SAISIA

Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies

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

1st Saskatchewan Rural Collaboration Meeting
Minutes of meeting- April 29, 2026

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** Wednesday, April 29, 2026 10:30 am – 11:45 am **LOCATION** Join Zoom Meeting **Meeting ID:** 870 3405 0672 **Passcode**: 344055	Saskatchewan Rural SPO's IRCC ICT Guest speakers **46 attendees** **FACILITATOR** Janvi Tuteja, SAISIA

1. Welcome and land acknowledgment

The facilitator opened the first Saskatchewan Rural Collaboration Call with a land acknowledgement recognizing that SAISIA operates on Treaty 2, Treaty 4, Treaty 5, Treaty 6, Treaty 8, and Treaty 10 territories, the traditional lands of 74 Indigenous Nations, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Following the acknowledgement, she shared a personal reflection on her evolving understanding of land acknowledgements. She spoke about her journey as a newcomer to Saskatchewan, the importance of learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and how her understanding has deepened through lived experience and community engagement.

She emphasized that land acknowledgements are not only ceremonial statements, but a reminder of responsibility, respect, and ongoing learning, and the importance of demonstrating this through actions and relationships with Indigenous Peoples and the land.

2. SAISIA Updates

✓ **Gender-Based Analysis Plus Coordinator**

SAISIA shared an update on its collaboration with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan to improve accessibility of community supports and care services for individuals living with

dementia, particularly those from non-Western cultural backgrounds and/or racialized communities.

As part of this initiative, SAISIA is currently conducting a series of focus groups with settlement service staff who support older adult newcomers, to better understand their experiences and challenges in meeting the needs of this population.

Participation in the focus groups is open to relevant organizations, and interested individuals were invited to contact Amber Parker, GBA Plus Coordinator at SAISIA (amber.parker@saisia.ca).

The upcoming focus group schedule is as follows (all sessions held via Zoom):

- **May 11** – Saskatoon-based organizations (1:30–3:30 PM)
- **May 27** – Organizations in mid-size centres (Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Swift Current) (1:30–3:30 PM)
- **June 1** – Regina-based organizations (1:30–3:30 PM)
- **June 3** – Organizations in small centres (Humboldt, North Battleford, Weyburn, Estevan, Tisdale, Lloydminster) (9:30–11:30 AM)

✓ The Rural Coordinator shared that she and Innocent attended the ribbon cutting ceremony in Humboldt. The Humboldt Regional Newcomer Centre has been officially renamed **Prairie Gateway Settlement Services**. Congratulations were extended to Janine and the Humboldt team.

✓ SAISIA, along with IRCC, conducted an activity monitoring visit last week. As part of the visit, IRCC representative- Carly was taken to Humboldt to provide exposure to rural settlement realities.

✓ SAISIA's **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** will be held in a hybrid format on **June 26 via Zoom**. Registration is required in advance: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/na5M30L5SlSogSoBmeVT_A

- The deadline to nominate candidates for the SAISIA Board of Directors is **May 31**. Support is available from SAISIA staff for those needing assistance with nominations. Only full members are eligible to nominate.
- Members were reminded to ensure SAISIA membership is purchased or renewed to be eligible to vote at the AGM and access upcoming training opportunities for the fiscal year.

✓ The **De-escalation Training**, which received positive feedback from Saskatchewan SPOs in the previous fiscal year, will be offered again this year. Interested organizations can request access by emailing Kira Epp (kira.epp@saisia.ca) with the list of staff participants.

✓ SAISIA is collaborating with Saskatchewan LIPs and RIFs to coordinate a consistent provincial message for **World Refugee Day**, aligned with the "Better Together" campaign. Organizations planning events were asked to inform SAISIA and their regional LIP.

✓ **SAISIA's first Language Call** of the fiscal year will take place on **May 13 at 11:00 AM**. Participants were encouraged to attend, and those who did not receive an invite were advised to contact Gelrene at gelrene.sanfuego@saisia.ca

3. Provincial gov updates- Derek Williams

Derek Williams, Acting Director of the Settlement Services and Credential Recognition Services Branch, provided an update on recent changes and priorities within the branch.

He noted that there has been a change in title for his work/capacity and also pointed out changes within the branch. The branch has transitioned from Career and Employment Services to Credential Recognition Services to better streamline programs and supports.

Over the past year, the branch also completed an overhaul of language programs, including issuing a **new RFP** and adding additional seats to address provincial waitlists.
Looking ahead, the Settlement and Gateway Services RFP is expected to be released toward the end of summer. Organizations interested in applying or reapplying were advised to watch for the announcement around August, with additional reminders to be sent by program officers.

Derek also shared updates on a **new pilot initiative** developed in collaboration with the **Ministry of Social Services**. The program aims to support individuals for whom language is the primary barrier to employment. Language training supports are being delivered through providers in Saskatoon and Regina, with the goal of improving workforce readiness for both social services clients and other eligible participants.
Additional updates included:

- Continued delivery of Gateway Settlement Services and language programs across the province.
- Ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services.
- Credential recognition supports, including assistance provided to approximately 550 internationally trained healthcare professionals over the past year.

Discussion / Questions
In response to a question regarding rural access, Derek confirmed that while the majority of clients currently referred through the Ministry of Social Services are in urban centres, but rural and remote clients are also being considered. The initiative is still in the early stages and will include virtual training and learning options to ensure accessibility across the province.

He added that referrals from Social Services are still in development and that clients will be referred through the Ministry to appropriate service providers. The program is an evolving pilot, and flexibility will be maintained to connect clients with specialized supports as needed across the province.
Participants noted the importance of maintaining face-to-face access and strong connections with local SPOs, particularly in rural communities.
A further discussion highlighted concerns about equity in credential recognition across professions. While healthcare credential recognition remains a priority due to provincial demand, Derek acknowledged the importance of supporting other professions as well, including engineers and trades.
He noted that the Ministry is exploring additional recruitment missions and expanding focus to other sectors over the coming years. Stakeholders were encouraged to share information on individuals awaiting credential recognition in niche areas to help inform ongoing program development.

4. IRCC: Joyce Kadiebwe and Alex Racine

The Rural Coordinator shared the Community of Practice (CoP) guidelines document in both English and French.

To summarize, IRCC and the sector are working together to improve consistency and coherence in the delivery of NAARS across the country, with the goal of moving towards more standardized delivery models in the future. The CoP brings together all organizations involved in supporting newcomers' access to NAARS, including IRCC-funded and non-funded service providers, LIPs, RIFs,

Francophone, Resettlement, SWIS-, as well as partners from settlement, health, education, community, language services, etc.

The purpose of the CoP is to support knowledge sharing, collaboration, and the exchange of promising practices to improve access to settlement services and strengthen NAARS delivery. It also serves as a forum for ongoing coordination and learning as the sector transitions toward a more standardized NAARS delivery model

- Alex- Manager for small centres and language portfolio for PNT.
- Joyce- Supervisor for small centres in PNT region
- **Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CERT):**
  IRCC thanked all attendees for their cooperation in negotiating agreements.
  Reminders were provided regarding upcoming deadlines:
    - Phase 1: May 27 – agreements to be signed by all parties
    - Phase 2: July 30
    - Phase 3: To be determined
      Further details will be shared at the next meeting.
- Staff were asked to notify the program office in advance if they anticipate an extended absence during agreement negotiations.
- **Annual Report:** The submission deadline has been extended to **June 30** due to overlap with CERT negotiations. Organizations may still submit earlier if ready.
- **Activity Monitoring Visits:** IRCC is currently planning travel within Saskatchewan to conduct activity monitoring visits. Dates have not yet been finalized. Due to budget limitations, not all organizations will be visited this year; however, those not visited will be prioritized in the following year.
- **NAARS Provider Updates:** Joyce invited NAARS providers to share updates on their delivery models and community practices:
- **Moose Jaw Multicultural Council (MJMC):**
  Tyler shared that NAARS is delivered in person and serves as the primary intake point for referrals to funded settlement services, including francophone providers. Internal communities of practice are used to adapt to new referral pathways and program changes, following IRCC templates.
- **YWCA Prince Albert:**
  Carolyn noted that NAARS is conducted in person, including for GARs and refugee intake. Assessments inform referrals to case management and settlement services. The organization maintains strong community connections (health, schools, immunizations, employment, etc.), though formalized group collaboration across agencies has been challenging.
- **Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre (BIRC):**
  No update provided.
- **East Central Newcomer Welcome Centre:**
  No update provided.
- **Prairie Gateway Settlement Services (Humboldt):**
  Janine shared that NAARS is delivered in person through SWIS, depending on location, and follows the standardized template with adaptations based on client needs (e.g., age of children). Additional NAARS-related supports are offered outside

IRCC-funded programming. There is no formal inter-agency community of practice or shared case management model.

- IRCC noted that guidance and examples from other Saskatchewan providers and provinces can be shared upon request.
- **Saskatchewan Intercultural Association (SAIF):**
  Leonnie Kabole shared an update.
- **Southeast Advocates for Employment:**
  Shannon shared that NAARS is conducted in person through the SWIS program, focusing on understanding newcomer family needs and goals. Referrals are made to appropriate local resources, with strong collaboration with school divisions. Follow-ups are conducted over time to monitor progress and provide additional support as needed.
- **Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre:**
  Deanna shared that NAARS is delivered in person within their service area. As the only SPO in the region, there is no collaboration with other settlement agencies. Their process is based on an adapted iCARE form.

Note: All NAARS service providers are expected to share updates at upcoming Saskatchewan Rural Collaboration Calls. Those unable to attend are requested to submit their updates in advance to the Rural Coordinator at janvi.tuteja@saisia.ca

5. Presentation#1: SCOPE project of Mosaic

Taj Kaur and Noor Bajaj presented on the **Social and Civic Opportunities: Pathways to Equity (SCOPE) Program**, which focuses on supporting racialized immigrants and newcomers in meaningful community participation.

The program aims to empower participants to engage in leadership and decision-making spaces, including serving on boards and committees.

