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A network of Local Immigration Partnerships

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TORONTO SOUTH WEST



CONFRONTING XENOPHOBIA THROUGH COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

A Workshop Resource Guide

Last updated January 2026

Introduction

This working document brings together the ideas, reflections, and proposed solutions generated during our recent workshop on xenophobia, held in partnership with Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) facilitators from across the country during the 2025 Pathways to Prosperity Conference held in Halifax, which is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

Building on the spirit of the workshop's original goal, this document captures a wide range of community-informed perspectives on addressing xenophobia at personal, systemic, institutional, and local levels.

It is important to emphasize that what follows is not a definitive or exhaustive list of issues or solutions. Rather, it represents a snapshot of an evolving collection of insights shaped by the experiences and knowledge participants brought into the room.

We encourage readers to continue exploring these topics, deepening their learning, engaging in community conversations, and participating in communities of practice that support ongoing reflection and action. Our hope is that this document serves as a starting point for ideas, dialogue, and future collaboration.

This resource emerges from our own experiences working within the Local Immigration Partnership sphere. As facilitators, we come to this conversation from diverse personal and professional positions. Some of us are embedded within municipal government and others are situated in host organizations. Wherever we are located, inside institutions, alongside community, or somewhere in between, our perspectives inform how we understand and respond to xenophobia.

In solidarity,

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Land Acknowledgement

The Pathways to Prosperity conference took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia which is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726.

The treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources but in fact, recognized Mi'kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

As attendees that participated in the conference in Halifax, we acknowledge the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed in this Territory and recognizes that we are all Treaty People.

Advocating against Hate in Hamilton

In November 2024, a white supremacist group led an anti-immigrant demonstration in the heart of downtown Hamilton. Their banner read, “Mass Deportations Now”.

In response, the leadership of the **Hamilton Local Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC)** convened to determine next steps which resulted in HIPC’s first press-conference where community leaders called for solidarity and denounced the hate incident. In a similar hate incident that took place November 2025, HIPC leadership responded by issuing a press release denouncing racism, white supremacy, and fascism in all their forms.

