

# LANAUDIÈRE

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

STUDY ON THE PROFILE OF  
LANAUDIÈRE IMMIGRANT YOUTH  
FROM A SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL  
INTEGRATION CONTEXT



**SADC**

Société d'aide  
au développement  
de la collectivité  
Matawinie inc.

**CONSULTATION PAPER**

Discussion groups

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1. <http://www.laclef-perspectives.com/>
2. <http://www.credil.qc.ca/index.jsp>
3. <http://www.actionfamillelavaltrie.sitew.com/#Accueil.A>
4. <http://www.cjemoulins.org/>
5. <http://www.aminat.qc.ca/index.php>
6. <http://www.hebdorivenord.com/Actualites/2010-09-24/article-1790963/SAFIMA-%3A-La-bouee-de-sauvetage-des-immigrants/1>
7. <http://www.matawinie.qc.ca/fr/>

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# Terms of reference

We had a mandate to hold focus groups during the months of December 2010 and January 2011 with young immigrants aged 16-35, Canadian citizens, permanent residents or refugees awaiting permanent residence status, located in the Lanaudière region and in the country for less than five years. Chosen initially because it took up one of the eligibility requirements for the MGC programs (*Ministère de l'immigration et des communautés culturelles*, or Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities), the latter criterion having been dropped along the way due to being too limiting.

The objectives of the project to study the profile of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region in the context of socio-professional integration are:

- to achieve an accurate picture of the immigrant clientele;
- to validate the solutions raised in the diagnostic portrait painted through the work of Youth Engagement<sup>8</sup>;
- to identify the processes and challenges of the integration of an immigrant person;
- to explore the best practices of other regions;
- to analyze the continuum of services of organizations and programs, and
- To identify outcomes: findings, actions, prioritization and recommendations to the Working Committee.

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<sup>8</sup> Table of partners for the social development of Lanaudière, *Youth Engagement, Engagement jeunesse. Diagnostic sur la continuité des services aux jeunes. L'insertion socioprofessionnelle des jeunes immigrants*, consultation document for Youth Engagement Lanaudière, May 10th, 2010, 36 pages.



## Methodology

Seven focus groups were held corresponding to a total of 67 participants: four in Joliette, one in Terrebonne, one in Lavaltrie and one in Repentigny, from January to mid-February, 2011. Notes were taken during meetings and a report was later drafted. The exchanges were recorded on video. Redundancy in the answers to our questions was a sign that, despite a lower number of participants than desired at the beginning of the study, we had enough food for thought to develop courses of action.

Definitions of technical terms used in this report and the facilitation grid for discussion groups can be found at the end of this report. The grid was changed along the way in order to facilitate discussions. Four major themes were addressed:

- 1) life goals, obstacles and assets;
- 2) appreciation of the municipality of adoption;
- 3) knowledge and appreciation of the services offered, and
- 4) ways to better integrate young immigrants; a form containing personal information was also completed by participants.

## INTRODUCTION

Strong, due to figures released by the CRE, the regional conference of elected officials of Lanaudière reported a 62% increase in the number of immigrants established in the Lanaudière region<sup>10</sup> between 2001 and 2006, and the predominant age groups among them (by order of magnitude), are the 25 - 34 year-olds and the 0-14 year-olds, the *Table des partenaires du développement social de Lanaudière* (the Table of Partners for Social Development in Lanaudière) observed, in May 2010, that these are young families who immigrate to the region<sup>10</sup>. What followed was the realization of the urgency to understand the challenges young people face, in order to spare them as much as possible,

problems of social and professional integration, lack of motivation, isolation and ghettoization listed in the diagnostic portrait concerning the continuity of services for young people from Youth Engagement. <sup>11</sup>

In June 2010, a task force and work force was set up to achieve the regional strategy action plan set out by Youth Engagement, to ensure the provision of employability services to young immigrants aged 16 to 35. This committee was composed of government agencies (Service Canada, MICC, the CRE Lanaudière, and Youth Engagement), semi-public agencies (CJE Montcalm and Matawinie CFDC (SADC) and community organizations (*Perspectives Nouvelles* and CREDIL). Not having enough information to clearly identify the needs of young immigrants, the committee recommended a study focused on the opinions and perceptions of young people.

The draft study on the profile of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region in the context of socio-professional integration is funded by Service Canada and presents the comments collected from 67 young immigrants who participated in focus groups held in January and February 2011 in the Lanaudière region.

The enthusiasm of the 67 young people who participated in the study and who shared their immigration experience in the Lanaudière region has been remarkable. The aim was to know their current occupation and future plans, the reason for their establishment in the Lanaudière region and appreciation of their municipality of adoption and the recreation it provides, their knowledge and appreciation of the services helping with integration, the trials they faced and the guidance they were given upon their arrival and during the period that followed, the barriers that blocked their path to integration and, conversely, the assets that helped remove them. We asked them their opinion on ways to facilitate their integration in the Lanaudière region, to better provide them with information and, ultimately, what *being an immigrant* meant to them. They were generous in their responses, without artifice, without claim, without self-pity even when they evoked particularly difficult situations they faced. We had called upon immigrant youth, and we met with youth, period. Youth which, encountered difficulty in establishing rapports sometimes; youth whose reality is not always consistent with their dreams; youth limited in their movements by an inadequate transit system; youth who want more money; youth who try to find a place in day care or a family physician; youth struggling hard to balance work, studies and family life. They speak, all 67 of them, the universal language of youth, that is practiced by their sisters and brothers in Lanaudière, the language of hope, but who in their situation as newcomers, sometimes is tinged with despair, questioning and misunderstanding. They are simply young, yes, but young people facing the harsh reality of integration into a new world without landmarks, having left behind a page in their lives to find themselves in front of a blank page they struggle to customize due to lack of information or knowledge of the tools at their disposal.

In the next section, we present the demographic characteristics of immigrant youth participating in the focus groups. These data were collected through the completion of forms by participants and through the comments exchanged during the discussions.

Further still, we will present the views expressed by participants about their municipality of adoption, their future, obstacles and opportunities for integration, support services for the welcoming of immigrants, coaching upon arrival in the country and what it means to be an immigrant. These views were expressed during the focus groups. Finally, a number of recommendations are proposed that these exchanges have allowed to identify and, hopefully, will allow to better attract and retain young immigrants in the Lanaudière region.

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10 Also, the Lanaudière region is located in 8th place of the administrative regions of Quebec with respect to the number of immigrants in its territory. CRE Lanaudière Regional portrait on immigration in Lanaudière, March 2011, page 4.

10 Table of Partners for Social Development Lanaudière, Youth Engagement. Diagnosis on continuity of services to youth. The socio-professional integration of young immigrants, the consultation document for the Monitoring Committee Youth Engagement Lanaudière, May 10, 2010, page 7.

11 Idem, page 9.

# 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

## Profile

The sample includes a majority of women and its age stratum is predominantly situated in the twenties. Most (87%) of the 67 participants came to Canada between 2006 and 2010 and reside in various municipalities in the Lanaudière region. Countries of birth total 14 in number, Bhutan and Colombia figuring in the greatest numbers.

Table 1 12

### Age strata

Age	Participants	%
16 to 19 years	14	21%
20 to 29 years	30	45%
30 to 35 years	23	34%

**Table 2**

**Year of arrival in Canada**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>%</b>
1993	1	1%
2004	2	3%
2005	6	9%
2006	11	16%
2007	4	6%
2008	12	18%
2009	12	18%
2010	19	28%

12 The percentages in the tables have been rounded for ease of reading.

**Table 3**

**Place of residence**

<b>City</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>%</b>
Joliette	42	63%
Terrebonne	12	18%
Repentigny	5	7%
Laval	4	6%
Mascouche	1	1%
Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes	1	1%
Saint-Charles-Borromée	1	1%
Saint-Paul	1	1%

**Table 4**

**Country of Birth**

Country	Participants	%
Bhutan	21	31%
Colombia	20	30%
Haiti	8	12%
Democratic Republic of Congo	5	7%
Dominican Republic	3	4%
Mexico	2	3%
Brazil	1	1%
Chile	1	1%
Côte d'Ivoire	1	1%
Guatemala	1	1%
Morocco	1	1%
Romania	1	1%
Sweden	1	1%
Tunisia	1	1%

## Status in Canada

A person in Canada can be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or temporary resident. The categories of immigration to Canada are: family reunification, economic immigration and refugees<sup>13</sup>. The table below shows the status held by participants in focus groups and categories under which they immigrated.

13 Law on Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, SC 2001, c. 27, assented to 1 November 2001, current version in force since June 29, 2010, article 12.

