

Brandy Y Productions Inc. | #307 10230 114 Street NW | Edmonton, AB T5K 1R9
P: (001) 780 761 4116 | E: brandy@brandyYproductions.com | W: brandyYproductions.com

Brandy Y Productions Inc. 
presents:

BROOKS

The City of 100 Hellos

**A documentary about how
immigration changes and challenges
a cowboy town.**

Produced, Directed
and Written by
Brandy Yanchyk

Director of Photography:
Jeff Allen

Editor:
Sarah Taylor

Composer:
Mark Zagorsky

Languages:
English, Mandarin & Tagalog
Running time:
48:30 minutes



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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Brooks - The City of 100 Hellos explores how immigrants, refugees and temporary foreign workers from the local meat packing plant are changing and challenging the western cowboy city of Brooks, Alberta, Canada. It also explores the city's 100 year history as it celebrates its centennial anniversary.



DETAILED OVERVIEW

Brooks - The City of 100 Hellos gives us a rare glimpse into the lives of many of the new immigrants, refugees and temporary foreign workers that have moved to Brooks, Alberta, Canada. It also explores the challenges they face and looks at how longtime residents of Brooks feel about the new immigration in their community.

The documentary is set in Brooks, Alberta, a western Canadian city known for its farming, cowboys and oil patch workers. About 10 years ago the local meat packing plant, XL Foods Lakeside Packers Inc., starting bringing over and employing about 2,000 workers from across the world; some temporary foreign workers, others new immigrants and refugees in Canada.

Many don't speak English and have come to Brooks to make about \$14 an hour, paying for their lives here in the city but also supporting their families back home.

The new immigrants have physically changed this traditional cattle ranching city. Schools teaching English as a second language have been popping up across town as well as different multicultural churches, a mosque and ethnic stores. It is now believed that over 100 languages are spoken in Brooks.

"Brooks is unique," says Brooks Mayor Martin Shields. "It was basically 14,000 in population who changed in 10 years from basically one culture, one language to representing as many as 60 to 70 different countries with many languages and dialects."



DETAILED OVERVIEW



Schools teaching English as a second language have been popping up across town as well as different multicultural churches, a mosque and ethnic stores.

CHALLENGES

The influx of immigrants has challenged this traditional western ranching city.

“A lot of people don’t like change. People want things to stay the way they always were,” says Max Tateson, a rancher from Brooks. “It is all the yearning for the good old days. On one hand [the rise in immigrants] was almost a reminder that the world was bigger than Brooks.”

Inge Ellefson, a retired school principal who moved from Denmark to Brooks sees the same resistance from the longtime residents. “Not everyone is

comfortable with having young black people, young asian people, young Chinese people come and live next door to them,” says Ellefson. “I think that fear of what might happen, of not really knowing whether they can be trusted is always lurking in the back of everyone’s minds.”

Max Tateson is quick to add that “not all cowboys are racist.” He says they have learned a lot from the new immigrants in Brooks. “I think we have more to learn from them because they have seen so much and struggled so hard to adapt here.”



SIMULATED REFUGEE CAMP

Some of the locals have gone out of their way to make the newcomers feel welcome in their community. There have been multicultural events celebrating their heritage and the local Red Cross has set up a simulated refugee camp so that locals can get an idea of where the refugees have come from. “Some didn’t understand or didn’t know what a refugee was in the first place so it was a sharp learning curve for them,” says Biftu Abdalla from the Canadian Red Cross in Brooks. “We put people through the camp with different profiles, so all the profiles are real people with real stories and real outcomes at the end.”

RACISM AND CONFLICT

Despite the warm welcome from some, many of the immigrants complain about the city’s racism and feel that they are not accepted. “There’s no doubt in my mind there is a lot of racism in this town,” says Shane Dawson from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, local 401 that supports workers at XL Foods Lakeside Packers Inc.

