

NORTH SHORE LEADERS OFFER THEIR VIEWS

Two forums convened by NSIIP brought together more than 40 Leaders of North Shore agencies, organizations and institutions. Their input is important as part of a comprehensive engagement strategy that has also canvassed service providers, employers and immigrants. The input collected at these Forums will inform the development of a Settlement Strategic Plan for the North Shore. This information sheet summarizes the Barriers and Challenges, Promising Starts and Priorities they identified. Leaders were drawn from civic and provincial governments, school systems, health authorities, police and fire services, First Nations, libraries, community planning authorities, and several other agencies and organizations within all three North Shore Communities.



Barriers and Challenges

Leaders identified the following as issues to be further explored by the NSIIP.

- **ACCREDITATION ISSUES** Many immigrants must work in positions below their level of education, skills and experience, which creates financial barriers and contributes to feelings of isolation and other settlement stresses.
- **AFFORDABILITY** The cost of living on the North Shore may be felt more acutely by newcomers due to under- and unemployment and the challenge they face obtaining credit.
- **PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENT** For many, accessing services and navigating bureaucracy are hampered by a lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of government and / or lack of trust. This can also represent a barrier to community engagement.
- **EXPECTATIONS OF THE CANADIAN SYSTEM** Health care costs often come as a surprise, and for many the public school system is not as envisioned. Understanding the systems is difficult and impedes settlement.
- **LONELINESS AND ISOLATION** Language barriers, financial burdens and potential misunderstandings of Canadian norms, can lead to culture shock, isolation and loneliness among immigrants who are struggling to make connections with local residents.



Promising Starts

These are some of the things that Leaders feel currently promote inclusiveness and could be leveraged to enhance settlement.

- **EVENTS** Leaders recognize the strength and value in bringing people together for fun, food and shared passions. A need was expressed for more support of culturally-focussed events such as Caribbean Days.
- **LIBRARIES** The Library Champions program was noted as a highly successful program promoting libraries as free, open, accessible and inclusive spaces. The program could be a model for other institutions.
- **SCHOOL DISTRICTS & PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS** School-based settlement workers and programs provide invaluable support to immigrant students and their parents. Many PACs have an ambassador who welcomes new families into the school community. Further expansion of such services could promote youth engagement and help identify the challenges and barriers they face.
- **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS** Vancouver Coastal Health partners with recreation and community centres to provide orientation workshops on the health care system. The North Shore Multicultural Society offers tours of civic institutions. The co-delivering of workshops, presentations and outreach activities has the dual advantages of streamlining delivery and making specific information more accessible and easily publicized.
- **PARTNERSHIPS OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSION, COMBINED WITH RECOGNITION OF CULTURALLY SPECIFIC NEEDS** Some pools offer and promote female-only swimming times in recognition of some cultures preferences and practices. Leaders praised such efforts to meet diverse needs, especially when they can be delivered at no or limited cost.



Priorities for NSIIP Consideration

In identifying priorities North Shore leaders struck a delicate balance. The North Shore is comprised of three unique communities, with distinct populations, challenges, opportunities and hot-button issues. The NSIIP recognizes each communities uniqueness and is developing a Strategic Plan for the whole North Shore. The priorities identified by community leaders were chosen with the goal of providing value and return on investment throughout the region.



CIVIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

- A two-way education and communications campaign targeting immigrants and the receiving community.
- A focus on identifying areas of priority – likely to include municipal affairs, first responders and health – and providing information to immigrants about available resources and how to navigate the system.
- A secondary campaign to myth-bust and provide fact-based information to the receiving community. Elements would include who is settling here, the value of effective settlement and how to make immigrants feel welcome.



SPORTS AND RECREATION

- Sport, recreation and fun in general are powerful and low-cost life enhancers and community builders.
- Community centres and recreation facilities could do more to reach out to immigrant communities in a targeted way.

- The important role of leisure-access counsellors was identified, as was the need for more resources for such portfolios.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

- An informal, fun and free or low-cost way to bring people together.
- Leaders support all such events but are specifically interested in exploring opportunities to expand culturally specific events and to attract the participation of immigrant communities.
- Such events present an opportunity for NSIIP to distribute information and make itself known to community members.



CIVIC REPRESENTATION

- A campaign or commitment to recruit and support immigrant representatives on boards, committees, PACs and other community-based groups.
- Marks an important step in engaging the broader immigrant community: If immigrants don't see their interests being represented, why would they engage with Council, police, etc.?
- North Shore leaders support any efforts to diversify the representation on community boards and councils.



ADVOCACY

- Because immigration is under the jurisdiction of the federal government, North Shore leaders want to ensure that federal representatives are aware of local immigrant-related settlement issues and opportunities.
- Particular topics of interest include funding for settlement services and work being done to expedite recognition of foreign credentials.

About the North Shore Immigration Inclusion Partnership

The NSIIP is a coalition of some two dozen community agencies and institutions focused on improving the settlement outcomes of new immigrants on the North Shore. It is part of a national initiative called Local

Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) led by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) which aims to foster local engagement of organizations that offer services to new immigrants, to support community-level research and

planning, and to improve the coordination of services that help immigrants settle and integrate.

In November 2014, the NSIIP began a Community Research and Consultation process, which includes four components: Community Service Provider Consultation, Employer Consultations and

Online Survey, Immigrant Focus Groups and Community Leader Consultations. The research and consultation work emerging from this process, including the results from the Leaders Consultations, will be used to inform the development of a Local Immigration Strategic Plan for the North Shore and guide the work of the NSIIP from 2016 - 2019.