**Table 5**  
**Status in Canada and immigration categories**

Status	Immigration category	Participants	%
Permanent Residents	Category unspecified	9	13%
	Refugees and persons in similar circumstances	21	31%
	Family reunion	3	4%
	Economic migration	2	3%
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>52%</b>
Canadian citizens		8	12%
Temporary Residents	Asylum seekers recognized as refugees awaiting permanent residence	2	3%
	Temporary worker waiting for permanent residence	1	1%
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Sub-total categories</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>69%</b>
Did not answer the question		21	31%
<b>Total</b>		<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note that almost one third of participants have immigrated under the “refugee” category. This reflects the fact that the vast majority (63%) of participants recruited for focus groups reside in Joliette and that this is the city of refugees.<sup>14</sup>

## Migration route

The route taken by an immigrant, the cities and countries through which they travelled before arriving in Québec, constitutes their migratory path. Nineteen percent (19%) of participants reported having passed through a third country, or more, before arriving in Canada, 19% have passed through Montréal before settling in the Lanaudière region and 3% by another city.

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<sup>14</sup> Table of Partners for Social Development Lanaudière, Youth Engagement. Diagnosis on continuity of services to youth. The socio-professional integration of young immigrants, the consultation document for the Monitoring Committee Youth Engagement Lanaudière, May 10, 2010, page 8.

## Educational Attainment

One of the findings of a study published in March 2011 by the Statistical Institute of Québec highlighted the impact of the place of graduation on the integration of immigrants: their unemployment rate will be lower and their rates of activity and employment higher if they graduated in Canada.<sup>15</sup> More than two-thirds of the 67 participants in the focus groups who obtained their last degree before immigrating to Québec, would be subject, according to this study, to encountering more obstacles to integration than immigrants who obtained their diplomas in the province. However, as we shall see, almost half of respondents questioned about their future wish to further their studies. Hopes and dreams are allowed for them, provided that the obstacles to the achievement of these projects, the very ones they have identified and which will be discussed later, be addressed and resolved.

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15 Statistical Institute of Québec, Participation of immigrants in the labor market in 2009, March 2011, page 11.

**Table 6**  
**Last degree obtained**

Education level		In Québec	Overseas	Participants	%
Primary school			10 <sup>16</sup>	10	15%
High School	General Education	10	25	35	52%
	Vocational training		3	3	4%
College		2	8	10	15%
University		4	5	9	13%
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

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16 Of which seven are currently studying at the secondary level in Quebec.

18 MICC, Welcome to Quebec. Sheet 2. Usefulness and limitations of Benchmarking, in September 2007. (<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/evaluation-etudes/fiche2.pdf>)

**Table 7**

**Accreditation**

Equivalency	Respondents	%
By the MICC	15	88%
By a school	2	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Current occupation

More than a quarter of the 49 respondents to the question about their current occupation said they attended French courses while employed or studying. Just over a quarter are also in school - secondary, vocational, college — or are preparing for professional examinations. Their fields of study are nursing, health management, office automation, physical sciences. Some young people, at home, take care of their children or are looking for a job or waiting to start a course. Those who work full time are in the areas of health, food, community and energy. Finally, a minority are working and studying simultaneously.

**Table 8**

**Current occupation**

Current occupation	Number	%
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Following a French course (while in school or while employed, in some cases)	13	27%
In school	13	27%
At home	11	22%
Working full time	9	18%
Working and studying at the same time	3	6%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100%</b>
Did not answer the question	18	
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	

## Family and social networks

The majority of the participants have family in the Lanaudière region. Some have family in Montréal, elsewhere in Québec, in Canada or the United States. Nearly half of the participants have friends in the Lanaudière region.

**Table 9**

### Presence of family and social network

Presence of a network	Number	%
Have family in the Lanaudière region	35	64%
Have family in the Lanaudière region and Montréal	5	9%
Have family in the Lanaudière region and elsewhere in Québec	1	2%
Have family in the Lanaudière region and elsewhere in Canada	2	4%
Have family in the Lanaudière region and the United States	1	2%
Have family in Montréal	6	11%
Have family in Montréal and elsewhere in Québec	1	2%
Have family elsewhere in Canada	3	5%
Have family in the United States	1	2%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>
Did not answer the question	12	
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	

## Why choose the Lanaudière region?

Although settling in the Lanaudière region was not necessarily a choice for all participants, the fact remains that the majority held positive opinions about their city of adoption. Their reception in the Lanaudière region is part of a dynamic regionalization of immigration.

Bhutanese refugees met in Joliette told us not to have chosen their destination, but did not, however, express regret about it. In interviews, they mentioned, on a cheerful note: "We were recognized when we arrived at the airport thanks to the *Organisation internationale pour les migrations* (OIM, or International Organization for Migration IOM) sign that we wore, and we were immediately taken to a taxi. Someone handed the driver a piece of paper on which was written the name of Joliette -- once in Joliette, we were taken to the hotel. "

We find that these young people, whose trip was organized by the IOM and who were supported by Québec, do not seem to be familiar with the process of determining the destination of refugees. It should be understood that a host city is awarded to individuals based on family reunification, the annual distribution of Refugees (annual target host for each of the 13 destination cities), the profile of the people in question (eg , specific health needs, family size, etc.). The 13 host cities were determined over time, according to the will of the community to accept refugees and their hosting capacity: the presence of an agency for refugees, hospitals, academic institutions, French classes, employment services, facilities, allowing for the realization of social, cultural, recreational and sports activities, commercial establishments, etc.. Other criteria are also important, such as the availability and cost of housing, the presence of transport, etc..

In terms of participants who chose to settle in the region, the reasons range from joining a family member, spouse or friends, to the attraction of the beautiful scenery, including the realization that this region is: "*the perfect place to raise children.*"

« Lavaltrie and its beautiful natural landscape, seasonal fruit and never-ending fields »

## 2. Perceptions and opinions of participants

### Findings of the municipality of adoption

The Lanaudière region has a strong appeal to the vast majority of the 26 participants out of 67, who demonstrated an appreciation of their municipality of adoption: most of them spoke in positive terms, praising its tranquility and the fact that it is a great place to raise children, enjoying the friendliness of the people and their interest in social ties, the freedom and security found there, the ease of life in general and shopping, especially for the wide range of products and especially food.

Compared to its neighbor, Montréal, Lanaudière takes the upper hand for a third of respondents. In their opinion, Montréalers were less friendly and less accessible, more agitated and stressed. However, Montréal seems to maintain the upper-hand for work or entertainment or, for a participant in sub-Saharan Africa, its cosmopolitanism.

Some respondents complained about the difficulty in establishing relationships with their fellow Lanaudière citizens that "looked at them, but did not talk to them." They regret not having a social life and not having established relationships with their neighbours. A young woman wearing the Islamic veil is concerned that people are "uncomfortable" with her in the streets.

« In Montréal, there are many immigrants and Africans. Here, it is every man for himself. On the bus, if there is a place, people will look at me and people will not come sit down. In Montréal, it's normal, they are accustomed. »

For some Bhutanese refugees, it is difficult to practice English in their municipality of adoption. Indeed, Joliette is a largely French-speaking and these youths do not seem to be aware of it.

## Knowledge and use of leisure facilities offered by the municipality

The provision of municipal recreation is known by two-thirds of respondents and 80% have expressed being very satisfied or satisfied. However, over half of them do not participate, or<sup>18</sup> rarely do. Participants in a focus group highlighted the difference between the rates offered in the municipalities, namely Repentigny and Terrebonne, and the city of Montréal, and found the first too expensive compared to the latter. Some travel to Montréal to enjoy less expensive activities and complain that "people tend to think that those who live in the Lanaudière region are rich."

## Knowledge and appreciation of support services at reception and to integration

Sixty-three percent of the 35 respondents, when asked about support services at reception and to integration, have claimed being aware of their existence. The information was transmitted to them in one of two ways: either formally through structured information sessions, or informally through a relative. However, 26% of respondents admitted to not being familiar with the services in question, and 11% claimed to not know them at all.

**Table 10**  
**Knowledge and use of leisure activities offered by the municipality**

Knowledge		Use		Never participate
Know of them	29	<i>Participate often</i>	4	4
		<i>Participate seldom</i>	9	
		<i>Almost never participate</i>	16	
Do not know of them	11			
<b>Sub-total</b>			<b>44</b>	
Did not answer the question			23	
<b>Total</b>			<b>67</b>	

### Through an information session

Of the respondents who obtained information on support services for reception and integration, 14% said they received a briefing upon arrival at the airport during which contact information for organizations supporting their integration was transmitted to them, as well as details about the steps involved in obtaining permanent residence and their health insurance cards and social insurance. Some also benefited from a briefing session given later in their municipality of adoption, by a municipality immigration officer, focusing on Québec and the rights and duties of immigrants.

### Through an agency or relative

Others have benefited from using the CLSC which informed them on organizations and services of interest to them or a non-profit organization, located in Montréal, which offers training in job search. Two percent (2%), meanwhile, benefited from an integration support service through their spouse or family member already settled in the Lanaudière region.

Twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents declared they were not familiar with the services provided for them and 11% did not know about them and were disappointed about it:

"Life is very different, there is a good quality of life, but we do not know how to enjoy it, because we keep the same habits, it is difficult to integrate, a great program would help (...) to know (the agencies and their services)."