Jonathan Gasirabo who moved from Rwanda after fleeing the genocide there in 1994 has felt racism towards him in Brooks. “The old people, they look at you funny and I just got used to it,” explains Gasirabo. “Let’s say you walk in the hospital, and you see an old person, and you say hi and they just look at you. I was just being nice saying hi, and they were like ‘why is this black man saying hi?’ There’s nothing you can do.”

The praying schedule for Muslims working at the meat packing plant has also caused controversy because Muslims have to pray at certain times and need to leave their job to do so. Sometimes this has caused conflict because workers and supervisors are not always happy that their co-workers are walking off the job to pray.

“For the first couple of years it wasn’t that smooth,” says Shane Dawson from UFCW local 401. “If you are letting this guy go pray, there’s another group of people that don’t pray and they don’t understand why he is able to go. It’s been an uphill fight and it’s one that is going to continue.”

DETAILED OVERVIEW

HARD WORKING CONDITIONS

Many of the immigrants working at XL Foods Lakeside Packers Inc. complain about their repetitive strain injuries. Ariel Gimenez, a temporary foreign worker from the Philippines complains about how sore his hands are. “Very hard to work at Lakeside,” says Gimenez. “My job is holding a knife almost eight hours a day. It’s so hard, very cold inside. All sore in my hands.”

Francisco Trujillo from Colombia quit after working three weeks at the meat packing plant claiming, “all the time it’s go go go, for 8 hours. The work is not for humans, the work is for the machines.”

SUCCESS AND ADVENTURE

Moving to Brooks has brought a lot of success for some of the newcomers. Emelyn Yabut, an immigrant from the Philippines has opened her own store called Fil-Mart which caters to the Filipinos living in Brooks. “Since I came to Brooks blessings have been non-stop,” says Emelyn. “It’s like a dream come true to me that finally I have my own store. Being an immigrant it’s unbelievable to think that I was able to do this.”

Chrisen Gopall has been sending money back home to his family in Mauritius. He is a temporary foreign worker working at the meat packing plant. “I came here for the money, to be rich,” says Gopall. “The dollars, it’s very good comparing to the rupee. I am not poor in my country. I want to retire maybe after 10 years, I won’t work again. No, no way. Because I am working hard here. So I want to go home rich, make my family rich, enjoy whatever I want so that is why I am working hard here.”

LONELINESS, ISOLATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Although these new immigrants are making money it does not take away their feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are very common for many newcomers in Brooks. They long for their families back home whose lives are going on without them.



Mootoo Sunnassee is a temporary foreign worker from Mauritius and has two young children and a wife living back home. “I feel lonely, very lonely, missing my family very much,” explains Sunnassee. “It becomes stressful there to live alone without my children, without their dad there. I have to go back.”

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XL Foods Lakeside Packers Inc.
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Loneliness and a sense of displacement aren’t exclusive to the new immigrants in Brooks. Others who moved to the area over the years also have those feelings. Inge Ellefson moved to Brooks as a little girl with her parents from Denmark in the 1950s.

“There’s a constant search and wondering about how my life would be different should I not have immigrated.” admits Ellefson. “Should I have stayed in Denmark, what would have happened in terms of marriage and family and career and life long ambitions? How would that really have been different? So it’s a feeling of being displaced to a certain extent.”

INTEGRATION

Inge Ellefson also feels that the new immigrants are not integrating with the longtime residents in Brooks. “I think that what they’re doing is that they’re coming, and they’re finding friends, or family, or people who have similar backgrounds to them and they’re sticking together,” says Ellefson.

Fred Rattai who owns Garth’s restaurant in Brooks adds, “I hear people talking, I don’t think they’re racist. They’re uncomfortable with the fact that people aren’t working hard enough, in their opinion, to learn to drive, to become a part of the community.”

DETAILED OVERVIEW

The Colombians are definitely the exception. They spend their weekends together volunteering their time to help clean up the city.

