



Welcoming Communities Dialogue
May 20, 2008
Tigh Na Mara Seaside Resort and Spa
Parksville, BC

Attendance:

Arnold Harasymchuk, Cheryl Fortin, Bruce Brautigian, Hilde Schlossar, Kathy Landry, Wanda Zink, Kevin Douville, Paul Weist, Ron Trepanier, Tek Manhas, Gabrielle Ratjen, Carla Green, Dennis Silvestrone, Rick Roberts, Ron Acros, Gabrielle Ratjen, Carla Green, Joy Andrews, Peter Doukakis, Rachel Blaney, Paul Mitchell, Laurie Jones, Cori Lynn Carlson

Cori Lynn Carlson welcomed everyone to the second session of the Welcoming Communities Initiative for Vancouver Island.

Ron Trepanier and Paul Wiest were introduced as the facilitators for the session and provided an overview of the history of the program and why immigration integration programs are essential to a region.

Funding for this project has been obtained from the Attorney General of BC and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Ron and Paul are currently working with 4 different regions. Kootenays, Thompson Shuswap, Northwestern BC and Vancouver Island.

The purpose of the session is to share what is going on the Island and identify any gaps in services for Immigrants and to work towards building a regional Immigrant Strategy for Vancouver Island.

Immigrants have historically made a fundamental contribution to our labour market and society. Canada will depend solely on immigrants for growth in the workforce for the next decade and beyond. Over the past five years 39,000 immigrants have come to BC. They need to adjust: find somewhere to live, language services, how to get around, how to get a job.

What is the warmth of the welcome they are experiencing in the communities they have immigrated to?

As we continue to rely on immigrants are we as welcoming as we should be?

The ultimate objective

To promote the strengthened participation of new immigrants in civil society and foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment

Move towards an Island wide strategy: What do we need to do?

What are we doing now?

What are the services we are providing now?

Carla Green: Victoria Intercultural Association:

See Power Point Presentation at www.viea.ca

Questions:

Arnold: PNP Business program: Do you work with PNP Business Program to successfully integrate immigrant entrepreneurs into the region?

Response: Not at this time.

Opportunity: To develop a strategy to work with PNP Immigrant Investors and Entrepreneurs to successfully integrate them into the Region.

Arnold : Are there any programs that you work with the EDO in Victoria? Do you work in concert with workforce attraction efforts?

Response: Not at this time.

Opportunity: To develop a model whereas Economic Development Officers who are focusing on the workforce attraction strategies, work with Settlement services to ensure that the attracted immigrant workforce can successfully integrate into the region.

Paul : Do you have any toolkits to share?

Response: Jean McRae the Executive Director of the Victoria Intercultural Association has developed excellent tool kits for immigrant integration.

Gabrielle Ratjen: President Intercultural Society Cowichan

Cowichan Valley : 70,000 people in 15 different villages

Society was founded 25 years ago to serve the immigrants.

The Mission of the Cowichan Intercultural Society is to facilitate mutual respect, trust, support and education in the culturally diverse Cowichan Region.

See website www.cisduncan.ca

The Challenges and difficulties that the organization are facing is funding. The two major centres Victoria and Nanaimo receive the funding, but up until now the Cowichan Region does not receive funding even though there has been a significant increase in immigrants

to the region. They need to do community outreach and have very limited resources. The Executive Director currently only works 10 hours per week.

Questions:

Tek: CFDC Cowichan would like to work closer with you, how do we do that?

Response: With limited resources the ED only works 10 hours per week but would like to be able to develop stronger relationships within the region. With limited resources, there has been a focus put onto priorities.

Opportunity: City and Chamber of Commerce to have information available to immigrants. As well CFDC would like to work closer with the Society.

Affordable housing is an issue in Cowichan and the CFDC working on a affordable housing strategy for the region.

Hilde Schlossar, Nanaimo

Central Vancouver Island Multi-Cultural Society

17% of population are immigrants in Nanaimo

See Power Point Presentation at www.viea.ca

Questions:

Immigrant settlement services: Question: Has the government addressed the inequity in the distribution of settlement dollars per immigrant?

Response: There is still an inequity related to the settlement dollars assigned across the provinces. BC was allocated an additional three million dollar but it is still not on par with Eastern Canada.

What about Secondary Migration settlement services?

Response: There is not process in place that tracks Secondary Migration settlement needs.

Settlement services are for landed immigrants and refugees but do you get money for temporary foreign workers as well??

Response: Temporary foreign workers are not allowed to use immigrant services. Temporary Foreign workers are expected to pay for all these services on their own although they can live in the community for up to 2 years. This lack of immigrant services creates a class scenario within the immigrant and is not conducive to welcoming communities.

Businesses and government have to work harder when it comes to the successful integration of foreign workers.

Opportunity: To work with VIEA and other Island Advocacy groups for the development of a policy that addresses the gaps in temporary foreign worker assistance and the inequity in settlement fees.