Some, who are familiar with the support services that help with employment, such as the CJE, *Carrefour jeunesse emploi*, would like to know more about the host organizations and support for immigrants "in order to have more openness and opportunities."

**Table II**

### Knowledge of services offered

Knowledge	Respondents	%
Knowledge of services offered	22	63%
Unfamiliar with services offered	9	26%
Do not know the services offered	4	11%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>
Did not answer the question	32	
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	

Thirty-one percent (31%) or 11 respondents, expressed their appreciation of the services offered and their opinions are divided as follows: 55% satisfied and 45% dissatisfied. Satisfaction ranges from recognition of the dedication of the staff of community organizations and government (CREDIL, *Perspectives Nouvelles*, Emploi Québec) and the "colossal" work that it does, to the warm welcome they received. Dissatisfaction is expressed by the personal observation that an organization does not promote the integration of immigrants by bringing together people from the same linguistic origin in French courses, by the fact that the pairing with non-immigrant families is no longer offered as before, or by the fact, again, that the leadership in assembling a business plan offered by an organization does not help in drafting it.

## Future Plans

**Table 12**  
**Future projects**

Projects	Respondents	%
Study	23	48 %
Work or start a business	16	33 %
Improve their own situation or another's	5	10 %
Other projects	4	8 %
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Did not answer the question	19	
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	

With a very large proportion (66%) of participants in focus groups between 16 and 29 years of age, and an overwhelming majority (76%) with high school, college or university degrees, it is not surprising that nearly half (48%) of respondents to the question about future plans said they would investigate, pursue, resume, or complete their studies. Table 13 shows the level of education they wish to attain.

**Table 13**  
**Projected level of study**

Level of study	Respondents	%
High School	2	9 %
College	8	35 %
University	9	39 %
Did not specify	2	9 %
Did not specify the level or nature of study	2	9 %
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Have other projects or did not answer the question	44	
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	

For those who responded that it was nearly impossible for them to integrate the labour market, a quarter stated they hoped to start a business (see Table 14). Studies on the topic of employment among immigrants conclude that such a choice is the result of their inability to integrate the paid labour force, which makes self-employment seem more financially profitable.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 14**  
**Projected jobs**

<b>Job Type</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
Starting a business	4
Nurse	3
Engineer	1
Ambulance technician	1
Office Clerk	1
Teacher	1
Daycare Educator	1
Unspecified jobs	4
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>16</b>
Have other projects or have not answered the question	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

## Barriers to integration

We have asked participants to tell us about the obstacles that stood between them and the realization of their future plans. They all quoted, either spontaneously or to our invitation, more than one obstacle. Table 15 shows their responses which, for the vast majority (responses given by 90% of participants), highlight the obstacles that are beyond the control of participants, and the rest (responses given by 49% of participants), barriers of a personal nature (in italics in Table 15).

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<sup>19</sup> Do the Falling Earnings of Immigrants extend to immigrants who work independently?, Marc Frenette, Analysis Division of Business and Labour Market, Statistics Canada, 2002, page 1.

### 1) No obstacle

Seven percent (7%) of 67 respondents told us they do not face any obstacles to integration, either because of the financial health of their spouse, meaning that they do not have to deal with "problems related to job searches or related to befriending strangers", or due to the fact that they have overcome obstacles early in the course of immigration or with the help received from their family settled in Québec.

## 2) Lack of knowledge of French and French lessons

### a) Lack of French

Studies have shown, without adequate knowledge of the language, economic and social integration of immigrants is a challenge:

"Ignorance of the language is the primary source of all learning difficulties that result in school failure (Melzak and Blackwell, 2000), cultural and social isolation (Long and Amaya, 2007) or significant distress (Ditiseim 1990, Beaulieu and Lavallée, 1992). Conversely, its mastery is the key to all knowledge (Rent 1987: 17-18; Moisset and others, 1995).<sup>20</sup>

Nearly half of respondents, from Colombia (most of which have a base in French) and Bhutan (the vast majority do not speak French), said their lack of knowledge of French is a barrier to integration, whether related to their studies or employment, as was the case for some Bhutanese refugees surprised at being told, by a community worker, that they will not find work if they do not speak French. By their force to denounce these remarks, they shared how, after their arrival in Québec, their ignorance of it crippled them. For others, ignorance of the language means a barrier to hiring as their specialization requires a mutual understanding with the clients they would have to serve. It also means resignation to stagnate where knowledge of French is essential to the progress or completion of a business plan.

The lack of interpreters has been raised by the participants to highlight the difficulty in understanding the content of the French correspondence addressed to them, or to be understood in the hospital:

"In the briefing we received in Nepal, they said: " When you go to the hospital, if you have difficulty with language, that's their problem, they will find a translator. But it is quite the opposite, we must find a translator, but they are all in school. "

But more than just a lack of language interpreters, lack of cultural interpreters, who serve as a bridge not only between one language and another but between one culture and another would be crucial in the Lanaudière region, according to one participant, a social worker. When an act of domestic violence -- or one relating to the *Direction de la protection de la jeunesse* DPJ (or Directorate of Youth Protection (DYP) occurs -- it has happened, she said, that people are told to go to Montréal.

**Table 15**  
**Barriers to integration<sup>21</sup>**

Types of barrier	Respondents	%
No obstacle	5	7%

<i>Ignorance of French</i>	33 (49%)	68%
and French classes	13 (19%)	
Flaws in the transit system	14	21%
Indifference of the people, difficulty in establishing contacts and isolation	13	19%
<i>Lack of money</i>	9	13%
Lack of information or transmission of erroneous information	8	12%
Health and health system	6	9%
Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec and recognition of prior learning	5	7%
Immigration status and red tape	4	6%
Teachers' attitudes	4	6%
<i>Personal situation</i>	3	4%
Ghettoization	3	4%
<i>Religion</i>	2	3%
Child care spaces	2	3%
Coaching	2	3%
<i>One's own attitude</i>	2	3%

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20 The academic success of immigrant students: factors to consider, Yamina Bouchamma, *Vie pédagogique*, No. 152, October 2009. ([http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/viepedagogique/152/index.asp?page=dossierB\\_3](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/viepedagogique/152/index.asp?page=dossierB_3))

21 We obtain a total of over 67 and 100% as respondents listed more than one obstacle.

Finally, ignorance of the French language isolates as it causes the inability to make friends or hold a proper conversation.

#### b) French courses

The MICC provides diversified services:

- Abroad, through the French Alliances and French institutes or other schools of French;
- Overseas and in Québec: online courses;
- In Québec: regular full time or part-time classes, specialized part time courses in the workplace, part-time and self-learning courses (in Québec City and Montréal) for workers in jobs and businesses who hire them.<sup>22</sup>

However, these courses are available where demand warrants it. In the greater Montréal area, who hosted in 2010 <sup>23</sup> 76.8% of immigrants admitted to Québec between 1999 and 2008, the service offering is complete, but in the Lanaudière region where, in 2010, 1.7 % <sup>24</sup> of this immigration was to be found, offerings were limited. This emerged from the comments gathered from participants in focus groups.

Those who voted on the issue complained that French courses are not offered part-time or during the evening. A greater availability of offerings would help newcomers, according to one participant, to balance work / study / family. In addition, evening jobs being less profitable monetarily, she claims, would help with working during the day and following a French course at night, which would allow many to get out the cycle of welfare.

Participants also told us they did not understand why they must wait to enrol in a French course. They did not seem to grasp that a minimum number of registrations was required to hold such a course.

The inadequacy of current courses and the needs of some newcomers was singled out by participants who spoke, among other things, about the fact that certain national languages do not know grammar, and therefore it is difficult for users of these languages to follow French classes where grammar is taught. This reality was further echoed by a French teacher for whom the urgency to remedy the situation comes from the strong growth in the number of immigrants in the Lanaudière region. Having taught French language <sup>25</sup> in Montréal, she says she has already alerted the director of the training center where she works about the importance of tailoring course offerings to the growing demand.

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22 MICC, MICC Services francization 2010-2011, August 18, 2010 (<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/langue-francaise/Services-francisation.pdf>)

MICC 23, 2010 in presence of immigrants who arrived in Quebec from 1999 to 2008, Research Branch and the prospective analysis, in December 2010, page 32.

24 Idem.

25 These French courses directed at illiterate or poorly educated immigrants.

The mix of students who are illiterate in their native language, with other students was also mentioned by participants as a barrier to the proper learning of French.

Finally, some participants regretted the homogeneity in the composition of French classes, which, according to them, impedes the learning of the language and isolates students from contact with people of other national origins and with members of the Québec majority.

### **3) Faults in the system of transit**

Just over 20% of the participants quoted flaws in the public transportation system as a barrier to integration, especially the low frequency of bus service which complicates their trips to Montréal <sup>26</sup>, where they study or work; the high cost of taxis as a means of alternative transport, or the cost of a monthly pass for the company that serves their municipality, in addition to that of the Montréal OPUS card for travel within the city.

