Living and Working in Greater Victoria
A Place for Everyone

A Welcoming Community Action Strategy

May 27, 2009

Prepared by
Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
In partnership with

- BC Construction Association Immigrant Skilled Trades & Employment Program
- Camosun College School of Access and Department of Aboriginal Education & Community Connections
- Camosun College Diversity Advisory & Employment Equity Committees
- Canadian Red Cross, BC Coastal Region
- Career Solutions
- Fairfield Gonzales Community Association
- Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee
- Greater Victoria Police Victim Services
- Puente Theatre
- Saanich Department of Parks and Recreation
- School District #61 - Greater Victoria
- School District #63 - Saanich
- Single Parent Resource Centre
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- University of Victoria Office of Community-Based Research
- University of Victoria Equity & Human Rights Office
- Volunteer Victoria

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INTRODUCTION

The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) initiated a Partnership Development Project in March 2009 under the provincial Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP). Inspired by Victoria’s Gate of Harmonious Interest, this project recognizes the importance of creating a culture of working together to the community’s benefit.

The long term goal of this initiative is to develop the Capital Region’s capacity to more effectively attract, welcome and integrate newcomers into our community, workplaces, organizations and institutions. During a period of three months from March to May 2009, ICA along with the University of Victoria and Metropolis BC hosted a series of working and training sessions (see Appendix A). These workshops set out to accomplish three goals:

1. Bring together leaders from a broad range of community and business sectors to build a more inclusive and welcoming community;

2. Develop a community action plan identifying tangible projects that can be supported through the provincial WICWP funding program and other means; and

3. Establish a formal partnership agreement to carry these goals and projects forward over the next two to three years.

Invitations to participate in this initiative were extended to 63 organizational groups from which 27 have become active partners or interested stakeholders. Through a series of exercises and discussions, workshop participants established the foundations for a common vision and purpose. Community service needs and project ideas were identified, and a network of community partners began to form.

This Action Plan represents the work of close to 30 participants from local government, community and employment service organizations, and education institutions. The accompanying Partnership Agreement endorses the goal of creating a more welcoming and inclusive community for all and provides an organizational framework for a collaborative plan of action.
According to the 2006 Census statistics, the population for the Capital Regional District is both growing and becoming more culturally diverse. The net growth of the CRD increased 8.4% between 1996 and 2006 to its current population of 340,710. Immigrant newcomers comprise approximately 20% or 65,535 of the overall population. The principal languages spoken by immigrants, other than English, include: Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, Spanish, German, and Tagalog (Filipino). What are the benefits and challenges associated with this increasing diversity to our local communities and our workforce?

It is estimated that by the year 2015, 100% of the labour market growth in British Columbia will come from immigration. Yet, according to the 2006 Census, the number of immigrants and other newcomers moving into the Greater Victoria region has been decreasing. What must employers, community service agents, educational institutions and our community as a whole do to ensure that we remain vibrant?

During 2008, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria organized and hosted two information workshops on Changing Demographics in the Capital Region and on Regional Immigrant and the Labour Market. More than 80 representatives from a range of businesses and organizations attended the two sessions. Clearly, there is interest in finding ways to ensure Greater Victoria is both welcoming and inclusive to newcomers.

Communities across the country have begun new initiatives to improve their ability to be welcoming and inclusive for immigrants. Under the Province of British Columbia’s 3-year Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP), ICA established one of 24 partnership development projects to expand immigrant integration efforts to a regional level. Partnership development represents the first in a series of phased program funding streams. Additional WICWP community support will address:

- **Knowledge Development and Exchange Venues** to increase awareness and understanding by community members and stakeholders
- **Public Education Resources** to increase awareness and understanding by the community at large
- **Demonstration Projects** to develop new and innovative strategies that will address settlement and multiculturalism issues, help to integrate immigrants and refugees, develop workplace diversity/cultural competence, or enhance social engagement and inclusion.

