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Title: Collaboration with the Central Alberta Immigrant Women’s Association (CAIWA) – Developing a Community Plan for Immigrant Women’s Economic Security

Summary: From 2012-2015, Sociology faculty participated in a research collaboration with CAIWA; they were seeking to identify barriers to economic stability for immigrant women and develop a community network of programs, services and supports that would ensure immigrant women better economic returns on their work, education, and language skills. Through independent study projects, honours theses, and community-service learning projects, the Sociology program engaged students to assist CAIWA’s efforts. Focus groups, surveys, interviews with immigrant women, some immigrant men and local employers were conducted and analyzed by students. The result is an impressive collection of local stories. The collection and sharing of stories is now being used to raise awareness about the realities faced by immigrant women but also to help affect positive change in services, polices and work opportunities. Analyzing these stories alongside their growing understanding of the usefulness of sociological theory and application, students proposed sociological solutions to the “troubles” of Immigrant Women in our community: cultural awareness campaigns in the workplace; database/referral system to match immigrant women to employers; assistance in job search and application; workplace training to orient women to “Alberta style” customer services; opportunities to practice “Canadian” interviews; volunteer opportunities; low cost child care options; etc.

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