

Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan

**WELCOMING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM
ACTION PLAN
VERNON, B.C.**

BACKGROUND

January 2013



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Community Futures North Okanagan

Okanagan College -Vernon Campus

North Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society

Family Resource Centre

First Nations Friendship Centre

North Okanagan Employment and Enhancement Society

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Introduction to Immigration

Canada has one of the highest immigration rates in the world, welcoming about 250,000 new permanent residents each year. Immigration is fundamental to the development of Canada's economy, society and culture, and Canada strives to be a world leader in maximizing its benefits.

The majority of Canadians support immigration and their support is underpinned by a belief in immigration as an economic benefit and pride in Canadian multiculturalism. The Multiculturalism Program supports the government's effort to build an integrated, socially cohesive society. Its objectives emphasize fostering intercultural and interfaith understanding, civic memory and pride, respect for core democratic values grounded in history, and equal opportunity for all Canadians.

Immigrants come to Canada in different immigration classes. There are eight broad immigration classes, which can be grouped down into two major classes, Economic Class and Non-Economic Class.

- Economic Class immigrants are selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy. This class of immigrants includes members of the Federal Skilled Worker, Provincial Nominee, Business, Live-in Caregiver, and Canadian Experience Classes.
- Non-Economic Class immigrants are members of the Family Class, Refugee Class, and Others.

British Columbia

International migrants to British Columbia's regions arrive as permanent residents (immigrants) or temporary residents (temporary foreign workers, international students, humanitarian cases, and others). Over the past five years, approximately 40,000 new immigrants arrived to B.C.

every year. The number of temporary residents in B.C. has increased over the period from 96,000 in 2005 to 142,000 in 2009.

Permanent and temporary residents come to different communities and regions of B.C. bringing their skills, knowledge, business experience, and culture. They settle permanently or temporarily in



communities and help to support the local economy and invigorate communities by providing labour, supporting local business and sending their children to local schools.

Of the 200,000 immigrants who came to B.C. in the years 2005 to 2009, most chose Mainland – Southwest as their initial destination. Of the remaining 10% of immigrants, half chose Vancouver Island – Coast and a quarter chose Thompson – Okanagan.

Thompson - Okanagan

- The Thompson - Okanagan Development Region received 5,765 new immigrants.
- This represented 3% of all B.C. immigrant arrivals over the time period.
- Of all the regions, Thompson - Okanagan had the lowest percentage (37%) arriving with university education and the highest percentage (34%) who came with high school or less.
- Over three quarters (78%) of immigrants arrived in the region with English skills.
- The primary source countries of immigrants to the region were the United Kingdom, India and the United States.

Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada,

http://www.welcomebc.ca/local/wbc/docs/communities/immigration_trends_2010.pdf

Who are Vernon's Immigrants? A snapshot

According to the 2006 Census Data, of the 35,944 people reported living in Vernon, 4,175, or 11.6% were immigrants.

Countries of Origin

All Immigrants

Total number of Immigrants in Vernon	4,180
Europe	2,505
Asian and Middle East	825
United States of America	425

Very Recent Immigrants

The top three country of origin for *very recent immigrants* to Vernon (landing between January 1, 2001 and May 16, 2006) were:

Total Number of Very Recent Immigrants in Vernon	330
Asia and the Middle East	125
United States of America	90
Europe	45

Language

Over ninety percent of immigrants stated that they had knowledge of English, with 40% stating English as their mother tongue, followed by 19.2% declaring German as their mother tongue, with Punjabi the next highest at 8.4%.

Age Distribution

Of the 4,180 immigrants in Vernon about 32% were aged 45-64, about 20% were aged 25-44, 18% were aged 65-74, with about 21% over 75. The remaining 8% were aged under 24yrs

Labour Force Integration

(Male and Female)

	Immigrants	Total Population
Participation Rate	45.5	58.8
Employment Rate	43.1	55.1
Unemployment Rate 5.1	6.3	

Occupations

The top occupations for immigrants were in the following sectors:

Sales and Service	19%
Trades and Transport	17%
Business and Admin	15%
Primary Industry	10%
Education and Gov't service	9%

Education

Of the 25-64 year old immigrants (2,210)

	Immigrants	Total Population
No diploma, certificate, or degree	13.1%	13.1%
High school certificate or equivalent	23.3%	30.7%
Apprenticeship or trade diploma or certificate	15.8%	13.9%
College certificate or diploma	20.1%	22%
Bachelors Degree	12.7%	10%
Advanced Degree	3.2%	2%

Income

Of the total 4,180 immigrants 15 yrs and older in Vernon, 3,960 had an income.