Action planning workshop exercises included an opportunity and needs appraisal. Workshop participants discussed priorities related to the physical, social, knowledge/training, and institutional dimensions of Greater Victoria. This exercise produced approximately 25 project ideas which were then reduced to 7 priority projects. This Action Plan focuses these project ideas further in the context of the WICWP framework.
ENVISIONING A MORE WELCOMING COMMUNITY

A welcoming and inclusive community means many things to different people. However, at its essence, our vision of a more welcoming community is built on a belief that all residents should be able to feel that they belong where they live; and that newcomers should be able to become active members of their community in five years or less. Using their own experience as a reference, partners in this Welcoming Community initiative thought about community qualities that would make residents feel more comfortable, at ease, confident, open, less afraid, able to contribute, and able to communicate better with each other. These images and words will help to build a common vision among community and business leaders for a more welcoming place to live and work.

Images of a Welcoming Community

- Familiar
- Warmth
- Trust
- Safe
- Open
- Multicultural
- Embracing
- Collaborative
- Connections
- Contributing
- Family friendly
- WEL-COM
- Diverse
- Be yourself
- We are one
- Interdependence
- Gateway
- Accommodating
- Mutually supportive
- Solidarity
- Victoria Chinatown’s Gate of Harmonious Interest

VISION STATEMENT

Greater Victoria is a community where old neighbours and newcomers alike can build trusting relationships through respectful curiosity and openness to learning about themselves and others. It is a place with transparent local governance processes and public services that dignify all members, and support their efforts to make valuable contributions in our community.
GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

Goals and guidelines for this community Action Plan were developed by local leaders, program coordinators, project managers, executive directors, and specialists who work in the fields of immigrant settlement and multicultural services, K-12 and post secondary education, human rights and equity policy, public safety, immigrant employment services, community planning, youth and family services, community recreation services, Aboriginal community services, community development, and community theatre.

There is a strong recognition by community partners of the need to develop a broader level of awareness and deeper level of interest in the issues and opportunities related to immigrant integration in Greater Victoria. We also recognize the need to improve knowledge and skills among the partnering organizations and others who serve, hire, supervise and work with new immigrants; and to galvanize efforts reducing barriers to immigrant integration in communities and workplaces. The following goals and guidelines will help focus these efforts over the next two to three years:

ACTION PLAN GOALS

1. Raise awareness among community leaders and business managers of the need to create more welcoming and inclusive communities and workplaces in the Greater Victoria region.
   - Help people to recognize and understand that ‘inclusion’ is their concern.
   - Reach out and build pods of advocates within organizations and across sectors.

2. Strengthen the collective knowledge and skill-set of partnering organizations.
   - Develop an ongoing professional learning network and learning opportunities.

3. Seek and apply solutions to known barriers to inclusion.
   - Ask leaders, employers, service and learning agents, policy/program decision makers, front-line staff and others what types of organizational and educational needs will enable them to facilitate immigrant integration.
   - Facilitate opportunities, provide useful tools and establish new relationships.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

- Think strategically; work at the personal and organizational level
- Focus on social-cultural change management
- Promote a “two-way street” model of inter-cultural integration
- Develop culturally flexible practices; reflect on how our behaviours affect others
- Learn from diverse community groups
- Build relationships by building trust
- Improve upon, and share, existing community strengths, assets and resources
- Facilitate learning through experience
Significant concern has been expressed that many of those who participate in community workshops are the same people who already share a deep understanding of the issues. One-way messages and advocacy approaches need to be transformed into two-way dialogues and learning exchanges.

Knowledge development and exchange must be raised to the next level and expanded to involve a wider audience with active participation across the community spectrum.

The Project: A Community Leaders “Summit”

The intent of a local leaders’ summit is to build awareness and momentum among leaders within municipalities, business associations, education institutions and community service organizations (see Appendix B).

The Summit will bring attention to issues and information such as:
- Immigrants and immigration trends in Greater Victoria
- Building a welcoming and inclusive community
- The social and economic benefits of multiculturalism and immigration
- Immigrant settlement, adaptation, and integration – local services and service gaps
- Attracting and retaining immigrants for labour market purposes
- Cultural diversity and multiculturalism in today’s context
- Social exclusion/inclusion – who’s in, who’s out and why this happens
- Workplace diversity/cultural competence
- Best practices from other communities

The Summit will also emphasize the need for practical skills and knowledge development on topics such as:
- Public and stakeholder communication/marketing skills and strategies
- Inter-cultural training for community volunteers, managers and staff
- Community mapping of relevant services, programs, resources and assets
Issues or Opportunities Addressed

The Summit concept addresses the organizational and community needs of local leaders in relation to integrating immigrants in schools, the workplace, and community life.

