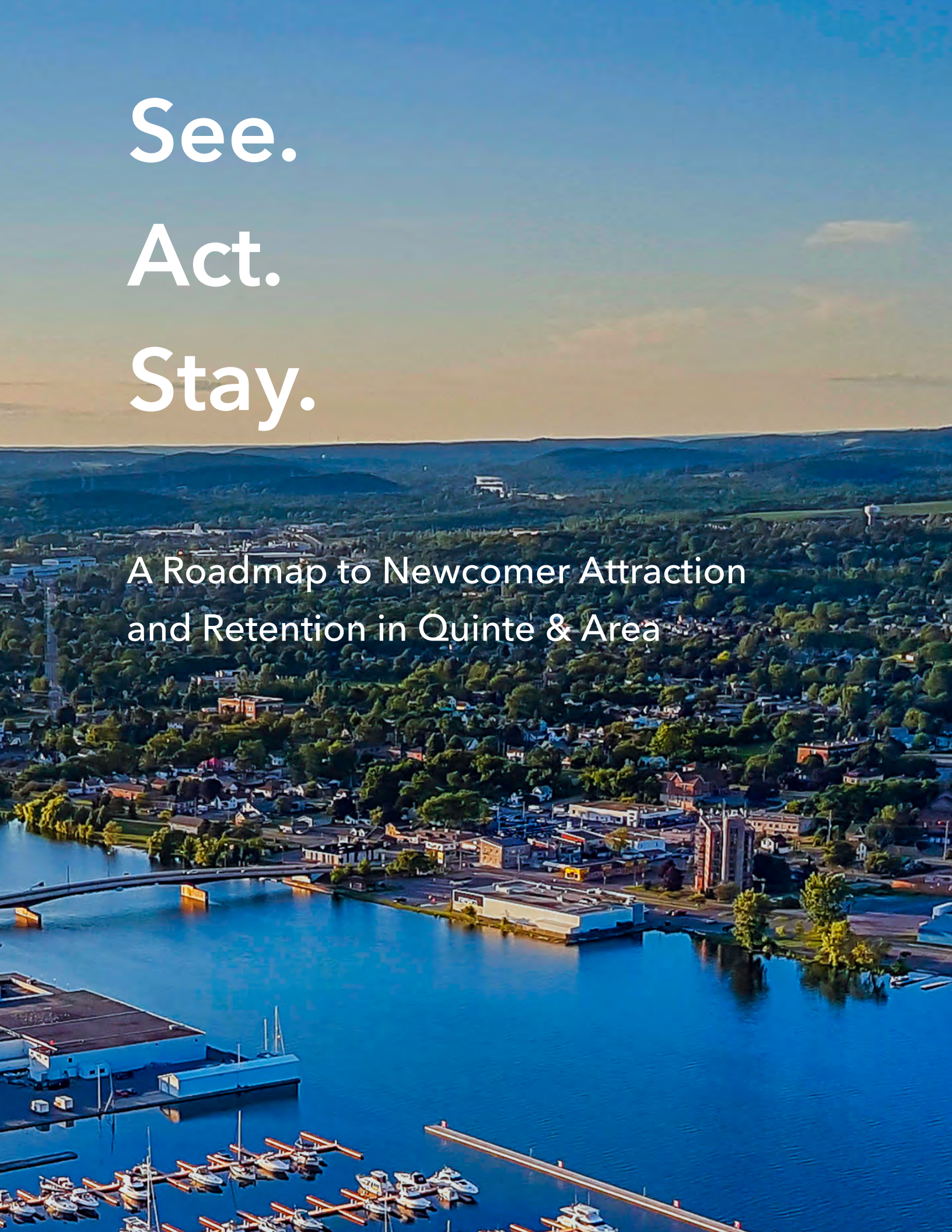
See.
Act.
Stay.



A Roadmap to Newcomer Attraction and Retention in Quinte & Area

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Front cover image
Tim Morris

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QUINTE & AREA REGIONAL RURAL IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

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Preface

The Rural Immigration Strategy was created by a partnership among the Centre for Workforce Development, Trenval, City of Belleville, City of Quinte West, County of Hastings, The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward, County of Lennox and Addington, Quinte Economic Development Commission, and the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board.

The research was made possible by the Rural Economic Development (RED) fund at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). This rural community matching grant is designed to generate sustainable economic growth for the region. The project was led by a Steering Committee of community actors and Consultant Chéla Breckon of With Chéla Inc.

The Strategy's recommendations are intended to provide specific evidence-based directions not only to solve current workforce challenges but also to stimulate long-term economic and social prosperity. The strategic directions include suggestions for measurement and analysis to enable the collection of research-based results.

The material contained in this report has been prepared for the Centre for Workforce Development (CFWD) and its partners on this project. The information is drawn from a variety of sources considered to be reliable. We make no representation or warranty, explicit or implied, as to its accuracy or completeness. In providing this material, CFWD does not assume any responsibility or liability. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario.

This report has been issued March 2020.

WHO - THE PARTNERS

A recent article written by Derek Baldwin in The Belleville Intelligencer on January 3, 2020, featured the reaction of local leaders to the Liberal government's announcement to take in more immigrants over the next three years with 5,000 selected to help offset skilled workforce shortages in smaller communities and rural areas – including Belleville and Quinte region. Belleville Mayor Mitch Panciuk Belleville welcomes the idea pointing out that "businesses in the city and region are in dire need of employees with the necessary skills to move the local economy forward." The federal initiative will help offset the tendency of most new Canadians to settle in Canada's large cities. "A lot of immigration, when it does come, goes to bigger cities. We're just waiting to see how it falls out," says Bay of Quinte MP Neil Ellis.

While welcoming the federal initiative, as reflected by the article in The Belleville Intelligencer, local and regional leaders realize much more effort is required to make it a success.

In response, the region created a unique partnership among community leaders to explore a Rural Immigration Strategy to solve urgent labour market shortages and stimulate economic growth. The following regional partners came together to identify evidence-based solutions to address this challenge:

Centre for Workforce Development, Trenval, City of Belleville, City of Quinte West, County of Hastings, The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward, County of Lennox and Addington, Quinte Economic Development Commission and theBay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board.

- Hastings County is the second-largest county in Ontario and includes the cities of Belleville and Quinte West. The total population is 136,445 which includes 9480 immigrants or 7%. The average age is 43.8.

- Lennox & Addington County is a vast rural county and includes the towns of Napanee and Amherstview. The total population is 42,888 which includes 2655 immigrants or 6.2%. The average age is 44.4.

- Prince Edward County is a 1,000-square-meter island community with a population of 24,375, which includes 2480 immigrants or 10%. The average age is 49.4.

HASTINGS COUNTY

136,445
POPULATION (2016)

1.12% POPULATION GROWTH RATE 2011-2016

Second largest county in Ontario, stretching almost 160km from the Bay of Quinte to Algonquin Park

HASTINGS **43.8** AVERAGE AGE

ONTARIO **41** AVERAGE AGE

CANADA **41** AVERAGE AGE

Comprised of 14-member municipalities

Ages 0 - 14	15.4%
Ages 15-64	63.3%
Ages 65+	21.3%

9480 (7%) TOTAL IMMIGRANTS (NON-CITIZENS)

TOTAL IMMIGRANTS CONTINENTS OF ORIGIN

EUROPE	5815
ASIA	1850
AMERICA	1550
AFRICA	190

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

24,375
POPULATION (2016)

-2.1% POPULATION GROWTH RATE 2011-2016

Nearly half of the working age population (15-64) are closing in on retirement – age 49 – 64 is 47% of working age population, or 6815 people out of 14,495

PEC **49.4** AVERAGE AGE

ONTARIO **41** AVERAGE AGE

CANADA **41** AVERAGE AGE

Total Immigrants 2480 or 10% where 1805 (73%) of them arrived prior to 1981

Ages 0 - 14	11.6%
Ages 15-64	58.6%
Ages 65+	29.8%

TOTAL IMMIGRANTS CONTINENTS OF ORIGIN

EUROPE	1850
AMERICA	380
ASIA	160
AFRICA	75

LENNOX & ADDINGTON COUNTY

42,888
POPULATION (2016)