Reflecting on Advocacy

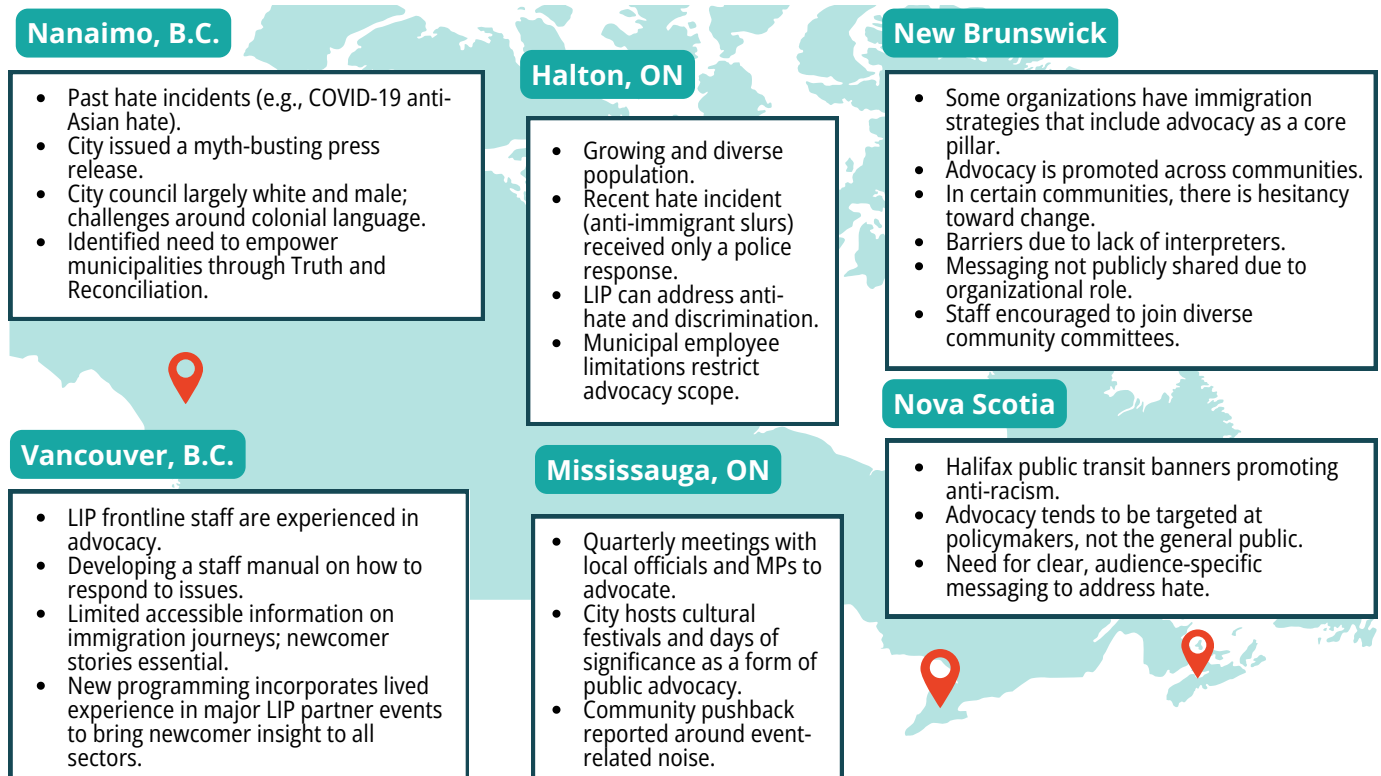
HIPC is a local immigration partnership funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. We engage in advocacy that strengthens community systems and supports immigrant inclusion. In practice, this means addressing incidents of hate and other barriers to inclusion through systems-focused advocacy that reflects our mandate (i.e., **Community Plan**) and our responsibility to make Hamilton a welcoming community, where newcomers have a positive settlement experience and feel a strong sense of belonging.

We also recognize the realities faced by organizations, including funding constraints and the perception that speaking out can be risky. As a municipally hosted partnership, we navigate similar dynamics and rely on the leadership and collaboration of our HIPC council members to advance HIPC’s mandate.

Advocacy Checklist

- ☐ **Clarify the situation:** Understand what happened and who is affected.
- ☐ **Confirm leadership awareness:** Ensure organizational or community leaders know about the issue.
- ☐ **Identify response mechanisms:** Determine if a group or process exists to address emerging issues.
- ☐ **Choose an advocacy format:** Consider whether an in-person response or a virtual/written statement is most appropriate.
- ☐ **Use collective voices:** Collaborate with partners and community members to strengthen the message.

What we heard



General Reflections

This workshop on advocacy brought together insights from service providers and local immigration partnerships across multiple regions, highlighting both innovative practices and persistent challenges in fostering inclusive communities.

Central themes emerged around the need for community education and awareness, using storytelling and targeted campaigns to counter hate and promote belonging. Participants emphasized the importance of collaborative engagement, including regular dialogue with municipal leaders and diverse representation in decision-making spaces.

The discussion underscored the urgency of responsive action to discrimination, through clear messaging and initiatives that address incidents while promoting reconciliation and cultural understanding.

Building capacity among frontline staff through training and practical tools was identified as critical for effective advocacy. At the same time, organizations must balance grassroots efforts with policy-level advocacy, often navigating restrictions on personal versus professional roles.

Despite these limitations, the consensus was that meaningful advocacy requires coordination and a commitment to amplifying newcomer voices to create communities where everyone feels welcome and valued.

