



RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE

**IMMIGRATION, MIGRATION,  
OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES:  
BRANDON, MANITOBA**

**October 15, 2008**



**BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY**

*Founded 1899*





## **Rural Development Institute, Brandon University**

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research center and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

For more information, please visit [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi).

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OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES:  
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*Notes from Tapestry of Our Community  
Service Providers' Fair*

**October 15, 2008**

*Submitted to:*

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Corporation

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# **Tapestry of Our Community Service Providers' Fair**

**Wednesday, October 15, 2008, 11am – 9pm.  
Central United Church Auditorium, 327 – 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Brandon, MB.**

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## **Community Display Participants**

Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba  
Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre  
Assiniboine Community College  
Career and Employment Youth Services  
Canadian National Institute for the Blind  
Brandon Friendship Centre  
Westman Youth for Christ  
The Counseling Centre  
YMCA  
YWCA – Westman Women's Shelter  
Streetlove  
Service Canada  
Race Relations Network  
Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation  
Westman Immigrant Services  
City of Brandon  
Prairie Health Matters (RHA)  
RHA Diabetes Study  
Public Health Services  
7<sup>th</sup> Street Health Access Centre  
The Women's Resource Centre  
Westman Coalition for Employment Opportunities Inc.  
Brandon Community Welcome  
CMHA – Restore/Refit  
United Church Ministries  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
Westman Crisis Services

## **Welcome**

Brandon's first immigrant and community service provider fair was planned and hosted by the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation and Westman Immigrant Services. The Rural Development Institute (RDI), Brandon University offered input into the day's activities and recorded discoveries from presentations and community dialogue. The information presented in this report reflects RDI researcher's interpretation of October 15, 2008 activities.

## **Shawn Ankenmann, Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (BNRC)**

Mr. Ankenmann welcomed everyone to the Service Providers' Fair and thanked all participants of this inaugural event. He noted the importance of bringing different agencies and community organizations together to inform each other of their services and the challenges they are facing, to network, and to avoid duplication of services in the community.

There has been a will to host a similar event in Brandon for many years. This fair is the first in a series of similar events that will be planned annually. The main purpose is to encourage the community to work together as Brandon continues to change over time. Mr. Ankenmann noted that in order to attract more public to the event, the next fair should be held at a more public venue such as the Town Centre.

## **Laura Moar, Brandon Friendship Centre (BFC)**

The BFC operates five buildings at different locations in Brandon. Currently the organization is running fifteen community-based programs including Partners for Careers (resume writing, job postings, counseling), Adult Learning, In a Good Way (pre- and post-natal education), Access Service (addressing issues of family violence), Drop-In Centre for Youth, and others.

The BFC always tries to develop new programs to meet the needs of people in the community; they often partner with other organizations in the area such as the Brandon Regional Health, 7<sup>th</sup> Street Access Centre, Samaritan House, and others. On request, their cultural worker/ Elder works with other organizations in the community and offers information sessions regarding Aboriginal culture. Although their main focus is the Aboriginal population in Brandon and area, they also serve non-Aboriginal clients.

The BFC's Kokum's Little Daycare provides care for 36 children and currently there are no spots available because of limited availability. The BFC also operates a 40 housing units in Brandon. They are receiving requests for housing units daily and currently there is a 3-year waiting list for open units. Their Transitional House on 12<sup>th</sup> Street also has a long waiting list. The BFC is looking at adapting another building to help alleviate the need for housing in the community.

The Brandon Friendship Centre offers tours to interested clients or organizations on request. Their 60+ staff in Brandon always seeks ways to grow and develop new programs to meet the needs in the community.

Ms. Moar mentioned that the lack of housing is the number one issue that the BFC deals with on a daily basis. In Brandon, the shortage of adequate housing and high rents result in increasing homelessness and have effects on people transitioning from other communities. There is a particular demand for apartments with 3 or more bedrooms to accommodate families with more than 3 children.

Brandon's rapidly growing population also puts stress on other BFC programs such as Head Start and In a Good Way, both of which have waiting lists and simply cannot meet demands. More space is needed for programs so that more people can be included.

### **Marie Wotton, Child and Family Services (CFS)/ Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre**

The Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre focuses on family issues, parenting, and the well-being of children. The Centre offers a variety of services to its clients including parenting courses, support groups, family literacy and preschool programs, parenting outreach programs, and others. The Elspeth Reid Centre focuses on serving families holistically. Ms. Wotton affirmed "parents can't meet kids' needs if their own needs are not met."

