IMMIGRATION & DIVERSITY IN GREATER VICTORIA

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 a 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 is the significance of this increasing diversity to our local 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.

New immigrants have been identified as the largest, most promising source of skilled labour to grow the economy and offset attrition rates in our current labour force. Attracting and retaining immigrants presents both opportunities and challenges for employers, service providers, educational institutions and our community as a whole.

In 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. ICA asked attendees whether they would support ICA leading the project and there was agreement.

A COMMUNITY-WIDE INITIATIVE

Funded by the Province of British Columbia and Government of Canada, and supported by eighteen organizations representing community service, cultural, education, municipal and employment service sectors, the Community Partnership Initiative was launched in May, 2009. Founded upon the widely recognized need to increase our labour force over the next few years, ours is one of 29 partnership projects in British Columbia. This new partnership initiative creates a community-wide commitment to make the Capital Region a welcoming and inclusive community.

The Community Partnership Network currently includes:

- Camosun College
- Canadian Red Cross, BC Coastal Region
- Fairfield Gonzales Community Association
- Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee
- Puente Theatre
- Saanich Department of Parks and Recreation
- BC Construction Association (STEP)
- School District #61 of Greater Victoria
- School District #63 of Saanich
- Single Parent Resource Centre
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- University of Victoria
- Volunteer Victoria
**FOUR PROJECTS UNDERWAY**

Four projects were established to broaden awareness of the need for immigrants, strengthen inter-cultural competencies in the workplace, and apply community-wide solutions to reduce barriers to immigrant integration.

**Victoria: Community Dialogue on Diversity (March 29, 2010 at Victoria City Hall)**

Newcomer immigrants, students, senior citizens, multi-generational families, long standing residents, Aboriginal peoples, faith communities and others all live, play, work and worship side by side. All of them call Victoria home. Such diversity in our community brings both rewards and challenges. This half-day dialogue invites all members of the public to participate in a full and deep conversation about the challenges and rewards our community is facing; and explore concrete actions we can take as a community to welcome diversity.

**Global by Design: The Competitive Advantage (May 14, 2010 at Victoria Conference Centre)**

Global by Design is a one day Leaders Summit that will bring together a cross section of executives and decision makers from education, health, community, municipal government and business sectors. The Summit has been designed to generate tangible ideas and develop a leadership network for immigration and socio-economic development in the Capital Region. The day will also feature renowned keynote speakers with expertise in the areas of cultural diversity, intercultural communication, and collaborative leadership.

**Creating Culturally Welcoming Communities and Businesses Demonstration Project (December 2009 to March 2011)**

This demonstration project will include a series of customized cultural diversity training workshops and online learning modules for five sectors: business, community organizations, public education institutions, non-profit agencies and municipal governments. Additionally, the project will produce new local diversity tools and resources, and a local communications strategy to promote diversity in the region. The first diversity training workshop will be delivered for community organizations on March 31 & April 1, 2010.

**Diversity Education Web Resources and Arts Project (March to May 2010)**

This project will develop a diversity education resource page on the Inter-Cultural Association’s website. Material will include a comprehensive array of education resources, stories and experiences of local immigrant newcomers, regional immigration statistics, and services. The education and arts project will also include the production, performance and video of an innovative puppet-based presentation, titled “We Are Here”, featuring real life experiences of ten immigrant newcomers in the Victoria region.

ICA is the longest standing and largest immigrant settlement services and multicultural education organization in the region. ICA also hosts the annual Luminara Community Lantern Festival and hosted Folkfest for over 30 years. As the lead organization for this project, ICA has been addressing regional labour market issues since 2004.

Together with our Community Partnership Network, we very much look forward to working with other community leaders, employers, educators and service organizations on this exciting new venture.

For more information on the work of ICA and the Community Partnership Initiative in the Capital Region, contact:

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For more information on the Province of British Columbia’s Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program, go to: