

Harvesting The Most From Your Rural Alberta Home:

**An Orientation Guide For
International Medical
Graduates (IMGs) And
Their Families**



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HARVESTING THE MOST OF YOUR RURAL ALBERTA HOME



Purpose of Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide information that will help you settle in your rural Alberta home.

This guide should be used in conjunction with the *Welcome to Alberta* document and *Planning to Work in Canada* workbook. These documents can be accessed through the following links:

Welcome to Alberta: Information for Newcomers:

<http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/WelcomeToAlberta/WelcomeToAlberta.pdf>

Planning to work in Canada? An essential workbook for newcomers:

<http://www.credentials.gc.ca/immigrants/workbook/workbook.pdf>

Overall, the information in this guide will enhance your understanding of the people, culture and customs found in rural Alberta.

Canada

Canada is the second largest country in the world. It is made up of ten provinces and three northern territories. The country's population is over 33 million.

Aboriginal people make up just under 5% of Canada's population and include First Nations, Métis and Inuit. First Nations are the first peoples of Canada and include over 600 recognized bands throughout the country. Métis are of mixed ancestry (First Nations originally partnered with French and Scottish settlers) and live in various parts of Canada. Inuit are the Aboriginal peoples of Arctic Canada, the most northern part of the country.



English and French are the *official* languages of Canada but more people speak English than French. There are pockets of French speaking Canadians found across the country.

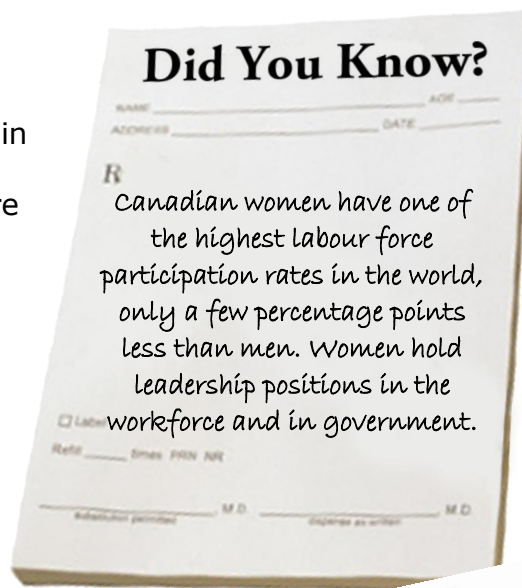
Canada is home to people from more than 200 countries throughout the world. Core Canadian values include *a fair and equal treatment of all people without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability* (The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms speaks to what Canadians believe and how they live in Canada. Canadian laws reflect this Charter.

To learn about your rights, duties and freedoms in Canada, visit <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/before-rights.asp>

To learn about laws that you should be aware of as a newcomer to Canada and which may be different than the country you are coming from, refer to www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/guide/section-08.asp

Rural Alberta

Alberta is a large province located in Western Canada with a small population relative to its size. There are differences in landscape, climate, population, industry, language and services available - all depending on where you live. For the most part, English or French will be the primary language spoken. The province measures more than 640,000 square kilometres in size and currently has a population of over 3.5 million.



When Alberta first became a province, farming was the livelihood for the majority of people. There was a spirit of cooperation among Albertan farmers. The early 1900's saw the rapid development of cooperatives to support the marketing of farm products. The influence and impact of the cooperative movement can still be seen in Alberta today.

Alberta's economy continues to thrive on its expanding technology, manufacturing and services sectors. The following sectors account for two-thirds of Alberta's total economic output.

- Information, Communications & Technology (ICT)
- Industrial & Consumer Products
- Agriculture
- Energy (Oil and Gas)
- Forest Products
- Tourism

Did You Know?

NAME _____ AGE _____
 ADDRESS _____ DATE _____

R Historically, Alberta's immigrants came from European countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Ukraine. In recent years there has been a shift and there are now more immigrants coming from countries such as India, China and the Philippines.

Like _____
 Ref: _____ Date _____
 M.D. _____



Did You Know?

NAME _____ AGE _____
 ADDRESS _____ DATE _____

R Northwest Alberta has a lot of oil and gas development projects underway. Forestry activities are common in north and western parts of Alberta. Northeast Alberta has major developments taking place in the Oil Sands. Central Alberta has a lot of grain and cattle farming, while ranching on large tracks of land occurs in southern Alberta.

Like _____
 Ref: _____ Date _____
 M.D. _____

Communities in rural Alberta will range in population size from a few hundred people to a few thousand. Some are more remote than others, largely operating as self-contained communities.

In rural Alberta it is common to own all terrain vehicles (ATVs) such as quads, snowmobiles and motorized dirt bikes. These vehicles are mainly used for recreational purposes. Safety is very important and it is against the law for youth under the age of

14 to operate these vehicles on public property (although many young people use ATVs on their family's property).



Some Facts:

- Alberta became a province in 1905
- 52% of Albertans live in one of the two major cities - Calgary and Edmonton
- 25% of Albertans live in communities across the province which have a population of less than 10,000
- The majority of people living in Alberta are Caucasian
- The majority of people living in Alberta speak English as their first language (there are small pockets of communities across the province where people speak other languages)
- Immigration to Alberta has increased substantially in recent years. Currently, more than 20% of Alberta's population was born outside of Canada

There are numerous religious beliefs in rural Alberta. However, corresponding places of worship are not necessarily found in every rural community. To date, churches have been the most common place of worship. There is an increase in other religious places of worship as more people of different faiths settle in rural Alberta. For example, the number of mosques and synagogues found in rural Alberta has risen over the past ten years.

Despite a majority Caucasian population, there are other cultures that have a strong presence throughout rural Alberta. The province is home to Aboriginal Peoples, Francophone Albertans, Hutterites and Mennonites. Living in rural Alberta, you are likely to see people from one or more of these distinctly different cultures. Below is a description of some of the characteristics associated with each of these cultures. It is important to note that not everyone in each of these groups is the same. There are individual differences within any group, and so the information in this manual is based on *generalizations*.

Aboriginal Peoples



Six per cent of Alberta's population is Aboriginal people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit). This is slightly greater than the percentage found nationally.

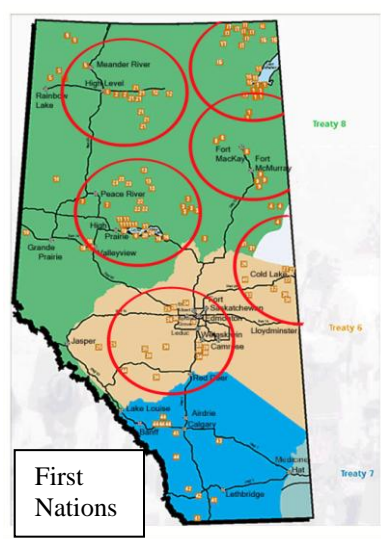
- 44 First Nations groups (almost 100,000 people) live mainly on reserves throughout the province.
- More than 85,000 Métis live mainly on Métis settlements in north and north-central parts of the province.

A strong bond and sense of loyalty within the community is very important in many Aboriginal groups. This is demonstrated in several behaviours and across many situations. Below are *some* of the characteristics that tend to be associated with Aboriginal Peoples in Alberta.



It is common for Aboriginal Peoples to...

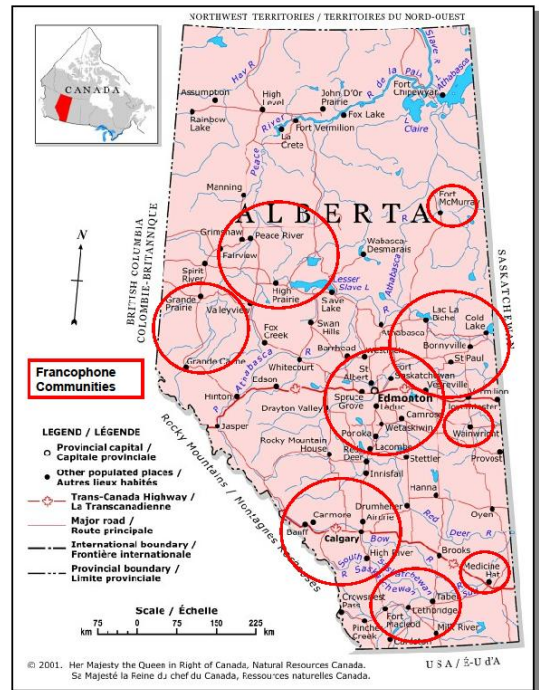
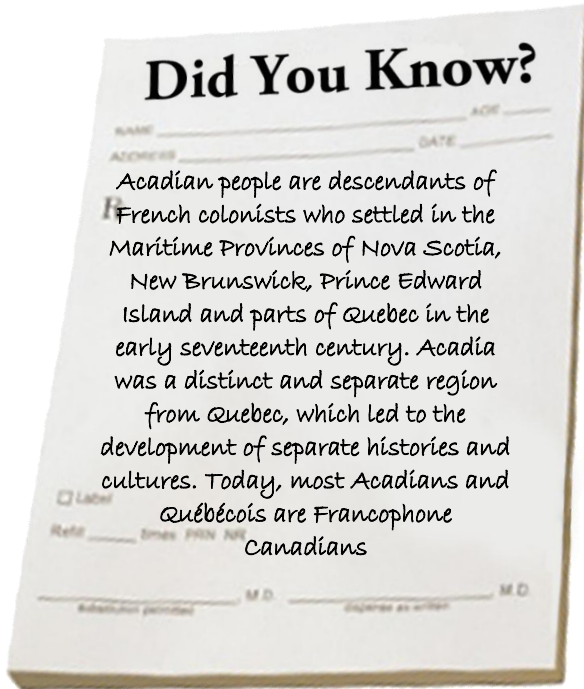
- Have extended families with many members living in the same household
- Have representatives speak on behalf of Elders
- Explain things through story-telling
- Have many people come to meetings and appointments
- Arrive past the scheduled time to meetings and appointments
- Have many people involved in the decision making process
- Place a strong emphasis on non-verbal communication
- Not show a lot of outward emotion (This should not be perceived as un-expressive or impolite. It is simply a cultural difference around how people show respect and consideration)
- Not maintain eye contact (A sign of respect)
- Leave long gaps of silence in conversations
- Have spiritual beliefs based on the natural world and partake in various rituals



Francophone Albertans (Franco-Albertans)

There are several French speaking communities spread throughout the province of Alberta. You can see where these communities are located by viewing the corresponding map.

