



**WELCOMING  
COMMUNITIES  
VERNON**  
[welcomevernon.ca](http://welcomevernon.ca)

## **Welcoming Communities Vernon Immigration and Settlement Strategy- Vernon B.C.**

### **Project Overview**

Welcoming Communities Vernon is a program to support and attract new immigrants and make our community welcoming and inclusive. It is hosted by Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan (SPCNO).

### **Background**

Welcoming Communities was originally launched by the Province of BC in fall 2012 to support new immigrants and ensure they feel valued and part of local communities. There is an understanding that immigrants provide important cultural diversity to local communities as well as skills, investment and an entrepreneurial spirit. Canada has an aging demographic with a declining birth rate and will need to depend on immigration for social and economic growth in the upcoming decades. According to Statistics Canada, approximately 11% of Vernon's population is immigrants. Over half are of European descent; the majority of the balance are from the Middle East and Asia; and 10% from the U.S. Of the 330 most recent immigrants, 125 came from the Middle East and Asia, with U.S. and Europe sharing the balance.

In January 2013, over 30 participants attended a community consultation in Vernon and provided feedback for the creation of the Welcoming Communities Action Plan. Seven projects were identified for implementation, and partnerships were developed to deliver the projects within the community. The input and results gathered through this first phase of Welcoming Communities will inform the next step of the program.

### **Immigration and Settlement Strategy for Vernon B.C.**

The second phase of Welcoming Communities is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and focuses on a locally driven, broad-based strategic planning process. It will engage a wide variety of community stakeholders in further developing partnerships and capacity to support the integration of new immigrants.

The goal is to develop an *Immigration and Settlement Strategy* to attract and retain immigrants, including key priorities for action and a corresponding implementation plan.

Newcomers' needs, and assets and gaps in community services available to them, will be reviewed. Additional research will include:

- Demographics and trends in the community and immigrant population.
- Labor market demographics and investment opportunities.
- Available services and capacity of existing service providers.
- Assessment of community knowledge of immigration.
- Identification of barriers to integration in key areas such as employment, housing, education and health care.

Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan continues to be the umbrella host agency. The Local Partnerships Council will be the steering committee, helping to engage existing and new stakeholders, and providing input into the planning process through quarterly meetings. The project has a two year time horizon, from April 2014 to March 2016.

## Welcoming Communities Vernon Phase 1 Projects and Results:

Projects	Lead Agency	Description	Final Results
<b>Live Work Play Vernon</b>	Chamber of Commerce	The Live Work Play project was designed to be a resource for employers of new immigrants, new immigrant entrepreneurs, and their families. It includes printed packages, and a web site with video. The website will be maintained by the Vernon Chamber.	<b>The website can be viewed at <a href="http://www.welcomevernon.ca">www.welcomevernon.ca</a> and printed materials are available through the Chamber of Commerce.</b>
<b>Diversity Training Feasibility Study</b>	Nexus BC	This project was designed to assess the interest and commitment in the community for an on-going diversity training program. The project included a pilot training session attended by fifteen businesses.	<b>The Diversity Training Feasibility Study has been completed. For the complete report see <a href="http://www.socialplanning.ca">www.socialplanning.ca</a></b>
<b>Public Audit</b>	Social Planning Council	The public audit was designed to assess the welcoming aspects of a number of public sites from the point of view of the new immigrant. Several public buildings and services, and spaces were assessed by new immigrants using a set of criteria. From this assessment, several implementation activities were to be identified and developed within the timeframe of the program.	<b>A Public Audit has been completed and a number of recommendations have been implemented. Branding, including a logo and rack card was developed. For the complete report see <a href="http://www.socialplanning.ca">www.socialplanning.ca</a></b>
<b>Multicultural Community Event Audit</b>	Vernon Immigrant Services	The multicultural event audit was designed to assess current community events to determine how they could become more welcoming to new immigrants and/or to pilot a new event within the community.	<b>Vernon Immigrant Services partnered with the DVA to introduce a multicultural theme into the Light Up event in November.</b>
<b>School Inclusionary Teams</b>	School District #22	Inclusionary Teams were designed to create more welcoming spaces at schools and provided tools and resources to student teams to	<b>To date, 9 of the 17 schools in the district launched Inclusionary Teams and hosted</b>

		implement activities that would honour diversity and multiculturalism.	<b>school based activities.</b>
<b>Public Art Project</b>	Downtown Vernon Association	The public art project was designed as a participatory project to include new immigrants in the production of public art piece, while showcasing multicultural diversity and appreciation to the wider public. Immigrants worked on a mosaic tile that represented a fabric of the world under the guidance of a local artist. These have been installed in a public square with accompanying signage. A public launch of the art project took place in Civic Square in November 2013.	<b>The <i>Fabrics of the World</i> art project is on display at Civic Square with interpretive signage.</b>
<b>Multi-Cultural Place Feasibility Study</b>	Social Planning Council and Vernon Immigrant Services	The Multicultural Place Feasibility Study was developed to research the possibility of creating a space in the community to address identified gaps. These included: increasing Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society capacity to provide recreational space for New Immigrants; enhancing and accommodating multi-cultural organizations' need for meeting and event space; as well as to help raise the profile of multiculturalism in the community.	<b>The Multi-Cultural Place Feasibility Study has been completed. For the complete report see <a href="http://www.socialplanning.ca">www.socialplanning.ca</a></b>

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Fabrics of the World Art Mosaic