

Immigration and Settlement Strategy-Vernon, B.C.

Local Immigration Partnerships Council

Meeting Minutes: December 3 2014

In Attendance: Jan Schulz *Family Resource Centre*, Jane Lister *Okanagan College*, Cheryl Bannoya *Okanagan Shuswap Filipino Association*, Marcel Korver *Community Futures*, Kevin Poole, *Economic Development & Tourism City of Vernon*, Tannis Nelson *RDNO*, Juliette Cunningham *City of Vernon*, Lara Konkin *DVA*, Tara Thompson *Vernon Branch Okanagan Regional Library*, Heather Press *Tolko Industries Ltd.*, Julie Steffler *Interior Health*, Dauna Grant *Vernon Public Art Gallery*, Annette Sharkey *SPCNO*, Wayne Robert *Urban Matters*, Ted Treller *Urban Matters*, Lorelei Fiset *Pinnacle Communications & Media Inc.*, Brigitt Johnson *Consultant*

Regrets: Carol Wutzke *VDISS*, Pam Myers *Nexus BC*, Lynn Belsher *Nexus BC*, Dan Rogers *Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce*, Lisa Krushen *NOYFSS*, Alison Krick *Silver Star Ski Resort Ltd*, Marlene Higgins *Kal Tire*

1. **Introductions:** Participants introduced themselves and the organization they represent.
2. **Web Site Updates:** Brigitt advised that Agendas, Minutes, and finalized documents would be available through the Social Planning Council web site at www.socialplanning.ca under the Local Immigration Partnerships Council tab.

As part of the official launch of the www.welcomevernon.ca web site, the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce did a media release and presentation during Small Business Week in October. A Local Immigration Partnerships Council NEWS tab has been added next to the Home page. Short profiles and articles about events and organizations related to the Immigration Strategy project will be featured here monthly. Traffic to the site has already increased as a result of the launch.

3. **Public Awareness/Education Research:** Annette introduced Lorelei Fiset of Pinnacle Communications & Media Inc. who will be researching the components of a public education and awareness plan. With the support of the funder, Citizenship and Immigration, this component of the project has been moved up in the timeline. Lorelei will be conducting research to evaluate community public attitudes towards immigration. This information will help shape the development of a public education campaign. It will also be useful base line data against which strategy implementation can be evaluated in the future. A 10 question telephone survey of 300 random residents in Vernon is planned for January to February. She is also reviewing relevant research done nationally.
4. **Communication Plan- Finalization:** Wayne briefly reviewed the purpose of the communication plan: Engagement, Education, Explain (goals and benefits of the project), and Awareness. Council members volunteered communication channels (newsletters, email blasts, bulletins, etc.) their organizations have that could be used to help reach out to target groups in the community over the course of the project. Any additional ideas can be emailed to Wayne for inclusion in the final Communication Plan.
5. **Community Mapping:** Wayne recapped the major steps of the project timeline and the 17 characteristics of a Welcoming Community as presented in a national study. These 17 characteristics are being used as a starting point for community mapping. Once the Council has given its input, these characteristics will also be presented to target groups, including immigrants, as a way of evaluating the community.

Wayne reviewed the key sections of information used to describe each characteristic: Outcomes, Key Processes and Structures, Players, and Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators. Employment was used as an example.

Council members were asked to review the Players section for their organization and let Wayne know directly about any changes or omissions.

In the discussion regarding employment, the observation was made that employers may not be aware of screening and interview biases that may prevent them from considering, interviewing and hiring immigrants. One example is the challenge of evaluating and recognizing foreign education and work credentials. Training and a tool kit for employers were suggested as ways to overcome these barriers. (Note: Some existing resources for employers are available through IEC-BC and Human Resources Management Association web sites at www.iecbc.ca and www.hrma.ca .)

The question of how “recent immigrant” is being defined for the purpose of the project was raised. After some discussion, the consensus was that the general target for the project is immigrants who have been in Canada 10 years or less, but that the preference is to be inclusionary and let immigrants self-identify, rather than excluding anyone who would like to participate. It was agreed that the experiences of having to adjust to a new community and culture were key components of the immigrant experience for the purposes of developing our strategy.

The question of whether international students should be included as a target group was also raised. The group felt that the experiences of international students could be a good indicator of how welcoming the community is presently. Some international students may come here with the intention of immigrating. Including international students can provide valuable insight, but we may wish to identify them as a separate group if possible. School district 22 has a very active international student program with almost 200 participants.

Council members broke into 4 working groups to review each characteristic, brainstorm quantitative and qualitative indicators for each outcome, and identify the 3 most pertinent indicators. Group input was collected and will be incorporated into the document.

6. **Next Steps:** As there was not enough time to work through each of the characteristics, the Council requested a follow up working meeting to finish these discussions. It has been scheduled for December 18, from 10-12 am.

7. **Next Meetings:** **December 18 2014 10-12 am** (additional working meeting)
3rd Floor Board Room
Community Futures
3105 33rd Street

March 25 2015 10-12 am
3rd Floor Board Room
Community Futures
3105 33rd Street