- French speaking people that live in Alberta are referred to as Franco-Albertans
- Their roots are mostly European, Quebecois and Acadian (although some have their roots in other parts of Canada)



Below are *some* of the characteristics that tend to be associated with Francophone Albertans.

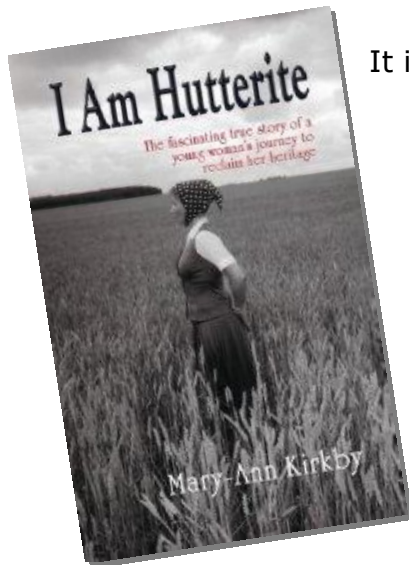
It is common for Francophone Albertans to...

- Speak French in their daily interactions at work and in the community
- Attend French speaking schools
- Use a lot of hand gestures and expressive body language
- Be more animated and charismatic in their emotions
- Be more physically affectionate
- Be more direct in their communication style

Hutterites and Mennonites

Hutterites and Mennonites originated in East and Central Europe, and made their way to Alberta during World War I. There are several Hutterite and Mennonite communities spread throughout the province.

- Hutterites live in self-contained colonies throughout rural Alberta. They operate as an independent community and construct their own buildings, make their own clothes and have their own schools
- Hutterite colonies are typically found in Central and South-eastern Alberta
- Most Mennonite communities are located in southern Alberta
- Unlike the Hutterites, Mennonites hold private properties
- Farming is the main source of livelihood and income for both groups
- Both groups live a conservative and simple lifestyle, however more Mennonites have adopted Western customs than Hutterites
- Both groups are very religious (Anabaptist) and regularly attend church



It is common for Hutterites to...

- Speak a form of German language known as Hutterite German or Hutterisch
- Dress in distinct clothing that is conservative in style (For example you will see women wearing vests, pleated skirts and dark coloured headscarves)
- Separate themselves from mainstream Canadian (and Albertan) culture

It is common for Mennonites to...

- Dress like other Albertans, although in a more conservative style
- Integrate themselves into mainstream Canadian (and Albertan) culture
- Speak English as their first language

The information in the next section highlights aspects of life in rural Alberta that will help you and your family settle in your new environment.

GETTING SETTLED

There is a good chance you will have already been in contact with someone from the community where you will be residing. This person may be part of a local Rural Alberta Physician Recruitment and Retention (R&R) committee or a member of the medical practice you are joining. These individuals will be valuable resources both before and after you arrive.

Housing

It is common to have assistance with finding temporary accommodation and transportation prior to arrival. If this has not been arranged, you can request information on housing options from the local R&R committee as well as fellow medical practitioners.



For more information about the Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan, or to contact one of their consultants for support, visit <http://www.rpap.ab.ca/>

Transportation

Alberta has 2 international airports – one located in Calgary, the other in Edmonton.

Several small communities in rural Alberta have limited access to public transportation. As a result most people own a vehicle. There are car dealerships in the majority of rural communities for people to purchase a new or used vehicle. Larger communities will have access to urban centres and neighbouring communities through a bus service company called Greyhound.



To see if there is a bus service to and from your community, visit the Greyhound Canada website at www.greyhound.ca/home/

When driving in rural Alberta in the winter, there are a few things worth considering:

- Have a snow scraper, a snowbrush and a small shovel in your vehicle
- Consider using winter snow tires to minimize the possibility of becoming stuck in the snow or sliding on icy roads.
- Ensure that a block heater has been installed in your vehicle in order to plug in your vehicle on cold nights.
- Carry a blanket, a candle and lighter or matches in your vehicle to keep you warm if your vehicle breaks down during cold weather.

Countries with reciprocal licensing agreements include:

- Austria
- Belgium
- England
- France
- Germany
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Scotland
- Switzerland
- United States
- Wales

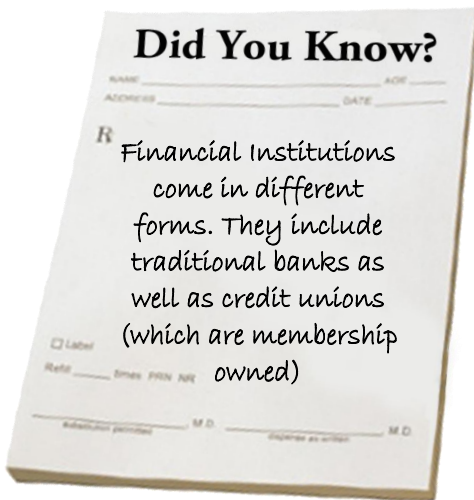
For more information on countries with reciprocal licensing agreements and how to get your Alberta drivers' license, visit: http://www.servicealberta.ca/Drivers_Motor_Vehicles.cfm

Other transportation services often found in rural communities include privately owned taxi services, and a "handi-van" to transport seniors and people with special needs who cannot drive. Upon arrival you can request information about these and other local transportation options.

For more information on transportation options refer to the *Important Things to Do and Know* section of the *Welcome to Alberta* document.

Note: Alberta Motor Association (AMA) offers their members roadside assistance. To find out more about these and other AMA services, check: www.ama.ab.ca





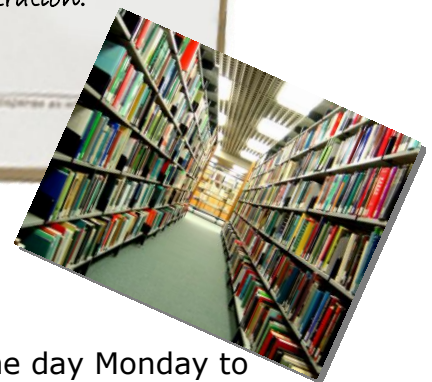
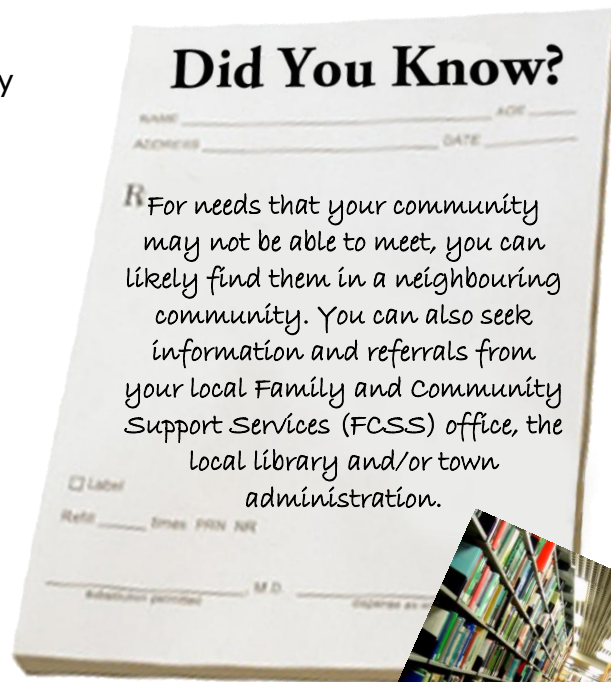
Shopping and Community Services

Stores in rural Alberta will carry the same items found in larger centres. The only difference is that you may have a more limited selection to choose from. For example, if the grocery store doesn't carry your favourite spice or the butcher doesn't have your preferred choice of meat, you can ask if it can be ordered. Local store owners are very willing to help you get what you are looking for.

An excellent resource to find out what your community has to offer is <http://www.AlbertaFirst.com> Every Alberta community has a profile that describes town services, upcoming events, and sports and recreational activities.

Standard services found in most rural communities include:

- Independent and Cooperatively owned grocery stores
- Financial service institutions
- Bakery
- Convenience store
- Gas station
- Hardware store
- Clothing store
- Hair dresser
- Library
- Liquor store
- Restaurants
- Hotel, Motel or Bed and Breakfast
- Sports and Recreation centre
- Places of worship
- Schools
- Hospitals and doctors' offices
- Ambulance services
- Police and Fire services



Most local businesses are open during the day Monday to Friday. Some are open on Saturday and most are closed on Sunday. Gas stations and convenience stores are typically open extended hours; however, products available there are limited and may be sold for higher prices.



People may also operate a business from their home which offers additional services to the community. They may advertise their business locally through the community newspaper, on community bulletin boards or by word of mouth. Examples of such businesses include child care, housekeeping, catering, home and car repairs, yard maintenance, tutoring, music lessons, and sewing or tailoring.

Schools

Almost all children in rural Alberta attend the publicly funded school system. Public education meets the provincial government education requirements and is the prominent system in Alberta. It provides high quality education for all children. Catholic, Francophone and/or Charter schools can also be found in many rural Alberta communities. They are also part of the public school system. In addition, some communities may have privately funded schools, such as independent Christian schools. People may choose to send their children to private schools for a number of personal reasons including religious ones.



Children living in Alberta must attend school from ages 6 to 16. All children have access to the school system from grade one through grade twelve. Rural Alberta schools tend to be small in size and have fewer students than schools found in larger centres. Children living in rural towns normally walk to school or ride the bus. Those living outside the town are brought in to school by school bus at no cost. If a community does not have a high school, the school makes sure that children are transported daily by bus (at no cost) to and from the neighbouring community to attend high school.

Rural Alberta schools include core courses such as English, math, science, history and social studies. Learning a second language is also a mandatory part of the curriculum. Also included are courses such as visual arts, music, drama, physical education, and career and technology studies. These latter courses may be different from the courses taught at schools in your home country. These subjects are important in developing your child's skills in social interactions and communication. It is important to note that in rural Alberta, one school is not better than another when considering the required school subjects.

Did You Know?

NAME _____ AGE _____
ADDRESS _____ DATE _____

R Parent-Teacher interviews are scheduled at times throughout the year to discuss your child's progress at school. Of course parents do not have to wait for a scheduled interview to speak to their child's teacher. They may do so whenever there is an issue.

Label
Ref# _____ Smax PRN NR
M.D. _____ M.D.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's education through a variety of ways:

- Supporting your child with their homework
- Meeting with teachers
- Participating on school committees
- Attending school events

Teachers and principals in rural Alberta have an open door policy. This means that you are welcome to meet them to discuss a variety of social, emotional or educational needs your child may have. Examples of things to discuss might include:

- Health issues you would like to have monitored by a teacher
- Difficulties your child may be experiencing with other children at school
- Challenges understanding certain concepts in one or more classes



It is also important to note that mass media has a large influence on fashion trends in rural Alberta. It is common for children and youth to follow current trends in clothing. Dressing similar to other children will help to make socializing at school easier.

For more information on Alberta schools refer to the *Education* section of the *Welcome to Alberta* document.

Did You Know?

NAME _____ AGE _____
ADDRESS _____ DATE _____

R

Public health care provides immunizations for childhood diseases at all schools on a voluntary basis.

Label
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LIFE IN YOUR RURAL ALBERTA COMMUNITY

Rural Albertans take great care and pride in their communities. They actively participate in community associations, local projects and social groups. People may show up at your door with gifts, food and invitations to events. Community members will be excited to help you settle in and get you involved in local activities and events. If the community tries to welcome you in a way that you are not comfortable with, please try not to take offence – it has been offered as a gesture of welcome.



Being Polite

Canadians have a reputation for being polite. People in rural Alberta often smile, have a friendly attitude and ask questions to gain understanding. Albertans are also conscious of other people's feelings. They tend to put thought and care into their choice of words so that the feelings of others do not get hurt. Should you unintentionally say something that offends someone in your community, the person is unlikely to tell you because they don't want to hurt your feelings. Try to observe the way people talk and the choice of words they use.

Sense of Time

There is a general expectation for people to be on time for appointments and meetings in rural Alberta. However when things happen that prevent people from being on time, rural Albertans are usually accommodating. It is best to pay attention to punctuality until you have an understanding of how time is understood in the community.

Scheduling is also a common practice in Canada. Rural Albertans are more relaxed than urban Albertans when it comes to scheduling appointments, meetings and social outings. In larger cities, these events are usually booked far in advance.

Clothing and Appearance

Rural Albertans dress fairly casual compared to people that live in larger cities. People often run errands wearing 'at home' or work clothes. If there is a social event or something important taking place in the community, rural Albertans will dress up. People in the city also tend to dress more formally for conferences and meetings. The best advice is to dress similar to others and observe the various customs around clothing. For example, many people wipe their boots or shoes and remove their footwear when entering a home. People will also remove their hats when sitting down for a meal.

If you are accustomed to wearing traditional ethnic clothing, you should be aware that you will stand out in a rural community. This may attract undue attention from others. The attention is usually not discriminating in nature. Rather, it is often rooted in curiosity about something new in the community.

Odours

People in rural Alberta tend to be more sensitive to odours than others. You may find places with 'no scent' policies. This is largely to accommodate people with allergies.

Odours which rural Albertans react most negatively to are:

- Tobacco smoke
- Cologne/perfume
- Strong cooking spices

Suggestions to avoid odour problems are:

- Wear fragrances in small amounts
- Have a mint or piece of gum after smoking a cigarette
- Keep your clothes in a location away from the kitchen so they don't absorb the smell of spices

It is also worth noting that you may experience unpleasant odours that rural communities are used to. For example, the smell of livestock and manure can be strong in some parts of rural Alberta. These odours are not harmful and people adjust to them fairly quickly.



Humour



What people find funny varies from culture to culture. Canadians enjoy laughing *with* people as opposed to laughing *at* people. The exception is that Canadians often laugh at themselves and make fun of their own shortcomings. Since there is an increased sense of familiarity among people in rural Alberta, people are comfortable joking and laughing with each other about many things. These jokes are usually well intentioned.

Sarcastic humour is not always received by Canadians the way it is intended by others. As a result, misunderstandings can occur. It is best to observe and learn what people find funny before you start joking around with them. If someone tells a joke that offends you, know that it was likely unintentional. They probably did not mean to insult you and reacting in a negative way may make the situation worse. Rather, consider having a conversation with the person at a different time to explain your perspective on what was said.

Gifts

Albertans usually give gifts on special occasions and holidays. It is worth noting that not everyone celebrates the same holidays. It depends on the person's cultural and/or religious beliefs.

Common occasions and holidays include:



- Birthdays
- Graduations
- Weddings
- Valentine's day
- Mother's day and Father's day
- Bridal shower and baby shower
- Housewarmings
- Christmas
- Easter
- Thanksgiving
- Canada Day



In rural Alberta common gifts could include:

- Home baked bread, cakes or muffins
- Bottle of wine
- Gift basket with fruits and jams
- Soaps and lotions
- Flowers and plants

When going to someone's house, it is common to bring a gift such as a bottle of wine, flowers or homemade food.

The most common misunderstanding with gift giving in Canada is when to open the gift. If someone gives you a gift, it is expected that you open it in front of them and thank them. Rural Albertans want to see your reaction and hope that you like the gift. If you receive a gift by mail or delivery (For example a fruit basket), it is expected that you call the sender to thank them. Not acknowledging this gesture can be interpreted as bad manners. If at any time you are unsure what to give as a gift, ask advice from someone you know in your community.

Socializing and Making Friends

Getting to know the people in your community is an important part of settling in. There are certain opportunities that will make it easier for you to get to know other community members.

Some of these opportunities include:

- Church and other faith based group gatherings
- Sports and recreation events and activities
- Community fairs and rodeos
- Fundraising events
- Community dances
- Pancake breakfasts and barbeques
- Programs offered by the local library (For example movie nights)
- Local farmers' markets
- Adult learning classes (For example Spanish, basket weaving, wood work, cooking lessons)
- Volunteering (For example school, library, youth centre, community centre, various town committees)

You are encouraged to participate in these kinds of activities. People in your community want to get to know you and being involved in these activities will allow others to meet you. It also offers a great opportunity to try something new that you may not have done before. Any uncertainty you have about involving yourself in these new experiences is often eased by the open and welcoming nature of rural Albertans.



Rural Albertans like their sports. Organized sports are a great way to have fun with others and exercise at the same time. Rural communities will have some if not all of the following sports available:

- Curling (mainly played by adult men and women)
- Hockey (played by adult men, women, boys and girls. Recent years has seen an increase in girls hockey leagues)
- Baseball (played by adult men and women, boys and girls)
- Soccer (mainly played by boys and girls)
- Lacrosse (mainly played by boys and girls)
- Bowling (mainly played by adults, some youth)
- Walleyball (mainly played by adults)
- Volleyball (played by adult men and women, boys and girls)
- Squash/racket ball (mainly played by adults)
- Football (played by adult men and teenage boys)

It is easy to form acquaintances and friendships in rural Alberta because towns are small and people tend to know everyone. Neighbours may show up at your door with homemade bread and jam, and would like to be invited in for a visit.

When it comes to conversation, people will be interested in knowing where you come from, what you like to do and what you think of the community. They are not particularly interested in what school you went to, how many degrees you have or your professional accomplishments. This may be a noticeable difference from your home country.

Greetings



A community member will refer to you as Dr. 'Family Name' when they see you as a patient. This is because they respect your position as a physician in the community. They may also refer to your spouse or partner as "the wife of" or "the husband of" Dr. 'Family Name'. Again, this is out of respect. When interacting outside of your practice or workplace, introduce both yourself and your spouse or partner by first name. People want to know you (and your spouse or partner) as a person when you are not at work.

Shaking hands is a welcoming gesture in rural Alberta. Handshakes are common when you meet someone you don't know for the first time. Hugging and pats on the back are often used by people who know each other well.

Common verbal greetings include:

- Hi, how are you?
- How's it going?
- How was your weekend?
- Have you been keeping well?
- Hey!



It is also very common to talk about the weather at the beginning of a conversation. This is because the weather can change very quickly and sometimes quite dramatically. Listen to what people say, and you can talk about the weather too!

There are also greetings that are customary when sending emails to people. The first sentence is similar to a verbal greeting. For example, it is common to begin an email in the following ways:

- Hello 'First Name', I hope everything is going well.
- Hi 'First Name', I hope you had a great weekend.
- Hello 'First Name', I hope you are enjoying the beautiful sunny weather!

Beginning an email this way is a form of politeness. Observe the emails you receive and how they are written (particularly the beginning and the end of the message). Try to respond with the same amount of politeness.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is common in rural Alberta. To look someone in the eyes when interacting suggests interest and respect for the other person(s). Maintaining eye contact is an expectation in many social and work situations (For example a job interview, purchasing an item from a store, ordering food at a restaurant). It is worth noting that **not** making eye contact may suggest avoidance or disinterest.



Pausing in Conversation

In Canada and rural Alberta, it is common for people who are conversing to leave a brief pause in between speaking. For example, when you finish a sentence there is a small pause before the other person begins speaking. When the other person finishes their sentence, there is a small pause before you begin speaking again. This pause in conversation means 'I am listening to you and I am interested in what you are saying'. The pause is also an opportunity to ask questions.

