



National  
**LIP**  
Secretariat

A network of Local Immigration Partnerships

# Annual Consultations on Emerging Issues in Newcomer Communities

NLS, February - March 2025

## Acronyms:

**LIP/ZIP** – Local/Zonal Immigration Partnership (In the rest of the text LIP is used to encompass ZIP as well.)

**NLN** – National LIP Network – Network of 88 LIP/ZIPs in Canada

**NLS** – National LIP Secretariat – backbone support for the National LIP Network

**IAT** – Immigrant Advisory Table (used also as a synonym for Newcomer Council, Newcomer Working Group, Lived Experience Advisory Table, Newcomer Focus Group, etc. – different models and names exist in different LIPs.)

## Background:

In 2023 the NLS conducted a series of four consultations with 30 LIP IAT members and compiled the findings in an Emerging Issues in Newcomer Communities Consultation [Report \(March 2023\)](#). One of the outcomes of that consultation process was that participants would like to see more opportunities for newcomers to meaningfully participate and shape the work of LIPs.

In 2024 we consulted with 25 newcomer LIP representatives. The consultations focused on challenges and promising practices with immigrant engagement in LIP structures. Findings from those consultations are captured in the Newcomer Consultation – Compiled [Report \(April 2024\)](#).

# 2025 Consultation:

## Objective:

The focus of the consultation in 2025 was to explore the perspectives of immigrants during a time in which reduced immigration targets led to reduced funding for settlement services and anti-immigration sentiment was increasing in Canada.

## Process:

The consultation sessions were conducted on two occasions: February 18th and 19th, 2025, with total participation of 18 newcomer representatives from 13 LIPs across Canada. The structure of the consultation was designed to look the same in both groups. However, the amount of time the groups spent on each of the questions was different, as was the flow of the consultation.

Findings from the sessions were compiled anonymously in this report. We acknowledge that each immigrant experience is unique, and these perspectives are only reflective of the individuals we were engaging with.

## Agenda:

- Welcome, introduction to the host (the NLS) and the process of the consultation
- Land acknowledgement
- Rounds of questions and answers
- Closing

## Questions Asked:

1. Name, what are you doing in life (profession/student etc.)? Where are you located - city/town? How long have you been in Canada? What immigration stream did you arrive through? What is your country of birth?
2. What is your role with the LIP immigrant advisory table (IAT, newcomer council, focus group, etc.)? How did you arrive in that role with the LIP? What kind of issues are you addressing with the LIP?
3. How do you understand/define the following terms: “settlement”, “integration”, “belonging” and how do you position yourself with regards to these terms and your own migration journey in Canada?
4. What do you see as barriers to “belonging”?
5. What kinds of changes are you noticing in the environment lately? What is becoming better/worse? What is increasing or decreasing?
6. What would be helpful for LIPs to do in the next 3 years? What kind of issues would you like to add to the agenda of the LIP newcomer advisory body?
7. What else do you think is important that hasn’t been asked so far?

## Participant Profile:

- Participants came to Canada from the following countries: Nigeria (3 participants), Vietnam (2 participants), and one participant from each of these countries: Egypt, India, Guatemala, El

Salvador, Somalia, Serbia, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Jordan, Iran. Some participants had migrated multiple times either internationally or within Canada.

- Participants arrived in Canada via different migration streams: International students (7), Skilled immigrants (2), family members of international students (5), asylum seekers (1), refugees (2), Provincial Nominee Program (1).
- Participants were employed in a wide range of professional services, social services (some of them related to the settlement sector), and trade sectors. Three participants were full time students.

In their opening statements, participants expressed overall positive attitudes about their migration experience. They were either very new to Canada or had been in the country for quite a long time:

- 6 participants arrived in Canada over 10 years ago (most over 15 years ago)
- 3 participants arrived 3 - 10 years ago
- 9 participants arrived less than 3 years ago

## **LIP Engagement:**

### **How were participants involved with their LIPs?**

Most participants reported going through some process of becoming a member of IAT such as applying to an open call or taking part in an interview. One participant was surprised at the process for securing a volunteer position and commented that this also adds to the hardship of being an immigrant. At least one participant became an IAT member because of a personal or professional connection with LIP staff.