2.6% POPULATION GROWTH RATE 2011-2016

39.15% of the working age population 15-64 is closing in on retirement – age 49 – 64 is working age population, or 10,635 people out of 27,165

L&A **44.4** AVERAGE AGE

ONTARIO **41** AVERAGE AGE

CANADA **41** AVERAGE AGE

Total Immigrants 2655 or 6.2% where 1750 (66%) of them arrived prior to 1981

Ages 0 - 14	15.1%
Ages 15-64	63.4%
Ages 65+	21.6%

TOTAL IMMIGRANTS CONTINENTS OF ORIGIN

EUROPE	1840
AMERICA	425
ASIA	270
AFRICA	65

HASTINGS COUNTY

Over the last three census periods, these numbers have been steady and most recently increased:

2001 - 2005: 560 Newcomers
2006 - 2010: 540 Newcomers
2011 - 2016: 655 Newcomers or 0.5% of population

TOTAL IMMIGRANTS AGE

Under age 5	1395 or 14.7%
5- 14 Years of Age	2050 or 21.6%
15 - 24 Years of Age	2450 or 25.8%
25 - 44 Years of Age	3145 or 33.2%
45 Years or More	440 or 4.6%

Countries of Origin for Recent Immigrants (2016):

AMERICAS (150 or 22.9%):
Brazil (20 or 3%), Colombia (25 or 4%), Jamaica (10 or 1.5%), United States (80 or 12.2%), Other (10 or 1.5%)

EUROPE (65 or 10%):
Romania (10 or 1.5%), Ukraine (10 or 1.5%), United Kingdom (35 or 5.3%), Other (20 or 3%)

ASIA (400 or 61%):
China (40 or 6.1%), India (115 or 17.6%), Japan (10 or 1.5%), South Korea (25 or 3.8%), Nepal (10 or 1.5%), Pakistan (25 or 3.8%), Philippines (130 or 19.8%), Vietnam (15 or 2.3%), Other (35 or 5.3%)

AFRICA (35 or 5.3%):
Democratic Republic of Congo (10 or 1.5%), Other (25 or 3.8%)

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

The 1980's welcomed ***215***
The 1990's only welcomed ***130***
2001-2005 welcomed ***100***
2006-2010 another ***150***

During the home price boom, the value dramatically lowered to ***65*** in 2011-2016

TOTAL IMMIGRANTS AGE

Under age 5	320 or 17.7%
5- 14 Years of Age	560 or 31%
15 - 24 Years of Age	625 or 34.6%
25 - 44 Years of Age	815 or 45%
45 Years or More	150 or 8.3%

Countries of Origin for Recent Immigrants (65, 2016):

AMERICAS (20 or 30.7%):
Jamaica (15 or 23%), Other (5 or 7.7%)

EUROPE (15 or 23%):
Other (15 or 23%)

ASIA (25 or 38.5%):
China (10 or 15.4%), Israel (10 or 15.4%)

AFRICA (10 or 15.4%):
South Africa (10 or 15.4%)

LENNOX & ADDINGTON COUNTY

The 1980's welcomed ***315***
The 1990's only welcomed ***185***
2001-2005 welcomed ***140***
2006-2010 another ***165***
2011-2016 welcomed ***105***

50/50 Economic to Sponsored immigrant status upon landing

TOTAL IMMIGRANTS AGE

Under age 5	420 or 15.8%
5- 14 Years of Age	660 or 24.9%
15 - 24 Years of Age	585 or 22%
25 - 44 Years of Age	870 or 32.8%
45 Years or More	115 or 4.3%

Countries of Origin for Recent Immigrants (2016):

AMERICAS (50 or 47.6%):
Cuba (10 or 9.5%), Mexico (20 or 19%), United States (20 or 19%)

EUROPE (15 or 14.3%):
Germany (10 or 9.5%), United Kingdom (10 or 9.5)

ASIA (30 or 28.6%):
India (15 or 14.3%), Philippines (15 or 14.3%)

AFRICA (10 or 9.5%):
Other (10 or 9.5%)

QUICK FACTS

- **50/50 Economic to Sponsored immigrant status upon landing**
- County has welcomed approximately 1000 immigrants each decade from 1980 up to 2010. **This increased by 31%** when you compare historical entries to the last census.
- **New Brand and Marketing plan in place early 2019**
- **Housing Plan updated at the end of 2019**
- Deep partnerships with The City of Belleville and Quinte West (Trenton)
- Average Market Rent (CMHC) – 1 bedroom $918, 2 bedroom $1027
- **Average Home price (MPAC) ranges from $156K to $183K**
- Video series "I left the city" as usable tool
- **Settlement Services and English-as-a-Second Language Training centralized in the City of Belleville**

QUICK FACTS

- 50/50 Economic to Sponsored immigrant status upon landing
- Community and Economic Development Commission well-established, advisory to Council in nature with operating budget
- Projected industry growth in Accommodations & Food Services, Agriculture & Forestry and Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
- Picton is the business centre of the county
- **Expanding cultural amenities and small business dominated economy**
- **Support for welcoming communities work contained in Strategic Plan Framework**
- **Housing concerns with an average home price of nearly $500K and limited rentals**

QUICK FACTS

- **50/50 Economic to Sponsored immigrant status upon landing**
- A strong focus on bolstering business activities is present here
- **All immigrant supports are located outside of the county**
- **2019 Provincial investment in affordable housing initiatives**
- **New child care centre approved for Amherstview**
- **Business Coaching provided to business community successfully – example of robust business supports available from the county**
- **No mention of newcomer attraction as a specific target within communications**

WHY - THE PROBLEM

A profound demographic shift is driving an urgent need for an organized Rural Immigration Strategy within the region. This shift is caused by the twin obstacles of an aging population and youth outmigration, exacerbated by a declining birth rate and accelerated retirements.

Quinte's regional population is significantly older than the rest of the province and the nation. The average age is 43.8 in Hastings County, 44.4 in Lennox & Addington County, and 49.4 in Prince Edward County compared to 41.0 in Ontario and 41.2 in Canada. To underscore the significance of this trend it bears mention that nearly half (47%) of the working-age population in Prince Edward County and more than a third (39.15%) in Lennox & Addington County are closing in on retirement.

At the same time that Quinte and area faces labour shortages caused by an aging workforce, it also has a significantly lower immigrant population than the rest of the province and the nation. The total immigrant population is 7% in Hastings County, 6.2% in Lennox & Addington County, and 10% in Prince Edward County compared to 53.3% in Ontario and 21.9% in Canada. Immigration to the region has been largely stagnant with only a small uptake in recent years of 655 newcomers in Hastings County, 105 in Lennox & Addington County and 65 in Prince Edward County.

Most immigrants still tend to arrive in Canada's largest cities – 77% or 106,000 people in 2018 according to Statistics Canada – instead of Canada's smaller cities and rural areas. They arrive in Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal driven by the perception of vast economic opportunities, greater cultural and ethnic diversity, and most significantly, a familiarity with either family or friends already living there. In 2012, only 15% of newcomers living in Canada's large cities reported that they would be willing to move elsewhere in Canada.

This urban-rural immigration imbalance has created strain on both sides. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA), for example, has experienced a rapid increase in population since 2012, causing a significant out-migration into neighbouring cities such as Hamilton and London and even more outlying communities such as Niagara. These communities are now facing unplanned rapid population growth and are struggling to settle and retain immigrants and secondary migrants without increasing the housing crisis. Meanwhile, rural communities lag far behind in proportionally equal immigration values as their urban counterparts, and struggle to avert economic decline due to workforce shortages.