Personal Space



Rural Alberta is quite vast in size and people are accustomed to having a lot of space. Houses are located on large pieces of land, commonly in the form of lots, acreages and farms. People who come from smaller countries with large populations tend to have a smaller sense of personal space than rural Albertans. It is important to be aware of this because coming too close to someone may cause them to feel uncomfortable. Observe

the space that rural Albertans leave between one another in various situations. It is usually one arm's length from person to person.

Accents

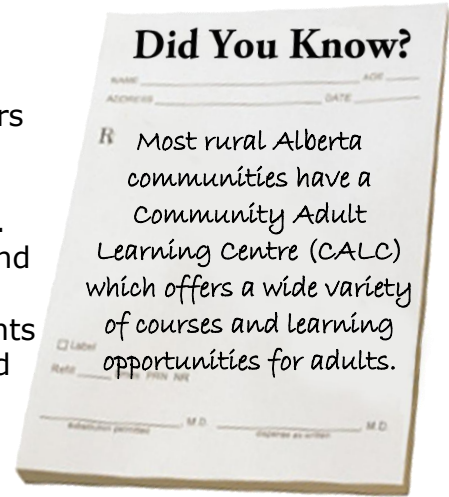
Rural Albertans are not exposed to many accents. People in your community are likely to think that your accent is 'neat' and fun. They may also have difficulty understanding you at times. If rural Albertans do not understand you because of your accent, they may not tell you because they don't want to hurt your feelings. Most people will ask you to repeat yourself once or twice. If they still don't understand, they may nod their head and smile, pretending to understand you. This saves both people from embarrassment, but it does not solve the problem.

Ways to tell if people understand you:

- Observe facial expressions when speaking to others
- Ask them if they understand you. This is perfectly acceptable and most people will tell you the truth
- Provide an example of what you are talking about. This can be a great aid in helping others understand

You may also have difficulty understanding the accents of rural Albertans. Tips to help you better understand the accents of Albertans:

- Listen to audio books (available at your local library)
- Listen to Alberta radio stations
- Watch Canadian television programs and movies
- Seek a tutor in the community or enrol in a class to help with language and pronunciation (if offered locally)



For more information about Community Adult Learning Centres, visit: <http://communitylearning.info/>
For a listing of communities that have a Community Adult Learning Centre, visit: <http://www.aet.alberta.ca/apps/councils/councils.asp>

English Language

Whether you speak English as a first or second language, there are differences around the words that are used. Canadian English words are not always the same as those used in other English speaking countries. There may also be certain words or phrases specific to rural Alberta. This may be confusing, especially during your first few months. It can also be humorous. When you use a word from your home country that means something different in rural Alberta, the result is often a lot of laughter among you and your acquaintances.

If you do not understand a word, ask the person what it means or have them use the word in a sentence.

Communication and Technology

People use different methods to communicate in different cultures. Common methods of communication in rural Alberta are:

- Face to face communication
- Telephone
- Voicemail
- Email
- Text messaging (Sms)
- Skype

When possible, many rural Albertans will use face to face communication because relationships with others are important. When communicating in person is not feasible, telephone and email are popular choices. Texting is particularly common among children and youth.

When using voicemail, you may notice that Albertans leave long and detailed messages. Listen to the information that people leave in a voicemail message and try to do the same when you leave a voicemail message for someone else.

Technology and electronics found in large Albertan cities are also found in rural Alberta communities. Devices commonly used in rural Alberta include:

- Cell phones
- Laptop computers
- Satellite television
- Internet (choice of dial up, satellite and high speed connections)
- iPods
- Handheld video games

Some points to be aware of regarding technology include:

- Most schools have regulations about cell phone and iPod use during school hours
- Restrictions can be placed on TV channels if you have satellite television
- Internet programs are available to restrict access to selected sites on your home computers
- In public places internet sites are unrestricted (For example the local library, internet cafes and coffee shops)

If you or family members have problems settling in to your rural Alberta home, there is free support available through the following means:

- Your local Rural Alberta Recruitment and Retention Committee
- Your Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP) consultant
- The Physician Family Support program through the Alberta Medical Association



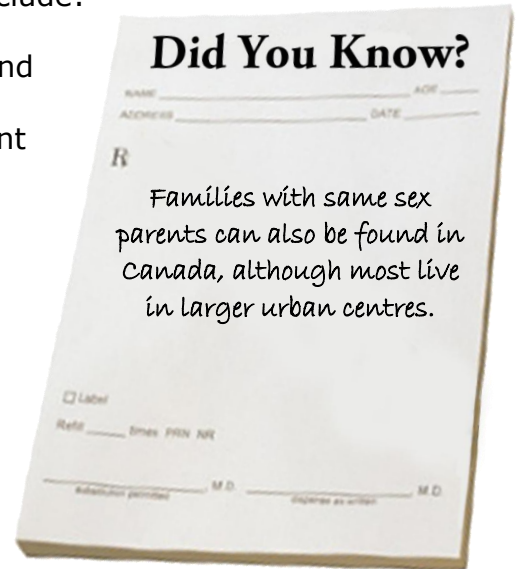
FAMILY

Family Structure



The concept of family in rural Alberta may be different than what you are accustomed to. Many kinds of family structures exist. Some of these include:

- Families with two parents and children
- Families with only one parent
- Blended families (divorced people that remarry)
- Mixed culture families
- Families with an absentee parent (one parent works away from home for extended periods of time)
- Families with adopted and/or foster children



Regardless of the type of family structure, it is unusual to find relatives other than parents and children living in the same household in rural Alberta. Extended family often lives in the same community in rural Alberta.

For more information on family structure visit The Canadian Way of Life
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/guide/section-08.asp>



Considerations for the Spouse or Partner

The first few months in a new community are usually the hardest for any spouse or partner. One contributing factor is that the physician is focused on work and becoming familiar with their practice. As a result, the physician's life in Canada often develops at a faster rate than that of the spouse or partner.

As a spouse or partner, it is normal to experience the following:

- Feel alone and/or envious because your partner, as a working physician, has a professional life that you are not a part of
- Feel neglected because your partner may not be giving you the time and attention you would like (especially while adjusting to the new environment)
- Feel lonely because your partner spends long hours at work and has lower energy levels at home

These feelings are a result of coping with a large amount of change. They are usually temporary and go away when the period of change is replaced with a feeling of comfort in the new community.

As the spouse or partner, you must seek ways to enjoy yourself and keep busy. The people living in your community will be happy to assist you in finding things to do and in meeting new people.

Some ways to fill your time include:

- Find a job in your local community
- Take courses for personal or professional development
- Utilize your skills to introduce something new to the community (teach an art, craft, sport, skill, etc.). This could be arranged through the local Community Adult Learning Centre which pays individuals to give courses in the community

Volunteering in the community is highly recommended for many reasons:

- You can give as much or as little time as you like to volunteer work
- It's a great way to meet and get to know others in your community
- You will feel good about yourself because you are making a contribution to your community
- It gets you out of the house for a break

To find out what volunteer opportunities are available, consult the community newspaper, bulletin boards, schools, the local library and your local social service agency offices.

It is common for people in rural Alberta to run their own business from home. Note that you must be eligible to work in Canada to start your own business. There is a process that must be followed and approval must be granted by the provincial government.

You will likely be able to find some kind of work in your local community. However, it may not be a job you were trained for. This may be due to a few different factors:



- There may be limited job openings in your profession (For example small towns do not need many lawyers and accountants)
- Transportation to other towns or cities may be limited
- Commuting means more time away from home and family
- There may be language barriers (English is essential for almost all rural Alberta communities. French speaking communities will likely give preference to people that speak French)

Things you can do in your local community to help find employment:

- Read community bulletin boards and newspapers
- Get to know people in your community by participating in events and activities
- Many jobs result from talking to someone you know

For more information on how to start your own business, visit <http://www.canadabusiness.ab.ca/>

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In Canada, and to a certain extent rural Alberta, it is common for parents to be out of the home for at least some portion of the week. As a result, it is important to consider what supports are available with respect to child care, supervision and activities, for the times that both parents are away from the house.

Child Care for Infants and Toddlers

You may have young children who are not old enough to go to school. In rural Alberta there are different child care options which may be available and which you might wish to consider.



These include:

- Staying at home to care for your child
- Hiring a child care provider that comes to your home
- Hiring a child care provider that works out of her home
- Enrolling your child in a Family Day Home program. These programs offer care in a private residence where there are typically 6 or less children with one caregiver
- Enrolling your child in a Daycare program. Daycare programs offer up to full day care for infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children
- Enrolling your child in a Pre-school or Playschool program. These programs offer child care for 4 or less hours per day for pre-school aged children

Before and After School Care for School Aged Children (6-12 years old)

Many rural communities offer programs for school aged children to attend before and after school. If both parents work, there may be days when



no-one is home to watch your child when they get out of school. It is against the law to leave children under 12 years of age alone (for safety and other reasons), so you may need to make arrangements for their care.

One of the more common arrangements made between families in rural Alberta is for children to go home from school with their friends or neighbours. Parents will then pick them up on their way home from work. Pay is

not normally expected for this arrangement if it happens occasionally. Watching the other child in return is a common way of saying thanks and helping out the other family.

Other arrangements include:

- Schools that offer before and after school programs on site
- Daycares that offer before and after school programs
- A babysitter who will watch your children after school until you get home
- Organized children's activities in the community (see suggested activities in following section)

Youth (children ages 12-16)

It is generally acceptable for children 12 years and over to be left on their own. Young people (youth) usually want something to do before and after school, as well as in the summer. Rural Alberta communities will often have youth centres which are open to young people between the ages of 12 and 16. These centres have a youth worker on site and are places where youth can go to interact with their peers in a supervised environment. Various activities are housed in youth centres such as video games, board games and pool tables (billiards). Often there is a skate board park close by. Youth centre hours and what is offered will be slightly different depending on the community.



