Understanding Alberta’s ethnic communities

New study explores ethnic settlements in Alberta’s two largest cities.

By Katie Willis on September 5, 2018

Ethnic communities provide secure, supportive spaces for immigrants in Canada, according to a new study by University of Alberta researchers. And they don’t develop as a product of poverty, discrimination, or deprivation.

“Almost every immigrant group in their initial years of settlement in the host country forms enclaves or communities,” explained Sandeep Agarwal, lead author and professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences.

“They provide immigrants with a sense of security, employment in the local ethnic economy, and mutual support and help in settling in the new country.” Agrawal is also the director of UAlberta’s Urban and Regional Planning Program.

The study focused on ethnic communities in Edmonton and Calgary, exploring how both visible and non-visible minorities gather in Alberta’s two largest metropolises. Results show that, similar to other large Canadian cities, ethnic settlements are becoming increasingly suburban, and that both new and well-established settlements seem to thrive. Moreover, the study helps to dispel some common misconceptions.

“These are residential concentrations combined with religious and cultural institutions and services,” said Agrawal. “They are largely concentrations by choice, a product of housing market and opportunities. They are not ghettos that emerge because of a combination of poverty, discrimination, and deprivation, a commonly held misconception.”

This research is aimed at guiding local policy makers in understanding how and why communities in Edmonton and Calgary came to look the way they do now, and how they might change in the future.

“This type of study also helps city planners identify where a certain critical mass might be available to provide more ethno- and cultural-specific services, such as English classes, settlement programs, and employment services,” added Agarwal.


Source: Faculty of Science