

Mission Local Immigration Partnership Action Plan 2017-2018

SUMMARY

Newcomers arriving from other countries have been a feature of Mission from its earliest days, and in the past year not only have the regular stream of immigrants settled in the community, but 24 refugees from the Congo and Syria who have also added a new dimension to the work of the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and its council.

The LIP, funded by the federal government's IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) is focused the social and economic integration of immigrants into the community and again reached out into the community in 2016-2017 to build partnerships, leverage existing resources and respond to community knowledge and identified needs.

The LIP considers this year one of implementation following a time of research and building. Three focus groups on immigrants, (government and faith-based) sponsors and employers aided us in outlining the key needs of newcomers in Mission, through the regular channels and through government-funded and private sponsorship (and blended) refugee arrangements which created its own set of challenges/opportunities for local settlement services.

The top needs for all newcomers in Mission are **employment** and **language**. And those two areas will be a major focus for the LIP this year as local settlement services are coordinated with organizations (and LIP partners) including Mission Community Skills Centre (WorkBC), Mission Literacy in Motion and the LINC language program.

A public forum put together through the LIP and Mission Community Services Society settlement team helped share the compelling stories of our Mission newcomers, the spirited volunteers, and those in settlement and other sectors, and was received with much appreciation and enthusiasm. Another forum is set for November of 2017.

From the time Mission Community Services engaged influencers and the general community through the development and promotion of its findings in its Welcoming Communities project in 2013-2014 to now, many immigration-related successes have been noted. Services to newcomers and awareness of immigration in the community have been improved. This year a LIP working group of volunteers was established to provide specific supports for newcomers when material needs were expressed.

Again we found our strong relationship with faith-based refugee sponsors a big plus in community engagement, sharing our stories and making newcomers aware of Mission settlement services.

WHAT THE LIP DISCOVERED (KEY POINTS)

1. Through our research this year, with focus groups with employers, sponsor groups and immigrants themselves, we discovered finding employment is the biggest challenge for the newcomers we interviewed. More language training was expressed by all interviewed newcomer parties, and employment sector information providers and innovative funders have a desire to increase the number of newcomers they serve.
2. Two thirds of Mission's population commutes outside the community to work. Developing jobs locally and having immigrants tapped into a local network is an admirable goal. Our LIP went one step further this year by working on developing access to employment opportunities in rural communities to the east of us on the north side of the Fraser River, specifically in the farming, hospitality and light industry sectors. Newcomer families expected to arrive in that region will be served by us through the auspices of Agassiz Community Services. Agassiz-Harrison Chamber of Commerce was the audience for one of LIP talks this year on immigration in the region. West Coast Express train transportation access to community employment opportunities west of Mission continues to be a benefit.
3. Having a representative from the Mission School District (superintendent of schools **Angus Wilson**) on our LIP has vastly improved the relationship we have with the school district. Mission settlement workers have timely access to information on new students arriving from other countries who may require settlement services. The school district is now aware of potential refugee families with children arriving in the community.
4. For the Connector and Ambassador programs, which were launched by the LIP in our community last year, those who decided to participate enjoyed access to new people in the community, be they business people or representations of organizations like Fraser Health. We discovered that if newcomers were staying with friends or other family members, the desire for the Ambassador program appeared to reduce because those supportive individuals in their lives were filling that role. By developing volunteer Connectors for this referral service to help immigrants build a professional network, awareness of the LIP activities in Mission rose.
5. Our LIP Council still believes strong marketing is required to keep our settlement programming top of mind. Those in leading positions in various organization at times can be likened to a revolving door and new people need to be made aware of what we do. We continue to keep telling our story in the community through mainstream media and social media.

6. With the success of our Power of Small: Refugees Welcome forum last year (<http://missioncommunityservices.com/power-small-nov-19.html>), and other forums to follow, we are encouraged by the support and interest in helping those new to Canada. By leveraging the passion of the faith groups in Mission, the level of support for refugees/permanent residents in our community is certainly looking promising. Another immigration forum involving the LIP is scheduled in November 2018.
7. This year we discovered volunteer burnout, even for enthusiastic supporters of our refugee families, is very real and we have advised sponsoring groups to have enough support people with backup volunteers to ensure newcomers receive the support they expect to receive.



Above: Mission Settlement worker translates for Syrian father, new to the community in 2016, who shared his compelling story about how he came to Canada with his wife and children, at Power of Small: Refugees Welcome public forum involving the Mission LIP.