Activities for Children and Youth

There are many activities in rural Alberta that serve as a source of fun and learning for children and youth. Not every activity of interest will be found in all communities, but here are some examples of what you may find. Details of the activities and programs offered in rural communities can be found at the local recreation department, or on the town website.



You can access information on topics such as parenting in two cultures, moving to a new country and English as a second language. Consult your local library, the Community Adult Learning Council, the Family and Community Support Services office or town office to find out what is available locally. These offices and programs will also be able to assist you in finding courses and workshops in neighbouring communities and in urban centres.

- Guides and Scouts
- Youth centres
- Air cadets
- Bowling
- Gymnastics
- Ice skating
- Dance classes
- Music lessons
- Karate and other martial arts
- Various programs offered through the local library (these can include board games and pizza nights, movie and popcorn nights, internet and computer access)
- Swimming lessons
- Summer day camps
- Art classes
- Hockey
- Baseball
- Soccer / football

Two unique activities for children in rural Alberta are 4-H clubs and Junior Forest Warden programs.

- 4-H is only found in rural communities. It is a program for youth that provides opportunities to meet new friends, participate in fun activities, and learn new skills and abilities. These include leadership and public speaking skills.



For more information on 4-H clubs, visit: http://www.4h.ab.ca/regional_info.html

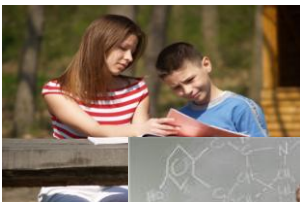
- Junior Forest Warden programs offer an opportunity for young people and their families to have fun, develop skills, and get educated in the many diverse aspects of the natural environment.



For more information on Junior Forest Warden programs, visit: <http://www.albertajfw.ca/>

Parental Considerations

In rural Alberta, children can easily access things like the internet, numerous television programs, video games, movies and cell phones. Most children in rural Alberta own a variety of electronic devices and share the use of these devices with their friends. While you may have rules regarding some of these things in your home, it is important to realize that access may be readily available to your child outside of the home. You may wish to have a conversation with your child regarding electronic devices.



Did You Know?

NAME _____ AGE _____
ADDRESS _____ DATE _____
R Did you know...in rural Alberta communities you can access information on topics such as parenting in two cultures, moving to a new country and English as a second language. Consult your local library, the Community Adult Learning Centre, the Family and Community Support Services office or town office to find out what is available locally. These offices and programs will also be able to assist you in finding courses and workshops in neighbouring communities as well as in urban centres.

Lethbridge
Ref: _____
M.D.

**Considerations for Foreign Trained
Physicians and Specialists**



THINGS TO KNOW WHEN PRACTICING MEDICINE IN RURAL ALBERTA



Moving to rural Alberta will likely find you prepared for some degree of change in practicing medicine. Medications may go by different names than what you are accustomed to, different equipment might be used in comparison to your home country, and the kinds of cases you treat may be different. For example, Emergency wards and clinics in

South Africa are used to treating gunshot and stab wounds. Emergency wards and clinics in rural Alberta are used to treating common illnesses and wounds from accidents involving motorized vehicles and recreational vehicles (with motors), such as quads and snowmobiles.



As a physician practicing medicine in rural Alberta, you will often play many roles. Patients will see you as the main point of contact for both physical and mental health. Medical specialists, therapists and mental health professionals are commonly accessed by referral from one's family doctor. As a result, you may find yourself taking on the combined role of doctor, marriage counsellor, addictions support, mental health therapist and anything else that may be needed until your patient is referred to the appropriate professional.

PHYSICIAN-PATIENT INTERACTIONS

Many IMGs come from countries that adopt a patient centred approach to medicine. This is also the preferred approach to primary health care in Canada and rural Alberta. There are many definitions of "patient centred approach". Most of them include some or all of these characteristics in a physician:



- Shows concern and empathy for the patient
- Seeks to understand the patient as a whole person – physical needs, emotional needs, life struggles, etc.
- Seeks agreement with the patient on the problem and how to manage it
- Promotes health and prevention

From a patient point of view, these are qualities that make a good physician in rural Alberta. A pleasant attitude and spending time with patients in order to better understand them is seen as very important. Canadians often refer to these traits as 'bedside manner'.

In rural Alberta, your interactions with patients will likely extend outside of the practice due to the size of the community. The local librarian and your child's school teacher may also be your patients. As a result, physician-patient interactions in a variety of contexts in the community are common. You may even become friends or acquaintances with your patients.



Due to the continuous nature of physician-patient interactions in rural communities, it is important to be conscious of your communication style and how your patients perceive you. Many patients are accustomed to the Canadian way of communicating, which is polite and sometimes indirect. As a result, you may come across as more direct than rural Albertans are accustomed to in your communication style. For example, a South African physician practicing in one rural Alberta community was visited by a patient who asked to renew his prescription for medication. The patient's current supply of medication would be finished in two weeks. The response of the physician was "No, come back in two weeks". The patient proceeded to tell people in the community how rude and unfriendly the physician was. What could the physician have done differently to avoid this outcome? They could have provided an explanation to the patient as to why they wanted him to return in two weeks. Perhaps there were potential risks or side effects associated with the medication and the physician preferred to have the family doctor make the final decision. Providing an explanation to the patient would have been helpful in this situation.

The good news is that because physician-patient relationship is an ongoing one, both parties tend to adapt their communication style and become comfortable with one another rather quickly.

It is worth noting that patients in rural Alberta often come to an appointment with ideas of what is wrong with them. In some cases this information can help the physician with treatment. In other cases it can pose a challenge as it is sometimes difficult to convince a patient that the problem is not what he or she self-diagnosed it to be. Either way, the patient will want to be involved in determining the health issue as well as the treatment.



Cultural Considerations

Some rural Alberta communities have a higher concentration of culturally different groups living in them. You may see these cultural differences reflected in your patients, depending where you practice. The information that follows should be considered when treating patients of the noted cultural backgrounds. This information will enable you to better relate to and communicate with your culturally different patients.

Aboriginal Peoples as patients:

- Aboriginal culture tends to view health in a holistic way. Most agree that health is a balance of emotional, mental, physical and spiritual well being. Although Aboriginal groups will differ in their spiritual beliefs, many Aboriginal people value traditional medicines and herbs such as sweet grass. Some people look to the spirits for healing while others are more open to modern medicine. It is important for physicians to take this into consideration when treating Aboriginal patients. It can potentially impact patient compliance and possible drug interactions.
- When it comes to family, one does not need to be related by blood. This may raise challenges when physicians need to question Aboriginal patients about their family history. Another potential challenge includes the number of people that accompany an Aboriginal patient to his or her medical appointment. Other people may also be involved in making decisions related to the patient's healthcare. It is typical for Aboriginal Peoples to come in large groups to medical appointments or to visit someone in a hospital.
- Silence is valued in Aboriginal culture. It is a time for the listener to process and make sense of the information being shared. Many cultures are not comfortable with a long pause in between dialogue. This may result in speaking to fill the gaps. If filling the gaps occurs in a physician-patient situation, the Aboriginal patient may feel they did not have time to sufficiently understand what is being explained. They may also feel frustrated for not being given an opportunity to speak. Conversely, the physician may feel that the longer periods of silence indicate a lack of interest or respect for what he or she has to say.
- Within Aboriginal communities increased incidences of poverty, alcoholism and addictions as well as increased incidences of domestic and family violence can be found.



Physicians may notice a higher incidence of mental illness, dual diagnoses and high risk behaviours in Aboriginal patients compared to the national average. Many of these current day challenges, high risk behaviours and illnesses can be linked to the lingering impact of the residential school system on Aboriginal people. The residential school system purposely separated children from parents with the intent to eliminate connections to their traditional culture and replace it with European-Christian values and beliefs. The first residential schools were established in the 1840s with the last school closing in 1996. While attending these schools, many Aboriginal people suffered abusive treatment from school officials.

- Aboriginal People may be more sensitive to touch for reasons related to past experiences in residential schools or current day behaviours found on reserves. Physical and sexual abuses were common occurrences that have left many significant scars and may have been passed down through generations. Informing a patient before touching them is a courtesy that is appreciated by most. It will likely decrease the element of surprise or a negative reaction.

It is recommended that Aboriginal People be approached with respect and humanity. It is advised not to make assumptions or show differential treatment based on stereotypes that may exist.

For a deeper understanding of Aboriginal population health you can visit <http://www.visions.ab.ca>

Franco-Albertans as patients:

- The identity and culture of Franco-Albertans is built upon their language. There is a relatively high expectation for physicians practicing medicine in French speaking communities to speak the French language. Some patients may not speak English at all, thus making treatment difficult.
- Sometimes there are challenges around pain management when treating Francophone Albertans. Situations may arise where there is a disconnect between the physical condition of a patient and the amount of pain they are expressing. This tends to happen when the level of emotion expressed by the patient is very different from that expressed by the physician. For example, a patient might have a minor sprain but the physician thinks they behave like something has been broken.



Hutterites as patients:

- Hutterites often use medicinal herbs and other home remedies to treat minor ailments. It is important for physicians to take this into consideration when treating Hutterite patients as it can potentially impact patient compliance and possible drug interactions.
- Hutterites tend to faithfully trust whatever a physician says. There is not the same tendency to question doctors or self-diagnose their symptoms. This is in part due to the self-contained colonies in which they live and the lack of influence received from outside sources.
- Similar to Aboriginal Peoples, Hutterites tend to visit physicians in large numbers. It is typical to have many family members accompany a Hutterite to his or her medical appointment or to visit someone in a hospital.

Primary Care Networks



A Primary Care Network (PCN) is a team effort and coordinated approach to providing seamless health care services to Albertans. In this type of arrangement, a group of family doctors and other health care professionals work with Alberta Health Services to coordinate the delivery of primary health services for their patients. There are currently 35 PCNs in Alberta with eight more in the planning phases. Approximately two-thirds of family physicians belong to a primary care network.

