SAISIA

Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies

Association des agences d'établissement et d'intégration des immigrants de la Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies

2nd SK RURAL COLLABORATION MEETING

MEETING DETAILS	LOGISTICS	ATTENDEES
MEETING SK Rural/Small Centre's Collaboration **PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE** To foster learning from guest speakers and create space for roundtable updates, dialogue, and collaboration among rural partners	**DATE** Tuesday, July 28, 2026 10:30 am – 12:00 pm **LOCATION** Join Zoom Meeting **Meeting ID:** 852 3194 3812 **Passcode**: 338518	SAISIA Saskatchewan Rural SPO's IRCC ICT Guest speakers **FACILITATOR** Janvi Tuteja, SAISIA

AGENDA

1. Welcome and land acknowledgment
2. SAISIA's updates
3. Provincial Update
4. IRCC update
    a. Community of Practice- SPOs to give an update on **NAARs**
5. **Retaining Talent in the Settlement Sector: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly-** Laura Gold
6. **Overview of the State of Rural Canada (SORC) Report-** Joelena Leader
7. **Temporary Foreign Workers**- Nehal and Jessica, CCIS
8. **Indigenous engagement and land acknowledgement workshop** project- PSIN

*Next meeting on **Oct 27, 2026** at 10:30 am*

2nd Saskatchewan Rural Collaboration Meeting
Minutes of meeting- July 28, 2026

LOGISTICS

Facilitator: Janvi Tuteja
Number of Attendees: 42
Time of meeting: 10:30 am

WELCOME

The 2NDQuarterly Rural Settlement collaboration meeting was opened with a welcome to participants joining from communities across rural Saskatchewan. The meeting provides an opportunity for connection, collaboration, and learning, as well as for sharing the unique opportunities and challenges associated with delivering settlement services in smaller communities.

A land acknowledgment was provided, recognizing the Treaty territories and the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples connected to the lands where participants live, work, and gather. The importance of settlement organizations supporting newcomers in understanding Indigenous history, culture, and reconciliation was highlighted, along with the meaningful work being undertaken across Saskatchewan to strengthen Indigenous awareness, build relationships, and support reconciliation.

SAISIA upcoming initiatives focus on Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives, including learning and engagement opportunities for settlement workers. Appreciation was expressed for the continued collaboration and commitment to creating welcoming and inclusive rural communities.

UPDATES

Building Connection: An Indigenous Engagement Summit for Saskatchewan Settlement Workers.

The event will take place at The Chapel Gallery and will run from 11:00am-5:00pm on Sept. 17 and 9:00am-4:00pm on Sept. 18. This is a professional development event for those who work with newcomers to Canada. The event provides the opportunity to learn about Indigenous cultures and histories directly from Elders and Knowledge Keepers so they can, in turn, share accurate information on Indigenous peoples with newcomers.

The upcoming **Provincial Language Sector Call** was noted as scheduled for August 19 at 11:00 a.m. Participants were invited to submit any questions, updates, or discussion items for inclusion on the agenda by emailing Gelrene.

Participants attending the **P2P conference in November** were invited to connect regarding a potential workshop proposal. Organizations interested in collaborating on the workshop were asked to confirm their participation by Friday, as the proposal submission deadline is August 7 which will be submitted by Janvi Tuteja on the topic: It Takes a Village: Building Partnerships that Strengthen Rural Settlement

- Discussion of partnership and collaborations with Municipalities, Employers, Schools, Libraries, Health services

- Indigenous organizations relations
- Community events/ projects that have strengthened the relations of newcomers to the rural area they are living in
- Community events as settlement tools

Provincial Government Updates: Derek Williams

- The Provincial Government provided updates on ongoing work with regulatory bodies to strengthen and streamline immigration pathways and make processes more accessible for newcomers.
- Efforts are also underway to expand knowledge and coordination around pre-arrival services. The Ministry offers pre-arrival presentations for individuals who have not yet arrived in Saskatchewan, and service providers can request sessions for groups by providing details and preferred timing. Sessions can be scheduled according to participants' local time zones, with previous presentations delivered for groups in Mexico, India, and Pakistan.
- The Ministry also plans to conduct in-person visits with service providers throughout the summer and early fall to strengthen connections and better understand local needs. Initial visits are expected to include Moose Jaw, followed by Prince Albert, Humboldt, Lloydminster, and other communities, with the goal of connecting with all service providers before the end of the calendar year. Regional colleges may also be included as part of these visits.

Questions from attendees:

Lloydminster delivers the Rural Renewal Program for Alberta residents , will Sask be introducing this program as well in the future?
It is something that Saskatchewan is potentially looking at.