THE PLAN: TIME-BOUND LIP ACTIVITIES

1. **ACTION: Organize and/or partner with** organizations, including WorkBC and Mission Community Skills Centre, to provide information to employers and potential employees to drive the message focused on the benefits of hiring immigrants. Work with SRC-Tec and Mission's Economic Development office to be regularly kept apprised of employment opportunities in the community and in the tech sector. Promote entrepreneurial opportunities for immigrants through North Fraser Community Futures and Mission Regional Chamber of Commerce.
2. **ACTION: Increase the relevance and accessibility of language training** for newcomers by working with Mission Literacy in Motion to help build programming around conversation circles and where identified, job-specific language training. Increase referrals to English language training and support programs. We will develop and implement strategies to boost English proficiency and improve the speed at which newcomers are ready for employment and encourage employers.
3. **ACTION: Continue to leverage funding** through the LIP (with a target of \$5,000 by March 31, 2018) to help enhance services to newcomers and identify more settlement gaps and opportunities be they through economic development or social networks. Leveraging of funding will also be achieved through services provided for special forums or community functions providing educational opportunities centred around culture. These leveraging opportunities include Festival of Light: Diwali in October and strong connections with Mission's social development committee and sponsors supporting our special forum.
4. **ACTION: Increase engagement with District of Mission Council** to make settlement in Mission a recognized activity with public recognition of city support. Activities include LIP delegation to council, outlining immigration, settlement and LIP activity in the community, and a specific ask for public recognition of immigration contribution to the community. The LIP will also engage in other public speaking opportunities in this community and in others to share the benefits of Mission and the value of immigration to create empathy for newcomers who come here through the regular immigration channels or for humanitarian reasons.
5. **ACTION: Continue to build on our marketing and public relations efforts** in the next 12-month period to promote LIP Action Plan components, in particular ones that assist in enhancing positive public perceptions about newcomers in the District of Mission. LIP will continue to communicate with public through media relations, promoting and engaging in forums, producing online video, posting on social media and MCSS website to relay messaging related to immigration and issues that help educate the public on quelling racism.

MISSION COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY

Connector Program



- Business is all about making connections and the same is true for people moving to Mission from other countries.
- Establishing these networks can take a long time but we want to speed up this process and help our newcomers to connect sooner. The Connector Program allows for business and professional people to meet informally with our clients and find out about their skill set and goals.
- Our Connectors then introduce our clients to three more people. Those three then introduce our client to three more and before you know it, our clients have a starting network of people they can go to for help and advice.



Contact Rick Rake for more details :
 604 826 3634 ext. 249
rick.rake@missioncommunityservices.com

PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION, TIMELINES, OUTCOMES

ACTION POINT	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINE	EXPECTED OUTCOME
Optimize employment/economic development opportunities for newcomers since employment is one of the highest needs expressed by our new-to-Canada clients.	LIP coordinator will connect, collaborate with economic/employment leaders including SRC-Tec, Mission Community Skills Centre, North Fraser Community Futures, Mission Regional Chamber of Commerce.	This process is ongoing, with specific economic meetings set for an average of once every quarter. Will keep the lines of communication open with volunteers offering help through our Connector Program.	Employment opportunities and information sessions will be coordinated and enhanced for our newcomers. The path to getting employment will offer more ease locally and in the region.



Above: Volunteer tutors at Mission Literacy in Motion offer language support for newcomers, in particular at regular conversation circles involving people from around the world. Literacy in Motion has representation on the Mission LIP and is a strong LIP partner.

ACTION POINT	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINE	EXPECTED OUTCOME
<p>Increase the relevance and accessibility of language training.</p>	<p>Working with Mission Literacy in Motion to help build programming around conversation circles and where identified, job-specific language training. Increase referrals to English language training and support programs, including link. Develop and implement strategies to boost English training.</p>	<p>This action point is already launched as soon as possible with critical meetings, with the target realized by the end of this term, March 31, 2018.</p>	<p>Increased English proficiency and improved speed at which newcomers are ready for employment, encouraging employers to hire them.</p>

Happy Diwali
FESTIVAL OF LIGHT:
 BRINGING LIGHT TO LEARNING

WED, OCTOBER 26
 5—8 pm
Clarke Theatre
 33700 Prentis Ave.,
 Mission, BC
Questions? 604-826-3634

Brought to you by: **MISSION**
Community Services Society

You're invited to celebrate Diwali!