The main issues affecting the Centre mirror the needs of families. The first issue mentioned was family income, often a barrier that places stress on families. The lack of housing, particularly low-income housing, is an ongoing local issue. A serious lack of childcare, particularly the lack of infant spaces, is having an impact on the well-being of today's families.

While the Centre offers a wide range of classes and services to the public, families encounter a number of barriers that prevent them from accessing services. These obstacles include parents' lack of time to meet needs (across all income levels); transportation to services for some families; limited employment opportunities, particularly parents without secondary or post-secondary education; the know-how to fit the services into a busy lifestyle; and the issue of isolation and finding time for families in an environment where the parents' role is not supported.

While the centre also offers some programs to newcomers and their families, they often encounter language and cultural barriers in successfully delivering these programs. The lack of interpretation and translating services is acute.

Ms. Wotton encouraged the audience to read two recent studies on families that reflect the CFS' and the Centre's concerns – a Winnipeg study on stress on parents, and another study available online entitled *Vital Communities, Vital Support*.

The Elspeth Reid Centre has created a new coalition, the Healthy Families Team, which meets nine times a year to discuss issues related to families and parenting. This is an open organization and new members are welcome to join.

### **Greg Lupier-Roziere, 7<sup>th</sup> Street Health Access Centre**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Street Health Access Centre has been in operation for approximately four years.

The demand for services has been increasing, especially during the past year, and there is increasing need for more staff and resources to keep up with the demand.

The Centre operates a number of programs for its clients, including: Adult Community Mental Health Program; Public Health Services; Sexual Health Education; baby clinics; and a Midwifery Program; as well as offering temporary laundry, shower, long distance calling, and internet services. They often partner with other organizations on the development and delivery of programs, i.e. Healthy Baby Program held at the Elspeth Reid Centre and Mamas Latinas, a partnership program with Regional Health Authority and Westman Immigrant Services that provides home visits, translation services, and information sessions for Spanish speaking mothers.

Language barriers and the lack of translation services are the biggest issues impacting the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Centre programs. Clients with limited English language comprehension cannot take full advantage of the Centre's programs or are unaware of them. The Centre had all key documents translated into Spanish, Mandarin, and Amharic. Their Spanish- and Amharic-speaking cultural workers focus on cultural facilitation and work with clients speaking these languages.

The critical lack of affordable housing in Brandon is another major issue for the Centre and its clients. Also, many newcomers have very limited or no understanding of landlord-tenant agreements or what rights they have. Advocacy and greater awareness for newcomers are needed.

The demand for services and an increasing volume of clients are major challenges at the Centre. Their programs are growing, but unfortunately are often hindered by language barriers as the Centre adjusts to a rapidly changing community and its needs.

### **Dean Munchinsky and Adrian Franco, Youth for Christ (YFC)**

Youth for Christ has operated in Brandon and area for fifty years and offers programs and resources to help youth build self-esteem and develop their potential in life. Their focus is on the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of youth.

The organization conducts a number of programs for youth including Uturn, which provides semi-dependent homes for youth-at-risk; Vox, an employment-training program; The Back Alley, a drop-in facility that is currently closed but plans are in place to find a new location; and Gymblast, a program delivered in partnership with YMCA and the schools. The organization also coordinates trips for youth to expose them to different parts of Canada and recently coordinated a volunteering trip to the USA.

YFC is also reaching out to the immigrant population in Brandon and area. Adrian, a Spanish-speaking youth, works with the Spanish-speaking community and youth at schools and organizes a number of programs for newcomers. One of the most popular is the Soccer League for children aged 6 to 13. The Soccer League started with the Spanish-speaking youth in Brandon and has recently expanded to become a truly international venture with participating members from other parts of the world. Other activities from newcomers include Drop-In Nights for teenagers, trips to other parts of Canada, and pool tournaments (for male adults mostly).

YFC has recently participated in a training session from the Search Institute in Minneapolis on healthy development and encouraged people to visit their website for more information.

What can service providers do to ensure the well-being of youth?

- Ensure that people have the information they need;
- Provide free, visible, well-communicated services and community resources;
- Provide opportunities for youth to volunteer; and
- Provide role models and mentors to youth.

### **Yvonne Hodge, Brandon School Division (BSD)**

Aside from the regular schools operating within the BSD, the Alexander school is in the process of becoming an art school, and the Neelin Off-Campus School is attended by approximately 200 students who work at their own pace towards graduation.

The Brandon School Division facilitates a number of special programs within the school system including English as an Additional Language (EAL); Eco-Odyssey at Crocus High; Special Needs Programs; and Brandon Healthy Families (part of Special Needs programs directed at pre-school population). The BSD has also recently hired a full-time Occupational Therapist (continuation of the position is dependent on funding). A website with a list of school division programs is available at <http://www.brandonsd.mb.ca/>.