Credit: Studio Dreamshare

WHAT - THE VISION

The purpose of the region's Rural Immigration Strategy is to revitalize the rural community by encouraging newcomers to settle in the various towns and cities. Integral to this effort is the desire to value the potential contributions of immigrants not only to perform critical jobs, but also to bring diversity to the region.
Whereas the immediate need for newcomer workers is to retain current local employers and the jobs they generate, this solution also allows for long-term planning to avoid future workforce shortages and stimulate the business sector.
And whereas the immediate settlement needs of newcomers is to take up residence in the region, this evolution also invites the local population to develop suitable support programs and welcoming communities.
The ultimate purpose is to foster a vibrant community where all people are valued and invited to contribute – an objective that goes beyond any direct economic benefit and truly advances sustainable revitalization. This reflects the desire of the local community itself, which during consultations indicated that we do better as a community when diversity is present and welcome, and all people have equal opportunity and access to the life they choose to build.

Credit: Studio Dreamshare

To achieve this objective, the region has identified four over-arching strategic visions that together form the framework of the Rural Immigration Strategy:

LEGEND FOR PROJECT ICONS

Vision 1 = Prepare
Regional actors assemble, coordinate and prepare to take action.

Vision 2 = See
Newcomers can clearly perceive economic and community opportunities in the region that match their skills/education and preferences.

Vision 3 = Act
Newcomers acquire familiarity with their potential new community for themselves and their families that motivates migration to the region.

Vision 4 = Stay
Newcomers have a sense of belonging made possible through meaningful, self-defined participation in the community and region.

HOW - THE SOLUTION

The way in which the region proposes to implement the objective of its Rural Immigration Strategy is multifaceted and designed around a set of core principles. It involves projects that reflect the four strategic visions, which put the newcomer centre stage to ensure their immigration or secondary migration to the region is a success.

Their success is our success!

The four strategic visions are dynamic, mutually reinforcing and cyclical:

The Cycle
Implementing the region's Rural Immigration Strategy by understanding what newcomers need and appreciate to become valuable and valued community members

-> Catching the attention of newcomers by promoting Quinte and area as a desirable place to live -> Attracting newcomers by demonstrating the economic and social advantage of moving to Quinte and area -> Retaining newcomers by offering welcoming communities that invite families to settle and stay.

The backdrop these goals and actions is a set of four core principles that will be reflected throughout all components of the region's Rural Immigration Strategy:

Credit: Studio Dreamshare

1. Leadership that engages in newcomer advocacy and is deliberate in including newcomers in community planning. For example,
   A) Research and investigate the lived experiences of newcomers to build understanding of their unique needs
   B) Advocate for all partners and other actors to adopt this understanding into their planning and efforts
   C) Invite and encourage newcomers to become leaders at planning tables and in decision-making roles to ensure the lens of their experience is considered
   D) Select project leaders and staff with a passion for welcoming communities and the principles of inclusion

2. Actions that are inspired by the values of community-wide equity, diversity and inclusion. For example,
   A) Put people at the centre of all decisions
   B) Focus on building a welcoming community

3. Innovation that is rooted in the resourcefulness and perseverance typical of rural communities. For example,
   A) Consider the differences between the rural areas of the region and the more urban zones and determine what is required to provide meaningful impact within each environment
   B) Explore shared resources and collaboration to carry out projects

4. Success that is measured in how many newcomers feel they have been welcomed and are permanently settled. For example,

A) Measure project results according to newcomer satisfaction in living in the region
B) Create robust narrative and qualitative measurements that tell the story of welcoming communities in the region

The projects recommended have been organized into clear and concrete frameworks that can be adopted and adapted by the regional actors. They each outline:

1. The strategic vision(s) supported by the project
2. The expected outcomes of the project
3. The current situation from both a position of strength and the opportunity to address challenges
4. A summary of best practices related to the project
5. Recommendation on a project solution framework
6. Suggestions for evaluation and measurement, including opportunities to add value beyond the expected outcomes

Sam Elbadawi and Carmen Ellis-Toddington are a husband and wife design/build team who own and operate Structural Anomaly.

PROJECTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

UNITE!

Host a commitment and coordination event with all relevant players, partners and groups.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Projects selected to be carried out are delivered by the most suitable partner with roles and resources that fit the project.**
2. **Partners feel a sense of ownership over the individual project they selected.**
3. **All partners are aligned with the regional commitment for change.**
4. **All partners adopt common language and behaviours for consistency.**

Situation

STRENGTH

Six core programs supporting welcoming communities were identified,

1. Direct services to newcomers (Quinte Immigration Services and Loyola)
2. Social change initiatives (Inclusion Committee, United Nations Association – Quinte Branch)
3. Information Sharing and Access (Quite Immigration Portal and Quinte Local Immigration Partnership)
4. These programs are achieving results ongoing and are positioned to continue. The actors involved are committed to serving, supporting and advocating for newcomers. Each program operates under a specific mandate tied to their respective sectors and a clear unifying connection to welcoming communities was found.

The partnership of local and regional government and agencies to support the creation of this plan shows buy-in and commitment from community leaders. A clear connection to the economic benefits of a welcoming community is shared and understood among the partners.

OPPORTUNITY

Bring together these six groups and the regional partners in order to tackle,

1. Overall alignment of purpose and commitment to becoming more welcoming
2. Coordinate players with respect to individual need and strengths for project selection
3. Discover shared resources and partnership opportunities for working together on projects
4. Prepare and plan for investments required to carry out projects

Working together in alignment is essential for a regional strategy to work. The players can come together to reduce siloed work and find ways to complement each other's effort. Making sure to tie projects to the right partner will be important to reach expected results efficiently.

Best Practice

Effective community engagement and regional coordination is brought about by adopting some specific key principles. When forming the coordination exercise with partners, consider these elements in the plan:

1. Plan & Prepare – chose the participants to be invited carefully, select a seasoned workshop designer and facilitator to lead the exercise and layout the expected outcome of the session and reason to do it with planning team. Engage the use of digital tools like sli.do to collect, prioritize and synthesize information in real time. Design the session with the participants needs for access in mind (dietary, language, timing).
2. Inclusion & Diversity – use a variety of media to promote the event, employ different ways to offer participant feedback (verbal, written, visual, artistic etc.), and ensure that the voices represent a diverse set of experiences and lenses.
3. Shared Purpose & Vision – develop a vision for the region collectively and investigate the common reason to do it, where all participants can unify in the objective and why to head there.
4. Learn & See – be open to the different views and approaches presented by participants and assist participants in doing the same with each other.
5. Transparency & Trust – provide a guide for your process and share it with the participant group, making sure to capture the results publicly as well by using video, live streaming or multi-person note taking with public distribution follow up.
6. Intent & Action – ensure that the plans you produce will have the impact you planned for and are well positioned with concrete action items to help move participants forward.
7. Commitment – Stay involved and regularly support participants as they progress to deliver on projects. Measure and reflect ongoing in order to learn how to improve year over year of execution.

Recommendations

Host a commitment and coordination event with all relevant players, partners and groups. It is recommended that this event be extraordinarily inclusive and well-planned, utilizing the expertise of a dynamic facilitation team that has experience with regional coordination and has familiarity using mechanisms and tools that invite widespread participation, centered in the principles of community engagement.

It is recommended that during the event, the development of a Welcoming Communities Collective Charter where all parties involved in any initiatives designed to inspire belonging commit to and live by. The charter would contain an overarching purpose statement, clearly and boldly articulating the reasons why to embark on the work, and defined messages and language that should be adopted by, used and shared commonly within the grouping. Planning an insightful moment around signing the charter can bring about pride, connection and help to elevate meaning derived from the event, making the commitment to the charter's elements highly recognized and adopted by community members. People or organizations who sign the charter then become members of a democratic collective where the power of their membership is made possible through collective impact.