Goals/Desired Outcomes

- Representatives and leaders in local government, business community, employers, education, community services, and aboriginal organizations will endorse the inclusive community initiative.
- Community partners will gain a common knowledge-base of relevant and available services, programs and resources for immigrant settlement and integration in Greater Victoria
- Community partners will identify additional resource needs for the initiative
- The Summit will reflect the diversity within the Capital Region, through broad-based participation and consultation

Organization & Planning

A Community Partnership Network will be established with the dual purpose of organizing the Summit and providing a regular knowledge exchange opportunities for the partners.

The Network will meet regularly, using a rotating host system. A suggested meeting format includes time to learn about the host organization and/or an invited guest speaker on a learning topic of interest, in addition to forum planning/organizing time. Learning topics may include those to be addressed in the community forum or other knowledge/skill building topics.

Executives and civic leaders will be consulted as part of program development to ensure the Summit will address their concerns and match their interests. Respected leaders on a variety of topics will be invited to bring expertise and best practices to Greater Victoria.

Timeline & Budget Estimates

June 2009 – March 2010
Estimated at $100,000 (max. of $50,000 available from WICWP)
PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

There is a strongly held interest in broadcasting information and educating the general public on topics related to welcoming and inclusive communities. These interests are founded on an abiding belief that social change happens through everyday activities and a well informed public. There is also a recognized value in developing specialized resources to meet specific needs.

To be effective, public education and information resources must be developed and delivered more professionally as well as more prominently. Messages must also be focused, personalized and interactive.

The Project: Connecting People with Knowledge

A series of public education events and messages aimed at a diverse local audience such as local residents, neighbours, employers, hospitality, and service workers.

This project will broaden awareness of what a welcoming and inclusive community means on a personal and interpersonal level. The project will also help to raise the general level of knowledge and skills in public education and social marketing among organizing partners.

The public education project will focus messages and activities that:

- Illustrate local cultural diversity and its importance to community vitality,
- Heighten awareness of the issues and opportunities related to developing a healthy local labour market, cultural diversity, social and economic inclusion of newcomers, and
- Recognize exemplary diversity employment practices in the Capital Region.

Final products have yet to be determined. A sample of potential public events and activities includes:

- Annual employer awards
- Story telling events
- Online community chats, blogs, bulletin boards, wikis & e-learning tools
Issues or Opportunities Addressed

The public education events and messages addresses a significant need to expand existing dialogues on labour market demand, the social and economic value of immigrants, and other related topics into the public arena. This project will also place these topics in the local context, making the dialogue and messages more relevant and meaningful.

Goals/Desired Outcomes

- Local employers and residents will be more culturally aware and supportive of culturally diverse community
- The local media will provide a higher quality portrayal of related issues
- Local employers and residents will have a better understanding of the contributions and needs of newcomers and how to be more inclusive

Organization & Planning

Partners will develop a marketing strategy, gather or develop the necessary resources, and implement the strategy. Specific skills development and experiential learning will be an integral part of the process for the partners.

Timeline & Budget Estimates

The timeline is dependent on WICWP funding opportunities
$75,000 - $100,000  (max. of $50,000 available from WICWP)
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

There is no shortage of issues to address and work to do. However, one of the immediate challenges in fostering a more welcoming community is deciding whether to focus on labour market and workplace diversity initiatives or on social engagement and inclusion initiatives. It may be possible to address both.

More consultation with representatives of the local government and business sectors will be needed to determine how an inclusive community project can meet their organizational needs or fit within their mandates. Final direction for a demonstration project will be determined through targeted dialogues with a selection of local business and civic leaders. This will be the first step in planning for the demonstration project.

Demonstration Project: Benchmarking the State of Community for Inclusiveness

As a community development initiative, it will be very important to be able to measure progress toward inclusiveness at the organizational and community levels.