What We Heard: Methods to Advocate

- **Adapting Policy:** Incorporating advocacy as a pillar in your strategic plan/community plan/immigration strategy.
- **Community Dialogues:** in-person or virtual to educate the public, has been used in response to hate incidents, can be used to foster greater understanding.
- **Campaign Ads:** in public spaces (e.g., transit banners) [see also [Hamilton For All](#)].
- **Leveraging Lived-Experience:** Creating events that involve the integration of newcomers to share lived experiences.
- **Municipal/Regional Campaigns:** Hamilton for All, We Belong Campaign, Welcoming Week (e.g., 1 world, many stories).
- **Public Statements:** Letters to city council, open statements, news releases, or hosting a press conference.
- **Social Media Campaigns:**
 - Using Facebook as a tool to share information relating to newcomers to educate the public.
 - Using a YouTube channel to interview immigrants as a form of storytelling for advocacy.
- **Training:** Municipality to educate/train on how to cater services from a newcomer lens. Staff to have a manual on what to do and how to respond. Share advocacy tools with clients for a grass-roots perspective, provide in-person support.
- **Websites:** Sites of resources for anti-racism, equity.

Ongoing Discussions:

- How can we advocate across **different levels of government**?
- How can we **meaningfully advocate** without fear of reprisal from funders or host organizations?
- How do we determine which advocacy efforts will have an **impact**? What are **best practices**?
- How do we **incorporate multiple perspectives** in an advocacy response?
- How can local immigration partnerships **share resources** with municipal/regional partners, including city council?
- How can organizations **foster better understanding** of newcomer experiences with their municipalities or regional partners?
- How can **frontline staff address hate** in the workplace? Can **training** be provided to respond and take action?
- What does it mean to **coordinate**?
- What does it mean to **engage in personal advocacy** while adhering to professional mandates?

Campaigns

Campaigns: How can we utilize campaigns in our work?



The group discussion on campaigns focused on sharing experiences, practical examples, and community-based ideas for building public support for newcomers.

Participants reflected on personal, systemic, institutional, and local perspectives, with a shared goal of exploring how public campaigns can challenge xenophobia and promote diversity. The conversation emphasized the importance of values-driven messaging, storytelling, community engagement, education, and collaboration, while recognizing capacity limitations and the need for locally grounded, relationship-based approaches. Participants also shared local, regional, and national examples to illustrate how these approaches are already being used in different communities.

Messaging,
Narrative, and
Framing

Storytelling
and Human
Connection

Community
Engagement
and Education

Partnerships
and
Collaboration

Key Themes

Audience
Targeting and
Reach

Strategy,
Capacity, and
Resourcing

Measurement,
Learning, and
Impact

Overall Takeaways

Across themes, participants emphasized that effective public campaigns to challenge xenophobia and promote diversity are rooted in positive messaging, authentic storytelling, strong partnerships, and sustained community engagement. Locally grounded approaches, combined with shared learning and flexible evaluation, were seen as key to building trust and long-term impact.

What we heard

Expand & spread
+ diversify our
partners –
corporate
sponsors

How can NLS
initiatives
introduce us to
new supports/
sponsors?

Education first
in communities
and finding the
right people

Micro-level
campaign +
navigating
political shift

Focus on the
positive, not
fear-
mongering.
Less triggering

Understand
race +
cultural
humility

Newcomer voices
campaign in
newspapers to
get people to
hear more stories
– storytelling

How do
we
measure
success?

We don't
want to
preach to
the choir

How to avoid
selling the
wrong
message?

Developing
the work with
comms teams
of different
organizations

Role of
community
development
orgs + help
address the
issues

It's a lot to run
our own
campaigns –
easier to support
existing
campaigns

We need to
customize
messaging
based on local
needs + context

Limited
resources to
organize and
run
campaigns

Starting
small +
focus on
local

Evaluation:
what's
working,
what's not

Learning
from other
campaigns/
cultures

Campaigns with
something
tangible are
easier to
engage with

Lack of
information
as a source
of
xenophobia

Meeting
people
where
they are

Finding local
champions
(artists, MPs,
activists)

Education
sessions
for
newcomers

Slow & steady –
bring people
together,
community
dialogues

Partnering
with ethno-
cultural
orgs

Storytelling
+ personal
connection

Capturing
success

How do we
reach people
that are in
the middle?