Comment:

Paul Mitchell: Delivery model in rural areas? There is a need for ESL in rural areas. All volunteer efforts in rural areas? Volunteer tutoring in Parksville. Demand side for Industry: Business and industry needs to be involved. Paul has been able to get various businesses together to provide this ESL training in rural areas.

Questions:

Ron Acros: Is there a plan to extend to Port Alberni?

Response: Port Alberni is not recognised as a settlement community. Community needs to lobby for making itself a settlement community.

Gabrielle: Plight of on the smaller organization. Cowichan feels that they are not adequately funded. Secondary migration is being felt in the rural communities around the Island. Primary migration is being recognised in Victoria and Nanaimo and secondary migration is being experienced in the smaller centers.

Opportunity: To develop a strategy for the smaller rural communities to assist them in having access to settlement services.

Ron Trepanier: How plugged into the cultural diversity are the businesses.?

Response: Not very but getting better due to the tool kit she has developed.

Peter: Peter is working on a few other projects in Parksville related to workforce attraction. Businesses do not understand the needs of immigrants.

Opportunity: To work with the business community on Vancouver Island to enhance awareness of the needs of Immigrants.

Question: How engaged is our school system?

Response: There is now a programs called SWISS settlement services in school system. There is push now to make the schools more responsive to their immigrant children. This provincial govt has made a decision to determine settlement services are part of every ministry. Schools have focused on racism and anti bullying campaign.

Dennis Silvestrone
University of Vancouver Island/Malaspina University College

There is approximately 1000 FTE students enrolled at MUC which equates to 3000 students in MUC . These students have the need for successful integration into the community and the local labour market.

ESL services are reducing in past years.

International education coordinates all of the immigrant integration services and requirements for its students.

Career centre at MUC connects international students with the business community.

Most international students attend the Nanaimo campus due to the clustering and populating of larger centers.

Opportunities

Branding/Marketing Vancouver Island needs to be done in conjunction with a Welcoming Communities theme and in consultation with post secondary institutions.

Parksville is concluding its local workforce strategy and the strategy that has identified Immigrants as an option. This needs to be fed into the larger picture?

MUC is looking at an essential skills project for all sectors, essential skill development.

Regional literacy program.

Rachel Blaney: CR Multi Cultural Immigrant Association

See Power Point Presentation at [www. Viea.ca](http://www.Viea.ca)

Questions:

Ron Acros: Are any of the immigrants coming under attack related to the downsizing of the forestry industry.

Response: Yes but in a smaller scale. The issue has not elevated to a level of concern.

Paul Mitchell

ISTEP

Helping immigrants integrated into the workforce.

Construction sector focus: Funded under the foreign credential recognition program.

Funded for 3 years. Linking under utilized skills of immigrants to the construction industry.

They hire skilled ticketed people to be the employees of ISTEP. They wanted to connect people with trades jobs. Once you leave Prince George and head north the populous is not familiar with Immigrant workers.

Through the job coach model they can assess the needs of the businesses. What it takes for a successful placement? ISTEP is the HR wing for the construction sector. They stay with each placement to mitigate the risks associated with that placement.

On the immigrant side this is their first job in the construction industry so it can be daunting.

\$168 billion of construction on the books. 16,000 construction workers immediately needed. Not entry level workers.

Piloted with downtown Vancouver Eastside to get workers into the Olympic Village.

Working with Oil and Gas and Forestry to integrate the same model as ISTEP

Additional Comments:

Rick Roberts:

Very complicated issue. So many groups doing many things and they don't communicate.

Foreign worker attraction workers are not working with settlement service workers. What does that dialogue look like?

Opportunities: To develop a communication model or process whereas all the stakeholders engaged in foreign worker attraction and integration can dialogue.

What are other jurisdictions doing ?

Ron Trepanier.

See Power Point Presentation at www.viea.ca

Question:

Paul: Are our communities ready for successful immigration integration; Ie: Affordable housing, Daycare, Health Care. Education, Transportation

Response: Not at this time.

Opportunity: To develop a community readiness strategy for all communities on Vancouver Island.

Who else needs to be invited to the next session?

Municipal Invitation:

Regional Districts:

Construction Associations:

Home Builders Association:

Post Secondary Educational Institutions:
School Districts:
Immigrants:
CFDC's:
Chambers of Commerce:
Vancouver Island Service Providers:
Tourism Vancouver Island:
Media:
Retail:
Transportation:
Real Estate:
First Nations:
Career Planners:
Employers/Grass Roots:

Is there a forecasting model for how many immigrants there be in 10 years?
BC Central Credit Union has a study for perusal on regional economic growth.

How to advance this for Vancouver Island?

Strategic Plan- June 16

Need to name this initiative for Vancouver Island- June 16

Key objectives and deliverables- June 16

Lead organization- To be confirmed June 16

Steering Committee- To be confirmed June 16

Next:

Program with coordinator and staff/ need an office location/ QB

Funding options? Service Canada JCP, Attorney General's office, MED?

Next meeting June 16th, 2008 Parksville and District Community Centre