Of responses to our questions about driver's licenses, it seems that obtaining it is easy for some and less for others. This is explained, according to information on the website for the Department of Immigration and Cultural

Communities<sup>27</sup> by the varying standards in the countries of origin for newcomers. With similar testing standards, the exchange of one's driver's license is done without a general knowledge test or road test. With different testing standards, the entrant must, however, take these exams. It is also recommended that newcomers immediately take the steps required to obtain a permit in Québec, in the early days of their arrival, as delays may occur depending on individual circumstances.

#### **4) Indifference of the people, difficulty in establishing contacts and isolation**

Of the 67 respondents to the question on barriers to integration, 19% stressed the difficulties in what they perceived as the indifference of others and the difficulty in establishing contacts. Also, there were many who, before or after the holding of focus groups, expressed a desire to repeat the experience to meet and further interact with people. This shows how great their sense of isolation is. The difficulty in establishing relationships is further felt by those to whom was added – during their migratory journey – a negative experience happening to them or one of their family members. For others, the difficulty in establishing contacts in the Lanaudière region contrasts with their experience in Montréal: higher professional fees in the city; friends with whom they find, an ease and spontaneity of exchanges, solidarity and social habits from their country of origin; a habit, within the city, to exchange and mingle with immigrants. The words heard by participants in the focus groups were hurtful to some, as the words of a young woman from Africa can attest to:

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26 The Eastern Train with the commissioning by the Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) is planned for summer 2012, will serve the cities of Mascouche, Terrebonne, Repentigny and Charlemagne in Lanaudière.

27 <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/avantages/vie-quotidien/transports/permis-conduire.html>

"In Montréal, there are many immigrants and Africans. Here, it is every man for himself. On the bus, if there is a place, people will look at me and people will not come sit down. In Montréal, it's normal, they are accustomed to it. (...) People do not approach me. They told me that people do not approach me because blacks stink. "

The difficulties in building relationships result in an isolation which is difficult to bear. Contacts have been established by some of their neighbours, but they ended in an impasse. Many complain of not having a social life.

#### **5) Lack of money**

Thirteen percent (13%) of participants have expressed a lack of money as an obstacle to achieving their future plans: cost of rent, which is the main problem for some; disastrous personal or family finances which might force them to quit their studies to go to work; insufficient government support for some newly arrived immigrants in Québec who wish to quickly integrate the labour market; costs related to obtaining permanent residence, education costs and interest related to loans and scholarships.

#### **6) Lack of transmission of information or misinformation**

For 12% of participants, half of which arrived recently in Québec, the lack of information or the transmission of erroneous information is, they believe, the main barrier to a successful integration. This situation had, for many,

an impact on their learning of French, their studies or their professional training. Some would like to know if they could enrol in a second French course, while others wish to not receive conflicting information about their equivalencies, and others still, would like to know whether the government would pay for training that they would like to take.

Other participants were hindered in their plans for employment or business due to, they claim, a transmission of erroneous information concerning, for example, their ability to find employment in their field of study or the development of a business plan. Some told us that a lack information prevented them from finding a family doctor or a career path to follow later in life.

## **7) Health and health system**

Health and the health system were identified as problematic by 9% of participants. The waiting time in hospitals or walk-in clinics was in question for some: "The health system is hellish. Even at the walk-in clinic, the waiting period is too much." For others, it is the general state of the health system: "Hospitals in Québec leave much to be desired, and the ones in Montréal are hell." Finally, for participants who do not speak French, accessibility to health care is problematic.

Respondents who arrived in Québec as refugees, cannot explain why, despite problems with their eyes and teeth, they must wait two years to receive the financial support available to them, or why they were not entitled to medical examinations as is normally the case for immigrants. They seem to have been misinformed or have misunderstood the information since, outside of Québec City and Sherbrooke where agreements exist with health facilities and services for the swift examination of new arrivals to Québec, immigrants must follow the normal procedure and wait for availability to undergo any examination. Waiting lists being what they are, months may pass before they undergo their first medical examination.

## **8) Comparative evaluation of studies conducted outside Québec and recognition of prior learning**

For 7% of participants, the comparative assessment of their studies done outside Québec by the Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities or the recognition of their achievements and skills by the Ministry of Education, Recreation and sport, proved to be a problem when it came time for them to enrol in a program of study or integrate the labour market. The disappointed expectations of one particular participant weighed heavily on her shoulders:

"I went to the RAC (*Services de reconnaissance des acquis et compétences*)<sup>28</sup> as a nurse. If I am recognized with the RAC, it will be as a nursing *assistant*. It's hard when you're older. When you're young, it's easier to fit in, because when you have children, you must care for those children and can become depressed." (Young woman, 34, from Colombia)

## **9) Immigration status and red tape**

For 6% of participants, the long wait for a particular status in Canada and the red tape which oftentimes accompanies its deliverance is a source of stress and a barrier to achieving the goals they had set out for themselves, particularly for those who study or wish to bring a family member in the country.

Some recognized refugees in Québec, waiting for their permanent residence, conclude from their experience that permanent residents receive better treatment and more benefits than refugees like them. They looked forward to their permanent residence to take courses in French and to return to school. Yet on the MICC website, it states that people recognized as refugees are entitled to French classes full time, part-time and on-line<sup>29</sup>. Failure to follow a French course is therefore outside the status of these respondents, but attributable, rather, to the unavailability of courses in the area where they are. The same applies to the studies they wish to undertake. Recognized as refugees, they are not subject to increased fees required of political asylum seekers or students, but the fees charged to a permanent resident or Canadian citizen.<sup>30</sup>

28 Recognition of service learning and competencies of the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport. Those eligible for general education adult education services are entitled to recognition of experiential learning.

[http://www.formulaire.gouv.qc.ca/cgi/affiche\\_doc.cgi?dossier=869&table=0](http://www.formulaire.gouv.qc.ca/cgi/affiche_doc.cgi?dossier=869&table=0)

29 <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/langue-francaise/lexique.html> tempscomplet

## **10) Attitude of teachers**

Studies have shown a lack of preparation on the part of teachers who teach students from immigrant families<sup>31</sup>. This lack of preparation could explain the hurtful retorts reported by 6% of participants in focus groups, held against them by some teachers: "You are a potential dropout, for you are an immigrant and your grades are not good" or " We need you to go see your guidance counsellor"<sup>32</sup> because I do not think you can pass the course." However, these words do not seem to have deterred those to whom they were addressed, but say they regret the lack of consideration given to their efforts.

## **11) Personal situation**

For 4% of the participants, all young women, a large barrier to the realization of their plans for the future comes from their personal situation. Some had to abandon or postpone their studies when they got pregnant, or after the birth of their child, or for one young woman in particular, give up work she loved as a customs officer, because she no longer had the physical strength required after an accident she suffered.

## **12) Ghettoization**

Four percent (4%) of participants have told us of the danger of ghettoization induced by clustering immigrants in their places of residence or by country of origin in the classroom. Giving the example of the city of Joliette, where newcomers are mostly housed in dwellings on Arthur Normand and Marsolais streets, they regret not mixing in with non-immigrants. This is due, according to what several social workers have told us, to the fact that few owners agree to rent housing to people without a credit history, and that the choice of housing is based on the household budget of newcomers.

One participant called for the organization of "buddy" activities between newcomers and non-immigrants to address the risk of ghettoization which she has observed, especially in schools where students "form groups

according to their affinities and origins." She herself is committed to such an organization, Casa Youth, which orchestrates such pairings and encourages initiatives to integrate immigrants into their host society.

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30 MICC Guide immigration procedures. Component 2. Humanitarian immigration. Chapter 9. Processing the application for a CSQ refugees or protected persons in Quebec, in June 2007, page 23.

(<http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=7&file=GPI-2-9.pdf>)

31 The academic success of immigrant students: factors to consider, Yamina Bouchamma, Vie pédagogique, No. 152, October 2009. ([http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/viepedagogique/152/index.asp?page=dossierB\\_3](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/viepedagogique/152/index.asp?page=dossierB_3))

32 Equivalent to Individual Educational Help

### **13) Religion**

Two participants, both Muslim, raised the issue of religion in their comments on the obstacles dotting their path to integration. The first discussed the barrier that the image of violence and intolerance associated with Islam casts upon her and might impede her to one day join the labour market. Her husband's current financial situation allows her to stay at home, so she does not need to go out to study or work. These are not only the problems that cause her concern, but also the fact that she feels uprooted from her culture of origin, far from large family gatherings, the celebration of Muslim holidays and the practice of her religion.

For the second, who began wearing the Islamic veil recently, fear of and discrimination against her are of concern. "Since I wear the veil, I find that people are prejudiced". These prejudices, she has experienced during a job interview, while her interviewer asked her how and where she thought she would do her five daily prayers during work hours and he questioned her ability to perform her work well during Ramadan. "How do you think you can be productive in your work, without eating all day?", he asked her. Yet, upon her arrival in Québec when she was not yet wearing the veil, this participant had no difficulty finding a job in customer service, whether at a major telecommunications company or a restaurant in Montréal.