It is also recommended that participants receive dynamic training on the founding principles of the charter. This would include understanding of one's own unconscious bias, privilege, expectations and norms built through intercultural competency. The training session can also include rationale as to why the charter is in place and how the common messaging was developed. Clear explanations and tools as to how to use the common language and phrasing should also be provided, helping every member to understand the power of consistent and aligned messaging in the communication plan for the region.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas:

- Number and type of participants (service providers, leaders, volunteers etc.)
- Sector reach (to track who is missing for future work)
- Track shareable talents and resources
- Feedback forms (use a pre and post-event question system to show increased understanding of why welcoming communities are important, of the participants' role in welcoming and an assessment of their capacity to engage)

Value Add Ideas:

- Film the session and use the footage for future communication tools
- Capture the results using a graphic recorder (illustration of feedback and findings created live at the event) so that a visual art piece can be used in the future to share the process and input
- Consider making the event annual – this is a way to take stock, reconnect and find new opportunities

COLLABORATE!

Learn from the common elements of social change initiatives practiced by other sectors and apply them to immigration project designs.

Intended Outcomes

1. **The effort of actors working towards inclusion in non-immigration sectors is leveraged so that all parties can mutually benefit from complementary work.**
2. **The network of people contributing to a welcoming community is broad and efficient.**

Situation

STRENGTH

Many agencies in the region support inclusion and belonging. Some examples:

1. United Way "United for All" Campaign (anti-racism and discrimination program)
2. Employment Accessibility Resource Network "EARN" (program empowering employers to hire a person with a disability)
3. Bay of Quinte Pride (LGBTQ+ events) and Positive Space training/initiatives
4. Belleville Waterfront & Multicultural Festival (community social celebration of diversity in general)
5. Women's events or events geared to gender equality (International Women's Day, Women in Business Initiatives, etc.)
6. Mosaics Creative Workshop Conference in Belleville (arts community leverage point)
7. Indigenous community events, groups and programs (Enyonkwa'nikonhriyo:hake [Good Minds] and Indigenous Peoples Partnership with Rotary Belleville)
8. Military Family support programs and events

By connecting with groups that share a common interest in fostering belonging through education and supports for vulnerable populations, the region can consolidate the efforts of many to capture the intended result of a welcoming community. This collaboration with other sectors also helps broaden understanding of the potential of all people in the region and the capacity of project leaders to capture their valuable contributions.

OPPORTUNITY

Connect community groups with a common interest in equity, diversity and inclusion:

1. Leverage common interest and priorities with groups contributing to inclusion outside of the immigration sector to amplify shared results and broaden their impact
2. Inventory best practices that are effective with respect to inclusion
3. Identify critical actors who can advise and contribute to planning, partnered grant proposals and execution of selected projects.

Programs that focus on a specific segment of the vulnerable population are important to address and support their unique needs. It can, however, lead to "siloed" efforts for each specific group. Being mindful of the central theme of acceptance and inclusion that connects all these programs opens the door to share and collaborate to mutual benefit.

Best Practice

Much advantage is to be gained from opening up the field of participation to other sectors embarking on the same or similarly themed work (see Unite!).

One of the major research findings of the Community Settlement Initiative (CSI) being carried out in Renfrew and Lanark Counties is that valuing people, fostering belonging and comfortably advocating for vulnerable or marginalized populations is not isolated in the immigration or anti-racism sector. As CSI developed baseline measurement tools, training and capacity building, other sectors began sharing and complementing this work from their respective viewpoints. For example, CSI researched and tested ways to train people to comfortably choose to advocate for others who belong to outsider groups (such as visible minorities). When these tests were carried out in the larger community, other sectors (such as LGBTQ+, Indigenous peoples, and Persons with a Disability) invited collaboration on how to adapt CSI's work to their identified group.

Another way to consider this overlap is to examine the lived experience of all visible minorities. How can the work being done to include immigrants who identify as a visible minority intersect with agencies representing other visible minorities? Applying the principles of proven support programs from other sectors is an example of practical innovation. Community leaders can identify a range of applications from other sectors to select those that can advance one specific vulnerable community, such as visible minorities, into their program design.

Recommendations

Learn from the common elements of social change initiatives practised by other sectors and apply them to immigration projects.

Regional leadership tables, such as QLIP or new ones established during the coordination event (see Unite!), would do well by including an agenda item for each meeting to share inclusion programs or campaigns from other sectors, and to develop mutually beneficial connections. Much work is being done with Indigenous communities, Pride events, women's issues, gender identity, and re-framing perspectives on physical ability in Canada and locally. This presents many opportunities to discover synergies and establish connections that advance community-wide impact.

An opportunity to research and investigate the models used by other sectors can be included in the strategic direction related to ongoing research (see Learn!). A concrete way to advance learning is to develop an online tool for sharing social change program designs. LIPs across Canada use a website named Base Camp to pose questions to a specialized network while responses are shared and archived in the system. A user can engage actively by posing questions and carrying out conversations, or passively by clicking through the discussions that have already taken place to learn. Assigning a relevant partner to this investigation process and to share it broadly at in-person meetings of groups like QLIP is a best practice for targeted learning, sustained by a central person or partner agency leading the effort.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas:

- Frequency of a best-practice model being applied to local projects
- Time-spend tracking to demonstrate increased speed in delivering an effective response to close the gaps presented by identified needs (e.g., reduce research and development investment and time, while still producing results)

Network breadth (how many sectors and people are contributing to the collective impact)

Value-Add Ideas:

- Create an online distribution channel to share what was learned and how it was applied to demonstrate leadership and to broaden duplication of what works (leverage the portal or social media as pre-established tools)
- Carry out joint events or programs with clear champions in other sectors to demonstrate unified action and community-driven commitment

LEARN!

Fund and augment ongoing research with local listening activities to highlight the lived experiences of newcomers needed to inform meaningful action.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Decisions are evidence-based**
2. **Project design reflects the current needs of newcomers**
3. **A full understanding of the lived experience of newcomers is achieved**

Situation

STRENGTH

Quinte Local Immigration Partnership (QLIP) has a federal mandate to produce research on the lived experiences of newcomers and is funded into 2025. QLIP is housed within Quinte Immigration Services (QIS), where detailed quantitative and qualitative data is collected about the newcomers who receive services there. This partnership provides a unique opportunity to leverage the data collected by QIS at the QLIP partner council meetings. Loyola School for Adult and Continuing Education, the local English-as-a-Second-Language training centre (Loyola), is also a keen participant in helping outside groups collect newcomers' stories to better inform interventions for language training.

OPPORTUNITY

Leveraging the data collected at QIS and Loyola and engaging with or expanding pre-existing planning tables like QLIP, is an easy way to accomplish the proposed learning activity. QLIP partners can help align and deepen the impact of the partnership, as well as leverage staff funding to support the need for detailed research year over year. The regional partners may also consider a shared research staff position, mandated to produce local, provincial, national or global information necessary to inform planning and action. The role could generally support understanding of immigration trends and specific information needed to carry out a particular project.

Best Practice

Pathways to Prosperity (P2P), formally known as the Welcoming Communities Initiative based out of Western University, is an organization mandated to perform research and analysis on best practices in settlement and integration work in Canada. It regularly receives funding to carry out investigations and publish reports on the findings. P2P provides a unique mix of academic methodologies and practical consultations, which offer an excellent example of the framework required for holistic decision-making. Consultations alone provide meaningful context to identify the needs of newcomers, and when combined with aggregated quantitative measures, understanding deepens.

Samantha Valdivia with her partner Rizal Adam runs a new, authentic Mexican restaurant, Le Condesa

Recommendations

Fund and augment ongoing research with local listening activities to highlight the lived experiences of newcomers needed to inform meaningful action.

Discover creative ways to stay in touch with the lived experiences of newcomers, making an intentional effort to reach those living in isolation or not using community services as their voices are likely the most important to hear. Agencies serving the general population, such as META Employment Services, and directed newcomer services, such as QIS and Loyola Adult School, are ideal places to access statistical and narrative information.

Much can be gained from taking this approach and making a concerted effort for newcomers to be heard. For example, the LIP in Renfrew and Lanark Counties carried out a "My Story" campaign to collect personal accounts of the lived experience of newcomers, which helped identify local agencies for support and places where access for newcomers needed improvement. The listening to newcomers approach has other benefits as well.