The average income reported for 2005 for immigrants was \$29,469 and \$30,142 for the total population

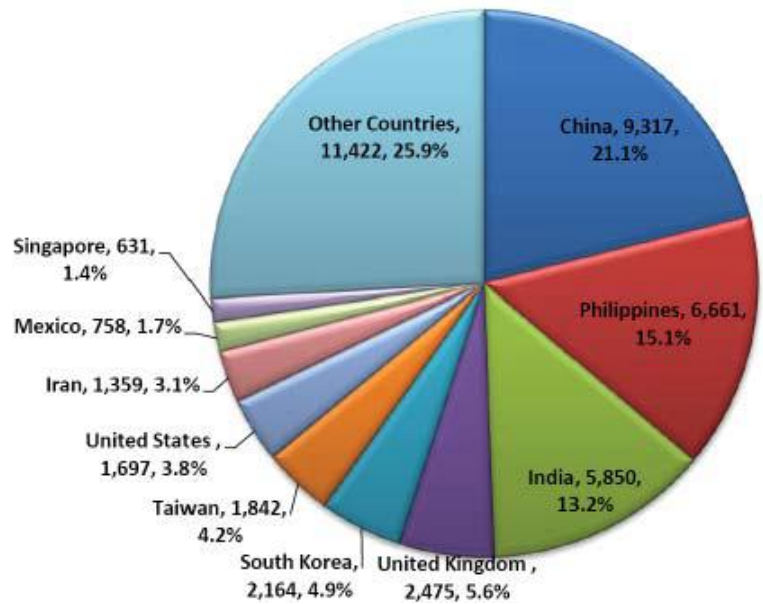
For those working a full year (875), the average income for immigrants was \$45,168 and \$43,812 for the total population (8,830).

Prevalence of Low income

Both sexes	Immigrants	Total Population
Persons in private households	4,165	35,030
Experiencing low income		
Before tax	16.6%	18.3%
After tax	8.9%	11.8%

Data Source: Adapted from 2006 Census, Statistics Canada

Top ten source countries of immigrants to BC 2010



Data Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

HIGHLIGHTS (2010-2020):

Regional Labour Market Outlook Thompson-Okanagan from WorkBC

- Thompson-Okanagan is expected to have modest employment demand growth over the next decade at 1.1 per cent annual average, slightly lower than B.C.'s demand growth of 1.4 per cent.
- Over the next 10 years, the highest employment growth in the region is expected to occur in industries related to *Health Care and Social Assistance, Professional, Scientific and Managerial, Accommodation and Food Services, Agriculture, and Utilities.*
- Shortage in labour supply is projected for the region starting 2014 and will continue towards 2020.
- Occupations with the highest cumulative shortage within the 10-year outlook period are forecast to be in *Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks, Cleaners, Assisting Occupations in Support of Health Services, and Paralegals, Social Services Workers and Occupations in Education and Religion.*
- Health related occupations such as *Nurse Supervisors and Registered Nurses, Physicians, Dentists and Veterinarians, and Assisting Occupations in Support of Health Services* are expected to have the highest employment demand growth in the region within the next decade.

Data Source: <http://www.workbc.ca/Statistics/Labour-Market/Pages/Labour-Market.aspx>

What Services Exist for Immigrants?

Federally

Immigration is an area of shared jurisdiction between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. In provinces and territories outside Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia, Citizenship and Immigration Canada manages settlement services, with different forms of co-management and partnerships. Through agreements with CIC, the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec have been responsible for the design, delivery and management of settlement services in their respective jurisdictions, supported by federal funding. For all jurisdictions outside of Quebec, funding for settlement services is allocated based on the proportion of immigrants in each jurisdiction.

Following the 2012 Budget, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) advised British Columbia and Manitoba that to better support the federal responsibility for nation building, the federal government would be resuming management of CIC-funded settlement services in those provinces within the next two years. This will allow CIC to provide consistent, effective and efficient settlement services across the country (outside of Quebec), and strengthen its federal leadership for ensuring comparable results for newcomers nationwide.

From: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/annual-report-2012/section4.asp>

Free services for immigrants to Canada include:

- language classes
- help finding a job
- help filling out forms and applications
- information about community services



Provincially

Through a federal-provincial agreement, British Columbia provides help directly to newcomers in that province. These services include:

Settlement Information and Support

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) is a program that provides supports to help newcomer children and their families to settle in their schools and communities.