“We have the temporary foreign workers, for example, from Colombia, which means they could go home at the end of two years but I find they are very social people,” explains Brooks Mayor Martin Shields. “They very much enjoy being out in the community. At the drop of a hat they would be to any event and they would participate. They were so proud of their culture. People very quickly identified, hey those are the Colombians. They just were infectious in their attitude about it.”

Jonathan Gasirabo, an 18 year old black refugee from Rwanda had a falling out with his father and is now living with his classmate Joey Hutter and his family who are longtime white residents of Brooks. He has integrated with the help of the family. “They’re the right example to say that’s how families should be,” says Gasirabo about the Hutter family. “They’re happy, they help people like me. They didn’t have to have me here. They could just have my room as another guest room. But no, they’re like you know what, he’s going through tough times, let’s help him and see how we can deal with this. And I really don’t feel out of place at all.”

COWBOY CULTURE

Adapting to the cowboy culture in Brooks has been a positive experience for some of the immigrants.

“In my country we don’t have cowboys. Only the cows, yes but not the cowboys,” explains Chrisen Gopall from Mauritius.

“Before I used to see cowboys on TV, movies, but here in Canada in Brooks, when they come in the summer I just go and watch them. It’s very beautiful to watch in life,” says Mootoo Sunnassee also from Mauritius.

“I enjoy the time going to the rodeo, to see the cowboys. Everybody, the farmers, because I grew up on a farm. That’s why I really like the rodeo,” admits Francisco Trujillo from Colombia. “I think it’s the best part about living in Brooks.”



Colombian volunteers

LANGUAGE – CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges for these new immigrants in Brooks is learning English. English as a second language is offered in the primary and high schools in Brooks. There are also schools dedicated to ESL for adults.

Min Li, a recent immigrant from Dezhou, China moved to Brooks to work at the meat packing plant but quit her job to fully concentrate on learning English. “I think I am Chinese and not Canadian right now because of my weak English,” says Li. “I feel I have not integrated into Canadian society. I think I will stay here in the future because of the decision I made to study English.”

LOSS AND DISAPPOINTMENT

Some immigrants try to start businesses in Brooks that end up being unsuccessful. Saddam Ahmed who is originally from Somalia started a Halal meat and Muslim clothing store catering to the Muslims who are working at the meat packing plant. The store was open for nine months but because the meat packing plant wasn’t giving people overtime or hiring new employees they didn’t have money to shop there anymore, says Ahmed.

“It’s not like before. Everything is going down,” says Ahmed. “I can’t cover, you know, even my rent and my electric, you know, we can’t. The last three months the guy who was shopping for me, you know before three hundred, four hundred now he is shopping seventy dollar, hundred dollar. What happened? You know, no money.”

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



IT'S 2010 and Brooks, Alberta is celebrating its 100 year anniversary this year.

Murals showing its history of cattle farming, cowboys and the oil and gas industry are painted around the city.

“A hundred years ago Brooks was nothing but a spot on the prairie,” explains Jamie Nesbitt, the Editor of the Brooks Bulletin. “The CPR realized that the ranchers needed to ship cattle from here and so they built a siding on the rail. Along the stockyards a rooming house popped up, a small store and little bit by little bit there were buildings built downtown, a small business community.”

The Canadian Pacific Railway advertised across the world calling for settlers to set up farms on the land. Immigrants came from across Canada, the United States, England, Scotland and the rest of Europe.

“A lot of the times the man of the family would come out and find his spot and get things ready and then he would call for the rest of the family,”

says Nesbitt. “There were a number of pretty disappointed women who came to this new land, one especially, she remembers she came out on the train and the train had stopped at Brooks and she looked out the window and there was nothing here but bald, dry prairie, and she said why are we stopping here? The conductor said this is your new home, and she started to cry.”

When the settlers first arrived the land was dry and inhospitable but once irrigation was introduced it became an oasis in the desert for cattle farmers.

The Duke of Sutherland was important to the community because he built ready-made farms just east of Brooks and attracted settlers from Scotland and England to move there. His plan was extremely successful and by 1914 his farms were thriving.

