

Immigration and Settlement Strategy-Vernon, B.C.

Local Immigration Partnerships Council

Meeting Minutes: February 24 2016

In Attendance: Alison Krick *Silver Star Ski Resort Ltd*, Juliette Cunningham *City of Vernon*, Kristie Henning *Vernon Branch Okanagan Regional Library*, Cheryl Bannoya *Club Filipino Okanagan Shuswap*, Pam Myers *Nexus BC*, Dan Rogers *Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce*, Tannis Nelson *RDNO*, Karine Posnanski *Translator*, Annette Sharkey *SPCNO*, Wayne Robert *Urban Matters*, Brigitt Johnson *Consultant*

Regrets: Lynn Belsher *Nexus BC*, Lisa Krushen *NOYFSS*, Lara Konkin *DVA*, Dauna Grant *Vernon Public Art Gallery*, Heather Press *Tolko Industries Ltd.*, Narinder Bal *APNI Director*, Tanya Osborne *Interior Health*, Lisa deBoer *School District 22*, Jane Lister *Okanagan College*, Scott Manjak *Family Resource Centre*, Kevin Poole, *Economic Development & Tourism City of Vernon*, Marlene Higgins *Kal Tire*, Marcel Korver *Community Futures*, Carol Wutzke *VDISS*,

- 1. Introductions:** Participants briefly introduced themselves and the organization they represent.
- 2. Review Vernon LIPC Immigration & Settlement Strategy:** Wayne gave an overview of the process followed and the research completed over the past 2 years, resulting in the development of the Vernon LIPC Immigration & Settlement Strategy.

Community Mapping: Characteristics of Welcoming Communities

One of the first exercises undertaken by the Vernon LIPC was a review of other LIPC projects and best practices. The 17 characteristics of a welcoming community as reviewed in the study funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Characteristics of a Welcoming Community March 2010) were used as a base to evaluate who in Vernon is playing what role. The results are summarized in the community mapping page.

Labor Market & Investment Review

The market to attract investment and skilled labor is hyper competitive: everyone wants the same thing. The national, provincial and regional contexts were included and are important because of the potential for synergies. Vernon by itself is not known internationally, and is not big enough to compete by itself.

Vernon's private sector was engaged through interviews and surveys. The high need for business succession is a significant part of Vernon's investment context. Vernon has 90% small businesses whose aging owners often close rather than selling. This is a critical economic development issue for Vernon and all rural communities in Canada.

Immigrant Perspectives

For the purposes of the strategy development, the CIC immigrant classifications were used. Vernon has primarily family and economic immigrants, which are the focus of the Immigration Strategy. It is recognized that a number of refugees are now expected to come to the community, and the North Okanagan Refugee Committee, with links to LIPC, has been created to provide support for them.

Surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews with immigrants to Vernon were used to collect information about the community through the lens of the immigrant. Vernon is a second port of entry for immigrants: most come to another Canadian city before moving to Vernon, but surprisingly, 47% of those interviewed came directly to Vernon.

- Jobs and career opportunities, and family and friends were cited equally as the top reasons for moving to Vernon.
- A safe place for family life and accessibility to education were the highest ranked community characteristics.
- 61% had friends or family that left Vernon again, mainly for economic reasons

Vision Statement & Strategic Goals

The strategic vision statement represents a common view of what Vernon LIPC members would like to see the community be. It is:

Vernon is a diverse and welcoming city where we collaborate to build and share a future of meaningful opportunities.

The four strategic priorities are:

1. *Target and promote newcomer engagement in economic opportunities and investment.*
2. *Ensure Vernon is a welcoming community that supports strong social inclusion for all newcomers.*
3. *Support newcomers and the community at large in their efforts to create a healthy and resilient community.*
4. *Promote and foster enhanced newcomer attraction and retention within the greater Vernon area.*

3. **Implementation Plan & Action Items:** Wayne provided an overview of the implementation plan included in the strategy and the action items under each strategic goal that have been prioritized by the LIPC through committee discussion, exercises and surveys. Existing action items reflect good work already being done in the community. Planned action items offer opportunities for LIPC members to connect and provide additional support. New action items represent gaps that LIPC members would like to see addressed. Linking financial and other resources to the action items will be a consideration for which items are implemented first. The implementation plan has a 3 year time horizon.
4. **Implementation Model & Funding:** Annette provided information about the implementation model used so successfully for Partners in Action that will be applied to implement the strategy.

Partners in Action Model

Partners in Action has existed since 2008. The vision is a safe, healthy, inclusive community in which to live, work and grow. It is a multi-sectoral group brought together to look at social issues, especially homelessness, food security, and affordable housing. The mandate is to create community action teams to address specific issues.

A coordinating committee reviews and approves requests to create an action team around an issue. To be approved, the issue must fit in the key focus areas, there must be a beginning and an end, and the initiative must be sustainable in the community. Partners in Action will help launch, but does not host ongoing initiatives.

There have been 93 action teams since 2008, which have included 32 non-profit organizations, 30 levels of government, and 1100 participants. In that time, Partners in Action has attracted capital funding of \$10 million and project funding of \$700,000.

This model will work well for LIPC moving forward because it uses LIPC member time wisely, and LIPC members themselves are not responsible for all the implementation. The LIPC will keep the bigger picture in mind while the community works together collectively to have an impact on priority action items.

Funding & Resources

Vernon LIPC members have already identified some resources they have available to offer, such as meeting space, staff time or financial resources. CIC is also contributing funding towards a marketing plan and public education campaign. Additional funding is available through Embrace BC for 10 profiles of multicultural champions in the community which will be published in the newspaper. A multicultural garden is being planned at Patchwork Farms that will feature plants and herbs from different cultures.

5. **Community Connections:** Whether through work or personal activities and interests, LIPC members are already connected to many organizations and committees in the community. Council members can raise awareness of and speak to the interests of immigrants through these connections. The extent of this sphere of influence has been captured and included in the strategy document. These connections may be helpful in achieving action items.
6. **Next Steps:** Consultants Wayne Robert and Brigitt Johnson will be completing their parts of the project at the end of March. Lorelei Fiset of Pinnacle Consulting will be rejoining the project to work on the public education campaign and marketing strategy. She will review the marketing materials already in place, identify gaps and recommend what is needed to fill those gaps. Annette will take over project coordination and reporting requirements, and will be in touch with LIPC members in the near future with a call for the next meeting.
7. **LIPC Feedback:** LIPC members were asked to complete and return an evaluation questionnaire. It will also be made available electronically to anyone that was not at the meeting and forms part of the final report to the funder, CIC.
8. **Next Meeting:** Council members were asked to provide input about the desired frequency of meetings. The consensus at the meeting was that LIPC meetings continue to be quarterly, with the ability to adjust as needed.