Settlement Information and Support Services helps newcomers to settle into their community and gain an awareness of BC's services and systems.

English Language

English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) provides basic and intermediate level English training for adult newcomers to Canada. ELSA is free to students.

English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are available at public post secondary institutions across British Columbia. The ESL programs provide language instruction at basic, intermediate and advanced levels to people whose first language is not English.

English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program (ESLSAP) provides tutoring for immigrant and refugees in small and remote BC communities to help them improve their English.

Community Connection

The *Host Volunteer Program* provides opportunities to connect newcomers with Canadian residents and build networks to support their integration process.

Employment and Labour Market

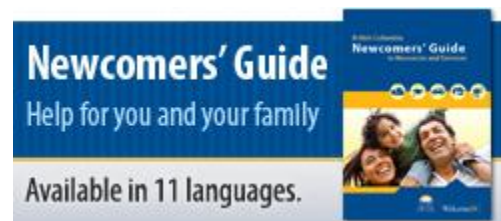
The *Skills Connect for Immigrants Program* is an employment bridging program that helps skilled immigrants connect to jobs in BC that build on their pre-arrival skills, training, knowledge, and experience.

Local Related Service Agencies and Programs

Service Canada – Vernon Centre

This is a Federal Government Department that offers a multitude of program and services to Canadian Citizens, Immigrants and Newcomers to Canada. You will find services such as

- Local Job Bank
- Social Insurance Numbers
- Employment Insurance
- Local Labour Market Information
- GST Credits, Passports, and Apprentice Grants



- Information is also available to the Newcomer on The Canadian Citizenship Program, Host Program, and Immigration Loans Program. Permanent Resident Program and the Right of Permanent Resident Fee Loan and Temporary Resident Visa Program.

Vernon and District Immigrant Services

A local non-profit agency that provides ESL classes, settlement services and employment services to immigrants in Greater Vernon.

Community Futures North Okanagan

Community Futures North Okanagan is a community based not-for-profit society offering business and employer services, and employment assistance services.

North Okanagan Employment Enhancement Society (NOEES)

NOEES is a non-profit society providing employment related services to residents of the North Okanagan. They currently host the Skills Connect for Immigrants program.

Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan

Host agency for a number of related community development and social planning projects and activities including a Multiculturalism Dialogue, Embrace BC Organizing Against Racism and Hate Regional Network development, and most recently a series of Welcoming Communities Background Paper Welcoming and Inclusive Communities initiatives.

Okanagan College – Vernon Campus

A local community college serving residents of the North Okanagan as well as students from across Canada and around the globe.

School District # 22

Serving Vernon and area's approximately 8500 students Kindergarten through Grade 12.

International Student Program

Global Education Program

K-12 French Immersion

Aboriginal Education Department

Welcoming Communities

Introduction

Over the years, a variety of service agencies in the Vernon area have been active proponents in creating a more welcoming and inclusive community. These initiatives have created stronger partnerships among the agencies and provided programs and projects that benefit the community. Each of these projects strived to help Vernon residents recognize and respect



differences, while finding a common ground in the places where they live, work, play, worship, and learn. These initiatives are summarized in the following list..

- Organizing Against Racism and Hate Regional Network Participation (Embrace BC)
- Welcoming Communities Action Plan
- Interfaith Bridging Project
- Dialogue on Multiculturalism
- Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneurial Immigrants in Rural B.C.
- North Okanagan Community Response to Racism
- Multicultural Health Fair (annual)
- National Aboriginal Day

As more newcomers and immigrants move to, or show interest in relocating to the area, it is important to ensure that Vernon is a place that welcomes newcomers, considers their needs and helps to facilitate their successful integration into the community.

What is a Welcoming and Inclusive Community?

A welcoming and inclusive community promotes the full participation of all residents in the social, cultural and economic life of the region without discrimination.

Individuals in welcoming communities are:

- helpful to newcomers
- open to new ideas and customs, and
- recognize the contributions newcomers make

Diversity means respect and understanding for differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, status, age, abilities or beliefs. This means more than simple tolerance: it means embracing and celebrating the whole community.

From: http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/communities/becoming_informed/index.page?WT.svl=LeftNav

About WelcomeBC

The Government of British Columbia recognizes the important role that immigration plays in helping to build a strong province. WelcomeBC helps ensure new British Columbians are able to settle, gain employment, become active members of their communities, and contribute fully to the social and economic prosperity of B.C.