The BSD also coordinates a program that assesses what skills children bring to Kindergarten. The statistics show that one in four children in Manitoba is not ready for Kindergarten; in Brandon the ratio is two in four children or 50%.

The EAL program has been developed to assist children from immigrant families. The BSD coordinates an English Language Assessment program for children and EAL teachers work with curriculum teachers in classrooms. There are also lots of visual supports available for children from non-English speaking families. There is now more support available within the school system for children from immigrant families than there was during the first years of new immigration influx to Brandon.

There are a number of issues at Brandon schools which include:

- Behavioral problems among students;
- Keeping Aboriginal children in school;
- Ensuring that children are equipped with basic skills to enter Kindergartens; and
- Cultural differences and integration of the immigrant children in schools.

In terms of the support for teachers dealing with immigrant families, the BSD organizes workshops and provides consultants and visual support for classes. Also, there are regular group meetings of teachers and principals. The issue of inter-cultural training among students was raised and there is hope that this training could help address some tension and cultural issues among students, particularly in high schools.

### **Heather Sharpe and Colleen Erickson, YWCA Westman Women's Shelter**

The Women's Shelter opened in 1978. The organization provides emergency and support services to women and children who are leaving abusive relationships. In addition to a temporary shelter, the organization offers education, empowerment, counseling services, childcare, crisis intervention and referrals as well as information on legal, medical, housing and employment needs.

The average age of women in the shelter is 18 to 32 and the majority of clients are Aboriginal women. The women can stay in the shelter for up to 30 days, which is an upper-limit set by the government. The YWCA funding is based on 'bed nights' or the number of beds occupied monthly. They rely heavily on private donations and also operate the Adopt a Room Program where businesses sponsor a room in the shelter. Additional programs organized by the YWCA include Power of the Girl Conference, 5<sup>th</sup> annual conference, focusing on self-esteem and leadership among young women.

The lack of housing, particularly low-income housing, adds lot of pressure on YWCA's operations. Women in the shelter get only 30 days to rebuild their life and find a new home; this time frame and an often limited income does not allow many women to find an apartment in Brandon. Some women end up returning to the relationships they left.

In terms of immigrant women, language factors often prevent YWCA from providing services to this community. In the past, other organizations have stepped in to help with language and immigration-related issues; however, the lack of translation services, language barriers, and unavailability of literature in other languages result in many immigrant women being unaware of the Shelter and its services.

### **Hope Roberts, Westman Immigrant Services (WIS)**

WIS provides a variety of programs and services to the immigrant community in Brandon. With the growing immigrant population, Brandon is changing and WIS is looking for ways to link their work with all that is happening in the community. The organization is seven years old and has been growing rapidly. EAL is their primary issue and WIS now employs fourteen to fifteen teachers for their English classes. Their settlement classes and programs employ ten to twelve workers. In addition to Brandon, WIS also offers EAL programs in rural areas, currently there is an increased demand in Neepawa.

The immigrant population seeking WIS's services are of various immigration streams including Maple Leaf workers, refugees through different sponsorships, business immigrants, family members of immigrants, and others. In the month of September alone WIS opened 96 new client files (Ms. Roberts noted that this number does not include all family members.). According to WIS, 181 immigrants arrived to Brandon in 2005, 172 in 2006, and 642 in 2007. However, these numbers do not necessarily reflect the true, new immigrant population in Brandon; it is estimated that the numbers are in the thousands when dependents of landed immigrants are counted.

WIS has been consciously hiring workers with different language skills to provide services to immigrants with limited or no English language skills. They now employ staff fluent in Amharic, Spanish, Mandarin, Teglá, French, Swahili, and German. Aside from language and settlement services, Ms. Roberts noted that major needs arising from the community relate to issues with mental health, counseling, and marriage breakdowns. WIS collaborates with a number of other organizations in town to develop and deliver new programs and services (i.e. Family Literacy and ESL, Sexual Health Promo Campaign).

New programs at WIS include Entry Program, which is a core orientation program for newly arrived immigrants and provides information on the city, health, education, employment and justice and legal issues. The WIS Assessment Centre coordinates tests for EAL classes as well as one additional test for people transitioning from high school.

Ms. Roberts noted that one of the major issues at WIS is the risk of core service provider burnout. Also, some of WIS's programs depend heavily on volunteers.

Despite the ongoing demand for services, there are very few if any professional interpreters and translators in Brandon. WIS has worked for over a year to build interpretation and translation pool in the community.