Participants described the topics and type of work that IAT work on as:

- Advising on immigrant issues in general, making the community welcoming, shaping campaigns on inclusion.
- Providing feedback for online tools or platforms for navigating different systems relevant to immigrants.
- Advising the LIP on how to make sure immigrants are well connected with information and education on: housing, employment, banking, emergency preparedness, commuting, accessibility, etc.
- Ensuring that all services, including recreation, in the community are accessible for immigrants.
- Advocating for the needs of newcomers with complex intersecting identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, sexuality etc.)
- Connecting the LIP with specific populations (most often that means their ethnic group); translating messages to a specific language and listening for feedback. In short, acting as a liaison with their community.

## **Settlement, Integration, and Belonging:**

### **How did participants understand and position themselves with regard to these terms?**

Participants aligned around describing **settlement** as more related to tangible 'infrastructure' – acquired on their journey: having a job (possibly in line with qualifications), adequate housing, having an appropriate place of worship, having a place to buy their preferred groceries, access to transportation, etc. A special mention was made of access to a family doctor and medical specialists. (One participant mentioned that

they had not found the occupational therapist that their child with disability needs on an ongoing basis.) They commented that a lot of these pieces are lacking (most importantly employment) or are hard to access on their journeys, even though settlement service organizations strive to provide education, information, referrals, and connections. Some of these infrastructural pieces are simply not available, especially in remote, small, and rural communities.

On the topic of **integration**, participants in these two sessions mostly said that it is a two-ways process and referred to their own responsibility to do things in and together with their community (like volunteering or having a job that contributes to some shared purpose or helps to uplift others). These particular newcomers are especially active in this domain – in addition to being volunteers with their LIP, most of them volunteer in other organizations or professionally run meaningful initiatives in their respective communities.

On the topic of **belonging**, participants mostly aligned around a definition that it's subjective and agreed that it's about how one feels, but they had some interesting differences in how they view it. On the one hand, a number of participants reflected on how they felt in certain situations with regards to others not understanding their point of view, being misheard or tokenized (e.g. having advice or opinions ignored after they were asked for their perspective), which all led to an undermined sense of belonging.

One participant reflected that as an immigrant in Canada, they are often expected (also by the settlement sector) to seek belonging in a community originating from their home country. This individual explained that this presents an issue for them because they left their home country because of the feeling of not belonging there (not willing to comply with the religious and societal norms) and they were hoping to find belonging in a multicultural and free country such as Canada.

On the other hand, some participants viewed belonging more as their internal feeling that they have the right to be in Canada, no matter how others see or treat them. These participants declared they had confidence in their belonging in Canada and never questioned or allowed for that inner feeling to fade. One of these participants shared that he and his family are regularly invited by a Canadian family to their home, to participate in celebrations and gatherings with close family and other friends.

## **Barriers:**

### **What did participants say made settlement, integration, and belonging harder to achieve?**

- **Scapegoating:** Participants expressed a feeling that immigrants are being blamed for everything that goes wrong or that is lacking in society (housing, jobs, etc.)
- **Culture:** Differences/nuances in jargon, context specific jokes and an unwritten rule of engagement, with even a handshake not having the same meaning as in other cultures.
- **Language:** According to participants, for immigrants with no or low English fluency, language is a huge barrier and a reason why some individuals, and even entire communities, would self-isolate.
- **Age:** Participants spoke about increased barriers for newcomers over 30, who they said arrive with formed professional and personal attitudes and expectations.
- **Isolation & shortage of bonding capital:** Participants commented that having a family around (parents, relatives, wife and kids) helps the general sense of belonging. On the other hand, being a student, alone in the country, can make it harder to belong (though it may be easier to integrate by giving back even more).

Participants said that practicing religion helps, but that many immigrants are not finding their places of worship, especially in small communities. Even the existence of one’s place of worship is not a guarantee they will feel welcome: one participant reported that their experience in a small-town church was that queerness was not welcomed, although they found that it was at churches in larger cities. The participant who experienced this particular exclusion commented that sometimes belonging requires leaving something behind (in this case: religion) and moving on by creating one’s new places of belonging (e.g. a network of like-minded people).