For more information on Alberta's primary care networks, visit <http://www.albertapci.ca/Pages/default.aspx>

THE ROLE OF NURSES, PHARMACISTS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

It is important to understand the role of Nurses, Pharmacists and other health care professionals that may be assisting you. Although there are provincial standards and requirements that health care workers must meet in order to practice their profession, roles may vary across all clinics and hospitals. This may be due to the size of facility and/or resources available. Regardless of specific roles, each health care profession is viewed as bringing a needed expertise and value to the Canadian health care system.

Nurses

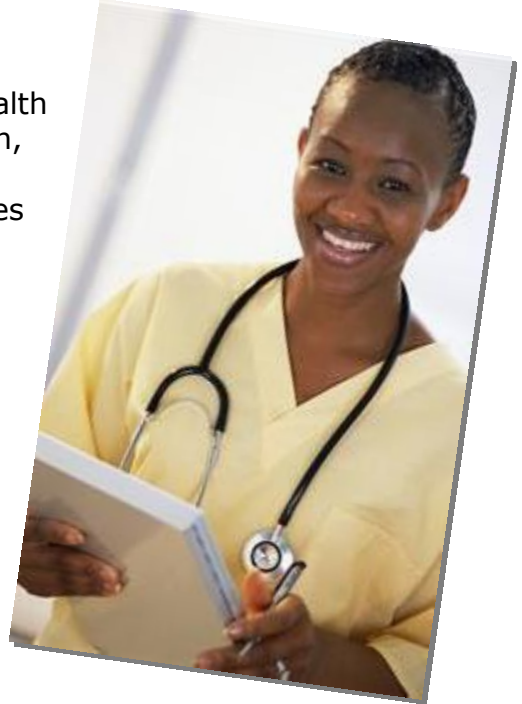
Nursing is an essential part of the Canadian health care system. It includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and care of the physically and mentally ill as well as people with disabilities (International Council of Nurses, 1999).

There are four types of nurses in Alberta that are regulated under the Health Professions Act:

- Registered Nurses (RN)
- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)
- Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPN)
- Nurse Practitioners

All nurses may work independently or as part of a health care team.

For more information on the nursing profession in Alberta, visit <http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna/index.aspx> and <http://www.crpna.ab.ca/>



Registered Nurses (RNs)

Registered Nurses (RNs) are governed by The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA). RNs are responsible for developing the overall nursing plan of patient care in the facility where they practice. The scope of practice for RNs is wider and deeper than the scope of practice for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). RNs have more responsibility than LPNs because the education and training requirements are greater. In most rural Alberta health care facilities, RNs will supervise LPNs. Some of the duties performed by RNs include:



- Record patient medical histories
- Examine patients and provide treatment
- Assist in the administration of diagnostic tests
- Analyze certain test results
- Operate medical equipment
- Administer medications
- Participate in patient follow-up care
- Educate patients about various medical conditions

Note: Registered Nurses cannot prescribe medication.

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) are regulated by The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA). LPNs are heavily involved in patient care and monitoring. They provide a variety of health care services across various health care settings. LPNs are often the main point of contact for patients. They are also responsible for keeping superiors informed on patient conditions. Some of the duties performed by LPNs include:



- Record vital signs of patients
- Prepare patients for diagnostic testing
- Take patient samples, send them to appropriate labs and get reports
- Clean wounds, apply bandages and assist physicians with sutures
- Administer patient injections
- Administer therapeutic massages
- Prepare patients for surgery
- Monitor continuous patient needs (food, water, oxygen, etc.)

In most cases, Licensed Practical Nurses report to Registered Nurses.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs)

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) are governed by The College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta (CRPNA). RPNs specialize in mental health. They often work collaboratively with other mental health care professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers to provide maximum benefit to their patients. Some of the duties performed by RPNs include:



- Physical and mental health assessments
- Help clients to become independent
- Develop, implement and document physical and mental health nursing care plans
- Evaluate and update nursing care plans
- Administer and assess the effects of prescribed medications and treatments
- Observe and report behavioural changes

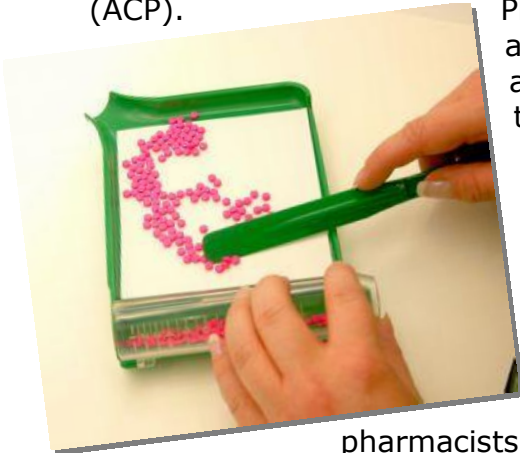
Nurse Practitioners (NPs)

Nurse Practitioners (NPs) are registered nurses that have completed advanced level education and training in the diagnosis and management of physical and mental health conditions. In Alberta they must be registered as NPs with The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) in order to practice their advanced knowledge and skills. NPs often work independently and manage the health needs of individuals, families, and communities, most commonly within a primary care setting. They practice in a variety of community health care settings including community health centres, nursing outposts, specialty clinics, emergency departments and long-term care facilities. Some of the duties performed by NPs include:

- Conduct physical exams
- Diagnose, treat, evaluate and manage acute and chronic health conditions (For example diabetes, high blood pressure)
- Order and interpret diagnostic tests (For example lab tests, x-rays)
- Prescribe medications
- Prescribe rehabilitation treatments
- Provide guidance and education to patients on good health practices
- Provide prenatal care and family planning services
- Assist in minor surgeries and medical procedures

Pharmacists

Pharmacists in Alberta must have 5 years of university education in a Pharmacy program and be registered with the Alberta College of Pharmacists (ACP).



Pharmacists provide services and programs that are designed to promote health and treat disease and other disorders through drug therapy and the promotion of wellness.

In Alberta, pharmacists who have appropriate certification can work collaboratively with other health care professionals and prescribe drugs or blood products, and administer drugs by injection.

Pharmacists may work alone or with other pharmacists, physicians, nurses, pharmacy technicians or pharmacy assistants. Some of the duties performed by Pharmacists include:

- Monitor and manage drug therapy independently, as well as in collaboration with other health care professionals
- Counsel patients regarding the safe and appropriate use of drugs and the importance of complying with instructions
- Administer drug injections
- Compound, prepare and dispense drugs

- Provide non-prescription drugs, drugs for injection and health care aides and devices
- Conduct and administer drug and other health related programs such as structured medication reviews
- Provide extensions to current drug therapies
- Adapt prescriptions to meet patient needs

For more information on the pharmacy profession in Alberta, visit <https://pharmacists.ab.ca/nRegistrationLicensure/Pharmacists.aspx>

Other Health Care Professionals

Physicians and nurses often work in co-operation with other health care professionals. Examples of other health care professionals include:

- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- Occupational Therapists
- Recreational Therapists
- Social Workers

Physicians practicing medicine in Alberta must comply with the Code of Conduct and Standards of Practice set forth by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA). For more information, visit http://www.cpsa.ab.ca/AboutUs/Code_of_Conduct.aspx

For a complete list of Alberta's health care professionals and services, visit the Alberta Health Services website: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/services.asp?pid=services>

WORKPLACE INTERACTIONS

Interactions with Colleagues

Positive interactions with the people you work with are known to enhance satisfaction in the workplace. There is often an additional level of closeness and informality among colleagues in rural Alberta because people know each other both in the practice as health professionals and in the larger community as community members.



Ways to reach out and get to know your colleagues:

- Participate in workplace activities such as fundraisers and birthdays
- Go out for lunch with people you work with
- Go for coffee breaks with colleagues

You may find yourself working with a colleague where you both speak a language other than English or French. It is considered rude and inconsiderate to speak languages other than English (or French in a Francophone community) in the workplace. It is important to be conscious of this because rural Albertans are too polite to bring it to your attention. It will, however, cause dissension with your co-workers.

Interactions among Physicians and other Health Care Professionals



Part of your role as a physician involves the development and mentoring of other staff. It is common for physicians to listen to the opinions and perspectives of other health care professionals who together, with yourself, are involved in the care of patients. Interactions between physicians and those that they work with are usually easygoing, informal and collaborative in nature. This may be different from other

countries where physicians instruct health care workers on what to do, and where health care workers listen and carry out such instructions.

Interactions among Physicians, Medical Staff and Facility Administrators

In Alberta, each hospital has a Medical Director, male or female, who is the senior medical administrative leader. The Medical Director oversees all physicians in that hospital or several hospitals and deals with issues concerning patient care and how physicians function in the hospital. This includes a physician's interactions with other physicians, patients and all health care professionals. The role of Medical Director may be held by any specialist, including a general practitioner/family physician who is also considered a specialist in family medicine.

Hospitals in Alberta are run by Facility Administrators who oversee all processes and operations within the hospital or facility. The Facility Administrator (regardless of gender) is the senior administrative leader of the facility who works with the Medical Director. If a Physician wants to recommend or implement changes in a hospital/facility, they must work with the Facility Administrator and Medical Director.



It is important to note that management roles are commonly held by women. These include positions like Directors, Facility Managers and Vice Presidents.

Men and women are treated equally and respectfully across all professions in Canada.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AMONG PHYSICIANS

This section takes a closer look at cultural differences among the top ten countries for physicians and specialists coming to rural Alberta (as identified by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta).

- Australia
- Egypt
- India
- Ireland
- Libya
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States

The data herein is derived from the work of Geert Hofstede, a Dutch organizational sociologist known for his cross-cultural research. Scores of source countries are compared to scores for Canada on the cultural dimensions of **Hierarchy** and **Individualism**. One can also see how each source country compares to another.