“The Duke of Sutherland was an extremely wealthy man, one of the richest people in Europe at the time,” explains Sandra Hajash, the current owner of the Duke of Sutherland House. “He was a major investor, and



John Ware and family

he saw Canada as a great way to invest in the future. He purchased the land in about 1910, there were roughly 7,000 acres.”

Sandra Hajash has opened up the Duke of Sutherland House for residents of Brooks to see during the Centennial celebration.

Over the decades immigrants continued to come to Brooks. Harry Burk bought a farm there in 1970 after moving to Canada from Germany. Now in his seventies, he has become an artist and creates sculptures depicting Brooks' past. One of his first sculptures was of John Ware, the famous black cowboy who was a former slave from the United States who came to the area around 1900.

“He was a legend who lived around Brooks,” says Burk. “I chose him because he was outstanding in my selection as a model citizen at that time. It fits in with our culture aspects right now too in Brooks. It gives the black African community something to look forward to—to have a model citizen here.”

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



SADAM AHMED – Somalian refugee

SADAM AHMED FLED SOMALIA in 1990 because of the fighting there and lived in Ethiopia until he was sponsored to come to Canada by his cousin in 2004. Ahmed owns a Halal meat and clothing store that caters to Muslims living in Brooks. When he is first interviewed he says business is good and the Muslim community in Brooks is happy that he sells the food and clothing that they need. After nine months Ahmed closes his store because of lack of sales. He says Lakeside is not hiring new employees or giving workers overtime so they don't have enough money to spend at his store.

"This country is my home, I'll never go back."



HARRY BURK – German immigrant

HARRY BURK BOUGHT A FARM in Brooks in 1970 after moving to Canada from Germany. In his seventies, he has become an artist and creates sculptures depicting Brooks' past. One of his first sculptures was of John Ware, the famous black cowboy who was a former slave from the United States who came to the Brooks area in 1900. Burk says he chose to create a statute about John Ware because "it gives the black African community something to look forward to—to have a model citizen here."

"I chose [John Ware] because he was outstanding in my selection as a model citizen at that time."

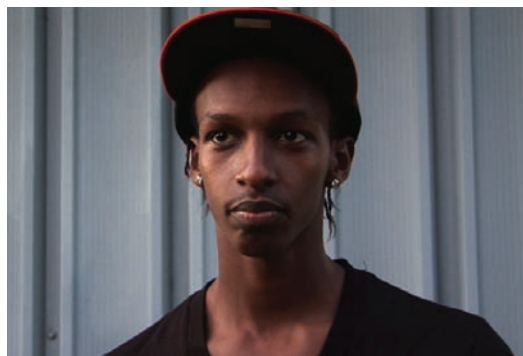


INGE ELLEFSON – Danish immigrant

INGE ELLEFSON MOVED to Brooks as a little girl with her parents from Denmark in the 1950s. She says she feels displaced because she immigrated to Brooks and wonders what her life would have been like if she had stayed in Denmark. "What would have happened in terms of marriage and family and career and life long ambitions?" wonders Ellefson. Ellefson says she is wary of some of the new immigrants. "I welcome them, but yet I have a bit of a caution against bringing things to a community where I live where I really want to feel safe," explains Ellefson. "I want to feel really proud of what we have, and not be concerned about drugs and alcohol, and street brawls, and murders and things along that line."

"Not everyone is comfortable with having young black people, young Asian people, young Chinese people come and live next door to them."

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS



JONATHAN GASIRABO – Rwandan refugee

JONATHAN GASIRABO IS FROM Rwanda and fled to Congo during the genocide in 1994. His parents decided it would be safer if they moved to Canada and originally settled in Montreal, Quebec. Gasirabo moved to Brooks with his father three years ago. After having a dispute with his father he moved into his friend Joey Hutter's house with Joey's family. The Hutters are long time white residents of Brooks. Gasirabo's story is one of integration. Jonathan says the Hutters understand that "he's going through tough times" and have helped him. He says he is so grateful and doesn't "feel out of place at all." Gasirabo says that despite the warm welcome he has felt from the Hutters he has also found that some of the older people in Brooks can be racist towards him because he is black.

