

Immigration and Settlement Strategy-Vernon, B.C.

Local Immigration Partnerships Council Meeting Minutes: September 17 2014

In Attendance: Juliette Cunningham *City of Vernon*, Carol Wutzke *VDISS*, Pam Myers *Nexus BC*, Jan Schulz *Family Resource Centre*, Jane Lister *Okanagan College*, Marcel Korver *Community Futures*, Dan Rogers *Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce*, Hailey Rilkoff *Downtown Vernon Association*, Tanya Osborne *Interior Health*, Alison Krick *Silver Star Ski Resort Ltd.*, Katie Moran *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, Annette Sharkey *SPCNO*, Wayne Robert *Urban Matters*, Brigitt Johnson *Consultant*

Regrets: Kevin Poole, *Economic Development & Tourism City of Vernon*, Tannis Nelson *RDNO*, Lara Konkin *DVA*, Jan Shumay *NOYFSS*, Jackie Kersey *SD #22*, Lynn Belsher *Nexus BC*

1. **Introductions:** Participants introduced themselves and the organization they represent.
2. **Settlement Strategy-Best Practices:** Wayne recapped the major steps in the project and presented criteria for determining best practices. He pointed out that what is commonly done is not necessarily a best practice and may not be relevant for our community. Ideas will be evaluated based on their:
 - i. Impact and effectiveness
 - ii. Relevance
 - iii. Innovation—Many communities are undertaking immigration strategies. How can Vernon differentiate itself?
 - iv. Purpose
 - v. Sustainability
 - vi. Transferability to our community.

Vision statements adopted by other Local Immigration Partnership Councils to guide their strategy development process were discussed by the group.

Partners in Action was suggested as a model of an effective committee in this community. A 15 member coordinating committee keeps track of temporary action teams that are created to address a specific issue. Action team members are drawn from the community based on their abilities (expertise, resources), have a specific task and clear goal, and disband when the task is accomplished. It is a way to mobilize the community and involve large numbers of people working collaboratively.

3. **Vision Development:** Wayne explained that the vision describes the direction of where the group wishes to go, and steers its resources in a common direction. In a discussion facilitated by Annette, Council members responded to the question:

Why are immigrants (and the creation of a strategy to attract immigrants) important to our community?

Growth & Diversity Growth Build a healthier community—economically, socially sustainable Create a thriving community Inclusive, diverse community Caring—shows that we care Making it the best possible place Beneficial to children: there's an outside world, and bringing the global community to Vernon Fill labor force needs Survivability—we need to open our doors Resilience Bring wealth	Equality and equity: equal opportunities and equal access New perspectives, ideas Bring Vernon onto the stage -create connections to other centers -regional linkages Complete communities Taking the silos down Being open Social benefit/obligation Diversity (we need to come back to what diversity means) Economic/social Sharing what we have here
---	---

The group agreed that a further discussion about diversity is needed.

Comments from the discussion included:

- Immigrants bring growth and diversity.
- They help to build a healthier community—economically, socially--one that is sustainable and thriving.
- Creating an inclusive, diverse community for newcomers makes it so for everyone in the community.
- It shows that the community cares and is interested in making this the best possible place.
- Success includes not just economic, but social success also.
- It is beneficial to our children to show there is an outside world. It brings the global community to the Vernon area, instead of people having to travel out if they can. It shows we participate in a global world sharing economic, social, food and cultures.
- Attracting immigrants will help us fill labor force needs in the long term.
- It will help ensure the survivability of our community and society in the face of the demographic shift we are facing.
- Immigrants bring wealth to the community through investment.
- Our labor force needs are broad based. Immigrants will contribute to the resilience of our community.
- Creating a community that attracts immigrants contributes to equality and equity, a strong middle class. Equal opportunities and equal access benefit everyone, not just immigrants.
- Immigrants can bring new perspectives and new ideas on issues because they may have a different pattern of thinking, or are familiar with other ways of doing things.
- Vernon may be able to participate on a bigger stage. The strategy and the connections to other centers may bring Vernon up to the level of bigger communities. Through regional representation we pool resources and can participate in opportunities we might not have otherwise.
- Complete communities are connected. Taking down the silos that divide organizations and groups is necessary for a community to be successful.
- We need to be open. If we lock the doors to our “paradise” and don’t let anyone else in, we are not thinking of sustainability.
- Vernon can be “cliquey.” It’s important to raise the awareness of people who have lived here for a long time.
- There is a social benefit and obligation. We live in the best time, the best place, have the best quality of life. Ours may be the first generation whose children are not as well off as we are. We have an obligation to help others.
- Diversity is not the same as immigration or newcomers. Is diversity part of the discussion? How are First Nations included?
- We need to define what diversity means to us.
- Sharing is an important word to capture: sharing the bounty of what we have. We need immigration, but we also have things to share.
- The quality of employment, safety and the work environment we are inviting immigrants into is important.
- The breadth of why this issue is important crosses economic and social boundaries.

4. **Draft Communication Plan:** Wayne presented the draft communication plan, focusing on how project communication will take place and how to get engagement from the community. Group discussion focused on some of the barriers to, and sensitivities about, immigrants that may exist. They included:
- The fear that jobs will be taken away from local Canadians
 - The need for safe and accessible child care
 - More pressure on already strained social programs, which residents are already being taxed for
 - Regulations, licensing requirements and red tape
 - Whether immigrants have adequate training
 - Racism, discrimination, biases and myths exist around immigrants and immigration
 - Any change can be difficult
 - Increasing the population adds to pressures on local resources such as water and food
 - Stereotypes exist—what does the community think an immigrant is?
 - Confusion and misunderstanding exists about the temporary foreign worker program
 - General apathy about involvement or participating in change
 - A dialogue with First Nations is needed

Key questions to answer in the communications strategy are:

1. Who are we talking to?
2. What will resonate with them?

For the next meeting, members of the council were asked to consider how their organizations could participate in the communication plan and what channels of communication they could potentially offer.

5. **Community Mapping:** Wayne explained that community mapping will consist of inventorying the assets, capabilities and relationships that already exist in the community to serve immigrants. The information will be gathered partly through interviews with Council members and will be presented at the next meeting.

6. **Next Meeting:** **December 3 2014 10-12 am**
3rd Floor Board Room
Community Futures
3105 33rd Street

**VERNON
LOCAL
IMMIGRATION
PARTNERSHIPS
COUNCIL**



Funded by:

Financé par :



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada