

## Immigration and Settlement Strategy-Vernon, B.C.

### Local Immigration Partnerships Council Meeting Minutes June 26, 2014

**In Attendance:** Juliette Cunningham *City of Vernon*, Kevin Poole, *Economic Development & Tourism City of Vernon*, Carol Wutzke *VDISS*, Jan Shumay *NOYFSS*, Marcel Korver *Community Futures*, Lynn Belsher *Nexus BC*, Dan Rogers *Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce*, Annette Sharkey *SPCNO*, Wayne Robert *Urban Matters*, Brigitt Johnson *Consultant*

**Regrets:** Tannis Nelson *RDNO*, Lara Konkin *DVA*, Pam Myers *Nexus BC*, Jan Schulz *Family Resource Centre*, Jane Lister *Okanagan College*, Jackie Kersey *SD #22*, Tanya Osborne *Interior Health*, Alison Krick *Silver Star Ski Resort Ltd.*

1. **Introductions:** Each of the members attending introduced themselves and the organization they represent.
2. **Welcoming Communities 2013/14:** Annette reviewed the seven Welcoming Communities projects completed in 2014 with funding through Welcome BC and the Government of Canada. Partnerships were developed with DVA, VDISS, Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Nexus BC and SD #22 to implement community projects with the goal of creating a more welcoming community for new immigrants.
3. **Immigration & Settlement Strategy-Vernon 2014/16:** Annette gave an overview of the project and terminology being used in communications. Social Planning Council continues to be the host agency for the project. Two year funding has been provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to develop an *Immigration and Settlement Strategy for Vernon*. The Welcoming Communities steering committee will now be known as the Local Immigration Partnerships Council. Membership has been broadened to build an even more extensive community network.

Canada will need to depend on immigration for social and economic growth in the future, and Vernon will be competing not just with other Canadian communities, but internationally, to attract skilled and entrepreneurial immigrants. This project will be key to creating a plan for achieving that and bringing the cultural, social and economic benefits immigrants bring to our community.

4. **Areas of Focus:** Each of the members attending was invited to bring forward general areas of interest in the project context.
  - a. Kevin Poole- Labor projections for the Okanagan suggest 75,000 additional skilled workers will be required by the year 2020. New immigrants are an important potential source to fill this gap. Key issues are how to attract new immigrant investors to the community and embrace and retain them once they are here. Succession planning and investment in new businesses, and where to focus marketing efforts are key areas of focus.
  - b. Lynn Belcher- Nexus BC coordinated the pilot diversity workshop for Vernon as part of Welcoming Communities and is interested in identifying ways to offer ongoing training and attract more participants.
  - c. Carol Wutzke- Some prior work was done several years ago around attracting immigrant entrepreneurs. A balance is needed between attracting immigrant entrepreneurs and immigrant families and refugees. A family reunification/refugee center for immigrants, similar to one recently established in the Lower Mainland, could be considered for the Okanagan. Questions to consider as part of the project include: What services do immigrants need now? How should they be provided? What is CIC's strategy and how does that inform the local strategy? How do we attract and how do we keep new immigrants? How does the community get involved?
  - d. Marcel Korver- As immigrants themselves in 2008, he and his wife faced the issues and challenges of adapting to a new country and community. One major challenge that needs to be

addressed is expediting the process of getting university and professional credentials recognized. We are talking about attracting skilled workers, but many who come cannot work in their original professions because out of country credentials are not accepted and the re-certification process is complex and/or lengthy. Addressing this issue is as important as a general sense of welcome from the community.

- e. Jan Shumay- At present NOYFSS does not have specialized programs specifically for new immigrants, but as service providers to the community, they are open to developing services that fit particular populations. NOYFSS does have immigrant clients and at times struggle to hire or find someone to bridge gaps related to servicing those clients.
  - f. Dan Rogers- The Chamber is part of current discussions related to the federal temporary foreign worker program. More generally, succession planning, labor market needs and employment needs are common issues faced by Chamber members. As a member of the provincial and national organizations, the Chamber can potentially play a role in lobbying for policy implementation as the project moves forward.
  - g. Juliette Cunningham- As the volunteer liaison from the City of Vernon, she has interest in supporting a diverse cultural base in the City. As is often the case, other levels of government impact the ability of local government to effect change. However, there are opportunities for the City to lobby on issues that arise, either through UBCM or FCM.
  - h. Wayne Robert- Connecting with LIPC from other communities and forming a larger, coordinated group to address some of the macro issues was suggested.
5. **Terms of Reference:** The Terms of Reference for the Local Immigration Partnerships Council were circulated in advance of the meeting. A question regarding attendance and the protocol if more than 3 meetings are missed was raised. Briggitt and Annette explained that formal terms of reference were a requirement of the funder. Because the LIPC meetings are held only quarterly, input from LIPC members is important for consistency, creating synergies and to keep the project moving forward. Meeting attendance is therefore important, and is also part of the evaluation framework of the project's success. Notifying the Chair of absences in advance and arranging to have an alternate attend meetings is a way to ensure everyone's perspective is included in the meeting discussions.

**Draft Work Plan:** Wayne presented the project approach and work plan. *Urban Matters* ([www.urbanmatters.ca](http://www.urbanmatters.ca)) is a social venture launched in 2013 that aims to build upon the nearly 4 decades of success in community based consulting and organizational development established by Urban Systems Ltd. ([www.urbansystems.ca](http://www.urbansystems.ca)). The broad mission at Urban Systems Ltd. is to see communities in Canada develop to achieve all that they aspire to; 'Spirit in Service for Vibrant Communities' is the simply profound vision statement." A participatory planning approach will be emphasized. In addition to interviewing service organizations, the private sector will be consulted for strategy development and implementation.

The work plan includes a review of what the community has done in the past, and a focus on what does the community want and need now, and how is that differentiated from what other communities completing immigration strategies are doing. Recently completed labor market survey information will be incorporated. Given the two year time frame to develop the strategy, there will be an emphasis on not just research, but also points of synergy and short term implementation opportunities.

The major deliverables are: Community Mapping; Labor Market and Investment Research-including skill misalignments and barriers for employers ie demand issues; Strategy Development; Researching the Components of a Marketing Strategy to attract entrepreneurial and skilled immigrants.

Implementation will be in a six step process: Project Launch & Communication Plan; Building on Local Successes; Labor Market Analysis; Strategic Planning; Researching the Components of a Marketing Strategy; Finalizing Deliverables and Strategy.

6. **Committee Membership:** Brigitt reviewed the list of LIPC members and community organizations, and sectors represented. Members are invited to bring forward the names of other individuals or organizations, either as representatives on the LIPC or for inclusion in future stakeholder and focus group discussions. UBCO and representatives from the corporate sector were suggested. Wayne and Brigitt will maintain a database of contacts to draw on as the project moves forward.
7. **Quarterly Meeting Schedule:** The quarterly meeting schedule for the entire project period was circulated ahead of the meeting. LIPC members were asked to bookmark the dates and times, to notify the Project Coordinator ahead of time if they cannot attend, and to try to send an alternate to ensure information flow to and from the meetings.
8. **Next Meeting:**           **September 17 2014 10-12 am**  
  3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Board Room  
  Community Futures  
  3105 33<sup>rd</sup> Street

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