



# Staff Report to Council - for Information

**Title:** Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership Immigrant Survey - 2023

**From:** Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

**Date:** July 4, 2024

Report Number: CDO-2024-012

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## Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

## Report Summary:

In 2023, the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) conducted the region's first Immigrant Survey in partnership with the University of Guelph. This survey was completed alongside 12 Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) across Canada, who share the intent to better understand their community, the needs of newcomers, and the impact of their collective work.

Locally, the survey gathered 120 responses from immigrants living in Grey and Bruce Counties; the key findings from the Grey Bruce survey are presented in this report. GBLIP will work with interested community partners to develop programs that promote social inclusion and community engagement, helping immigrants integrate more fully into the community.

Furthermore, staff see an opportunity for Grey and Bruce Counties, and others, to consider joining the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities to promote inclusion and diversity, while maintaining a focus on racism and discrimination. A future report will be brought forward to formally introduce the program for Council consideration.

## Background:

Over the past four years, GBLIP has conducted ongoing research and consultation to build foundational knowledge and set a baseline for data collection. From this information, several immediate actions have been taken to help address findings. Examples include:

- GBLIP, in collaboration with Huron LIP and Guelph-Wellington LIP, created and launched an ongoing positive messaging campaign.
- Partnership Council members received Indigenous Cultural Mindfulness training in partnership with the Giiwe program at M'Wikwedong.
- GBLIP and Huron LIP organized a one-day summit for municipal staff across four counties in November 2023 with regards to creating welcoming public spaces.

In 2023, to better understand the diverse experiences of newcomers settling in Grey Bruce, GBLIP partnered with the University of Guelph to conduct the First Immigrant Survey. The primary objectives of the Grey Bruce Immigrant Survey 2023 were to:

1. Undertake the first of its kind survey of immigrants in the Grey Bruce region;
2. Analyze the data collected to understand the varied experiences of diverse groups; and
3. Extract research findings that will inform how service providers, multi-tier government, businesses and the community at large can foster a more welcoming and inclusive space for immigrants and newcomers.

This project collected quantitative and qualitative data using an anonymous survey. The survey was designed collaboratively by all 12 LIPs participating in the Immigrant Survey 2023, then customized by GBLIP to reflect local context. This project was reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO). Ethical research protocols were followed in the design and administration of the survey, and information about the project and participant consent was included at the beginning of each survey.

The executive summary and full survey report are attached to this report for information. The information contained in this report is crucial to helping build strong, welcoming communities. The findings offer a lens of consideration, that will better enable our communities to both attract and retain newcomers and immigrants. Below are some future considerations and helpful changes shared by survey respondents.

## **Future Considerations**

### **Likelihood of staying in Grey Bruce**

Responses on the likelihood of staying in Grey Bruce varied. Most respondents (43%) answered that they planned on staying permanently, followed by 23% who might stay permanently, and 20% who were not sure how likely they were to stay in Grey Bruce. Additionally, 13% said that they did not plan on staying.

### **How to improve welcoming, integration and wellbeing**

Survey respondents were invited to share what they felt was the most important thing community leaders should do to improve the welcoming, integration, and well-being of immigrants in Grey Bruce. This open-ended question received several responses, out of which the research team uncovered a range of key themes.

### **Connection, friendship and community involvement**

The most prominent theme was the importance of connection, friendship, and community involvement. Many respondents specifically used the term “connection” when describing how community leaders could support immigrants in Grey Bruce.

## **Building cultural competence**

The next most common suggestion was related to building cultural competence in the broader community. This included supporting immigrants' cultural celebrations and recognizing non-Christian holidays and providing cultural education and training.

## **Supporting/expanding community services and efforts**

Another recommendation that emerged was a call to support and/or expand community services and efforts.

## **Addressing racism and discrimination**

Respondents also called for community leaders to address racism and discrimination.

## **Other themes**

Other less frequently referenced recommendations included improving affordability and living conditions (with particular emphasis on affordable housing and available transportation), increasing jobs and opportunities for immigrants, working to hear and understand immigrants and learning from their experiences, encouraging fairness, and supporting immigrants generally.

## **Conclusions**

The results of this study demonstrate that immigrants in Grey Bruce have had a wide variety of experiences, ranging from overwhelmingly positive to extremely challenging. Generally, the demographics of immigrants in Grey Bruce follow existing local and national trends, despite a lower (but increasing) proportion of immigrants in the population. Immigrants in Grey Bruce expressed both satisfaction and frustration with services available and the overall community, with those newer to the community more likely to experience challenges and discrimination than long-time residents.

An avenue for future research may be to explore the barriers that prevent immigrants from accessing services, as well as some of the factors that lead to overwhelming 'Poor' ratings, particularly around housing, health care and mental health and wellbeing.

Through the sharing of this report, GBLIP intends to support organizations who have direct impact on these findings grow their capacity to develop policies and programs. This could include programs such as mentorship programs, that connect newcomers with established residents who can provide guidance and support.

The results show a need to develop and update different policies to better support immigrant integration, addressing barriers such as discrimination and feeling of isolation. GBLIP will continue to offer EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) training programs for service providers to enhance their ability to work effectively with diverse populations.

By implementing these strategies, the survey findings will be leveraged to build capacity, enhance services, and create a more supportive and inclusive community for immigrants in Grey and Bruce Counties.

GBLIP will also use the survey data to advocate for additional resources and support for all council members, emphasizing the specific needs identified in the report.

Furthermore, staff see an opportunity for Grey and Bruce Counties, and others, to consider joining the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities to promote inclusion and diversity, while maintaining a focus on racism and discrimination. A future report will be brought forward to formally introduce the program for Council consideration.

**Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:**

There is no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations with this report.

**Interdepartmental Consultation:**

Grey County was consulted on this report.

**Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

Community and Partnerships - Build a strong and inclusive community

**Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:**

Bruce County Economic Development Plan

**Report Author:**

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**Departmental Approval:**

Jeff Loney, Manager, Economic Development

**Approved for Submission:**

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development