Launched on June 13, 2007, WelcomeBC is a broad strategic framework led by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation. It brings immigration, settlement and immigration-related labour market services under a single service umbrella.

Since its inception, WelcomeBC has continued to enhance its programs and launch new services and initiatives to help newcomers to settle into B.C., including services for newcomers, and information about English language courses, employment, health, and education services, as well as helping B.C. meet a critical labour market need by bringing immigrants and employers together.

WelcomeBC also works with employer associations and regulatory bodies to streamline the qualification assessment and recognition practices; and with employer associations to make them aware of the

barriers immigrants can face. WelcomeBC provides employers with tools and resources to help them attract, hire and keep immigrants; and works with immigrants to help them overcome those barriers.

Funding for WelcomeBC.ca is provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada-British Columbia Immigration Agreement. The Agreement defines the respective roles and responsibilities of each jurisdiction for immigration matters under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and Regulations*. It supports mutual federal and provincial objectives in the areas of immigrant attraction, selection, admission, retention and integration.

From: <http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/about.page?>

About the Welcoming Communities Action Plan Project in Vernon

The Welcoming Communities program is providing eligible communities within BC with funding support to develop a Welcoming Communities Action Plan which includes the delivery of several priority strategies and activities that will strengthen the capacity within the community to become more welcoming and inclusive.

The focus of the Welcoming Communities Program is to support the integration of new immigrants. New immigrants are considered those who have been in Canada for 10 years or less.

The Welcoming Communities program is designed to identify ways that communities in BC can support new immigrants through:

1. improving access to community services
2. supporting the development of intercultural relationships and mutual trust
3. supporting welcoming and inclusive workplaces
4. creating welcoming and inclusive spaces in the community



Program Activities:

The following list details the types of program activities (deliverables) that the Province requires from the Contractor, but are not limited, to the following:

1. Coordination of a community planning process that includes convening Community Partners and/or expanding existing community planning tables to develop a Welcoming Communities Action Plan that may identify:
 - a) demographics and trends;
 - b) existing services and supports for immigrants (if existing in the Community);
 - c) previous and existing action taken to strengthen Community capacity to be more welcoming and inclusive;
 - d) current barriers in the Community for New Immigrants to feel welcomed; and
 - e) priority strategies and work plans for action to be taken during the term of the Contract;
2. Delivery of a number of in scope activities identified in the Welcoming Communities Action Plan which respond to the strengths and challenges of the local Community, and priority strategies and activities that would strengthen the ability of the Community to be more welcoming and inclusive of New Immigrants
3. Specific, measurable and time-bound activities, including:
 - a) Planning and coordinating planning meetings;
 - b) Expanding existing networks to include new partners;
 - c) Developing materials to be distributed to participants of welcoming communities activities; and
 - d) Logistical coordination and/or management for events, activities and services and
4. Completion of reporting requirements and evaluation tools provided by the Branch and developed by the Sponsoring Organization and/or Community Partnership will help the Community to assess changes in attitudes and opportunities for Community engagement and development in coming years.

Program Outcomes:

Activities under the Welcoming Communities Action Plan will meet the following immediate outcomes:

1. Community Partnerships have a common vision to build welcoming and inclusive communities;
2. Communities have increased capacity to support Integration of New Immigrants by:

- a. Improving access to Community services,
 - b. Supporting development of intercultural relationships and mutual trust,
 - c. Supporting workplaces to be more welcoming and inclusive, and
 - d. Creating welcoming spaces;
3. Community organizations have increased, improved and strengthened partnerships and networking capacity to address issues of the inclusion of New Immigrants;
 4. Communities have an increased awareness and understanding of:
 - a. The contributions and needs of New Immigrants,
 - b. Settlement and Integration issues, and
 - c. Building and sustaining welcoming and inclusive communities; and
 5. Community members participating in Welcoming Communities Program Planning and consultation reflect the diversity of the Community.