Ms. Roberts encouraged other organizations to address issues related to the growing immigrant population by developing programs and services that address their concerns and collaborate with other organizations to accommodate their clients. She noted that even large businesses like Future Shop, Canadian Tire, and Superstore have hired people from the immigrant community to better accommodate their customers.

## **Panel Discussion 7:00 – 8:30pm**

### **Panelists:**

Marty Snelling, Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

Laura Moar, Brandon Friendship Centre

Sandy Trudell, City of Brandon

Yvonne Hodge, Brandon School Division

Adrian Franco and Dean Munchinsky, Youth for Christ

Shawn Ankenmann introduced individual panelists and each provided background information on their affiliations and involvement in the community. The following questions were prepared by Shawn Ankenmann and Hope Roberts.

### ***QUESTION #1:***

*One of the issues that comes up again and again is communication between the sectors. Often we create and operate within “silos” that become focused on our specific area of expertise and experience while inadvertently neglecting the formation of partnerships AND communication with other groups and agencies. Do you feel breaking free of these “silos” is important for Brandon as we face the challenges before us? And how have you and your office formed partnerships and cooperative alliances in recent months?*

**Laura/ Brandon Friendship Centre:** The Centre regularly forms partnerships with different groups and organizations to meet needs in the community. It does so directly through development and collaboration on some programs, and also through client referral to other organizations and services. Some of the organizations with which the Friendship Centre collaborates include: Brandon Regional Health Authority; Community Health Matters; City of Brandon; Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation; Brandon University; Assiniboine Community College; Helping Hands; Youth for Christ; The John Howard Society; and others.

**Adrian/ Youth for Christ:** Youth for Christ is developing a network of partnerships with other organizations. Their partners include Westman Immigrant Services, the City of Brandon, Brandon Friendship Centre, Brandon School Division, and others.

**Yvonne/ Brandon School Division:** The Brandon School Division collaborates with a number of organizations on their pre-school and school programs. Their partners include: Manitoba Health; Child and Family Services; Elspeth Reid Centre; Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre; Brandon University; Assiniboine Community College; and University of Alberta. Some of the collaborative programs they operate include Kinderlinks, Roots for Empathy and FAST (Families and Schools Together).

**Sandy Trudell/ City of Brandon:** The ongoing challenge for the City is how to reach out to the various groups more proactively. The City does so by networking, effectively communicating and active program involvement.

**Marty/ Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (BNRC):** The BNRC facilitates new partnership and projects that bring different organizations together. Their most recent project is the transformation of the Massey building into a 54-housing unit that includes the collaboration of the BNRC, Habitat for Humanity and Brandon Friendship Centre.

**QUESTION #2:**

*In our community we have numerous groups that have been in existence for a number of years, such as the Brandon Race Relations Network (BRRN), who have been tasked with the role of creating programming that promotes racial diversity and cultural understanding. These groups frequently are facing a lack of funding, a dearth of people committed to leadership and volunteers, and struggle to continue providing their services to the community. Why do you think that a group like this struggles in the city of Brandon? How do you suggest we as a community can address these challenges for groups like the BRRN and others?*

**Yvonne/ Brandon School Division:** Staff within every organization gets busy and preoccupied with core activities. This may be overcome by fostering new partnerships and enhanced communication with the public. One of the biggest challenges that BSD faces is that 50% of Brandon five-year-olds are not ready/equipped for Kindergarten.

**Sandy/ City of Brandon:** There is a global decline in volunteers and today's volunteers often only offer their time and energy when there is some personal gain. Deepening cultural awareness and diversity will have a long-term pay-off. The majority of Brandon's population does not know about the immigrant experience and therefore are largely unattached to the issues arising. We should all begin by asking ourselves 'what can I do' creating personal connections and linkages. Increasing and stabilizing funding for non-profit organizations will alleviate some issues and assist in the development of volunteer programs. Sometimes volunteers are not treated with full respect and therefore, do not stay with an organization. It is important that volunteers are valued and accorded with the same respect that paid staff are.

**Marty/ Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation:** It is important to build on successes and emphasize the positive. The Brandon Race Relations Network is involved with organizing two events a year in conjunction with Human Rights Day (December 10<sup>th</sup>) and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21<sup>st</sup>). The Multicultural Festival has been building on the new energy in the city and has been growing steadily. The BNRC still has project funding available that has to be allocated by December.

**Laura/ Brandon Friendship Centre:** The lack of volunteerism and participation in the community often goes back to the demands on families. Colleges, universities and workplaces need to create strategic plans for inclusivity and cultural diversity.