Compassionate
dialogues –
examples from
City of Winnipeg

Indigenous
relationships
toolkit

How to tell
where we get
the most impact
+ measure
success

Capturing
comments
on
Facebook

Evidence-based
campaigns –
targeting people
in the middle
base

Humanizing
the narrative

Bringing people
together over
shared values +
culture and food

#WeBelong
campaign +
educating
the
community

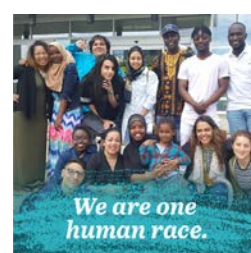
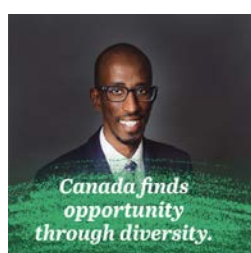
Racism +
power

Measuring
success is
important



Campaigns Mentioned

- Canadian Council For Refugee's Campaigns: **We Are Better Together** and **Refugees Welcome**.
- **Welcoming Communities Coalition** (Comox Valley / Campbell River).
- Lanark & Renfrew Local Immigration Partnership 2021-2025 Strategic Plan: **Welcoming Communities: No Wrong Door**.
- **I Am" campaign** (London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership).
- **Anti-racism framework** (National LIP Network and IRCC).



CCR Campaigns

Uses **positive, values-based messaging** to build public support for refugees and newcomers.

Website: ccrweb.ca/en



London Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership: I Am London

I Am London campaign shares **success stories of immigrants** in the region, highlighting their contributions and helping shift local narratives.

Website: iamlondonon.com

Welcoming Communities: No Wrong Door

Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew
2021-2025 Strategic Plan

Lanark & Renfrew Local Immigration Partnership 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

Strategic plan with a clear priority on building trust and promoting positive attitudes toward immigrants, cultural diversity, and newcomers.

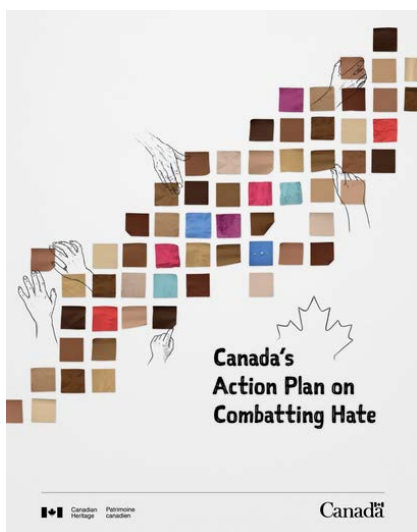
Website: liplanarkrenfrew.ca



Welcoming Communities Coalition

A local immigration partnership that conducts **community-based research, engagement, and education to raise awareness of newcomer issues** and foster inclusive, welcoming communities, in partnership with the Immigrant Welcome Centre.

Website: immigrantwelcome.ca/community-leadership/



Anti-Racism Framework

Anti-racism framework to support coordinated, community-level campaigns that counter hate, racism, and discrimination targeting racialized groups and newcomers.

Website: canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/combating-hate/action-plan.html

Key Challenges Identified



Limited Capacity and Resources

Participants highlighted ongoing challenges related to limited staff capacity, time, and funding to design, run, and sustain public campaigns. Many noted that it can be difficult to launch new initiatives, making it more practical to support or amplify existing campaigns rather than creating everything from scratch.



Reaching Beyond the "Converted"

A recurring challenge was how to engage audiences who are not already supportive. Participants expressed concern about "preaching to the choir" and emphasized the difficulty of reaching people in the middle without reinforcing polarization or unintentionally triggering defensive responses.



Navigating Sensitive and Polarized Contexts

Addressing issues such as racism, power, and xenophobia can be challenging, particularly in shifting political environments. Participants noted the need to balance honesty and accountability with messaging that remains accessible, compassionate, and non-confrontational.



