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Title of roundtable: What is a Welcoming Community?

Theme: The Role of the Host Communities for Newcomers and Minorities

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Name of third participant: Livianna Tossutti
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Name of fourth participant: Erin Tolley
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Name of fifth participant: Caroline Bennett-AbuAyyash
 Organisation/Affiliation: University of Western Ontario
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Name of sixth participant: Leah Hamilton
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Abstract

This roundtable will explore definitions of a welcoming community, current research attempting to assess the extent of welcome in communities, community programming in support of a welcoming community, and reactions to these efforts.

Summary

Over the past several years, the concept of a “welcoming community” has increasingly found its way into dialogue and practice around immigrant integration. The federal government along with provinces and territories promote various “welcoming communities” strategies while immigrant-serving organizations increasingly describe the objectives of their projects and programs as serving to render a community more “welcoming” for those arriving and seeking to integrate.

This roundtable will explore the various definitions of a “welcoming community” that have emerged, as well as the potential characteristics of an ideal welcoming community. The participants will discuss how we might manage the concept of a ‘welcoming community’ from a policy and programming perspective in relation to various populations and the divergence within groups. In addition, the discussion will explore to what extent we need to define the ‘community’ (i.e., based on interest, geography or some other aspect) into which the newcomer ‘integrates’ in order to understand the concept of a ‘welcoming community.’ Finally, participants will also consider how we can translate these concepts into operational definitions whereby we can measure whether or not a community is welcoming and identify concrete steps to become more welcoming.