For example, the newcomers interviewed for Quinte and area's Rural Immigration Strategy were recorded on video (with permission), which can be used in decision-making as well as communication to the community. To carry out this level of consultation and research, partners may elect to rotate ownership of this effort as timelines and workloads allow. Partners may also coordinate funding to support ongoing consultation, either as a collective through shared investment or through third-party agreements. All the while, professional research methods will make all the difference because nuances are powerful. Making assumptions based on one person's lived experience lacks the credibility required for regional rationalization and action.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas

- Scope and breadth of research carried out (how far-reaching is our learning?)
- Number of partners that are leveraging the information collected
- Number of times project design and implementation has been adapted according to the information
- Tracking methods used to reach newcomers who are not engaged in traditional services

Value-Add Ideas

- Use the online tool (Basecamp) recommended in Collaborate! to capture, archive and share findings
- Create a video series about what you learned to share with others

BE VISIBLE!

Develop a regional marketing and communication plan that captures all implementation aspects of the Rural Immigration Strategy.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Internal partner communication system supports widespread regional sharing of information and ideas.**
2. **External communication uses commonly adopted language and tone.**
3. **Audience, media and messaging is aligned with the strengths of the partner(s) implementing the strategy.**
4. **A dynamic and meaningful mix of quantitative and qualitative image-focussed messages is curated.**

Situation

STRENGTH

The size and breadth of the partnership groups is one of the region's core assets. With several economic development professionals and internal communications teams to leverage for support, the talent required to develop a communications and marketing plan is already in place. The existing immigration portal is also a considerable asset. Embedding the new information distribution system within the portal will help re-frame the effectiveness of this communications tool and make use of the investment in building and maintaining it.

OPPORTUNITY

The regional partners can collaboratively develop a communication and marketing plan for the Rural Immigration Strategy, pooling talent and resources to reach a variety of audiences. Partners can also consider hiring an outside agency to support this work. Key is to use effective and evocative images and branding, as well as highlighting the regions assets and opportunities, including those from an outsider's point of view.

Best Practice

One of the most important elements of the Rural Immigration Strategy is the communication planning around effort and outcome. Sharing process, best practices, lessons learned, successes, lived experiences, celebrating champions and telling stories is cornerstone to a well- executed communication strategy that uses a variety of dynamic communication tools. Not only will this capture progress but it will also inspire others to take part.

It can be difficult for one partner to conduct a region's worth of effective communication and breaking up the work into categories may prove to be the most effective:

1. External and internal communication
2. Audiences targeted by partners with expertise working with that audience
3. Media used by partners with expertise using that media
4. A unique mix of quantitative and qualitative image-focused messages curated by partners comfortable with the methods to collect and display this information.

Leaders may want to consider investing in professional services regarding the development of this communication plan. Engaging a marketing agency that can knit together the tools and messaging for coordinated and regional exposure may be a key investment the partnership can make. It would help ensure the communications work is an ongoing priority and has the far-reaching impact required for potential immigrants to take notice and for the community to remain involved.

Recommendations

Develop a regional marketing and communication plan that captures all implementation aspects of the Rural Immigration Strategy.

The common language, phrasing and messaging agreed upon during the development of a Welcoming Communities Charter needs to be reflected in the communication plan.
Also, by determining a set of guidelines for any external communication distributed by partners, the region can achieve cohesion in thought and approach, further demonstrating the leadership required for others to comfortably adopt the same language, phrasing and messaging.
Recommendations on image use in general and figures used within images form another important component of the plan. When newcomers can see themselves in the media content, they connect more quickly to the information provided.

The combination of a communication and marketing plan, undertaken in collaboration with partners, helps to transform sharing stories into campaigning for attraction. For example, if news coverage of the region's ongoing work with respect to welcoming communities is consistently reported, the predominance of articles and headlines indirectly influences one's perception of the community. These are not advertisements per se, but they send the same message as an ad without the cost of creating and placing one, and with additional narrative components not easily captured in advertisements.

"You Belong in (insert town name)" as a campaign name, for example, expresses the idea of being embraced by the community or being destined to live there, making a careful suggestion similar to the proven sales tactics employed by realtors who say "welcome to your new home" when you visit for your first showing.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas

- Track the number of articles or social media posts sparked by projects/effort
- Track whether those articles were push or pull inspired (did the media pick it up, or did you send a press release?)
- Ask "how did you hear about us?" whenever possible when interacting with potential or new residents
- Develop a robust website traffic tracking tool that helps you determine where your "clicks" are generated from

Value-Add Ideas

- Leverage the video and images captured by all direct and indirect partners working with and contributing to the communication and marketing plan. This will require a digital asset sharing agreement within the partnership.

COME HOME!

Conduct thorough community consultations to identify innovative solutions for housing inventory and affordability in the region.

Intended Outcomes

1. **New residents can clearly see the opportunity to acquire housing suited to their household budget.**
2. **New residents can chose to resettle in the region because housing is accessible to them.**
3. **Community leaders have expanded knowledge about housing development options, including innovative approaches.**
4. **Community leaders are flexible and can adjust land use and development parameters to generate housing opportunities that attract new residents.**

Situation

STRENGTH

Regional partners are actively developing solutions to the housing shortage that the entire province is experiencing in one way or another. For example, Hastings County recently redeveloped its housing strategy for submission to the provincial Ministry and is also actively recruiting professional services to help tackle homelessness in Belleville. Regional actors are assisting with the implementation of these plans and work at the land use/development side of the issue is ongoing as local leaders consider changes to reduce barriers to housing investment.

OPPORTUNITY

More and more innovative and progressive housing alternatives are being considered and pursued to diversify the inventory available to residents. Once regional partners have an understanding of residents' (and future residents') needs and chosen lifestyles, they can consider new housing models and emerging alternative solutions. Developers most-often select opportunities that will drive profit and return on investment, which is attractive for community leaders to explore and accept as a mutual benefit. The opportunity then lies in aligning the community's overall objective for housing and attraction with the increase or revitalization of the housing inventory.

Best Practice

The most effective approach to successful housing planning involves a deep and intentional consultation with residents and experts on potential solutions.

As cooperatives, collectives and tiny home developments surge in trend across the globe, the region can choose to adopt these innovative solutions to keep up or get ahead. These solutions prevent single-use development, such as building one-bedroom retirement-focused housing that will not be as applicable to the desired future of a family-based community. They also provide contemporary living spaces that the people designated for attraction want and need.

For example:

1. Younger people may be attracted to cooperative living opportunities
2. Creatives running home-based businesses seek out collective work/live spaces
3. Young families need multi-bedroom housing with social networks abundant in great neighbourhood design (e.g., street safety, school zone proximity, local childcare options)
4. Business owners may wish to live in commercially zoned buildings

Two approaches underpin the principles of great housing affordability – a balance of community and developer driven housing inventory creation/ re-creation and closing the housing-to-income disparity. Or, more simply – help residents afford it by lowering the costs of housing and increasing the money available to pay for it.

Lowering the Cost of Housing
Community consultations carried out in Vashon (WA) and other areas revealed the Community Land Trust model to leaders, when only private development had been considered before. Moving forward, Impact Capital, the non-profit now leading the CLT development in collaboration with the municipal leadership there says: "Our new loan is designed to help our partners quickly purchase housing units at risk of going market rate, stabilize and rehabilitate them, and then secure financing at a later date." (p 3)

The loans are used to renovate, improve energy efficiency, preserve and extend the life of the building, adapt to changing family or demographic needs, expedite re-occupancy, backing non-profit efforts to secure financing, create tiny homes, further leverage the land trust model and support vulnerable populations. The Vashon region is now able to balance private development and community-driven housing solutions with the municipality, residents and visitors benefitting from both.

Increasing Average Income
On the flip side, leaders can also leverage their position of influence to advocate for closing the gap between rising housing costs and much slower-paced income growth rates. Locally, leaders can become involved with Living Wage advocacy groups, such as Living Wage Ontario, which help demonstrate to employers the many benefits of paying a living wage, including housing security. This can and is likely to lead to an increased responsibility placed on employers as they recognize and accept that workers who feel stable in life, perform better at work. Employers can also consider adding other employee benefits to make room for higher housing costs, such as free access to food during work hours, assistance with transportation to and from work, providing day care services at work, use of property to allow employees to grow food, and adopting a listening approach to the needs of the workers.