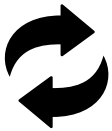
Crafting the Right Message

Developing messaging that resonates across diverse local contexts was seen as complex. Challenges included avoiding fear-based framing, ensuring cultural humility, countering misinformation, and tailoring messages without diluting core values.



Measuring Impact Meaningfully

Participants identified difficulties in measuring success beyond traditional metrics. Capturing qualitative outcomes such as changes in attitudes, trust-building, and community relationships requires time, tools, and shared approaches that are not always readily available.



Sustaining Engagement Over Time

Short-term campaigns were seen as less effective for creating lasting change. Participants noted the challenge of maintaining momentum through slow, relationship-based work such as community dialogue, education, and storytelling, especially when resources are limited.



Coordinating Across Partners

While partnerships were viewed as essential, coordinating messaging, timelines, and roles across multiple organizations can be challenging. Aligning communications and priorities without overburdening partners requires ongoing trust and clarity.

Ongoing Discussions:

- What messaging **resonates** most with your **local** audience?
- How can we use **storytelling** to **humanize** newcomers' experiences?
- Which **channels** (social media, radio, community events) are most **effective**?
- How do we **involve newcomers in campaign** design and delivery?
- What **partnerships** can amplify campaign reach and credibility?



Countering Hate in Real Life: What we heard

Structural & System-Level Tools

Systems, policies, institutional levers, and coordinated interventions.

- Collecting cases where hate crimes are reported; improving data access.
- Response frameworks / guidelines for addressing racism & discrimination in non-criminal code situations.
- Question: Does your city have a hotline for reporting hate crimes?
- Crisis line for hate-crime support ("start support and training").
- Anti-racism action plans.
- Multi-sectoral partnerships.
- PVLIP Anti-Racism Action Team.
- Guidelines for "grey areas" in reporting hate crimes (PVLIP).
- Communication / working with the RCMP.
- Collaborating with police / RCMP.
- Working with Human Rights Commission.
- Working with Chamber of Commerce around anti-racism & xenophobia.
- Burnaby's anti-racism policy.
- Committee structure connecting - A system where all three tables inform and support each other:
 - TRC
 - Anti-Racism
 - Gender
 - Inclusion
- Victim services connected to Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership.
- Ensuring health authorities have cultural competency training.
- Data for employers.
- Cultural competency for employers.
- Using data to counter misinformation (system-level version: data infrastructure).

Community Engagement & Bridging Strategies

Systems, policies, institutional levers, and coordinated interventions.

- Relational and coalition-building approaches that bring communities together.
- Building bridges between newcomers & Indigenous communities, Elders, and teaching.
- Engaging rural community members + understanding their struggles.
- Creating women's circles for deeper belonging.
- Targeting different narratives to different communities.
- Asking people: "When did your grandparents get here?"
- Reflection on individual past history.
- Storytelling (as relationship-building).

Countering Hate in Real Life: What we heard

Public Education & Counter-Misinformation Strategies

Shifting narratives, reframing myths, building shared understanding.

- Using data to counter misinformation (education version).
- Reminding people of their own history of immigration.
- Enlightening people that their struggles are often shared with newcomers, not caused by them.
- Teaching the truth about Indigenous history in Canada to counter misinformation.
- Using data/numbers to challenge economic myths about immigrants.
- Providing opportunities to tell stories that counter xenophobic myths.
- Calling curiosity in; checking people's information and sources.
- Sharing tangible success stories.

Capacity Building & Training

Skills, competencies, and readiness-building for individuals and organizations.

- Bystander training.
- Train-the-trainer models for bystander intervention.
- Cultural competency training for health authorities.
- Cultural competency training for employers.
- Victim services training (implied through PVLIP note).
- "Start support and training" (connected to crisis line idea).

Questions, Needs & Open Problems

What participants identified as gaps, uncertainties, or areas needing development.

- Does your city have a hotline for reporting hate crimes?
- What response frameworks/guidelines exist for "grey-area" racism incidents?
- Need for opportunities to share counter-myth stories.
- Need for shared tangible success stories.
- "Resilience" (noted as a theme needing development or clarity).
- Need to understand rural community struggles more deeply.