Information and scores pertaining to these dimensions can be found on the website ITIM International
http://www.geerthofstede.com/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml

HIERARCHY

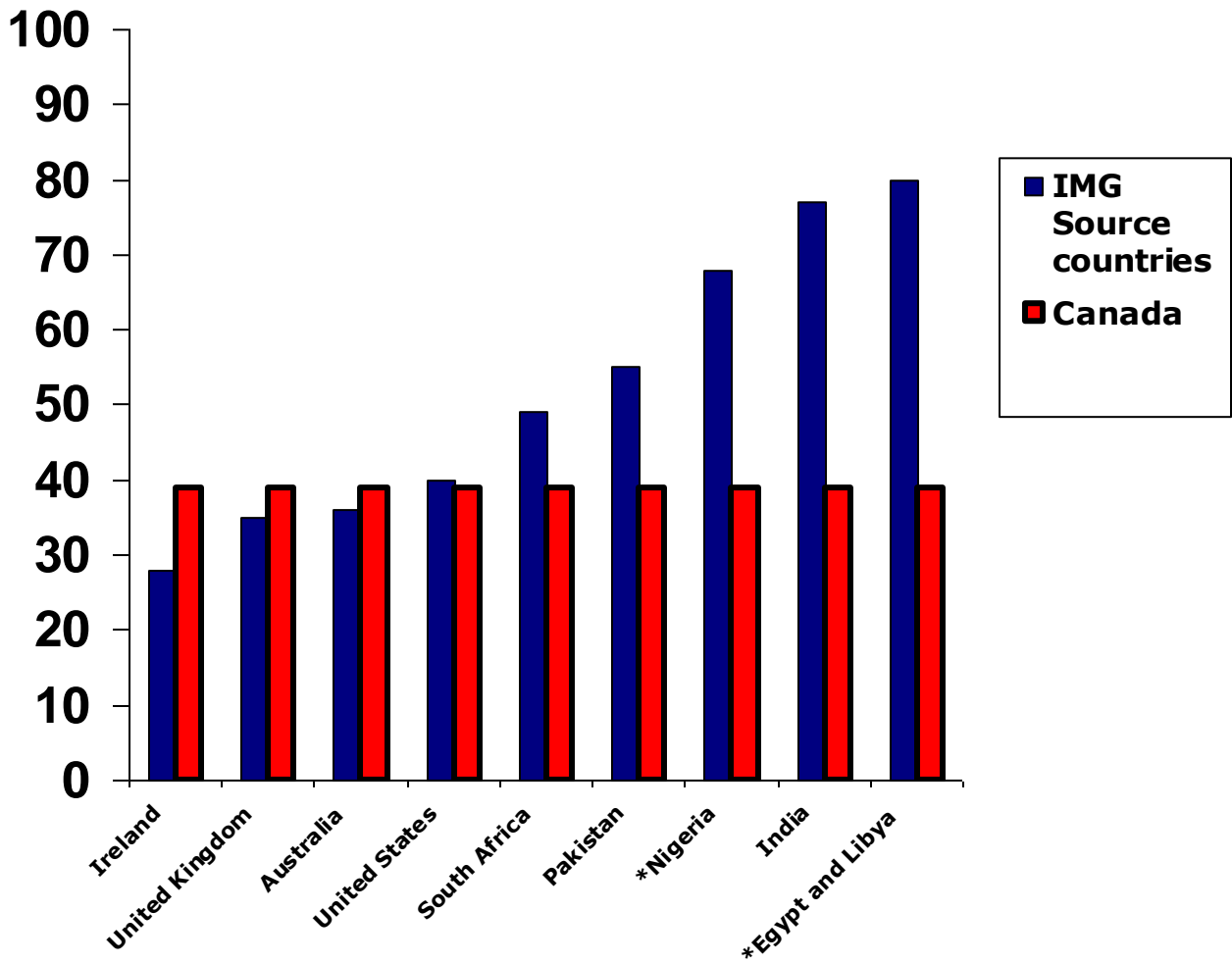
Hierarchy (also called Power Distance) refers to the degree to which some people are more or less powerful than others in an organization or society. In cultures with a high hierarchy score, people are treated differently depending on their status or rank in society. In cultures with a low hierarchy score (Canada), people are generally treated equally regardless of their position in society.

See Figure 1 for Hierarchy scores from IMG Source countries and Canada.



Figure 1

Hierarchy: Source country comparison to Canada



Hierarchy scores from IMG Source countries and Canada

* Arab countries include **Egypt**, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, **Libya**, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. **Egypt** and **Libya** are two of the top ten source countries for IMGs to rural Alberta.

* West African countries include Ghana, **Nigeria** and Sierra Leone. **Nigeria** is one of the top ten source countries for IMGs to rural Alberta.

What does this mean to you?

The higher the score, the more hierarchical the country. **Canada** is a society where people are generally treated with equality and respect. The elements that factor into someone's relative importance are different in Canada than they are in hierarchical countries.

For the purpose of the information that follows, South Africa, Pakistan, Nigeria, India, Egypt and Libya are considered hierarchical countries. Canada, USA, Australia, UK and Ireland are considered non-hierarchical countries.

HIERARCHY IN THE WORKPLACE

Hierarchy may impact your interactions with others in one or more of the following ways:

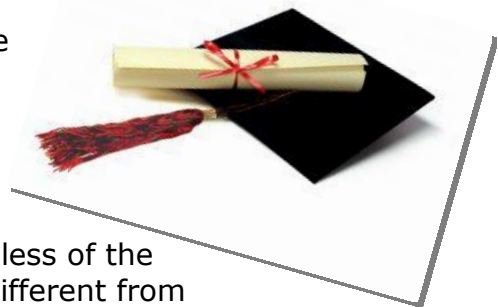
Formality

People with a high sense of hierarchy often refer to themselves and others in a formal manner. This may be done by using the person's first and last name or using titles such as 'Sir', 'Madam' or 'Doctor'. In Canada and less hierarchical countries, people tend to be more informal in their interactions at work. They often address people by their first name even if they have a title such as 'Doctor' or 'Professor'. In Alberta, titles are not necessarily an indicator of who is important and who is not.

When hierarchical people use formal language and titles, it can give the impression that they think they are better or more important than the other person

Education

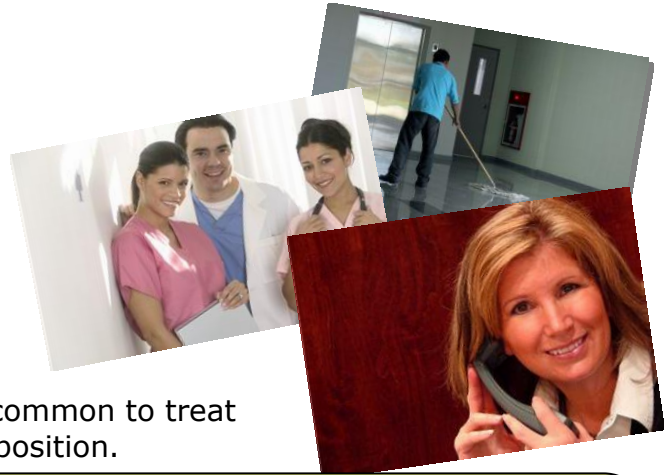
The value placed on high education tends to be greater in hierarchical cultures than it is in Canada. Higher education is not as accessible or affordable in hierarchical countries as it is in non-hierarchical countries. A university degree obtained in Canada through an accredited program is largely respected regardless of the institution it was obtained from. This is often different from hierarchical countries where there is a 'best' university that is recognized by most of society. In hierarchical countries, hiring decisions can be made based on what school a physician trained in. This is usually not an influential factor in Canada because all schools meet a certain standard or requirement of education and training.



In Alberta, experience, attitude and communication skills are often influential factors in hiring decisions

Respect

When interacting with people in the Canadian workplace, respect is supposed to be shown to people in all positions, at all levels. In Canada, a janitor, receptionist, nurse, technician and physician are typically treated with the same amount of respect. In hierarchical cultures, it is common to treat people differently depending on their position.



- If you work with people who are more hierarchical than you, you may want to show more respect and admiration than you are accustomed to in your initial interactions
- If you work with people who are less hierarchical than you, respect is largely shown by asking for one's input, opinion or contribution to something

The way that respect is shown also differs in hierarchical cultures. For example, respect may be shown by standing when someone of importance walks into a room. In Canada, respect tends to be conveyed by the value placed on someone's input or opinion.

- Generally speaking, the more weight the opinion holds, the more respected the person is
- Respect is conveyed both through the act of asking for one's opinion as well as being asked

Decision Making

In hierarchical cultures, decisions at work are usually made by high ranking positions. In Canada, the same decisions may be made at a lower level. Each health care professional has a level of authority when making certain decisions. For example, if a physician orders a prescribed dose of morphine to be administered to a patient every 4-6 hours, it is up to the nurse to decide when within that 4-6 hours the drug should be administered.

- Hierarchical people may consider the independent decision making of Albertans/Canadians as a lack of respect for authority and protocol
- Albertans/Canadians may consider the unwillingness of hierarchical people to make an independent decision as weak and lacking initiative

In hierarchical cultures, nurses and other health care professionals often communicate regular updates to physicians to keep them informed. Physicians are not normally questioned, and their decisions are respected as final. In Canada, healthcare professionals may question certain decisions to better their understanding.



- If you supervise people that are more hierarchical than you, encourage them to make decisions within their realm of authority
- If you supervise people that are less hierarchical than you, do not expect the same level of information updates or requests for permission that you may be accustomed to.

Initiative

One of the most noticeable differences between hierarchical countries and Canada is around initiative. In Alberta, initiative is an expectation in the workplace and can be shown in the following ways:

- Introducing a new idea
- Suggesting a different approach
- Contributing more thought, information and/or effort than was asked
- Taking charge of a difficult situation

Each of these behaviours is often praised and rewarded. In hierarchical countries, these behaviours are often discouraged and frowned upon. The role of the superior is to give directives and the role of the person under them is to carry them out.