"They were like *why is this black man saying hi?*"



CHRISEN GOPALL – Mauritian temporary foreign worker (left)

CHRISEN MOVED TO BROOKS from Mauritius with his friend Mootoo Sunnassee. The two men live and work together. Gopall misses his family and lifestyle in Mauritius. He has come to Brooks to make money and become rich. He plans to work at the meat packing plant for ten years and then move back to Mauritius and retire.

"I came here for the money, to be rich."

"We feel lonely, very lonely. . . . It's always boring here. We have nothing to do. . . only the supermarket, the discotheque and bar."

MOOTOO SUNNASSEE – Mauritian temporary foreign worker (right)

SUNNASSEE IS VERY HOMESICK for his wife and two young children. He hopes to gain his permanent residence papers in Canada and once they are approved he will sponsor his family to come to live in Canada. He is very bored in Brooks and says there's nothing to do. He does enjoy watching the cowboys in real life in the summertime in Brooks however.



SANDRA HAJASH – Owner of the Duke of Sutherland House

SANDRA HAJASH'S FAMILY immigrated to Brooks from Hungary in 1935. She now lives in the Duke of Sutherland House and has opened it up to the public for the centennial celebrations. Hajash loves living in Brooks. "There's openness to the prairie," explains Hajash. "It becomes a part of you, and I don't think if you ever move away you lose that. You might move away and you might like it, but you'll still always be a prairie person."

"You'll still always be a prairie person."

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS



MIN LI - Immigrant from China

MIN LI, A RECENT immigrant from Dezhou, China moved to Brooks to work at the meat packing plant but quit her job to fully concentrate on learning English. “I think I am Chinese and not Canadian right now because of my weak English,” says Li. “I feel I have not integrated into Canadian society. I think I will stay here in the future because of the decision I made to study English.” Li has also joined a Canadian cooking class with her Chinese friends so that she can learn what Canadians eat and integrate quicker into society in Brooks. She is very thankful for her husband who is supporting her so that she can focus on learning English.

“I feel I have not intergrated into Canadian society.”



FRED RATTAI – Owner of Garth’s Restaurant

FRED RATTAI HAS LIVED in Brooks for sixteen years and owns and runs the restaurant Garth’s. He is concerned about the new immigrants bringing crime to the city. “There are gangs in the community,” says Rattai. “The police will say that they definitely identified them. They come and go, many suggest that there at one point was an African Mafia group.” Rattai also says some people feel the immigrants are not trying hard enough to integrate into the society. “I hear people talking, I don’t think they’re racist. They’re uncomfortable with the fact that people aren’t working hard enough, in their opinion, to learn to drive, to become a part of the community.” Rattai also says he finds dealing with the new immigrants frustrating. “They’re slowing things down for people who normally, for years and years, walked into the bank, said hello to the counter person, got their business done and went home, instead of waiting for hours in line at times.”

“It’s difficult dealing with these people.”



MARTIN SHIELDS – Mayor of Brooks

MARTIN SHIELDS is the mayor of Brooks. He says the city is unique because in ten years it changed “from basically one culture, one language to representing as many as sixty to seventy different countries with many languages and dialects.” When it comes to the question of crime in Brooks, Mayor Shield says, “The RCMP will tell you there might be members of a gang here in town, but as far as an active gang? Probably not to the degree that people might think.”

“Brooks is unique.”

PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS



MAX TATESON – Local rancher

MAX TATESON is a local rancher from Brooks. He says that there has been a resistance towards the new immigration in Brooks from some of the longtime residents because “people want things to stay the way they always were. It is all the yearning for the good old days.” Tateson feels that the community has learned a lot from the newcomers and feels empathy for the immigrants, “If you think something bad enough to make you leave your own country to go someplace where you don’t understand the language. They’ve seen things that hopefully we never have to see.”