Examples of In-Scope Activities

- Workshops or Community meetings for members of the Community, Community organisations and businesses to develop and implement recommendations on how Community services and spaces could become more welcoming to immigrants
- Workshops or one on one support for Community based organisations or businesses to complete organisational reviews and develop plans to reduce systemic barriers to service for New Immigrants (e.g. changes to policy, signage, hours of operation, etc.)
- Recruit and train volunteers to promote the understanding of immigrant Integration issues and ways the Community can be more welcoming and inclusive of New Immigrants
Examples – Social drama or arts engagement projects targeting the Community which are planned and delivered by youth or other Community members
- Presentations or workshops for members of the Community on immigration policy, demographic changes in the Community and current and projected labour market shortages using relevant Community expertise
- Community based activities that include focused discussion/learning opportunities between Community members and New Immigrants to build mutual trust and reduce the likelihood of discrimination (e.g. dialogues, forums, arts based activities, etc.)
- Research projects and/or development of toolkits, training manuals, or other resource materials with clear implementation and/or sustainability plans and Branch approval

- Workshops or other activities for employees and/or employers involved with Community organisations and businesses to improve their ability to be more welcoming and inclusive of New Immigrants colleagues
- Workshops, presentations or other awareness raising activities for employers to better understand the skills and business opportunities New Immigrants bring, resulting in changed attitudes, hiring practices and improved retention. Planning and delivery of such initiatives may include New Immigrants.

Examples of Out-of-Scope Activities

- Use of Welcoming Communities funding to deliver additional Safe Harbour workshops, which are funded under EmbraceBC
- Matching volunteer hosts with immigrants in mentoring or host/buddy programs that are provided in existing English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program (“ESLSAP”) or Settlement programs in the Community
- Activities that bring Community members and/or New Immigrants together that do not include focused dialogue or public education component to support the building of intercultural relations and trust between the Community and New Immigrants (e.g. art or photography contests or exhibits)
- Dialogues or arts based activities that focus on issues of bullying, racism or discrimination for non-immigrants
- Art or photography exhibits in public spaces that illustrate diversity in the Community and promote multiculturalism and are not connected to structured activities that engages members of the Community in specific activities to promote understanding of New Immigrants and/or the development of intercultural relationships
- Websites without clear implementation and/or sustainability plans and Branch approval
- Ongoing program expenses such organization start-up costs and operational costs
- Activities already undertaken and for which funding is provided for existing deliverables under current Contracts (e.g. Settlement Integration Program (“SIP”), WICWP or other)
- Workshops, Community meetings or development of resource materials for immigrant job seekers to build skills or connections with employers
- Mentoring or matching programs involving immigrants and employers
- Research and/or development of resource materials for employers that duplicate existing materials

Examples – Presentations at Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Club events, Community conferences or local media campaigns

Note: Initiatives must be complimentary and not duplicate those led or provided by industry associations, sector representatives, the Immigrant Employment Council of BC or other organizations. As well, the Ministry is currently developing 12 Local Newcomers' Guides. These community focused versions of the 2012 B.C. Newcomers' Guide feature local information around select cities and towns throughout the province. Regionally specific topics include community resources, employment information, climate, and more. By 2014, there will be a total of 26 Local guides created for online distribution. Existing local editions of the guide are available in the Newcomers' Guide section of the WelcomeBC website (www.welcomebc.ca). Vernon has been selected as one of the communities to receive a Local Guide.

Timelines

Action Plan Completed – February 15, 2012

Project approval and funds allocated – March 15, 2013

Project Activities Completed with Final Report – March 31, 2013

What actions have been identified to date/are currently being taken to create a Welcoming and Inclusive Community?

TABLE 1: Summary of Welcoming Community Initiatives starting with most recent

Date	Project	Deliverables
Project Start Date: April 1, 2010 Project End Date: March 31, 2011	Program: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program: Public Education Name of Initiative: Living in Vernon Brochure/DVD Objectives:	A "Living in Vernon" brochure/DVD posted on the City of Vernon's website in English, German, Spanish and Cantonese 1500 copies of the "Living in Vernon" brochure in English, German, Spanish and Cantonese available at the City of Vernon, Vernon Immigrant Services, the Chamber of Commerce, and Vernon Tourism