Prince Edward County

Recommendations

Conduct thorough community consultations to identify innovative solutions for housing inventory and affordability in the region.

To determine the ideal path forward, leaders and partners can develop key questions, such as:

1. What is the housing inventory profile?
2. Who is our designated future resident or family?
3. What is the housing ideal for the future resident or family?
4. What can be done to revitalize existing inventory to suit those needs?
   A) What do home-owners need to invest in property revitalization?
   B) What are the barriers holding back revitalization of property?
5. What do developers see as an investment opportunity?
6. What is being done elsewhere that is working?
7. Have current development parameters been examined for suitability to accommodate future objectives and resident attraction?

A consultation process combined with external research will help formulate answers to these questions. Three key steps are recommended:

1. Research – examine the current inventory profile in detail, investigate barriers to development/ revitalization felt by home and property owners, consult with housing experts and seek out innovative solutions being attempted elsewhere.
2. Identify – determine your audience with respect to resident attraction/worker profile, flesh out the housing ideals for this audience (using Rural Employment Initiative candidates in Peel), identify the developers' perspective on opportunities, and highlight system barriers preventing action.
3. Respond – Test solutions in small batches, if possible, to reduce the risk of adopting a new approach, track results and apply what is learned in real time, invest in incentives or funding to support revitalization, select development projects that align, and connect each solution to the intended resident.

Although this recommendation may fall outside of the full scope of a rural immigration strategy and lacks concreteness, it is necessary to consider that housing is a major factor in shaping results in strategic visions 2,3 and 4. Without an affordable and accessible housing inventory in the places newcomers desire to live and work, barriers such as availability of public transportation, access to childcare, and proximity to training opportunities may prevent a potential new resident from moving to were they are needed most.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas

- Track the breadth of the information gathering process – was the status quo challenged?
- Track identified investment barriers to remedial actions
- Measure effectiveness of housing models with key metrics such as speed of purchase (how quickly was the new/ revitalized inventory occupied after investment was completed?), lists of people waiting for similar inventory, or employee acquisitions made possible through housing opportunities created at work

Value-Add Ideas

- Share the full story of this process – beginning with the choice to develop housing in a certain way to the new resident moving in and taking a local in-demand job – to demonstrate the full commitment to being a welcoming community
- Leverage the new resident/housing consultation process to also inform the tourism/accommodations challenges faced in certain areas of the region like Prince Edward County

BE THE VILLAGE!

Develop a capacity-building program designed to provide individuals, employers, service providers and community groups the tools they need to welcome and support newcomers.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Employers are hiring and retaining newcomers more often because they are supported in doing so.**
2. **Service providers are informed and prepared to support the unique needs of newcomers.**
3. **Community groups and individuals take an active, capable and ongoing role as significant contributors to newcomer integration.**
4. **Leaders are informed and prepared to support the unique needs of newcomer residents.**

Situation

STRENGTH

Consultations in the region revealed that some organizations currently have the capacity and expertise to support newcomers. The five core immigrant-serving groups (QIS, QLIP, Loyola, UNA – Quinte, and BIC) are led and supported by individuals who understand their role in community-driven settlement.

Specifically, the front-line client service providers, such as English-as-a-Second Language Teachers and Settlement Workers, are reported by newcomers as the most important people to facilitate their effective community integration. The staff who interact with newcomers directly on a daily basis bring incredible expertise and understanding of the lived experiences of newcomers. Other non-immigrant serving agencies are also a significant strength for the region. Organizations supporting job searching, healthcare, training, essential services and so on are effective overall when serving residents. The individual sector strengths are key leverage points for expanding regional capacity to serve newcomers.

OPPORTUNITY

The community champions at the immigrant-serving agencies are centralized in Belleville, leaving the remaining parts of the region under-served by this expertise. Traditional settlement and language service models favor centralization in urban settings where public transportation and funding for childcare is available. In rural areas or small towns with widespread geography, newcomers experience multiple barriers in accessing services.

Difficulty with access to service is also the experience of new Canadian residents in Belleville – lack of awareness of programs, working schedules conflicting with agency hours, lack of childcare options and other barriers were reported as significantly preventing access to service provision despite user proximity. The regional partners have an opportunity to expand the reach of core agencies by complementing the traditional service models they operate with programs designed to remove the barriers commonly faced by newcomers.

Best Practice

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada recognized as early as 2017 that the settlement service agencies they fund to support newcomer community integration were only reaching 40% of potential clients. In response, the federal department released a Call for Proposals for their new initiative named Service Delivery Improvement Fund (SDI). The program is directed to research promising practices for service delivery that challenge the traditional model and propose evidence to suggest a functional and affordable alternative. Before this investment, no significant research or best practice had been identified to assist smaller communities with commonly experienced barriers. However, some early wins have been achieved by SDI projects, key elements of which can already be replicated, including in Quinte and area.

One of those projects, led by Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley (Pembroke Campus) is a promising model defined by the Local Immigration Partnership of Renfrew & Lanark. The Community Settlement Initiative (CSI) is a research-driven effort to tackle settlement service optimization in rural settings. The model creates an intervention with the newcomer's service provider (ally) prior to or during service delivery to close the gap between the current capacity of the ally to serve and the objective of the newcomer to access the service.

The community ally (employer, service provider, community group or member) is the client for a CSI Coach, rather than the newcomer directly. The Coach's objective is to increase the capacity of the ally to successfully reach the newcomer client's objectives in equitable service provision through training and measurement in four key areas (AASK):

1. Attitude towards newcomers
2. Awareness of the needs of the newcomer client
3. Skills to perform the transactional or transformative relationship effectively
4. Knowledge of other complimentary services geared to the newcomer client.

This model helps to build widespread capacity in all areas of the region where every service provider, community group or employer identifying as an ally in welcoming community work can be obtain free coaching services. The service is delivered in a decentralized or outreach fashion through workshops, presentations and one-on-one environments.

The most significant outcome made possible using this model is the transfer of ownership of the settlement process to the community itself, rather than to one, or a few government-funded agencies.

Daniel Vaughan, Winter Sophiasburg horse wagon ride

Recommendations

Develop a capacity-building program designed to provide individuals, employers, service providers and community groups the tools they need to welcome and support newcomers.

A community-driven capacity model like CSI would offer a full-scope outreach settlement service in a large rural and geographic area. The program model can focus on building capacity in existing services (allies) as an effective and efficient approach to delivery in the region. Allies supporting newcomers include 1) non-settlement service providers, 2) workplaces/employers, and/or 3) community members and organizations.

Settlement coaches can be hired to act as training consultants to allies contributing to the settlement process through their relationships with newcomers. Capacity to serve the unique needs of newcomers is the main objective, which enables the non-immigrant sector to better understand and adapt to the lived experiences of newcomers. Because service is outreach oriented (we go to you), funding investment is low with salary and travel being the two core expenses of such a program. A physical office space is not required, but rather partnerships with agencies like libraries and municipalities who make in-kind and "as needed" space provision possible.

The consultation process with the ally centers on the newcomer's personal objectives. The strategies implemented to help the ally reach those objectives are formed in collaboration with the Settlement Coach. The ally obtains training, resources, and ongoing consultation from the coach to address newcomer progression through the integration process with positive settlement outcomes embedded throughout.

This approach deeply considers the newcomer's perspective and needs, as these are central to the collaboration, strategy, and consultation provided by the coaches. The ally obtains valuable information regarding newcomer objectives and needs through settlement support, language training, managed migration, and inclusion lenses, and can adapt their service provision to reflect this information. The training and consultation carried out by coaches not only builds the ally's current capacity to serve newcomers within their respective sector, but also their future capacity to serve newcomers with general and case-specific knowledge.