“A lot of people don’t like change.”



FRANCISCO TRUJILLO – Colombian refugee

FRANCISCO TRUJILLO came to Brooks as a refugee after his work with Human Rights International in Colombia put his life in danger. He has embraced his new life in Brooks and tries to help the other Colombians that are in Brooks as temporary foreign workers to integrate into the society. He organizes volunteer groups to clean up the city on the weekends. Francisco worked at XL Foods Lakeside Packers Inc. but quit after three weeks and says “This work is not for the humans, this work is for the machines.”

“Some people don’t really like immigrants.”



EMELYN YABUT – Filipino store owner

EMELYN YABUT moved to Brooks five years ago to work at the local meat packing plant and now owns the Fil-Mart grocery store, which caters to the Filipinos living in Brooks. She is married with a son and is pregnant with her second child. Yabut describes how proud she is of herself that as an immigrant she has been able to start such a successful business. Yabut gives birth to a baby girl at the end of the documentary and says now that she has a boy and a girl that “makes her family perfect.”

“Since I came to Brooks blessings are non-stop.”

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS



Brandy Yanchyk

Executive Producer, Producer, Director and Writer

BRANDY YANCHYK HAS CREATED news features and documentaries for international television, radio and online for clients such as the BBC, CBC, OMNI Television and Deutsche Welle Radio, amongst others. *Brooks – The City of 100 Hellos* is Ms. Yanchyk's second television documentary. In 2008 she produced, wrote and directed *From Desert to Ice* for BBC World TV's programme *Our World*. The documentary followed the lives of nine Palestinian refugees from Iraq who were resettled in Iceland.

Before forming Brandy Y Productions Inc. in 2009, Ms. Yanchyk worked as a broadcast journalist at BBC World TV, BBC World News America and the BBC World Service in London, England for five years. She also has been a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Toronto, Edmonton and London, England. In 2009 she hosted 55 episodes of the CTV/ACCESS program *Alberta Primetime*.



Jeff Allen

Director of Photography

SINCE 1998, Jeff has earned a reputation as a top quality producer, director and cinematographer for his broadcast television, corporate and Internet video production work. Jeff has shot and produced a variety of feature stories, documentaries, Internet and corporate video projects across North and South America. In May 2010 he formed his own company, Jeff Allen Productions in Edmonton, Alberta. Since then he has leveraged his experience to partner with Brandy Y Productions Inc., Omni Television, BBC, Prairie Dog Film & TV, Shaw TV, and Horse Racing Alberta to broadcast (and webcast) important stories around the globe.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS



Sarah Taylor Editor

SARAH TAYLOR IS AN EIGHT-YEAR VETERAN editor with a wealth of broadcast and non-broadcast experience that includes network television series, magazine shows, and countless corporate and government video productions. She is the lead editor of the sketch comedy series *Caution: May Contain Nuts* airing on APTN, freelances on various productions and works for the Statusfirm Media Company. Previously she worked as an editor for Careers TV on ACCESS for four years.



Mark Zagorsky Composer

MARK ZAGORSKY WROTE the theme music for the documentary *Brooks - The City of 100 Hellos* and some of his other songs are featured in the documentary.

Mr. Zagorsky is a musician who has written and produced two CDs *Songs from the Badlands* and *If One Is Good...Two Is Better*. He is currently recording this third album.

Mr. Zagorsky is from Brooks, Alberta and studied music at the University of Lethbridge where he completed a Bachelor of Music Degree along with a Bachelor of Education Degree. Zagorsky's musical experiences have included a broad variety of performances in symphony, jazz, opera, music theatre and various country music performances. Singing, songwriting, playing guitar and trumpet highlight Zagorsky's musical talents.

PRODUCTION PHOTOS