Could you clarify the target population for the pre-arrival orientation you mentioned earlier? Are these intended for individuals arriving in Canada as permanent residents, TFW, or another group.
The presentations we provide can be catered to each group - goal is to help any individuals wanting to immigrate here regardless of their status. Typically, we will want a decent size group of at least 10 individuals in order to do the presentation. If you have an individual, then I would suggest reaching out to navigator@gov.sk.ca and we can speak to them individually and discuss all their questions/concerns.

For individuals on work permits, is there support for them beyond the pre-arrival?
We would have to deal with them on a case by case basis, it really just depends on what their permits allow them to do. We have CBO's and agencies throughout the province that should be able to help them and Employment Counsellors that are available in person/phone/virtually. They definitely wouldn't be left in the dark - if we can't help, we know people that can.

Community of Practice – NAARS UPDATES

As part of the Community of Practice, a round of NAARS updates was introduced to provide organizations with an opportunity to share their experiences, successes, and approaches. The purpose of these updates is to support knowledge sharing, encourage organizations to learn from one another, and explore how NAARS resources are being utilized and adapted to meet the unique needs of local communities. The initiative also aims to strengthen connections, collaboration, and learning among settlement organizations across the province. Each organization was invited to provide a brief update on the progress of NAARS within their organization.

- **Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Inc.:**
    - MJMC continues to utilize strong partnerships, community committees, their ZIP and ongoing evaluations to inform NAARS delivery and referral paths
- **YWCA, Prince Albert**
    - The organization is currently experiencing a high volume of NAARS, along with the required follow-ups and referrals. With the number of workers and additional case management responsibilities, the team is currently feeling somewhat overwhelmed.
    - In smaller centres, building strong relationships with local service providers has been particularly important in supporting clients and facilitating referrals.
    - Having long-term staff and established relationships with local service providers has supported smoother coordination and referrals.
    - The organization has an established relationship with a local health clinic and has also developed a new connection with Social Services to support clients who require Social Services reviews.
    - Continued relationship-building with local service providers was identified as an important part of supporting clients and making the referral process more efficient.
- **Battleford Immigration Resource Centre**, North Battleford
    - BIRC is still utilizing our NAARS created internally. This NAARS is geared towards our common gateway needs specifically. We found that the IRCC NAARS contained very personal questions which our clients felt uncomfortable answering. Our NAARS contains questions related to the specific settlement issues in our areas. The personal issues surface after we have created a relationship with that client while dealing with settlement plans. BIRC then does a menagerie of referrals, information sessions and translation etc. BIRC has great partnerships within the gateway communities to assist clients. Our NAARS form is consistently assessed and improved as we meet the demands.
    - Maintaining consistent communication and contact with our clients is key! Therefore, NAARS is an ongoing process of supports. Needs and supports evolve as the client works through their settlement plan. By delivering the plans as such, we deter duplications. BIRC is at present, working on stabilizing our work force, lessening the mental stress on staff all while delivering programs. Maintaining long-term staff establishes important relationships with clients and partners alike.

- **East central newcomer welcome centre**, Yorkton
    - NAARS is delivered almost 100% in person and occasionally by phone, and completed by clients with assistance from the Settlement Worker.
    - ECNWCI had a PT (0.5 position) NAARS Coordinator in FY1. After phase 2, the NAARS Coordinator position, which was supposed to be FT by FY2, was eliminated.
    - ECNWCI is an Advisory Council member of East Central SK Immigrant Partnership (ECSIP) and receives referrals from all member stakeholders of this group.
- **Prairie Gateway Settlement Services, Humboldt**
    - The NAARS process often begins through relationship-building and conversations, followed by the collection of required documentation.
    - The organization is also working with its Early Years Centre and local daycares to connect with clients early and provide NAARS and referrals where appropriate.
    - The number of NAARS has increased, with staff working to ensure that every youth and family accessing services receives a NAARS.
    - Follow-up remains a challenge; however, staff continue to periodically follow up with youth who have received a NAARS to check on their progress and needs.
- **Southeast Advocates for Employment- Estevan, Weyburn**
    - NAARS has been a valuable tool for prioritizing referrals and connecting newcomer families with appropriate school and community supports.
    - The assessment provides a foundation for understanding each family's needs and connecting them with relevant services and community resources, including libraries, health clinics, banks, food banks, and other local supports.
    - Scheduling assessments around school hours and parents' work schedules continues to be a challenge.
    - Building trust with families takes time, and some families may be hesitant to share personal information during the initial assessment. As relationships develop, additional needs often emerge.
    - Some families may initially indicate that they feel safe and secure at home, but further concerns may become apparent as trust and communication develop.
    - Common needs identified among newcomer families include additional learning supports for children, while parents are adjusting to life in Canada and learning to navigate unfamiliar systems.
    - Transportation continues to be a significant barrier for families living in rural Saskatchewan, particularly in communities without public transit.
    - Limited after-school programs specifically designed for newcomer youth can also affect opportunities for social connection and integration. SWIS staff provide support where possible to help reduce this barrier.
    - Maintaining regular communication between SWIS staff and school support teams has been an effective practice. This collaboration allows emerging needs to be identified and addressed earlier, before they develop into crisis situations.

