



# CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES REFUGEE

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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES—THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

### Today's Refugees—Tomorrow's Citizens

As a major recipient of refugees in the Western world since the 1970s, Canada had to adapt to the task of enhancing the self sufficiency of the new arrivals and removing barriers from their full participation in social, cultural, economic and political activities. The main thrust of Canada's resettlement policy is "integration," generally defined as the process whereby immigrants and refugees become part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of a society (Breton 1992).

Resettlement strategy is also influenced by the multicultural policy which permits the pluralistic existence of diverse cultures; newcomers are permitted or even encouraged to retain their prior internalized cultural values while gradually adjusting to life in Canada. As part of this process refugees will have to acquire mainstream Canadian values such as the ability to speak English/French and other social patterns. Also they may have to undergo occupational upgrading, retraining and other activities which are necessary for successful participation in Canadian society.

Canada's refugee resettlement strategy differs from that of assimilationist nations which require refugees to abandon prior internalized cultural values for their ultimate absorption into the culture of the receiving society. Whereas assimilationists dwell on totalistic change of values, integration recognizes cultural pluralism. Canada's refugee resettlement strategy recognizes that integration goes beyond

basic economic conditions such as income and employment, and encompasses other aspects including participation in social, cultural and political activities of Canadian society.

In their 1992 meeting on indicators of integration, the *Canadian Academic Panel on the Social and Cultural Impacts of Immigration* identified the following

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