The demonstration project will develop benchmarks and indicators that can be used to measure progress. To be meaningful, they will be developed and tested in collaboration with a diverse range of community organizations. Working at all levels within the organizations; innovative tools and approaches will be developed and applied. The final product may be modelled after any of the following tools:

- A State of the Community report card
- Guiding standards or principles
- An audit or assessment

Issues or Opportunities Addressed

The demonstration project will address a significant need for creative solutions to reduce barriers to inclusion in the workplace and in public services. This project will provide the opportunity to develop, test and measure new ways of engagement and inter-cultural competency development.

Goals/Desired Outcomes

- New tools or services will be developed.
- New indicators and a measurement tool will be developed to determine a ‘state of community’ with regard to inclusiveness.
- Participating organizations will undergo an organizational culture change.
- Greater Victoria will improve its capacity to facilitate and support integration of newcomers.

Organization & Planning
Establish a core planning and delivery network of partners with new members representing sectors currently missing from the table.

Partners will undergo project planning, design, implementation and evaluation activities, such as:

- Engagement and consultation with a selection of key local organizations,
- Assessment of organizational and project development needs,
- Project design involving assembly of resources, identification of project activities and determination of desired outcomes,
- Development of new tools and approaches,
- Service delivery (implementation), and
- Ongoing evaluation and adjustment.

Timeline & Budget Estimates

The timeline is dependent on WICWP funding opportunities
$250,000 + (max. of $250,000 available from WICWP)
APPENDIX A: PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

TRAINING SESSION AND WORKSHOPS

**Workshop 1:** Introduce project, form a working group  
March 23  
2-4pm  
932 Balmoral Rd.  
(refreshments)

**Training:** Safe Harbours, a ‘welcoming diversity’ training session  
March 31  
2-4pm  
932 Balmoral Rd.  
(refreshments)

**Workshop 2:** Initiate the action planning process  
April 2  
2-4pm  
932 Balmoral Rd.  
(refreshments)

**Workshop 3:** Review draft action plan  
April 15  
10:30-1:30  
UVIC, Faculty Club (lunch)

**Workshop 4:** Review final action plan & partnership agreement  
May 5  
2-4pm  
932 Balmoral Rd.  
(refreshments)

**Workshop 5:** Sign the community partnership agreement  
May 27  
10:30-1:30  
UVIC, Faculty Club (lunch)

**Next Step:** Develop WICWP/other project proposals  
Spring-Summer
## APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY LEADERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

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<th>Antidote</th>
<th>Pauquachin Band</th>
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<td>Beecher Bay First Nation</td>
<td>Puente Theatre</td>
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<td>Burnside/Gorge Community Association</td>
<td>Royal BC Museum</td>
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<td>Camosun College</td>
<td>Royal Roads University</td>
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<td>Canadian Pakistani Alliance</td>
<td>Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>Capital Families Association</td>
<td>Saanich, District of</td>
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<td>Career Solutions</td>
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<td>Central Saanich, District of</td>
<td>School District #62</td>
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<td>Children and Family Counselling Assoc.</td>
<td>School District #63</td>
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<td>Colwood, City of</td>
<td>Sidney, Town of</td>
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<td>Downtown Victoria Business Association</td>
<td>Single Parent Resource Centre</td>
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<td>Songhees First Nation</td>
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<td>Sooke, District of</td>
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<td>‘Sou-ke First Nation</td>
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<td>Tsartlip Band</td>
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<td>Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Tsawout First Nation</td>
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<td>Greater Victoria Development Agency</td>
<td>Tseycum Band</td>
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<td>Greater Victoria Police Victim Services</td>
<td>United Way of Greater Victoria</td>
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<td>Greater Victoria Public Library</td>
<td>University of Victoria</td>
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<td>Highlands, District of</td>
<td>Values Based Victoria Business Network</td>
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<td>Hillside/Quadra Neighbourhood Action Group</td>
<td>Vancouver Island Health Authority</td>
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<td>Immigrant Skilled Trades &amp; Empl. Program</td>
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<td>David Aujla, Immigration Lawyer</td>
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<td>James Bay Community Project</td>
<td>Victoria Police, Diversity Advisory Comm.</td>
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<td>Victoria Red Cross</td>
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<td>Literacy BC</td>
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<td>Victoria Silverthreads</td>
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<td>View Royal, Town of</td>
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<td>Pacifica Housing Advisory Association</td>
<td>Volunteer Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Support Services</td>
<td>West Shore Chamber of Commerce</td>
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