### **14) Child Care Spaces**

The lack of child care space is a barrier for 3% of participants in the focus groups who complained about the long waiting lists in daycare centers and the high cost of private day care. They fight the urge to "drop everything and stay home to care for their child."

### **15) Coaching**

The lack of supervision was raised by 3% of participants who have come to regret the lack of assistance and coaching in finding employment or training: "We need more people present to help. They are so busy! The budget is not huge at CREDIL, which limits the available staff. "

### **16) One's own attitude**

Finally, 3% of participants recognized the responsibility for each immigrant to actively participate in his or her integration process, noting that "it's everyone's responsibility to adapt," or:

"Non-integration is our fault because we are embarrassed, we are afraid of being laughed at. Because sometimes people will say what?, what?, what?, when they don't understand what we mean. But they do not correct us and then after we are embarrassed to repeat it. "

## Assets to integration

Thirty-four percent (34%), or 23 participants, in the focus groups identified one or more elements that contributed to the facilitation of their integration in the Lanaudière region. An overwhelming majority of respondents (74%) identified personal or interpersonal characteristics (in italics in Table 16), and nearly half (48%) identified systemic features. The next table illustrates these responses.

### 1) Spouse / friends

Just over a quarter of respondents to the question on their perceived assets to integration, all women, acknowledged that the support from their spouses, or friends, was priceless to integration, whether their spouse was Québec-born or in Québec for several years, and accompanied them in the maze of paperwork or perhaps offered financial support.

### 2) Personal situation

The personal situation of 22% of respondents has facilitated their integration in the Lanaudière region. Diverse situations ranging from the personal attitude of a person, for example one that finds "everything relatively easy" and "not creating problems for themselves" to proximity of schools, groceries and services. One participant shared that her studies conducted prior to her migration to Québec was her biggest asset to integration, while another participant, cited her work experience in Manawan in the regional county municipality of Matawinie, as having helped her with integration since she was working for the Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities of Québec in Montréal, while undergoing training. Finally, one participant explained how her physical appearance is an asset, allowing her to blend into the local population:

"I am white and people do not realize that my background is different, that is until I start talking. I am betrayed by my accent (...) and because I do not speak French. I get to go unnoticed sometimes, though. "

**Table 16**

**Advantages to integration<sup>33</sup>**

<b>Types of asset</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Spouse / friends</i>	6	26%
<i>Personal situation</i>	5	22%
<i>Help for professionals and welcoming services</i>	4	17%
School system and learning French	4	17%
Security and rights	3	13%
<i>Joyful minority</i>	2	9%
Government Assistance	2	9%
Money and credit	2	9%

**3) Help for professionals and welcoming services**

For 17% of respondents, attention and assistance received from professionals such as doctors, nurses or teachers, have softened their integration. The time allowed and compassion of doctors, teachers and guidance counsellors, involvement and the hospitality of the people around them, were appreciated by the participants: "People of Québec, despite the language barrier, will do their best to help and will make an effort to understand you."

**4) School system and learning French**

Access, regardless of age, to Québec's school system, the choice of curriculum, technology and the opportunity to take French lessons through the Internet have been praised by 17% of participants.

**5) Security and Rights**

Hailing from countries where insecurity prevails, 13% of respondents said they enjoyed the peace they have found in their city of adoption and the rights recognized by law: "Here, as far as security goes, I can leave my house at any hour. I deliver the newspaper at night and it is safe."

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<sup>33</sup> We obtain a total of over 23 and 100% as respondents listed more than one asset.

## 6) Joyful minority

Nine percent (9%) of respondents told us how belonging to a minority in the Lanaudière region has actually helped facilitate their integration. Non-fluency in French and the color of their skin, so often cited by others as *barriers* to integration, have turned out to be assets for these people: "Since there are not many black immigrants in the region, people are more curious. The population is very open and friendly. "

## 7) Government Assistance

The assistance received from the government, including loans and grants, tuition, transportation or child care, was highlighted by 9% of respondents as an asset to their integration.

## 8) Money and credit

The ease of making money and obtaining credit was an asset for 9% of respondents: "To furnish an apartment in Colombia is not easy, but here it's easy. Credit is flexible, you can pay in small increments."

# Ways to improve the integration of young immigrants in the region

We asked participants to give us their views on how to improve the integration of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region. Twenty-one people have spoken on the topic and answers are shared almost equally between, on the one hand, an improvement to the structural organization of their integration (73%) and, on the other, an improvement relating to certain aspects of their personal development (71%) (in italics in Table 17).

Just over 50% of respondents favour friendly relations between immigrants and non-immigrants, through a job or internship, cultural activities, community kitchens, meeting in churches or even discussion groups, similar to those conducted for the current study: "If we could do an internship or have a job, we could be in touch with Québécois. (...) We would like to have contact with Québécois." This high percentage reflects the deep isolation in which newcomers to the Lanaudière region find themselves in, although it is not the only region to experience it.

Friendly relations between immigrants themselves is also mentioned by some, since they believe that: "being with other people living the same reality can be a source of comfort, while promoting a sharing of experiences can be very rewarding."

Whether between immigrants and non-immigrants or between immigrants themselves, friendly relations, according to one participant, promotes the building of networks necessary to a better integration, "People who

find work, it's usually done through their network. Those who do not find have to follow the normal process, but it does not work".

**Table 17**

**Ways to improve the integration of young immigrants in the region of <sup>34</sup> Lanaudière**

Ways to improve integration	Respondents	%
<i>Friendly relations between immigrants and non-immigrants and friendly relations among immigrants</i>	11	52%
Better transmission of information	3	14%
<i>Preservation of native culture</i>	3	14%
Place of worship	3	14%
Additional help filling out government forms, either by the addition of staff at CREDIL or by creating an information center	2	10%
More complete social care that goes beyond mere support for the job search to include all aspects of social integration	1	5%
Improved transit system	1	5%
English Courses	1	5%
<i>Greater sensitivity to the reality of immigrant women</i>	1	5%
Creating an organization that helps immigrants who, in addition to regular staff, had retired persons who dedicated themselves to newcomers	1	5%
More opportunities for part-time jobs for youth	1	5%
Opening a store specializing in imported products	1	5%
Lower long-distance costs	1	5%

<sup>34</sup> We obtain a total of over 21 and 100% as respondents suggested more than one way to better integrate immigrants in Lanaudière.

The MICC publishes the *Guide Apprendre le Québec* <sup>35</sup> for people present in the province or waiting to immigrate. We may find in it, among other things, information on the presence, at the airport, of a host agent responsible for transmitting information to newcomers to orient them. It also points out, to the attention of those who came to join a family member or friends, the importance of reporting to an MICC office as soon as possible for this information. However, 14% suggested a better transmission of information on services offered to immigrants and administrative procedures affecting them. This transmission should be done, they say, before leaving the country of origin or by email prior to arriving in Canada, whether the newcomer has family in Québec or not. From the remarks received during the focus groups, it appears that immigrants here to join a spouse or family member were not informed of the services which they were entitled to and could not count on the person they moved in with to inform them about these services. The advantage of being greeted upon arrival by a family

member has played against, it seems, individuals, in the transmission of information required, and was actually a detriment to some newcomers.

Preserving the culture of origin was reported by 14% of respondents as a way to improve the integration of immigrants: "To preserve our language, we must teach young children. Because without cultural preservation, there is no cultural exchange."

## Ways to better reach young immigrants

Having realized quickly enough that one of the major problems in the integration of young immigrants seems to be the poor circulation of information they require, we asked them what they believed to be the best way to reach them. The answer is startling but not surprising: the Internet and especially the social networking site Facebook. Accounting for answers here is useless, since most of the time, participants responded spontaneously, and often with one voice. Also proposed were newspapers, television, school or mail, Internet access not always being simple for all newcomers.

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35 MICC, *Apprendre le Québec. Guide pour réussir mon intégration*, second revised edition, 166 pages.



### 3. Comparison

Diagnosis on the continuity of services to youth & focus group results

Two surveys to assess the integration of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region were conducted, one in 2010, the other in 2011. The following is a comparison of the results recorded in these respective reports: the first *Diagnosis on continuity of services to youth*, by Youth Engagement, presents the perceptions of community and government stakeholders on the issue while the second, *Assessment Report: focus groups*, those of 67 young immigrants aged 16 to 35, met during focus groups.

Both reports offer more similarities than differences in the findings of their respective investigative steps. The findings regarding the obstacles to a smooth integration of immigrant youth in the Lanaudière region are often identical.

First, the **mastery of the French language and French class offerings**. Both reports highlight the urgency of the matter. Although the presentation of the results for both surveys differed -- the barriers to integration are not specifically given priority in the Diagnosis as is the case with the Report on focus groups -- the theme of French and its usefulness is central to both documents. It is the obstacle most frequently mentioned by participants in focus groups and is described as a major hurdle in the Diagnosis.

Although "many young immigrants who settled in the region speak French," some 70% of participants in focus groups spoke in French only at meetings. And those who have raised their lack of French as an obstacle to their integration have actually done so in that language. Such a paradox is explained by the fact that the command of French is still functional for many young immigrants in the Lanaudière region, but insufficient to achieve their future plans, which are mostly to study or to integrate the labour market. It is also insufficient to establish meaningful connections with people born in Lanaudière, or who have lived here for a significant period of time, and leads to isolation.

Besides the issue of the command of the French language, that of offering French classes in the Lanaudière region is mentioned in both documents and seen as problematic. The regret expressed by some participants in the focus groups to not being able to enrol in French classes, can be explained by the finding noted in the Diagnosis of failure to meet minimum enrolment requirements for the holding of such a course. The large size of the territory and the shortcomings of the transit system explain the difficulty to gather enough participants for these courses. These deficiencies are also reported in the Report on focus groups, 21% of participants having presented them as barriers to their integration in the Lanaudière region.

Failure to follow a French class, on a part-time basis, was also mentioned in both reports. Not currently available in the Lanaudière region, such classes would allow, as noted by participants in focus groups, more flexibility for young immigrants who wish, in particular, to integrate the labour market.

Participants in the focus groups also expressed the desire to take French courses during the evening, which are not currently available in the Lanaudière region. Others regretted the mixture in the classes between illiterate students and others. These two points, however, do not appear in the Diagnosis.

As for the criterion of eligibility for the French language program offered by the MICC -- five years or less since one's arrival in Canada -- it does not pose a problem for participants in focus groups because the vast majority have been in the country for five years or less.

**Access to a larger number of interpreters** is also raised in both documents. In the Diagnosis, it is seen as a solution to a better understanding between the parents of young immigrants and the school that they attend. In the Report on focus groups, it is felt in response to the difficulty expressed by participants in understanding the correspondence received in French or to be understood in a hospital or medical setting. The same report also underlines the need for cultural interpreters, who act as a bridge between one culture and another.

Another area of similarity between the two documents: the **difficulties of integration and adaptation between the school and young immigrants**. The testimony of participants on disparaging remarks made by teachers about them, about their ability to succeed in school, is echoed in the findings published in the Diagnosis stating that "the school would benefit from being better prepared to accommodate and integrate these young people (immigrants)." For its part, the Report on focus groups refers to studies that expose the "lack of preparedness of teachers to teach students from immigrant families."

Raised in the diagnosis as poorly documented in the Lanaudière region, school dropouts among immigrant youth was not discussed during the focus groups.

**Isolation and the risk of ghettoization** of immigrant youth are, too, reported by both documents. For the Diagnosis, they could result from "difficult and limited access to social places for young people (youth centers, recreation), particularly for young visible minorities", but also the cultural shock caused by new morals. The Report on discussion groups, meanwhile, highlighted the difficulties expressed by young immigrants in establishing links with Lanaudière residents, and the clustering of immigrants in places of residence or country of origin in classrooms, as factors of isolation and risk of ghettoization.

The Diagnosis states that the participation and employment rates of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region is lower than that of Québec as a whole. However, according to the analysis Report of the focus groups about their current occupation, it is noted that 30% of the 49 youth reported taking courses in French or studying or working, or studying and working at the same time, compared to 71.1% at the provincial level and 83.5% at the regional level. Among those who reported no current occupation, some are involved in caring for their children, seeking employment or are waiting to take a course.

Regarding income, earnings of immigrants and their precarious jobs, as quoted in the Diagnosis, the topic was not discussed during focus groups where discussions were focused on integration in Lanaudière society in general, more than on job market integration as such.

**Ignorance of immigrant youth services and public and community programs would** explain, according to the Diagnosis, the weak use made of them. Through remarks received during the focus groups, it appears, however, that this section of the Lanaudière population has a good knowledge of the existence of services available to them: 63% of the 35 young immigrants who spoke about their knowledge of support services have claimed being familiar with these services, against 37% who claimed not know about them at all or knowing very little. Knowledge of recreation activities offered by the municipality is also strong among the 44 young immigrants who spoke on the topic: 66% know about these services, and of those, 45% use them very often or often. It should be noted that almost a third (31%) of participants in the focus groups came to Canada as refugees and, as such, they belong to an organization for immigrants, providing them the information they need to facilitate their establishment in the region.

Non-recognition by the Québec model of degrees and work experience gained abroad, as cited in the Diagnosis as a "difficulty commonly encountered by young immigrants newly arrived in the region", was mentioned by 7% of participants in focus groups as a barrier to integration. As for over-education, the lack of professional networks and the difficulty in joining a professional association or a regulated trade, these were not included in the Report on focus groups.

Both documents agree on the **need for awareness of cultural diversity**, within work environments for the Diagnosis, and to the general public, business leaders and their employees, municipal officials, provincial and federal, doctors and nurses of health institutions, in the Report on focus groups. The same applies to the **buddy system**, quoted in the Diagnosis as an interesting practice to help young immigrants to enter the labour market, and raised in the Report on focus groups as a wish expressed by the participants to see the rebirth of the partnering program, matching immigrant families and non-immigrant families, once offered.

The Report on focus groups highlighted the following additional obstacles to the integration of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region: the long wait for a status in Canada and the red tape that accompanies it, religion and fear of discrimination on the basis of the image of violence and intolerance associated with Islam, lack of space in child care, lack of support in finding a job or training program, the attitude of each immigrant in the process of integration. It also notes the assets to integration highlighted by participants: the support of a spouse or friends, one's personal situation, proximity to shops, schools, studies completed prior to immigration, for example, the assistance obtained from professionals and the feeling of welcome offered them by the people of Lanaudière, security and the rights granted by law, the feeling of belonging to a minority that engages people, government assistance and the ease with which one may make a living and obtain credit.

Lastly, the Report on the focus groups lists the following proposals for improving the integration of young immigrants in the Lanaudière region, brought forth by the participants themselves: friendly relations between immigrants and non-immigrants, as well as friendly relations among immigrants themselves; better transmission of information; the preservation of native culture and access to places of worship; extra help to fill government forms; comprehensive social support that goes beyond simply looking for employment, improving the transit system, the opportunity to take English classes, and a **greater sensitivity to the reality of immigrant women**, also noted in the Diagnosis: the contribution of retirees in helping immigrants, more opportunity for part-time employment for youth, to open a grocery store specializing in imported products, and lowering the costs of long distance calls.

## 4. A summary of Focus Groups

The following is a summary of the exchanges by 67 immigrant youth who participated in one of the seven focus groups held in January and February 2011, on their integration in the Lanaudière region.

### **Assessment by immigrant youth of their city of adoption**

(26 participants expressed their views on the subject)

- The Lanaudière region has a strong appeal to the vast majority of the 26 participants who weighed in on their assessment of their municipality of adoption;
- Compared to its neighbouring region, Montréal, Lanaudière takes the upper hand for a third of respondents who find Lanaudière friendlier, easier to approach, less agitated and less stressed than Montréal;
- However, Montréal seems to keep the upper hand for work or entertainment;
- Some respondents complained about the difficulty in establishing relationships with their fellow Lanaudois that "look at, but do not talk to them."

### **Their knowledge and use of leisure activities provided by the municipality**

(44 participants spoke on the subject)

- The municipal recreation curriculum is known by two-thirds of respondents and 80% claim to be very satisfied or satisfied with it, however, more than half of them do not participate, or only rarely do;
- Some travel to Montréal to enjoy less expensive leisure activities and complain that "people tend to think that those who live in the Lanaudière region are rich."

### **Their knowledge and appreciation of welcoming and integration support services**

(35 participants expressed their views on the subject)

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they knew of such services; satisfaction ranged from the recognition of the dedication of the staff of community organizations, to the "colossal" work that it accomplishes.
- Dissatisfaction is expressed by the fact that some organizations do not promote the integration of immigrants by bringing together people from the same linguistic origin in French courses and the fact that the pairing program with non-immigrant families is no longer offered.
- Twenty-six percent of respondents said they were not familiar with the services and 11% did not know them at all.

### **Their future plans**

(48 participants spoke on the subject)

- Nearly half of respondents said they would continue, resume or complete high school, college or university;
- 33% said they wish to work or start their own business.

### **The obstacles they face in their integration**

(67 participants spoke on the subject)

The major obstacles faced by respondents are:

- The lack of knowledge of French and inadequate supply of French courses (68% of respondents);
- The flaws in the system of public transportation (21% of respondents);
- The indifference of others, the difficulty in establishing contacts and isolation (19% of respondents);
- Lack of money (13% of respondents);
- The lack of information or the transmission of erroneous information (12% of respondents).