Online Hate

Reflecting on “Online Hate”

Participants at the P2P Conference in Halifax (Nov 2025) discussed strategies to address online hate and improve digital safety for settlement organizations and equity-deserving groups. For niche programs or events with preset participant lists, closed platforms like WhatsApp were recommended to create safer online spaces, particularly for women-centered programming. These spaces should mimic physical safe zones, include designated moderators, and use organization-issued devices for security.

When encountering online hate, organizations should analyze the root causes (e.g., perceived lack of economic opportunity or services) rather than react emotionally. Direct engagement with perpetrators is discouraged; instead, organizations should disengage, report through platform channels, and involve police when necessary. Limiting or disabling comments on promotional posts was suggested to reduce exposure. A firm organizational stance against hate is essential, supported by canned responses and documentation of incidents (including screenshots and account details).

Resources proposed include pinned social media guidelines, professional development for staff and partners, and a toolkit to combat disinformation with templates, myth-busting content, and quick facts. Education campaigns addressing root causes of scapegoating (housing, cost of living) were emphasized.

Gaps identified include limited marketing capacity and lack of awareness among communications teams. Safety concerns extend to newcomer youth and staff psychological well-being.

Digital Safety
& Closed
Spaces

Non-
Engagement &
Documentation

Organizational
Preparedness
& Training

Education &
Myth-Busting

Capacity Gaps in
Communications

Psychological
Safety for Staff
& Youth

6 Key Themes

What we heard

Solutions

- Create closed, moderated online groups for vulnerable programs.
- Develop and pin social media guidelines for all organizational platforms.
- Implement training for staff and partners on responding to online hate.
- Build a comprehensive toolkit with templates, facts, and myth-busting resources.
- Launch education campaigns addressing root causes of anti-immigrant sentiment.
- Document all hate incidents systematically for reporting and advocacy.
- Allocate resources to strengthen marketing/communications capacity across organizations.

Practical Resources

- City of Surrey Social Media Guidelines: [Social Media | City of Surrey](#).
- Eradicate Hate: A Toolkit for Combating Online Hate: [#EradicateHate - CASSA](#).
- Block Online Hate, Unlock Resilience: An Educational Toolkit for Community Members: [ACCT-Combat-Online-Hate-Educational-Resources-0930-Eng-Final.pdf](#).
- The Canadian Coalition to Combat Online Hate: [Resources - Combat Online Hate](#).
 - Offers resources for youth, parents, educators, and policymakers
- Montreal Holocaust Museum: How to Confront Online Racism? [How to Confront Online Racism? - Musée de l'Holocauste Montréal](#).
- Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy: [Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2024-2028 - Canada.ca](#).
 - Offers an overview of the Government of Canada's Anti-racism strategy and provides a foundation for community organizations to align their work to government priorities.

Welcoming Communities

Case Study

Welcoming Week

Welcoming Week is an annual initiative that is run by **Welcoming America** and adopted by Immigration, Refugee, Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Welcoming Week runs for 1-week in September. During Welcoming Week, local communities around the world host events that connect people of different backgrounds through shared causes and interests.



Reflecting on Discussions on Welcoming Week

Participants in this discussion emphasized that building welcoming communities requires intentional, community-wide engagement. Participants shared diverse initiatives such as cultural celebrations, arts and sports events, job fairs, open houses, and anti-racism campaigns that have created meaningful connections between newcomers and long-time residents.

Strong partnerships with municipalities, Indigenous communities, employers, and local organizations were key to embedding inclusion into existing community life. Overall, the discussion highlighted that welcoming efforts are most impactful when newcomers are purposefully included in public spaces, decision-making, and shared celebrations of culture and belonging.

Welcoming Week Checklist

Source: Welcoming America's Event Planning Guide

- ☐ **Listen:** Ask a diverse set of residents and organizational partners what the community needs are?
- ☐ **Identify Partners:** Identify partners to help create and host the event. Partners should bring expertise to the event and help recruit diverse attendees.
- ☐ **Establish Clear Goals:** What is the purpose of the event? What are your expected outcomes?
- ☐ **Create a Workplan:** Use an inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility checklist to compliment your workplan.