Delicious food, entertainment, and a multi-cultural community bazaar.
Admission is free! Non-perishable food items greatly appreciated.

ACTION POINT	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINE	EXPECTED OUTCOME
<p>Continue to leverage funding through the LIP with a target of \$5,000 negotiated with partners this year.</p>	<p>LIP coordinator will collaborate with District of Mission Social Development and through private and government sponsors for a LIP-led cultural event: Festival of Light: Diwali set for Oct. 11 at Mission Clarke Theatre. Networking with potential funders, sponsors is key.</p>	<p>This action point is already launched with critical meetings held and planning under way for a major cultural event in the community on Oct. 11. Target expected to be reached by the end of this term, March 31, 2018.</p>	<p>The target of leveraged LIP funding will be realized to support improving newcomer integration and cultural appreciation and education in the community.</p>

<p>Increase engagement with District of Mission Council to make settlement in Mission a recognized activity with public recognition of city support.</p>	<p>Activities include LIP delegation to council, outlining immigration, settlement and LIP activity in the community, and a specific ask for public recognition of immigration contribution to the community. The LIP will also engage in other public speaking opportunities in this community and in others to share the benefits of Mission and the value of immigration to create empathy for newcomers who come here through the regular immigration channels or for humanitarian reasons.</p>	<p>A formal presentation to District of Mission Council by the LIP coordinator is expected by the fall of 2017. Speaking dates will be set as opportunities at public forums or events arise. When working with organizations like Mission Community Skills Centre (WorkBC), we will engage to share our message of welcoming communities and the benefits of hiring immigrants in the community.</p>	<p>District of Mission support with the settlement programs and LIP in Mission is seen as a form of acceptance and welcoming in the community. Engaging and compelling talks help in engaging the public when there are questions about culture, integration and employment in the community.</p>
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ACTION POINT	IMPLEMENTATION	TIMELINE	EXPECTED OUTCOME
<p>Continue to build on Mission LIP guerilla marketing and public relations efforts.</p>	<p>In addition to advertising in the Mission Visitor Guide, Mission Record and Punjabi Patrika and participating in public events, the LIP will be engaged in newsworthy events immigrant forums and myth-busting sessions to ensure a welcoming community. Flyer and poster distribution on our business sector and through non-profits will also raise awareness. Our website will also carry images and stories about LIP activities. And will be promoted through social media.</p>	<p>This process will continue through the next 12-month term. Advertising in the Visitor Guide is usually secured in December for the following spring. Patrika advertising and flyer/poster creation are reliant on the timely needs of the program.</p>	<p>Raising awareness levels of our LIP activities will be measured through feedback forms through our CARF systems of efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction through our LIP Council members and members of the public. With political support, the LIP has an opportunity to share features of local immigration in local promotional material for the community ranging from current events to economic development and employee recruitment.</p>



LIP COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP AND MEETING SCHEDULE

Encouraging consistent attendance and more time for strategic discussion, the LIP coordinator expects continued participation by keen influencers around the Mission LIP Council table in 2017-2018.

The nine-member Mission LIP Council represents important sectors of the community from business and economic development to education and literacy. Expertise in entrepreneurship, employment, social systems and government was also shared around the table to identify gaps, opportunities, challenges and solutions to help make settlement and integration a better experience for newcomers.

Continuing with the LIP are District of Mission economic development officer **Stacey Crawford**, Mission Literacy in Motion coordinator **Candie Thorne**, **Pia Rich** (with alternative **Ron Smith**) from WorkBC, Mission Library representative **Afton Schindel**, former District of Mission councilor and community advocate **Joan MacLatchy**, executive assistant **Jean Hooge** from the office of freshly reelected Abbotsford-Mission MLA Simon Gibson, 's office, **Doug Paille**, small business specialist with VanCity Credit Union, Mission City Councillor **Pam Alexis**, manager of social development for the District of Mission, **Kristen Hargreaves** and Mission School District Superintendent **Angus Wilson**.

The LIP coordinator expects to have an active LIP Council membership for its first meeting of the second term on June 22. A quorum consists of five members. That schedule will include four LIP meetings with the tentative schedule of Thursday, **June 22**; Thursday, **Sept. 21**, Thursday, **Nov. 23** and Thursday, **March 8**.