**Adrian/ Youth for Christ:** The lack of funding impacts the ability to promote change; continuity of activities and the capacity to develop new programs. Organizations should set aside funding for volunteers (i.e. for volunteer appreciation dinner, etc.). A lack of funding often impacts the desire to volunteer.

**QUESTION #3:**

*Over the last couple of years, we've heard the immigration projections for our city and region. We are currently experiencing the reality of these numbers as Brandon is experiencing a significant change in its population demographics. Many of our new immigrants are moving to the city with little or no proficiency in English. The sheer number of ethnicities now resident in our community, while offering a context for enriching our city by dramatically expanding our*

*cultural diversity, presents enormous challenges to many sectors. What role do you as an organization or an individual have in responding to the needs that are now facing our community and your work?*

**Sandy/ City of Brandon:** Between 1995 and 2003 there was an average of 62 new landed immigrants per year. That number more than doubled in 2004 to 130 a year. In 2005 and 2006 there were about 180 new landed immigrants each year. In 2007 the number increased to 642; in June 2008 the number of new landed immigrant in Brandon was 418, reflecting a half year of growth. These numbers reflect newcomers with landed immigrant status only and they do not include Temporary Foreign Workers, dependents, and those waiting for landed immigrant status.

Brandon will experience at least a 10% population increase by 2010. By 2010, 10% of Brandon School Division students will be EAL learners. 'Community welcome' is important to encourage people to stay in Brandon after they receive permanent resident status, particularly temporary foreign workers and their families. It is important to notes that arrivals through every immigrant stream is increasing in Brandon.

**Adrian/ Youth for Christ:** The Spanish Soccer Program started by YFC has developed into an international soccer league. Program goals include enhanced integration through networking, communication, introduction to new people in the community, and English language skill development through interaction with other children.

#### **QUESTION #4:**

*How are Brandon youth being drawn into the community and the changes within it?*

**Adrian/ Youth for Christ:** In high schools, youth often associate with separate cultural groups and there is a great deal of pressure to remain within groups. There are challenges related to interaction across groups.

**Sandy/ City of Brandon:** It is important to encourage people view local immigration as a permanent reality, and not as a temporary phenomenon. An interpretation and translation model needs to be developed; the housing shortage needs to be addressed by developing affordable housing. The Brandon Police Service not have funds to pay for translation services when required. The City is currently coordinating a translation of relocation manuals and bus schedules.

In terms of youth, activities that bring people together need to be encouraged. Integration only happens when there is a concentrated effort to ensure that issues such as lack of funds does not get in the way. It is important to develop personal connections with the immigrant community.

**Marty/ Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation:** Immigration is a great opportunity for the city. It is important to focus on the positive and build on what we have. Meetings are being held to establish a non-profit housing corporation in Brandon and introduce rent controls in the city. The numbers of students in Brandon schools are increasing rapidly with many ESL students needing special services.

**Laura/ Brandon Friendship Centre:** There is a need to raise awareness about different cultures coming to Brandon and introduce Aboriginal culture to newcomers. The issue of homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in Brandon must be addressed.

**Dean/ Youth for Christ:** There is not a great deal of interaction with newcomers. It is important to deal with integration and homelessness issues proactively. Some people coming from elsewhere slip through the cracks; sometimes cultural norms do not translate well in a new environment. Newcomers come equipped with different tools to deal with challenges. YFC's program, U-Turn, organizes two workshops a month to assist the journey to independence.

**The following community resources are available:**

- Community Contact List (from Sandy/ The City of Brandon)
- Brandon Resource Guide (available on the BNRC website)
- Service Provider Guide (available from Sandy/ The City or WIS offices)

## Schedule of Presentations

<u>Time</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Topic</u>
11:45	Shawn Ankenmann	Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation	Welcome
12:30	Laura Moar	Brandon Friendship Centre	First Nations
1:15	Marie Wotton	Child and Family Services & Elspeth Reid Centre	Children & Families
2:00	Greg Lupier-Roziere	7 <sup>th</sup> Street Health Access Centre	Health
2:45	Dean Munchinsky and Adrian Franco	Youth for Christ U-Turn	Youth
3:30	Yvonne Hodge	Brandon School Division	Education
4:15	Heather Sharpe and Colleen Erickson	YWCA – Westman Women’s Shelter	Women & Gender
5:00	Hope Roberts	Westman Immigrant Services	Immigration
7:00 – 8:30	<b>Open Discussion – “The Changing Face of Brandon: Opportunities and Challenges around Us”</b>		

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The role of the RDI Advisory Committee is to provide general advice and direction to the Institute on matters of rural concern. On a semi-annual basis the Committee meets to share information about issues of mutual interest in rural Manitoba and foster linkages with the constituencies they represent.