- Many newcomer families are not initially aware of the range of supports available through SWIS. As trust develops, families become more comfortable sharing their challenges and goals, allowing staff to provide more meaningful and targeted support.
- NAARS is viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time assessment, with needs and supports evolving throughout each family's settlement journey.

- **Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre- Swift Current**
  - We continue to use the internal NAARS form we developed, and staff complete it as part of their regular client appointments. Over the past few months, we have been making small updates to the form to improve clarity, reduce duplication, and make sure it reflects the information we need for consistent assessments. These updates help us keep the process responsive to client needs while maintaining continuity in service delivery.
  - At this time, we have not yet begun work on transitioning to a DNS model. Our focus during this period has been on stabilizing workflow within the Employment Team and ensuring that NAARS delivery remains consistent. We expect to revisit DNS planning in future reporting periods.

IRCC UPDATES- Alex Racine

IRCC provided an update on the Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER**)** and thanked everyone for their work throughout the process. Phase 1 has been completed, and Phase 2 is expected to conclude by the end of August, with only one submission remaining, which is outside Saskatchewan. There is currently no further update on Phase 3, which remains scheduled for the fall. Phase 3 is expected to include a review of indirect services and Francophone agreements. IRCC will share additional information as it becomes available. Organizations were also reminded to submit upcoming claims due within the next few weeks and to reach out to their Program Officer if they have any concerns about the submission deadline.

Question from attendee: Could language certificates issued through English language programs be recognized by SINP for temporary foreign workers who have completed the classes, instead of requiring them to take a separate standardized language test such as CELPIP or IELTS?

Answer: The response acknowledged that the concern is valid and noted that the language programs are primarily geared toward permanent residents rather than temporary residents, which creates challenges when some clients receive certificates while others do not. The issue will be raised for further clarification, and an official response will be shared if available. It was also noted that raising these concerns, particularly when supported by evidence demonstrating the benefits of a potential change, increases the opportunity for the issue to be considered at a higher level. While raising the concern does not guarantee a policy change, bringing it forward provides an opportunity for it to be reviewed and potentially addressed.

First guest speaker: Laura Gold

Presentation: Retaining Talent in the Settlement Sector: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

Laura Gold is a social worker with extensive experience supporting marginalized communities across Canada and the U.S. through direct service, policy development, and frontline service management. Her experience includes settlement services, home care, HIV/AIDS services, and social policy. She currently serves as Clinical Manager of Individual and Group Settlement Services at JIAS Toronto. Laura holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Toronto and advanced training in psychodynamic psychotherapy from New York University School of Medicine.

The PowerPoint presentation is attached separately to the email for reference.

- The presentation focused on current challenges affecting staff retention and employee well-being in the settlement sector.
- Ongoing changes in the sector, including NARS, changes in newcomer levels, service delivery models, funding changes, and funding reductions, were identified as factors creating pressure on organizations and staff.
- Salary stagnation and limited opportunities for salary increases were identified as additional challenges to staff retention.
- Rural organizations may experience additional challenges, including isolation, increased travel, limited local services, and fewer support networks.
- Workplace stress, burnout, and mental health concerns were highlighted as significant issues within the settlement sector.
- Staff turnover can result in increased recruitment, onboarding, and training costs, reduced morale and productivity, and the loss of institutional knowledge and service continuity.
- Factors contributing to staff leaving organizations can include burnout, limited career progression opportunities, compensation, challenging relationships with external partners, workload, and management-related concerns.
- Strategies shared to support staff retention included:
    - Developing a structured and team-based onboarding process.
    - Establishing individual professional development goals with staff and reviewing them regularly.
    - Incorporating team-based professional development and learning opportunities into regular team meetings.
    - Applying trauma-informed approaches to staff support, particularly for employees who may have lived experiences similar to the clients they serve.
    - Including emotional well-being and burnout as regular topics during staff check-ins.
    - Using workplace personality assessment tools, such as DISC, to improve communication and understanding among staff and managers.
    - Providing flexible employee wellness benefits that allow staff to choose activities or resources that support their individual well-being.

Discussion / Question: Why do people leave jobs?

- Job instability due to ongoing changes in the settlement sector and IRCC policies.
- Reduction of English language programming for Stage II learners, resulting in some language teachers losing employment.
- Low compensation and limited opportunities for salary growth.
- Lack of job security, particularly among language teachers.
- Burnout and heavy workloads.
- Seeking employers who can provide better support or pathways toward permanent residence.
- Feeling underappreciated or undervalued in the workplace.