### **Their assets to their integration**

(23 participants spoke on the subject)

- For three quarters of the respondents, the characteristics related to their personal situation (support from spouse or friends, proximity to schools, the grocery store or support services) or interpersonal (attention and support received from professionals such as doctors, nurses and teachers and the population of Lanaudière, in general) have mitigated the obstacles on their path to integration;
- Nearly half of all respondents mentioned systemic-type advantages such as universal access to the Québec school system, security and the rights granted by law, or government assistance, as assets to their integration.

### **How they perceive an improvement to their integration in the region**

(21 participants spoke on the subject)

- 73% of respondents expressed a desire for improvement in the structural organization of their integration, such as better transmission of information, the availability of a place of worship or extra help to complete government forms;
- For 71% of respondents, the desired improvement is related to their personal development and, for the vast majority, it is the establishment of friendly relations between immigrants and non-immigrants and among immigrants themselves that matter most.

## 5. Recommendations

In light of the remarks collected from 67 participants in either focus groups, we are able to offer the following recommendations which aim to better attract, integrate and retain immigrant youth in the Lanaudière region. They are presented in order of importance of barriers to integration mentioned by the participants.

### Recommendation 1 - French language

Misunderstanding of the French language and the inadequacy of language classes were cited as the first integration barrier by immigrant youth in the Lanaudière region.

**Objective:** Communicate the findings of this study to MICC officials regarding French language needs in the region and, if necessary, the central hierarchy of the Ministry (the General Directorate of the French language) by raising awareness about:

- a) the urgent need to adapt French course to the reality of Lanaudière (by reducing the minimum enrolment required to hold a course, and by offering part-time and evening courses;
- b) the importance of better informing immigrants to Québec about French lessons online <sup>36</sup> (<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/french-language/learning-online/index.html>) and the possibility of following French courses before their departure for Canada; <sup>37</sup>
- c) the importance of creating, as much as possible, heterogeneous French classes in which students find themselves from linguistically diverse backgrounds, to encourage students to talk to each other in French;

<sup>36</sup> A small number of participants in the focus groups seemed to be aware of these courses.

<sup>37</sup> MICC, MICC Services francization 2010-2011, August 18, 2010 (<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/langue-francaise/Services-francisation.pdf>)

- d) the ability to integrate, where appropriate, young immigrants in French classes for adults already in existence, and

- e) the need to create, in collaboration with public and private institutions from Lanaudière and community organizations, a list of names and phone numbers of persons speaking a language other than French and English, who would agree to be contacted, as volunteers, to serve as interpreters in exchanges between an immigrant who does not speak either official language and his or her counterpart.

People who could serve as cultural interpreters and those who could move about in order to offer help in person would be identified on this list.

## Recommendation 2 - Transit System

The shortcomings of the system of transit in the Lanaudière region complicate the movement of young immigrants and contributes to their isolation and impedes their integration.

**Objective:** To continue and strengthen the actions initiated by the RCMs of the Lanaudière region to improve access to transit in the region.<sup>38</sup> To do this:

- a) Increase awareness of transit services and provide existing users with the ability to communicate their comments about them through a telephone line or Internet connection;
- b) To promote carpooling, by advertising it on such services as the Facebook page "*Carpooling Lanaudière*";
- c) Consider implementing, in the Lanaudière region, a car sharing service similar to *Communauto*<sup>39</sup>;
- d) Promote to newcomers the self-service network of bicycles *BECIK jaunes (Yellow BIKES)*, who, in 2011, breathed new life into Joliette after a period without government subsidy. Being discussed in Mascouche, *BECIK jaunes* was implemented in Lavaltrie in the Summer of 2011;
- e) Better inform young immigrants, and immigrants in general, of the steps to follow to obtain their license in Québec and the importance of undertaking this in the early days of their arrival.<sup>40</sup>

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38 Transport collectif. Le transport collectif dans Lanaudière, un outil de participation sociale, Table des partenaires du développement social de Lanaudière.

39 <http://www.communauto.com/index.html>

40 Voir note 10.

## Recommendation 3 - Promote cross-cultural activities in the region of Lanaudière

The difficulty in establishing links with Lanaudois who were born here, or have been settled here for a long time, reinforces the long-standing isolation of young immigrants.

**Objective:** To promote inter-cultural activities in the Lanaudière region:

- a. Promote the pairing up of young immigrants / non-immigrants as proposed by the agency Casa Youth<sup>41</sup> through which a young immigrant newly arrived in the Lanaudière region can count on the help of a young Lanaudois;
- b. Organize neighbourhood parties or recreational activities for youth, both non-immigrant and immigrant, to get to know one another and develop friendships<sup>42</sup> as well as cultural activities, which would extend for several days, featuring young artists – immigrant and non-immigrant -- that would attract a mixed crowd of non-immigrants and newcomers;
- c. Guided tours of the municipality to help newcomers discover places and institutions of interest they could call upon later on their own, helping take them out of their isolation: library, museum, city hall, sports center, parks, swimming pool. At each location visited, they would be told how to apply or use the facility's equipment and they would be handed pertinent documentation;
- d. Publicize the *Jardin d'échange universel*<sup>43</sup> service, through which members can exchange services, goods and knowledge. New immigrants could contribute their talents and skills and receive, in exchange, those of other Lanaudière residents;
- e. Invite the municipalities to adopt regulations to promote the conclusion of agreements with several owners of apartments in different areas of a municipality so that the new immigrants who were destined for these dwellings are not all grouped in one place and subject to ghettoization.

41 <http://www.hebdorivenord.com/Societe/Vie-communautaire/2010-12-11/article-2030852/CASA-jeunesse-%3A-des-jeunes-au-service-des-jeunes/1>

42 An example of such activities would be a rally that would stretch over several days during which teams of two young, an immigrant, the other not, must overcome obstacles before reaching the final stage. The participants would sleep alternately in the two families, immigrant and non-immigrant. Challenges to involve the forces of both of others and to overcome them, the members of each team would have no choice but to cooperate. This could include, for example, to visit a well known Lanaudière, but less of a newcomer, and decipher an enigma that only someone familiar with the scene could understand, a text, or hiding another riddle, in the language of the newcomer. Large-scale activity that would involve local businesses and attract respondentship, it would help bring Lanaudois entrenched in their area to newcomers. Moving from one municipality to another and from one RCM to another, participants learn to know and learn about their region.

43 <http://www.monjeu.org/>

- f. Conduct campaigns to raise awareness of cultural diversity with the entire population, business leaders and their employees, municipal officials, provincial and federal, as well as doctors and nurses in health institutions and property owners.

#### **Recommendation 4 - Ensure better information and transmission of information**

Lack of information, or the transmission of erroneous information, are barriers to the successful integration of young immigrants. To overcome these obstacles many solutions can be put forward:

- a. Create a virtual page (Facebook, blogs or other social media) that would be a one-stop shop adapted to the taste of youth, and consolidate all information that can help to integrate them: studies and how to obtain a comparative assessment of studies done outside Québec, recognition of their achievements and skills, French language courses and how to apply for them, how to find a family doctor and get a first medical exam, entertainment provided by their municipality, activities of interest to them, bank of interpreters, information on carpooling, and on how to obtain their driver's license, etc.;
- b. Strengthen efforts to inform every new immigrant who is destined for the Lanaudière region of his/her rights and obligations, as well as programs that are pertinent to them, whether greeted at the airport by a relative or not. Upon arrival at the airport, each new immigrant could be called upon by customs control to report to the Immigration-Québec office at the airport. From there, he/she could choose to follow an information session, or be invited to attend it at a later date. They would be given, by an agent, contact information about the Immigration-Québec office of their municipality of adoption.

### **Recommendation 5 - Social and professional integration**

A globalized service that would include a support service for job searches and housing searches, but also focuses on all aspects of life in the Lanaudière region, would promote a better integration of young immigrants. Guidance and support in social life could mean:

- a. actions to consolidate the reception and support of new immigrants by strengthening the services that go beyond that of a job search, to include all aspects of life in Québec and in the Lanaudière region. In addition, accompanying – via this approach – the agencies offering these services, and involving retired people and volunteers in assisting new immigrants, and
- b. the recruitment of people through volunteer centers and the FADOQ.



## Conclusion

The young immigrants in the Lanaudière region we met have clearly expressed, in their own words, their integration challenges. First and foremost, they are concerned with a better way of learning French. Without it, their research projects, the urgency for them to integrate into the labour market, to participate in the economic development of the region, to carve out a place in its various spheres of activity, are doomed to failure and their desire to remain in Lanaudière will inevitably deteriorate. They spoke quite frankly about the general isolation that was theirs, their despair at not being able to contact non-immigrants, the fact that they are often all housed in the same area of town, walled up and isolated from those with whom they wish to connect. If they have told us that being an immigrant: "is very often breaking with one's culture and lifestyle of origin", it is because they recognize the need to fill this void. But they also understand that this void should be filled "on both sides". To this end, for their retention in

the Lanaudière region, the creation of networking is essential and is accomplished through mutual exchanges.