The model also considers the advantage that interpersonal relationship building, community-wide commitment, and improved mutual understanding have on the integration process. A focus on unconscious human bias, situational privilege and normative cultural expectations is central to the training topics. This holistic approach offers newcomers new, broad, and productive networks as pathways to realize self-defined objectives and ultimately, integration.

As a bi-product of this type of work, the program can also capture individuals identifying as allies in the community to form Community Settlement Groups where local champions are leading community-based integration through meaningful relationships, similar to the framework of private sponsorship of refugee groups, but applied to any newcomer desiring community integration.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas

- Track the number of allies and their sectors
- Track the baseline capacity of allies in the AASK framework
- Collect newcomer stories of how many allies served them and in what ways
- Compare capacity using the AASK framework post-intervention coaching

Value-Add Ideas

- Build the program in unison with the anti-racism and discrimination project since the overlap is significant
- Capture stories of the Canadian-born growing and expanding in their views of immigrants and empathy for their lived experiences

EXPAND ENGLISH!

Develop an outreach-oriented language training program that can be delivered anywhere in the region.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Newcomers access language training regardless of where they live**
2. **Language training is learner-centric.**

Situation

STRENGTH

Loyola School of Adult and Continuing Education is a genuine asset for language training in Belleville and area. Students report that the teachers and staff assist them well beyond learning English and support them with community integration. Most of their stories reveal that English training is a vehicle to integration. Meanwhile, the school's physical place has become a diverse hub of social interaction and for some, the sole opportunity for socialization and networking.
The Principal of the school is an important champion, offering support and advice to the language training community well beyond the region he serves.

The region is also home to numerous Private Sponsorship Groups who are assigned to refugee families. These community volunteers clearly present a strength at the grass-roots level to contribute positively to newcomer resettlement.

OPPORTUNITY

Partners have an opportunity to build on and expend the expertise and care at Loyola. Regional partners may wish to pool funds or resources and assist or partner with Loyola to broaden the English language training network.

A focus on equitable service provision across the region may lead to innovative approaches to deliver training to include smaller towns and rural areas that are not able to access Loyola in Belleville. Traditionally, language training is considered a classroom activity, centered on acquiring the language level tied to obtaining Canadian citizenship. Consultation with learners, however, revealed that community navigation and developing relationships locally was the more immediate objective. Newcomers also reported that dynamic learning environments were more effective and practical. For example, visiting the grocery store and making a purchase as a class was more meaningful than reading a book about that experience in class

Best Practice

Language training funding is tied directly to the number of clients served, similar to the traditional settlement service model. This translates to a lack of services in areas without the required density of English learners. Rural areas and small towns rarely have the number of participants to satisfy funding parameters and travelling to other sites presents a collection of barriers (transportation, childcare, etc.) that further prevent access.

Although some areas in Canada have proposed and are carrying out programs to tackle these issues, no singular best practice has emerged to date. Online learning development has received funding investments for some time and many excellent online programs are available for free to eligible learners. However, literacy and computer skills are pre-requisites for online programs in any language. Another major barrier is the need for a language assessment. For example, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Online requires a language assessment delivered by a central agency mandated to do so. If a newcomer faces barriers to achieving that assessment, accessing LINC Online is a non-starter.

However, a regional program pilot conducted in 2017-2019 by Algonquin College in Renfrew and Lanark Counties strongly suggests it may be replicable elsewhere. The pilot's findings confirm that newcomers living outside of urban areas find it challenging to reach classrooms funded by the province and often lack the computer or language literacy or bandwidth to learn online. In response, the pilot developed the Community Language Support (CLS) program to assists local volunteers who teach English informally in their community to help close a service gap by accounting for transportation, childcare and other access barriers that are common to centralized services.

The pilot's model is similar to CSI and developed by the same team. It builds on the good nature of volunteers in a sustainable way by supporting them with guidance and recommended teaching practices. With one part-time Language Coach, the CLS program has supported the creation and maintenance of more than 65 learning locations, where only two existed before, and has developed a handbook for personalized delivery of language training. The Guide for Volunteers Teaching English offers a set of resources in lesson development and selection of learning interventions. The concept is simple – empower and enable volunteers to sustain their effort helping a newcomer learn English based on their specific and individual needs.

Recommendations

Develop an outreach-oriented language training program that can be delivered anywhere in the region. Assemble local volunteers with a background in teaching and a passion for helping adult language learners in rural towns. Hire a Language Coach to provide volunteers with supports, resources, recommendations and a network to create sustainable English learning opportunities for newcomers, carried out in shared community spaces or wherever the newcomer prefers.

Partners can consult with Loyola to flesh out the complementary nature of such an initiative that would also rely on their staff and expertise. Regional leaders can consider carrying out this work in partnership with Loyola to provide consistent sector support and guidance on the development of the outreach program.

In practical terms, the Language Coach meets with the volunteers regularly and provides them with curriculum, guidance on teaching methods, ideas for activities, support with challenges, and resources to manage all of the above. Each meeting would provide enough support to 1) manage a short-term period of lesson delivery, and 2) offer the cumulative training and mentorship required to improve or sustain delivery and morale among the volunteers. Essentially, the Language Coach would act as a language service advisor to each individual classroom or learning environment and volunteer(s). Key partnerships with municipalities would provide access to libraries or other community hubs for in-kind spaces and places to teach. The team at Algonquin College could be consulted for the best approach when working with volunteers. Respect for privacy and confidentiality, reflection on personal bias and paternalism, and grouped effort were integral to the success in Renfrew and Lanark.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas

- How many volunteers are supporting the program?
- How many areas are now served, compared to before the program?
- What are the interventions most often used by the Language Coach to train a volunteer?
- Collect and maintain a list all materials and resources used in the training environments

Value-Add Ideas

- Share the learning locations publicly so that more learners can join in
- Share these participant numbers with Loyola to advocate for more classrooms to open, if possible, when participant numbers rise

GET TO WORK!

Develop or duplicate an existing holistic and personalized process to recruit, attract and retain immigrant workers to cultivate a much needed sustainable workforce in the region and offer a clear pathway to permanent residency.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Newcomers living in the GTA move to the region to accept economic opportunities.**
2. **Newcomers living outside of Canada move to the region to accept economic opportunities.**
3. **International students studying at Loyalist College discover economic opportunities in the region and choose to stay.**

Situation

STRENGTH

Several conditions present a clear strength for the region to achieve the desired workforce advancement. First, the selection of Belleville as pilot community for direct recruitment of international workers through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program's Regional Immigration Pilot. A highly competitive community selection process saw Belleville emerge as a likely effective place for direct recruitment. Second, the region's proximity to the GTA provides a considerable advantage. Accepting an invitation to visit or actually moving to the region is made more possible by its location along the highway 401 corridor. And third, the vast number of international students attracted to and studying at Loyalist College in Belleville presents a significant source of future workers. The narrative emerging from international students reflects a sincere interest in staying in Belleville, but no clear pathway to do so.

OPPORTUNITY

It is unclear whether passive recruiting methods, such as the Peel Newcomer Fair, the Quinte Immigration Portal or collaboration with the Rural Employment Initiative in Peel are producing results for local employers. Developing a more active and personalized approach to recruiting candidates by focussing on building familiarity with the community and its members may be what is missing. A more holistic family approach that is candidate-centric may be a worthwhile alternative for regional partners to recruit workers from the GTA. Also, with more than 1,000 international students on campus this school year, the region has a clear opportunity to attract those students as residents and workers. Developing a more robust relationship between in-demand jobs, students and the immigration pathways required to connect them may help solve workforce shortages and offer meaningful employment to students who love the area.

Best Practice

The recent Ontario 360 report revealed that the urban-rural imbalance is significant and growing. The fact that newcomers continue to land in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver at rapid rates compared to other areas suggests that efforts to spread immigration across Canada are not yet fully successful. Smaller towns and rural areas still struggle to attract newcomers today, further emphasizing that perhaps a model for best practice does not (yet) exist.