Comment from SPO at Humboldt: The organization shared that they place a strong emphasis on creating a positive and engaging workplace, which they feel contributes to good staff retention. They also noted that retention in small centres can sometimes become challenging when employees feel "trapped" due to having established their lives in the community, such as purchasing a home and becoming settled. This can make the prospect of leaving more stressful, even when employees are experiencing burnout.

The organization continues to use creative initiatives to support staff morale, including social media reels and other activities that help uplift and engage staff. They also shared that they are starting a podcast, with upcoming episodes focusing on topics such as how individuals came to live and work in the community.

Second guest speaker: Dr. Jolene Leader
Presentation: Report on the overview of the state of Rural Canada.

Dr. Joelena Leader is an Assistant Professor of Management and Managing Director of the BRIDGE Knowledge Centre at the University of Saskatchewan's Edwards School of Business. Her research focuses on the impact of emerging technologies on communities, organizations, and industries, with an emphasis on ethical, inclusive, and sustainable innovation. Her work includes rural and Indigenous technology adoption, telehealth, digital equity, and AI in public service delivery. She also serves on the Board of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and co-edited the *State of Rural Canada 2024*.

The PowerPoint presentation is attached separately to the email for reference.

- An overview was provided of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF), a national nonprofit organization focused on strengthening rural, remote, and northern communities through research, knowledge sharing, and collaboration.
- CRRF's State of Rural Canada report, published approximately every three years, highlights key issues and trends affecting rural communities across Canada.
- Key themes from the 2024 report included demographic changes, economic transition, infrastructure and service gaps, and governance and capacity challenges in rural and northern communities.

- The presentation highlighted the unique characteristics and challenges of Northern Saskatchewan, including its large geographic area, younger population, high Indigenous population, and lower levels of newcomer settlement compared to other parts of the province.
- The importance of accessible, community-informed education and partnerships in building capacity in rural and northern communities was also discussed.
- Participants were encouraged to connect with CRRF if interested in contributing to future State of Rural Canada reports or other initiatives.

Questions from Attendee:

- How can I get involved with the CRRF and be a part of this report and contribute in the further?
    - https://sorc.crrf.ca/
- How did you gather the demographic data, the immigrant population data? Did you work closely with the provincial governments throughout Canada to attain that information?
    - Statistics Canada data from 2023
    - Everything is cited and sourced as well in the publication
    - Contact Joelena for further details- leader@edwards.usask.ca

Third guest Speaker: Nehal Upadhyay- Community Engagement Specialist, TFW Program, CCIS
Presentation – Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program

The PowerPoint presentation is attached separately to the email for reference.

- An overview was provided of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) and its Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program, including its partnerships across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.
- The TFW Program provides support through airport reception, orientation, settlement services, referrals, information sessions, language support, and community connection activities.
- The Prairie Partnership works with local service providers, employers, consulates, and community organizations to ensure TFWs can access support across the Prairie provinces.
- Key challenges for TFWs in rural areas include limited access to services, transportation barriers, language barriers, and social isolation.
- Strong local partnerships, volunteers, and frontline workers were highlighted as important strategies for addressing these barriers.
- The presentation included an example of supporting TFWs experiencing workplace abuse in a remote Saskatchewan community, highlighting the additional challenges faced by workers who depend on employers for employment, housing, and transportation.
- Emergency supports may include transportation, temporary accommodation, food assistance, and support with accessing an open work permit for vulnerable workers.
- Ongoing immigration and policy changes were identified as another challenge, with TFWs often requiring additional information and support to understand their options and rights.
- The TFW Hub website was highlighted as a central resource for TFWs, employers, and service providers, providing information, resources, events, and contacts across the Prairie provinces.

- Success for TFWs was described as being able to work and live in Canada safely and with dignity, understand their rights and responsibilities, access support when needed, integrate into their communities, and pursue longer-term settlement or permanent residence where applicable.

Prairie Skies Integration Network , Sharayah and Jide
Indigenous Engagement & Land Acknowledgement Workshop

Prairie Skies Integration Network is planning to host an Indigenous Engagement & Land Acknowledgement Workshop that will be held virtually via Zoom sometime at the start of the new year. At this session, we will be exploring ways to make our land acknowledgments more meaningful and open to future collaboration with Indigenous groups in our regions. We will be focusing on topics surrounding colonialism, Indigenous histories and how we can support efforts to revitalize Indigenous cultures and languages. This session will be offered free of charge to any individual or organization who is interested in learning more about the practice of land acknowledgements. If you are interested in signing up in advance, please send our Assistant Project Manager an email at sharayah.bjelde@psinetwork.ca with your name and contact and she will reach out once a date and time is set for this session.

3rd SK Rural Collaboration meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 10:30 a.m