	<p>Create a resource brochure for New Immigrants so they can connect with local services that can assist with integration and employment</p> <p>Ensure the tool is available in multiple languages and targeted to cultural groups that have high immigration patterns in Greater Vernon</p>	
<p>Project Start Date: November 1, 2009</p> <p>Project End Date: April 30, 2010</p>	<p>Program: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program: Knowledge Development and Exchange</p> <p>Name of Initiative: Increasing Cultural Capacity in the City of Vernon and School District #22</p> <p>Objectives: Implement two goals from the Welcoming Communities Action Plan for Greater Vernon: Increase the cultural information available on the City of Vernon's website Increase diversity education in the school system</p>	<p>The City of Vernon IT Department designed and hosted a web page that is easily accessed by different sectors of the community and provides relevant resources/links regarding immigration/multiculturalism</p> <p>The consultant partnered with the Global Education class to conduct an inventory of current tools, curriculum and policies of School District #22 that result in diversity and multiculturalism education in the classrooms</p> <p>The consultant conducted a needs assessment/gaps analysis of the additional tools, resources or polices that are required to increase the amount of diversity education in the classrooms</p> <p>In conjunction with the Steering Committee and Global Education class, the consultant hosted a workshop for key members of the school district to report recommendations and findings</p>
<p>Project Start Date: October 1, 2008</p> <p>Project End Date: June 30, 2009</p>	<p>Program: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program: Community Partnership Development Funding</p> <p>Name of Initiative: Action Plan for a Welcoming Community</p> <p>Objectives: Increase community capacity to facilitate a more welcoming community: Strengthen the networking and collaboration of community partners Create a common vision (i.e. action plan) for the community</p>	<p>Action Plan completed with two priorities identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portal on Immigrant Information connected to the City of Vernon's website 2. Increased education on Multiculturalism and Diversity within our school system. <p>Other priorities identified were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational Workshops on Multiculturalism and Diversity ▪ Creating a Community Protocol for Dealing with Racism ▪ Creating a Community Mosaic Centre ▪ Creating a Video Hub Screen System

Source: Social Planning Council North Okanagan

What barriers/gaps have been identified to date?

TABLE 2: Summary of Gaps and Challenges, Strategies and Partnerships

Identified Gap, Challenge, Experience, etc.	Strategy to Address Identified Gap, Challenge, Experience, etc.	How will the Community Partnership work collaboratively to address this gap, challenge, experience, etc.
<p>1. Underemployment of skilled Immigrants in their field of training</p>	<p>Identify the barriers experience by these skilled Immigrants and what services are available to support them</p> <p>Define what can be changed at the local level to support New Immigrants to gain entry into the profession or trade</p> <p>Host a strategy session between employment agencies, educational institutions, business associations and skilled Immigrants</p> <p>Provide resources to local organizations to develop tools, training and/or policies that address these local barriers to employment.</p>	<p>The Community Partnership consists of local organizations that provide employment services to New Immigrants. It would be important for these partners (NOEES, Community Futures, and Vernon and District Immigrant Services) to strategize with Okanagan College to identify the types of local training programs that need to be developed to assist New Immigrants into their profession. In addition, NOEES and Community Futures also have links with employers. Their networks could be used to engage employers in the discussion on what is needed to support New Immigrants into their field of expertise.</p>
<p>2. Ensuring public spaces are welcoming and inclusive</p>	<p>Build on the green space audit that has already been conducted in the City of Vernon City Centre.</p> <p>Recommendations included highlighting contributions of Immigrants in Greater Vernon in public spaces and include signage in languages other than English</p>	<p>The City of Vernon can take the lead in this initiative and work with Vernon and District Immigrant Services and other stakeholders on what types of signage and acknowledgements of Immigrant contributions would be appropriate in specific public spaces.</p>
<p>3. Lack of diversity training opportunities for service providers and employers</p>	<p>Identify the diversity training assets that already exist in the community (local skills, curriculum etc)</p> <p>Identify the demand within service providers and employers for diversity training and establish if this could be a fee for service workshop</p> <p>Establish if there is an agency willing to develop and deliver diversity training as part of their core services or on a fee for service basis</p>	<p>The Community Partners would have to assist in defining the demand from employers and service providers for diversity training. Both NOEES and Community Futures develop and deliver workshops on other topics to this target population. It would be beneficial to see if there could be sustainability for ongoing diversity training workshops in the community.</p>

Source: Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan

Snapshot of Recommendations/Dialogue from previous projects:

Adapted from:

Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneurial Immigrants to Rural BC Communities: A Resource Manual 2005

- Resource package for International Tourists
- Website with labour market access
- Marketing the Provincial Nominee Program in Greater Vernon
- Community Education and Awareness – cultural events, centres, and celebrations
- Promoting business resources and networking

From immigrant survey executive summary:

- 80% immigrated with family as a result of spending holiday time here
- Lifestyle, climate, and cultural diversity in Vernon were influencing factors in more than 50% of the responses
- 95% agree that raising awareness of cultural components through events would be beneficial to attracting and retaining new immigrants
- 32.5% came with an education degree (health and marketing most prominent)
- Degree recognition not stated as an issue, but 60% had to choose a new career when moving to Vernon
- 95% stated no problem finding adequate and affordable housing
- 90% suggested City of Vernon have more involvement in early stages of settlement with better links to government and service agencies
- Over 62% felt welcomed and valued for their ethnicity
- 80% recognized that celebrating ethnic diversity creates economic growth
- 75% thought the community needed to be made more aware of this
- Financial services were not an issue for most surveyed, but felt financial institutions did not take into account their unique foreign talent or skills

- 62% had concerns with Canada's health care system namely language barriers with medical practitioners and accessing multilingual health publications at clinics, hospitals, dental offices, and health units.

Adapted from:

Dialogue on Multiculturalism: Immigration, Entrepreneurship and the North Okanagan Report on Process and Outcomes , 2008

- Cultural sensitivity training in schools, public places, and workplaces
- Awareness of the benefits of multiculturalism
- On-the-job training for new immigrant workers and marginalized people
- Multicultural celebrations and festivals in Vernon were cited as timely
- 'Life in Canada' – create a primer on the norms, customs and values in Canadian society
- Cultural exchange programs for youth and other members of the community to learn about a culture from inside it
- What if the community gathered to set standards for inclusion?
- We need to map out where the challenges are and what the needs and priorities for action are
- Let's be sure to pay homage to our cultural traditions (First Nations, Settlers and Immigrants)
- Map the current situation in terms of how many newcomers currently live in Vernon and how many are anticipated
- Map the current resources that exist and those that are needed including high school students and seniors who are willing and able to reach out to newcomers
- Examine the barriers to self-employment and remove them
- Make English classes available to all members of the family until they have intermediate skills
- Create a one-stop information hub for newcomers
- Celebrate diversity through gatherings and festivals and ensure that the leaders of the community are present

Adapted from:

Welcoming Communities Action Plan 2009

- Develop and deliver community workshops on diversity with a focus on delivery to schools and businesses.
- Website portal (on line tool) connected to the City of Vernon's Website for Immigrant and Cultural information
- Increase/Incorporate diversity and multicultural education and participation in our school system
- Create a Community Protocol for responding to racism.
- Establish a Community Cultural (Mosaic) Centre.
- Create a Community Hub – Video Screen similar to the City of Vernon Portal.
- Celebrate Multicultural Day – March 21st with a local festival
- Ensure that all local festivals/events capture a multicultural component i.e.
 - Farmers Market
 - Sunshine Festival
 - Winter Carnival- Suggest that Diversity is the Theme in upcoming Carnivals
 - Canada Day Celebrations
 - Silver Star Mountain
- Research the Welcome Wagon in the North Okanagan to ensure it provides forms of information on the local culture, multiculturalism and diversity
- Hire a full time North Okanagan Diversity Coordinator.
- Continue to celebrate and expand on National Aboriginal Day

References

Welcoming Communities Action Plan

Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan
2009

Dialogue on Multiculturalism: Immigration, Entrepreneurship and the North Okanagan Report on Process and Outcomes

Sponsored by the Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan
April 20, 2008

Attracting and Retaining Entrepreneurial Immigrants to Rural BC Communities: A Resource Manual

Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society

June 2005

For more Information

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WelcomeBC

www.welcomebc.ca

Citizen and Immigration Canada

www.cic.gc.ca

Vernon and District Immigration Services Society

www.vdiss.com

Appendix 1

Focus Group Comments and Recommendations from English Language Services Adult classes

January 15, 2013

Level 1

- Generally comments were very favourable in regards to how welcomed they felt coming to Canada and Vernon
- Of the ten attendees, each came from a different country ranging from Russian to Indonesia to Mexico to China.
- Participants attributed much of their positive settlement in Vernon to Vernon and District Immigration Services Society
- Some liked the idea of a Newcomer's Club
- Some liked the idea of a foreign film festival or cinema nights in several languages
- Of the ten, about 3 currently held jobs
- Getting familiar with grocery stores and where to find things caused some issue with some
- Eating together was considered a welcoming activity
- Transportation and the infrequency of service and round about routes was mentioned
- Those who were employed didn't seem to be too concerned with a language barrier, although policies, procedures and some of the higher level language could present some problems at times
- There was agreement that ELSA in the workplace could be of benefit in some situations
- There was a comment about accessing recreation services and that it could be intimidating (comment from instructor that there was resistance to staff conducting a tour of the facilities)
- Signage and finding their way around didn't seem to pose problems
- There were comments in some cases that there was a delay in learning about and finding VDISS – most didn't find it online