What we heard

St. John's Food Shop Hop

Gallery Hop for ethnocultural markets; chance for Canadian-born locals to build connections to foreign-born locals



Housing Expo

Workshop and tradeshow for all housing spectrums

March 21: Launch of Inclusivity campaign at local hockey game



Welcome Fair

Bridge-building activities where newcomers participate in Powwow and land-based activities

Community Connection & Job Fair



Event Launch: Anti-Racism Policy launched at an event that invited Indigenous community & newcomers to come up with what defines discrimination/exclusion



CPHR (Certified Professional in Human Resources) joint breakfast

Inclusion activities: open houses, Primary Care Network, networking events, art, music



Radio Campaign:

Prominent voices on feelings of welcomeness

Open House: Invite people into SPOs/places where immigrants congregate



Ideas from Participants

- It is critical to prepare your community as a whole when organizing welcoming activities for newcomers.
- Anti-racism in Sport campaign.
- Invite guest speakers from community to talk about the topic of interest. The speaker gets to meet newcomers in a different context.
- Partner with Chamber of Commerce for breakfasts, have a given community ethnic cater the food and be the speakers.
- Partner with City to include newcomer communities in city-wide events (booths, parade, floats, cultural activity like dancing.
- "Speed Dating" type meet-a-newcomer activity at a bigger city/community event.
- Tapestry Celebration of Diversity - Early and celebrate the many cultures in our community through food, fashion, performances, art, crafts.
- Anti racism community bylaw through municipality to report hate.
- Women's art event.
- Newcomer sports store dash bus around, try sports, tour facilities, apply slash register, free trials financial support applications.
- Main event included newcomers as a pillar of the event where they shared lived experiences. The discussions and event were more impactful.
- The Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table secured a seat on the social planning committee. Advocacy on repealing head tax.
- Local Immigration Partnerships join Committees such as social planning in various cities, truth and reconciliation, racial inclusion, gender inclusion.
- Refugee House: Soccer tournament fund, FIFA fund.

- Art Gallery, Newcomer Artists, faces of the town.
- Women's circles: women lead cooking, create a sense of belonging, peer support.
- Theatre group: Kids Theatre is popular in town. It's an opportunity to collect, connect newcomers with the local community.
- Mexican Independence Day soccer tournament: 5 employers bus their own teams, meal prepared for the community events; Budget from province for migrant workers. IRCC - Swiss funds honorarium.
- Newcomer Day: In May settlement education city services, school officials, Cultural programming, stories of Indigenous community citizenship ceremonies, surveys onsite and online.
- Displayed for a month at a gallery: Faces of Winkler partner with Art Gallery; Written Story Portraits - Artist will paint or draw portraits.

Welcoming Week Resources

Welcoming Week Toolkit

A toolkit with event planning guides, social media assets, communication templates, logos and best-practice tips to put on a Welcoming Week event. This toolkit provides Local Immigration Partnerships with a clear framework to plan and organize successful Welcoming Week events.

Resource Link: welcomingweek.org/toolkit

Welcoming Communities Toolkit

A toolkit designed for communities and organizations to assess how “welcoming” their environment is by identifying and measuring key characteristics of inclusive, newcomer-friendly communities.

It provides a set of tools including: an environmental scan to map existing conditions; a characteristic-ranking exercise to prioritize among 19 identified dimensions of a welcoming community; and a guide for selecting indicators and comparators to measure progress.

Resource: p2pcanada.ca/library/measuring-welcoming-communities-a-toolkit-for-communities-and-those-who-support-them/

Connecting Cultures & Communities – Guide & Toolkit: Pembina Valley LIP

A resource addressing newcomer experiences, employer relations, allyship, cultural competence and action steps for individuals, organizations and communities.

Resource Link: pvlip.ca/guide-toolkit/download/