- **Service eligibility:** Aside from non-availability of some pieces of the necessary infrastructure (housing, jobs, settlement, health services, etc.) one participant described a barrier in a form of rules imposed within the settlement sector: permanent residents’ ineligibility for services 5 years after first entry. This made services unavailable for this participant, who initially only entered for a brief visit to Canada and returned several years later, this time with the intention to settle.

## Trends:

**What did participants say is increasing and decreasing in the settlement environment? What is becoming better or worse?**

Increasing	Decreasing
<p><b>Entrepreneurship:</b> One participant shared the following insight: As employment opportunities for immigrants were decreasing, a number of immigrants took on entrepreneurship initiatives (including in the housing rental business), so business and housing ownership by immigrants increased.</p>	<p><b>Employment opportunities:</b> Participants agree that the number of immigrants were increasing in recent years, while the available opportunities are decreasing.</p>
<p><b>Immigration pathways &amp; services:</b> Participants said that pathways to permanent residency are increasing, and that settlement services are increasingly available.</p>	<p><b>Quality of life:</b> Participants noted that the cost of living in general is increasing, as well as wait times for medical care.</p>
<p><b>Secondary migration:</b> Secondary migrations, or “unsettlement” is frequently seen, and perceived as something that is increasing: moving from Canada to other countries, or moving within Canada: people are looking for either jobs and services, which draws migration towards big cities, or more affordable housing – pulling towards smaller centers.</p>	

### **Debated: Attitudes in the receiving community:**

Participants usually aligned around statements contributing and reinforcing one-another’s viewpoints. However, opinions diverged on this topic in particular, especially in one of the groups.

A number of participants shared that welcoming and acceptance of immigrants and diverse cultures is increasing. This was backed up by examples of: openness to learning; cultural events; raising flags to honor immigrants; exchanging food; creating programs to hire, include, and value immigrant talent; availability of ethnic food in mainstream supermarkets; programs for recognition of foreign credentials, etc. One group of participants believed that welcoming is increasing.

Others shared the perspective that the situation is becoming much worse. Participants said that people say hateful things about immigrants both in real life and on social media and that racism is growing. These participants expressed that immigrants are being blamed for everything that goes wrong (lack of jobs, housing etc.) and that specific groups of immigrants are especially targeted.

On a related topic, one participant noted that there is increased presence and visibility of the queer community, but they also commented on increased lack of acceptance (from their local church), and most recently especially coming from the US.

## **Recommendations:**

### **What did participants suggest LIPs and the sector focus on in the next 3 years?**

- **Amplifying immigrant voices:** LIPs to make sure immigrants have their voices heard. It will be different for different communities, but LIPs should create a platform through which immigrants can bring voice to the discourse.
- **Strengthen intersectional perspectives:** in settlement and immigration policies and services: LIPs to be leaders in integrating intertwined issues of race, religion, disability, 2SLGBTQIA+, etc.
- **Raise awareness of the need to:**
  - o **Resolve the housing problem.** Participants noted that: housing is closely connected with immigration; planning should consider housing needs of immigrants; past and promising solutions should be replicated.
  - o **Improve employability** of immigrants. Participants noted that international students and their families are especially facing too much financial pressure.
  - o **Advocate for the government to allow visitor visas for family members of people who are dying in hospice care** in Canada. Participants noted that these people are usually refugees.
  - o **Advocate for alignment of immigration criteria with workforce demands.**
  - o **Offer a single-entry point for all services.**
  - o **Improve access to health care for immigrants.** Participants noted that at a minimum everyone should have a family doctor to take care of their physical and mental health and direct them to additional services when needed.

### **Thank you:**

On behalf of the NLN and NLS, thank you to all the participants for their time, input, personal stories and reflections! We hope that by engaging in different networking structures, we can keep building a society in which every member can find ways to contribute to the maximum of their potential and benefit in equitable ways.

Rozeta Aleksov, NLS Community Coordinator