

METRO *Polis* Presents

Language Matters: A Policy-Research Seminar on Language Acquisition and Newcomer Integration

When: Thursday, October 22, 2009
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Where: Library and Archives Canada
395 Wellington Street, Auditorium
Ottawa

Description:

It is widely believed that acquiring the language(s) of the host society is critical to all aspects of the integration of newcomers – economic, social, cultural and political. And while linguistic diversity has always been a hallmark of Canadian society, this diversity has deepened with recent waves of immigration. In cooperation with provincial governments and other partners, the Government of Canada offers a range of official language training and related programs across the country to youth and adult newcomers.

Despite these initiatives, language remains a barrier to labour market success for many newcomers, including skilled workers. A mismatch exists between employers' expectations and newcomers' perceptions of requisite linguistic ability for many occupations. At the same time, newcomers' linguistic integration also depends on the receptivity of those listening to them, especially native speakers of English and French.

Maintenance of heritage languages and the existence of ethnic enclaves pose further complexities. Passing on the ancestral language to subsequent generations is an important way for linguistic minorities to maintain their cultural diversity. On the other hand, heavy dependence on the enclave may weaken linguistic and overall integration into mainstream society. In an era marked by increasing globalization and international trade, knowledge of languages other than English and French could also be an asset to Canadian institutions and individuals.

This seminar will provide both national and international perspectives on the complex relationship between language acquisition and newcomer integration, with the twin objectives of informing policy discussions and identifying future research directions.

Presenters:

Richard Bourhis, Université du Québec à Montréal
Monica Boyd, University of Toronto
Jean-Pierre Corbeil, Statistics Canada
Jim Cummins, University of Toronto
Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, University of Bristol
Kenise M. Kilbride, Ryerson University
Alanna MacDougall, Ryerson University Graduate

Catherine Murray, Simon Fraser University
Silma H. Roddau, Progress Career Planning Institute
Yves Saint-Germain, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Parminder Singh, OMNI TV
Wendy Swedlove, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council
Rachel Wernick, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Supported by:

Citizenship and Multiculturalism Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada
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Seminar is free of cost.

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