Key components of the 5-month program include:

- Participation in specialized trainings and panel discussions
- Access to the iCan Network, a peer-led platform for professional connection and knowledge sharing
- Skill development to support effective participation and advocacy in community decision-making spaces
- Opportunities to explore and apply for board and committee roles with organizations seeking immigrant lived experience

Link to slides: SCOPE Intro

6. Presentation #2: SARM: - Laurel Feltin

Laurel Feltin, provided an overview of the **Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM)** was provided. SARM is an independent association representing rural municipal

governments across Saskatchewan and serves as the principal advocate on their behalf to senior levels of government.

For over 100 years, SARM has represented the interests of rural Saskatchewan, advocating on key issues impacting rural communities.

Presentation: Attached to the email.

Question from attendee: **What type of educational programs does SARM have?**

Answer: **Municipal Leadership Development Program**

7. Presentation #3- BEACON-PHARE initiative- Mothers matter

Elena Popova provided an overview was provided of the Bridging Equity, Access, Care and Outreach with Navigators (BEACON) program, a free online wellness and mental health support service for newcomer, immigrant, and equity-deserving mothers who may be experiencing stress, loneliness, overwhelm, or uncertainty about where to seek help.

The program is delivered through Mothers Matter Canada – At Home in Canada, in partnership with GreenShield.

BEACON supports mothers and caregivers in strengthening mental health and well-being, with a guiding message that *when mothers thrive, children flourish and communities prosper*.

Key services include:

- Information and support related to mental health and well-being
- Guidance on available supports and how to access them
- Assistance with challenges such as stress, anxiety, low mood, loneliness, parenting, relationships, work-life balance, and settlement-related stress
- Support from trained peer navigators who help connect individuals to appropriate services
- No doctor's referral required

Additional program features include:

- Free, private, and confidential support available in over 40 languages
- A 15-minute intake consultation to assess needs
- Up to 5 hours (5 sessions) of free online support through licensed mental health professionals via GreenShield
- Access to over 2,100 licensed mental health professionals across Canada
- Self-guided online mental health resources and programs

The program is intended for women who are mothers or caregivers, are new to Canada or experiencing isolation, prefer culturally and linguistically responsive support, and may not know where to begin seeking mental health services.

Presentation: Attached to the email.

Key resource: MMC link for 5 hours of free counseling sessions through the GreenShield platform:

Registration Link: https://app.greenshieldplus.ca/en/sign-up/org-code?ref=MMC

Organization Code: GSCARES5

8. Presentation #4: Rural Development Network

Soheila Homayed and Elaine Flores provided an overview on READI and WARM projects.
READI to Work: A capacity-building project to support employers with the successful attraction, settlement and retention of newcomers into rural communities.
READI to Work is a training program that supports business sustainability and addresses labour shortages by teaching successful practices for the recruitment, hiring, and retention of newcomer employees. Training is done through a hybrid model with employers across rural communities in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

In addition, this project seeks to provide newcomers to Canada and international students with the opportunity to find meaningful work placements with READI-certified employers.

READI to Work supports employers in rural communities, newcomers, and international students.
WARM: WARM Project is a training series aimed at assisting rural Canadian communities to Welcome, Attract, Retain, and Motivate (WARM) newcomers. This initiative connects community leaders, employers, and service providers to build inclusive environments amidst rising rural newcomer challenges.
Key Aspects of the WARM Project:

- **Focus:** It addresses the "uncertainty" and complex needs newcomers face, including housing and social integration.
- **Structure:** A 5-part virtual training series tailored for rural, remote, and Indigenous communities.
- **Themes:** Sessions covered topics like libraries and community organizations as safe spaces and rural employer awareness on diversity.

Presentation: Attached to the email.

9. TFW Update

- We have 2 rural SPOs currently involved in the TFW program: Battlefords Immigration Resource Centre and the Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre.
- TFWs remain an important part of addressing labour shortages in Saskatchewan, especially in rural and hard-to-fill sectors, with employers recruiting through federal streams and, in some cases, SINP-linked pathways.
- There is an increasing focus on compliance, worker protection, and housing standards, particularly in rural areas, with employers encouraged to ensure safe working conditions, proper onboarding, and access to supports. Some eligible employers will have limited flexibility to increase low-wage TFW positions (to up to 15%, depending on criteria).

- LMIA processing times continue to be a challenge, and rural employers are encouraged to plan ahead and engage early with Service Canada to avoid delays.
- Transportation and housing remain key barriers in rural retention and attraction of TFWs, with growing interest in community-based and shared solutions.

Other updates

The Rural newsletter will be sent out quarterly. If you have any programs, events, services, or pictures that you want to include, please send them to Janvi Tuteja. An email will be sent out 2 weeks prior to sending the newsletter as a reminder to send over information to include.
All the meeting invites for the upcoming SK Rural Collaboration calls for this fiscal year has been sent. If u haven't received it, please send an email to Janvi Tuteja at janvi.tuteja@saisia.ca

The next meeting is scheduled for July 28 at 10.30 am.