- If you supervise people that are more hierarchical than you, encourage them to take initiative
- If you supervise people that are less hierarchical than you, explain to them how their involvement in certain projects will benefit their career. This will help keep them focused on the job and prevent them from wanting to go in a different direction

Guidance and Direction

Consider a situation whereby a non-hierarchical physician wants the opinion of a Canadian resident and asks him or her to retrieve a patient's chart. Does the resident read the patient's chart? The expectation of most Albertan physicians is that the resident will read the chart because it is implied that reading the chart is a necessary step in order to give an informed opinion.

Residents from a hierarchical culture may pull the patient's chart as requested, but not review it because they were not specifically instructed to review it.

People in Alberta give less guidance and direction to others and rely heavily on instruction that is implied or the expectation of the person to figure things out on their own. In these situations hierarchical people tend to ask a lot of questions because they don't feel they have been provided with sufficient instruction. This often gets interpreted by people in Alberta as an inability to think for oneself. Conversely, hierarchical people give a lot of guidance and instruction to others which can offend people in Alberta who know their job, but may ask questions to clarify or better their understanding.

- If you work with people that are more hierarchical than you and notice they are confused or asking a lot of questions, provide more information and guidance than you are accustomed to
- If you work with people that are less hierarchical than you, they will likely take the initiative to figure things out on their own. Do not interpret this lack of questions or need for guidance as disrespecting your authority

INDIVIDUALISM

Individualism refers to the extent to which members of a society identify with a group or groups, compared to an individual entity. The opposite of Individualism is Collectivism. Collective cultures identify strongly with a specific group which may be may be an extended family, an organization or association, a religious group or a nation of people. People pledge their loyalty to the group in exchange for long lasting protection and support. In contrast, individualistic cultures are known to promote independence and self-reliance. They measure success by personal achievement and value personal privacy (Hofstede, 2009).

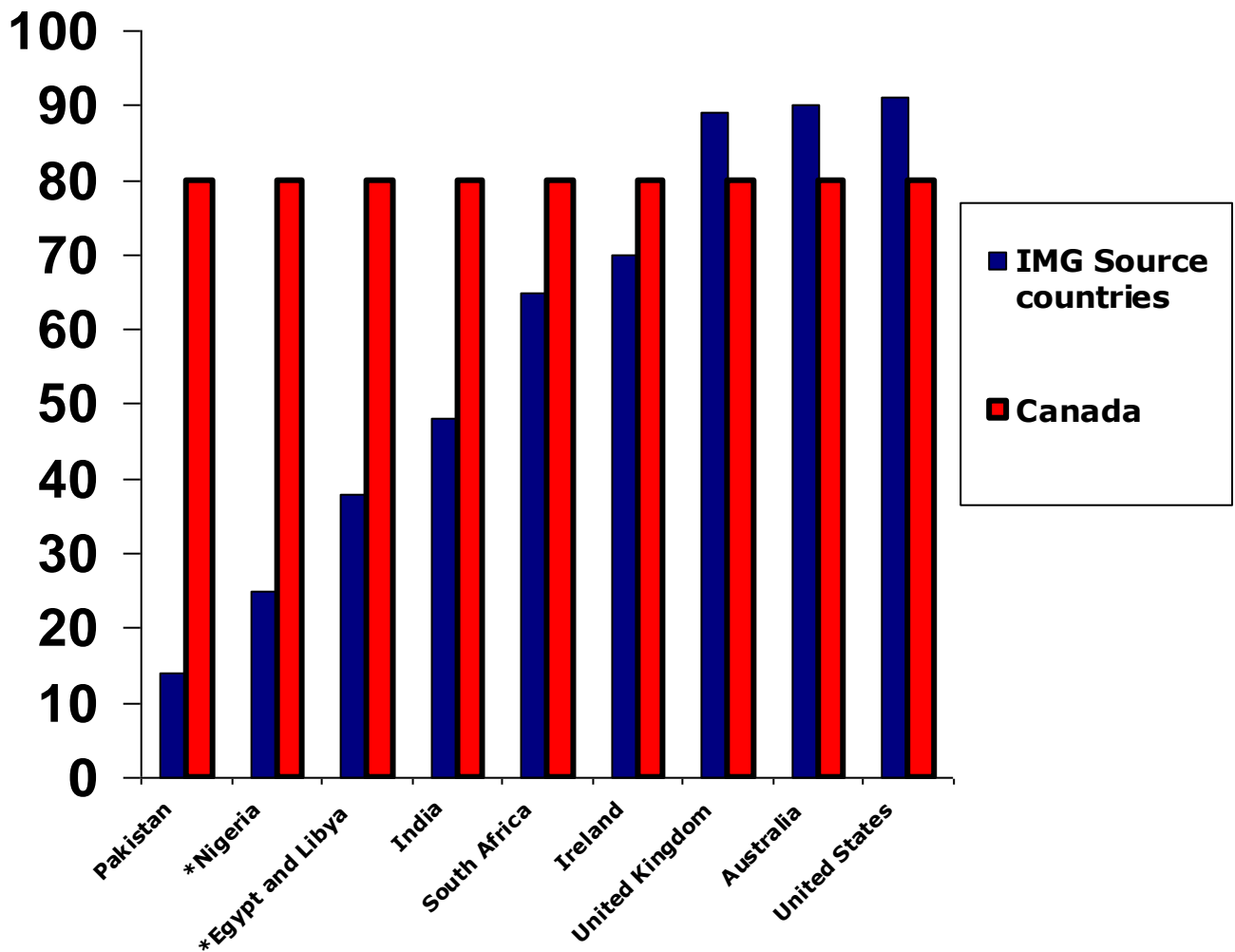
See Figure 2 for Individualism scores from IMG Source countries and Canada.



Figure 2

Individualism scores from IMG Source countries and Canada

Individualism: Source country comparison to Canada



* Arab countries include **Egypt**, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, **Libya**, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. **Egypt** and **Libya** are two of the top ten source countries for IMGs to rural Alberta.

* West African countries include Ghana, **Nigeria** and Sierra Leone. **Nigeria** is one of the top ten source countries for IMGs to rural Alberta.

What does this mean to you?

The higher the score, the more individualistic the country. Canada is an individualistic country where most people are motivated by self interest and define themselves through individual characteristics as opposed to group characteristics.



For the purpose of the information to follow, Canada, USA, Australia and UK are considered individualistic countries. Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Libya and India are considered collective countries. South Africa and Ireland are moderately individualistic countries where people may behave in a collective or individualistic way depending on the situation.

INDIVIDUALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Individualism may impact your interactions with others in one or more of the following ways:

Teamwork

The concept of a team is very different for individualistic and collective cultures. For **individualistic cultures like Alberta/Canada**, a team is a group of individuals that each look after their own area of responsibility.



Team members respect one another by staying out of each other's way and trusting each member to do his or her job. Together, everyone achieves the team's objectives by doing their individual part. It is common for individualistic people to use the word "I" and talk about themselves in terms of individual accomplishments as opposed to team accomplishments.

Collective teams are usually collaborative in nature. People still have expertise in certain areas, but most tasks and responsibilities are owned by the team rather than the individual. In collective cultures, team members are very involved with each other and share a lot of information. They often seek the consensus of the team before making a decision. Collective people often use the word "We" and speak in terms of group accomplishments as opposed to individual accomplishments.

If you are coming to Alberta from a collective culture, you may experience frustration from your colleagues in the following ways:

- Not offering their help and assistance
- Not sharing information that you feel concerns you as part of the team
- Not having sufficient group meetings
- Making decisions that you feel are not sufficiently informed



- If you work with people who are more individualistic than you, try to focus on your own responsibilities and let them look after theirs
- Before sharing information with others, ask yourself if they really need to know what you are going to tell them
- When working with people in Alberta, it is important to credit all members involved in team successes and achievements. Be wary of taking credit for something that was achieved by the whole team

Decision Making

In Alberta, decisions tend to be made by people based on self-interest. In collective cultures, decisions tend to be made through group consensus.

- If you work with people who are more collective than you, think about the influence of your actions on their areas of responsibilities
- When working with people in Alberta, the expectation is to voice your concern if a decision negatively impacts you.

REFERENCE MATERIALS TO HELP YOU EXPLORE RURAL ALBERTA

Best of the West: your guide to great new books from the prairies
2009 – 2010

Includes list at back of guide of bookstores across Alberta

<http://www.bookpublishers.ab.ca/BestoftheWest09.pdf>

Name and Location of Museums across Alberta

Listing of Alberta communities and museums and historic sites found in each one

<http://www.discoveralberta.com/SightsAttractions/Museums/>

Alberta Museums and Historic Sites

List of select museums and historic sites with brief description and location

<http://culture.alberta.ca/museums/historicsiteslisting/default.aspx>

Alberta Art Galleries

Listing of Alberta communities and the art galleries found in each one

<http://www.alberta.servpro.ca/listcompht/20005/Art-Galleries.html>

Alberta Galleries

Listing of all galleries and their location in Alberta

<http://www.discoveralberta.com/Galleries/>

Alberta Parks

Listing of provincial campgrounds

<http://tpr.alberta.ca/parks/default.aspx>

Alberta Sports and Recreation

Information on recreation and sports programs, provincial associations, recreation corridors and trails

<http://tpr.alberta.ca/recreation/default.aspx>

Alberta Magazines

Listing of all magazines about and published in Alberta

http://www.albertamagazines.com/member_magazines/

Alberta Ski Hills and Resorts

Listing of downhill ski hills and resorts in Alberta

<http://www.discoveralberta.com/ToursActivitiesAdventures/SkiHillsResorts/>

Cross Country Alberta
Provincial cross country ski association
<http://www.xcountryab.net/main.php>

Alberta Cross Country Ski Club
Listing of all Alberta cross country ski clubs
<http://www.zone4.ca/info.asp?cmd=pc&id=9>

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