According to the notes for the presentation of a study out of the Centre Métropolis du Québec<sup>44</sup> 69% of families surveyed have left the area where they first settled in the region. That which retains the other 31% is:

"A wider and more diverse labour pool, a larger pool of post-secondary education going all the way up to the university level, a greater potential for housing, more structured ethnic and religious networks, quality of life (security, ), opportunities for movement."<sup>45</sup>

This applies, of course, to young immigrants we met and their families. The Lanaudière region saw the beginnings of a new day in immigration. Its desire to retain it is undeniable. Local stakeholders with whom we spoke throughout the current project have demonstrated it over and over again, which is why we believe in the success of their ambitions.

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44 Retention of migration, mobility and critical mass: the dark side of regionalization, Michèle Vatz Laaroussi, University of Sherbrooke, Metropolis Centre.

45 Idem

## Definitions <sup>46</sup>

**Asylum seekers:** Asylum seekers are temporary residents who are part of the group covered by humanitarian considerations; they seek protection from their arrival in Canada, or after. The claimant receives Canada's protection when it is recognized as a refugee under the Convention (UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva in 1951 and its Protocol of 1967), or when it is determined that his/her life is threatened, or he/she may suffer punishment or cruel and unusual punishment, or be subjected to torture under the Convention against Torture. The asylum seeker whose application is accepted may apply for permanent residence in Canada. The applicant may include family members who are in Canada and abroad.

**Immigrant:** A person who has established him or herself permanently in another country.

**Economic immigrants:** Permanent Residents selected for their skills and their ability to contribute to the Canadian economy. The economic class includes skilled workers, business people, candidates from the provinces or territories, caregivers and the Canadian Experience Class.

**Migratory path:** The path refers to the migration route taken by an immigrant -- cities and countries travelled through -- before arriving in Québec.

**Refugees:** The permanent residents of the refugee category include government-sponsored refugees, refugees supported by the private sector, refugees landed in Canada and the dependents of refugees (i.e., the dependents of refugees landed in Canada, including their spouses and partners living abroad or in Canada).

**Recognized refugees in Canada:** Permanent residents from the category of refugees whose asylum application has been accepted, and subsequently requested and obtained permanent resident status in Canada. Since the entry into force of IRPA, the term "protected persons in Canada" is also used to refer to recognized refugees in Canada.

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46 from: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts and Figures 2009 - Immigration Overview: Permanent and temporary residents. Glossary of terms and concepts, (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/francais/ressources/statistiques/faits2008/glossaire.asp>), except for the definition of migration route is from the author.

**Family reunification:** The family class includes permanent residents of at least 18 who are sponsored by a Canadian citizen or permanent resident living in Canada. Immigrants in the family class includes spouses, common law and conjugal partners, parents and grandparents, and others (i.e., dependent children, children under 18 years of age whom the sponsor intends to adopt in Canada, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces and grandchildren who are orphans who are under 18 years of age or any other parent, if the sponsor has no relative as described above, abroad or in Canada). Fiancé(e)s are longer part of the family class under the *Immigration Act and Refugee Protection Act*.

**Permanent residents:** People who have obtained permanent resident status in Canada. Permanent residents must live in Canada at least 730 days (two years) over a period of five years, otherwise they risk losing their status. They enjoy all rights guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms such as equality rights, legal rights, freedom of movement and residence and freedom of religion, expression and association. However, they do not hold the right to vote.

**Temporary residents:** foreigners who are lawfully in Canada on a temporary basis with a valid document (i.e., work permit, study permit, temporary residence permit or visitor record), that was issued to interested parties to enable them to enter Canada. This group also includes people who seek asylum upon arrival in Canada or from the country and remain pending a decision to be taken after the processing of their application. Temporary residents include foreign workers, foreign students, humanitarian cases and other temporary residents.

## List of Acronyms

ACEF	<i>Association coopérative d'économie familiale</i>
AMINATE	<i>Accueil multiethnique et intégration de nouveaux arrivants à Terrebonne et les environs</i>
CJE	<i>Carrefour jeunesse emploi</i>
CRÉ	<i>Conférence régionale des élus et élues</i>
CRÉDIL	<i>Comité régional d'éducation pour le développement international de Lanaudière</i>
MIGC	<i>Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles</i>
RAC	<i>Reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences</i>
SAFIMA	<i>Service d'aide à la famille immigrante de la MRC de L'Assomption</i>
SADC	<i>Société d'aide au développement de la collectivité</i>



# Appendix

## STUDY ON THE PROFILE OF LANAUDIÈRE IMMIGRANT YOUTH FROM A SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION CONTEXT

### Facilitation grid

Developed in the context of the work undertaken by Youth Engagement

The passages in italics identify items of interest for the host

Duration of the meeting: 2 hours (maximum)

*Ensure that participants arrive at least twenty minutes early to register and fill out the personal information*

Date:

Time:

Location:

Number of persons present:

Genre:

Age Group:

Municipality of residence:

**Confidentiality will be ensured throughout the research and in the report.**

The audio recording will be used for subsequent analysis of information gathered during the meeting and for the drafting of the research report.

Ensure everyone's approval of the recording.

### **Introduction (5 minutes)**

Introduction of the facilitator

Objectives:

- Understand the perception you have of your integration into your local city of adoption:
  - understand your life goals, both short and long term
  - understand the obstacles you face in achieving these goals
  - understand your strengths in meeting these objectives
  - understand the strategies you adopt to get there
- Understand to what extent the services offered by community groups, government, your community, and your school meet your needs

- Learn about your future plans

Rules to follow during the discussion:

- When you are asked:
  - give your opinion
  - respond to others
  - respect everyone's right of speech
- Use first names only
- There is no wrong answer

### Introduction of participants (15 minutes)

- Round table
  - Everyone introduces themselves

### Life goals (40 minutes)

- What are your goals, both short and long term (issues)?
  - *learn French*
  - *succeed in school*
  - *complete training*
  - *find jobs*
  - *make friends*
  - *family reunification*
- What are the obstacles to achieving your goals?
  - *problems related to immigration status:*
    - *young people awaiting citizenship, for example*
  - *ignorance of French*
  - *isolation: no network of friends, family, etc..*
  - *financial problems: the participant's or family's*
  - *working instead of studying because of financial problems*
  - *health problems*
  - *family problems*
  - *the division between the values in the city of adoption and those required or preferred by parents*
  - *problems with government or municipal authorities (including the police)*
- What helps you with the achievement of your objectives (assets)?
  - *support obtained through community groups*
  - *support obtained through government*
  - *support obtained through the municipality*
  - *support obtained through school*
  - *support obtained through one's place of worship*
  - *support from family*
  - *support from friends*

- *the support of a person who has been instrumental in your integration*
- are there people you particularly admire?
  - *teachers, athletes, politicians, artists, etc..*
- are there any media that you particularly like?
  - *newspaper, magazines, blogs, television, etc..*
- What do you do to achieve these objectives (strategies)?
  - *French courses*
  - *employment*
  - *balance work / study*
  - *discussion with parents on the question of values*
  - *to make friends:*
    - *registration in sports or leisure*
    - *going to bars, nightclubs*
    - *Internet browsing*

### Perception of services offered (40 minutes)

- Do you use the services provided by:
  - community groups, the federal government, the provincial government, your community, your school, your place of worship, your elected officials?
    - if so, which of these services do you use?
    - if not, why do you not use them?
  - *community groups:*
    - *identify community groups in each MRC*
  - *Governments:*
    - *federal*
      - *CIC*
      - *CISR*
      - *Service Canada (Service Canada Centres for Youth - SCCY)*
      - *other*
    - *provincial*
      - *MICC*
      - *Carrefour jeunesse emploi (para-governmental)*
      - *CSSS*
      - *Your local employment center (Emploi Québec)*
      - *other*
  - *municipality*
    - *are sports and leisure activities adequate?*
    - *service costs*
  - *educational institution*
  - *places of worship*
  - *local officials*
- Are you satisfied with these services?
  - if not, why?
- How is your relationship with:

- representatives of community groups?
- government officials?
- representatives of the municipality?
  - the police, in particular
- your teachers and others in your school?
- students at your school?
- your employer and your co-workers?
- leaders in your place of worship?
  - *Have no dealings with the representatives of these institutions*
    - *Why?*
      - *do not know how to reach them*
      - *did not think they could help*
      - *these representatives interact with their parents, not with them*

### Perception of their present life (10 minutes)

- What do you like most about your life...?
- What do you dislike the most?
- What does it mean for you to integrate within your host society?
  - *a job*
  - *success in school*
  - *making friends*
  - *employment for parents*
  - *buying a house*
  - *being reunited with family members back home*
  - *losing one's culture*
  - *other*

### Perception of their future (10 minutes)

- What solutions do you see to a more successful integration?
  - for you
    - *What would make you happier in your life...?*
  - for your parents
- Where do you see your future?
  - *staying in...*
  - *moving to another city in Québec*
  - *moving to another province*
  - *moving to another country*
  - *returning home*
- What would ultimately keep you in your current municipality?