- Comment that printed information materials (when arriving in major ports of entry) are usually the first point of access to services, however, there wasn't information available about smaller communities and the opportunities for settling there

Level 6/7

- Again, much the same response in general as to the overall welcoming nature of Canada and Vernon
- They felt included as members of the community
- There was a wide diversity of reasons for coming to Vernon – in the case of one German immigrant, they researched a number of sites, but settled on Vernon because of its attractiveness and lifestyle
- Comment that banks sometimes unwilling to give credit or credit cards to newcomers because they have no credit history here in Canada
- Access Centre – employees not up on immigration policy and comments about getting the “run around” when trying to get a driver's license and general rudeness
- Schools (ESL) were providing great service to those who had children
- Comments about transportation - similar issues, but specifically the issue of access to the Kelowna airport (bus stop on highway), lack of intuitiveness in terms of routes, and one suggestion that the rates to Kelowna could be raised to offset some of the costs
- Comments about the lack of walkability in Vernon and safer cycling routes
- Multi-lingual signage would not make them feel more welcome
- Visibility of VDISS, and information about its services could be more readily available throughout the community – web and print
- Loved the idea of more festivals – did not think they necessarily needed to be specific to cultures, but thought that would be a good idea in general. Specifically an outdoor “winter” Christmas market, better use of Polson Park with more frequent events, a skating pond, something to bring people together outdoors
- Open air places to eat and relax
- Shopping – tips and tricks for best deals (best kept secrets, where to find...)

- International garden would be nice
- Intercultural cooking was favourably considered

Conclusion

New and less recent immigrants in general felt welcomed and included in Vernon. There were some areas where services, particularly learning about Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society sooner and increasing it's visibility in the community would be helpful. More community activities, and to a lesser degree, cultural activities, and better alternative transportation services were most frequently mentioned. Otherwise it seemed that they were well-served by Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society and were positively integrating into the community.

Implications for projects

Multilingual signage was not seen as particularly helpful or welcoming, and may be logistically difficult given the wide range of countries and languages represented around the table. A multicultural festival and more outdoor activities and spaces designed for meeting and eating could be considered. VDISS could consider new signage for more street visibility*, and a broader distribution of print materials and possibly web-based exposure would ensure quicker access by new immigrants and familiarize the general community with services for ease of referrals. Any anticipated audit should include recreation services, banks, and the BC Access Centre. The ideas of a newcomer's club, an international garden, cooking classes, more foreign film nights, were positively received and could be considered in general. Transit committees and other planning committees could consider including new immigrant/immigrants. Publications could include a "Where to find"... tips and related types of information".

* Perhaps this signage could be multilingual?

APPENDIX 2

Additional Cultural and Service Groups in Vernon and Area

Okanagan Indian Band

12420 Westside Road
Vernon, B.C. V1H 2A4
Phone 250-542-4328
Toll Free 1-866-542-4328
www.okib.ca

Spallumcheen Indian Band

970 Old Vernon Road
Box 3010
Enderby, B.C. VOE 1V0
Phone 250-838-6496
Email: spallinfo@spall.net
www.secwepemc.org/spallumcheen

First Nations Friendship Centre

2902 29th Ave
Vernon, B.C. V1T 1Y7
Phone 250-542-1247
Email fnfc@junction.net
www.bc-payc.com

Metis Community Services Society

2913 B – 29th Ave
Vernon, B.C. V1T 1Y8
Phone 250-545-0350
www.mcsbc.org

Sadok Ukrainian Dancers

2400 – 44TH Ave

Vernon, B.C.

Phone 250-558-2959

Email: sadok@shaw.ca

www.geocities.com

Sen’Klip Native Theatre Company

Phone 250-542-1247

Vernon Japanese Cultural Society

4895 Bella Vista Road, Vernon, B.C.

Phone 250-545-4162

www3.telus.net/aubcom/VJCS.HTM

Korean Veteran’s Association

Vernon, B.C.

Phone 250-542-8030

Belize Outreach Program

Vernon, B.C.

Phone 250-549-1185

Japanese Cultural Society

4895 Bella Vista Road, Vernon, BC, Canada

(250)545-4162

www3.telus.net/aubcom/VJCS.HTM

More a comprehensive listing of Vernon and area community organizations and services visit

www.canwehelpyou.ca