Across the province, employers, economic development professionals, and Community Futures Development Corporations, among others, are exploring ways in which to address labour shortages by attracting immigrant workers to smaller towns and rural regions. This approach would involve three strategic directions:

1. See the economic and family opportunities (see Be Visible!)
2. Choose to move because the community and its members are familiar (see Come Home!)
3. Stay because it feels like home (See Be the Village!)

The key to success would be to develop a personalized recruitment process by matching workers with employers and build capacity in the workplace and the community to welcome diversity.

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas

- Track number of candidates hired
- Track their interests and needs prior to, during and after the hiring process
- Regularly follow up with employers to track retention

Value-Add Ideas

- Combine employer support from a community-driven settlement capacity model (see Be the Village!) with the recruitment process for efficient and effective solution
- Combine the videos developed for promotion (see Be Visible!) with dynamic tools such as video blog and personal connection to generate familiarity

Recommendations

Develop or duplicate an existing holistic and personalized process to recruit, attract and retain immigrant workers to cultivate a much needed sustainable workforce in the region and offer a clear pathway to permanent residency.

This process would focus on three potential sources for recruitment to fill labour gaps and foster economic growth:

1. Direct Immigration
Recruit international workers through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program's Regional Immigration Pilot, especially with Belleville/Quinte West selected as a pilot community
2. Secondary Migration
Encourage immigrants who are living in urban centres to consider moving to small(er) towns and rural areas.
3. International Students
Assist current international students who are studying at Loyalist College in finding work and supporting their potential permanent residency in the region, perhaps through ONIP as well.

A holistic and personalized process would liaise with employers to determine available positions tied directly to current labour needs. It would also make meaningful connections between a candidate and a local employer, which would include promotion of the town where the job is located. The promotion could be developed in partnership with the municipality and/or economic development organizations and would include information tailored to the candidate, such as services, amenities, housing and child care. And finally, the process would assist employers in developing a welcoming workplace, adapting policies, procedures and spaces to reflect a culture that values diversity.

This approach to recruitment, attraction and retention of immigrant skilled labour, creating synergies among the different components along the way, is perfectly aligned with the intent of the region's entire Rural Immigration Strategy.

CLEAR THE PATH!

Build a holistic response program to address, reduce and eliminate anti-racism and discrimination experienced by newcomers.

Intended Outcomes

1. **Newcomers experience less lived discrimination.**
2. **Canadian-born residents understand the importance of diversity and value it.**

Situation

STRENGTH

A large number of regional partners already understand the importance of immigration for economic reasons and some truly value and seek out diversity in their lives. Local leaders and community initiatives are striving to broaden public appreciation of economic benefit and value for diversity being two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. This effort is having an effect. The UNA – Quinte and the Belleville Inclusion Committee are both already confronting racism and discrimination and supporting inclusive practices. Other organizations, such as the United Way, are embarking on similar targeted campaigns. Further investment to advance the region as a welcoming community is likely when the federal Department of Canadian Heritage responds to applications for funding to its Anti-Racism Action program by mid-2020.

OPPORTUNITY

Reducing the number of times a person who identifies as a visible minority experiences discrimination is vital to the success of any attraction and retention strategy. Disrespectful remarks about and attitudes towards language ability, accent, foreign credentials, cultural norms, clothing and religious choices cause newcomers to Canada to feel unwelcome.

If the objective is for newcomers to the region to settle and stay, regional leadership has a responsibility to commit to the values of a welcoming community and strive to develop community-wide appreciation of diversity and inclusion. Besides, any progress towards enabling newcomers to feel valued and included will have a concomitant benefit for resident vulnerable populations who share a similar desire to contribute to economy and community. A popular and productive community crucially depends on everyone's ability to reach their human potential.

Best Practice

Anti-racism and discrimination initiatives reflect very similar principles as the immigration sector's pursuit of welcoming communities. Both efforts are rooted in a fundamental quest to bring about inclusivity. The models for social change used in this pursuit are also very similar. A generic framework would reflect the following cyclical phases:

1. Take Stock – Determine the current state of racism in the community based on three indicators: the lived experience of visible minorities; the view of visible minorities held by others; and organizational policies that confront or contribute to racism within the service delivery systems that support people.

2. Spark Curiosity – Organize events that capitalize on trending topics on racism/anti-racism and provide enough fun and good information to cause curiosity in a topic a person may not have explored before, keeping the experience light and full of social interactions with diverse people.

3. Educate and Train – Connect the community with a variety of tools to assist in learning more about "the other" and about "self" to enable people to relate more broadly to others and become more self-aware through empathy, lived experience or story telling exercises.

4. Systemic Intervention – Provide access to an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion professional for agencies, organizations and employers seeking to improve their policies and practices with respect to inclusion.

5. Measure – Track once again the same indicators from phase 1 to demonstrate what is and what isn't working. Pivot or persevere according to principles of applied learning as the situation requires.

Regional leaders can adopt and adapt the framework in any communication and community driven initiatives laid out in the previous eight strategic directions.

Recommendations

Build a holistic response program to address, reduce and eliminate anti-racism and discrimination experienced by newcomers.

Develop synergies around these issues within the other strategic directions and suggested projects to achieve a holistic and consistent approach to inclusion. For example:

1. Embed the best practice model from 2 Collaborate! and 3 Learn! into the communication plan
2. Use the inclusion framework to tackle best practice model in 1 Unite!
3. Build best practice model in 3 Learn! and 4 Be Visible! into the recommended Community Settlement Program
4. Integrate best practice model 4 Be Visible! into the projects generated by 7 Get to Work!
5. Ask external partners to invest in best practice model item 2 Collaborate! for all of their events

Measurement & Value

Indicator Ideas:

- Collect the stories of lived experiences of newcomers
- Collect the stories of people who challenged their own personal biases
- Track provincial and national data with respect to employment rates of vulnerable populations to establish benchmarks

Value-Add Ideas

- The recommended solution can be built into each of the other eight strategic directions and resulting projects

DETAILED RESEARCH TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

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Downtown Bloomfield

Belleville bridge: Photo by Daniel Vaughan

DETAILED RESEARCH TO SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The learning presented in this final section of the report reflects the detailed pieces of information project leaders may wish to consider prior to and during plan formation. The intention of this section is to inform approach and best practice for the recommended projects and to highlight key findings that will help to build content, material and communications ongoing. The information presented about the lived experiences of newcomers and the initiatives supporting welcoming communities is not exhaustive. The findings summarized within those two topics are intended to provide guidance and prioritization in projects.

The Key Principles of Attraction, Retention and Inclusion Models

In order to help direct methodology and adopt best-practice, it is essential to examine the key principles that underpin three distinct topics related to attraction, retention and integration.

The three critical topics in the field of settlement in Canada are;

1. Welcoming Communities (Attracting and Retaining Newcomer Residents)
2. Attraction through Secondary Migration or Regionalization (Attracting Potential Newcomer Residents within Canada)
3. Economic Retention Tactics (Mechanisms to Support 1 & 2)

Leaders can tailor the initiatives they undertake and adopt the key principles so that the outcome is grounded in best practice and suits the local situation.

Welcoming Communities

Retaining newcomers in a community requires a sense of welcome and belonging held by the newcomer. Many regions are embarking on welcoming communities work in order to fully realize their investments in attraction and to foster inclusive dynamic places to live. Esses et al defines a welcoming community as "a collective effort to create a place where individuals feel valued and included" (2010, p. 9). There are specific elements to flesh out with respect to the collective effort, made possible through clear roles and responsibilities, coordination and many invested partners.

Local Leadership

Research reveals that most of the successful efforts for realizing a welcoming community is led by local government. Federal and provincial programs and policies are not currently designed to bolster this outcome, but rather to support local government to take action. When a local government does take action, it signals the importance of the work to the broader community, demonstrates buy-in from the leadership table for decision-making and deeply considers place-based thinking, intelligence and action.

The role and responsibility of the municipality is suggested by Esses et al and reinforced experientially by the Consultant to be multi-faceted, taking into account these six key functions;

1. Attraction and Retention Planning/Strategizing thorough Ongoing Community Consultations
2. Integration and Social Cohesion Support and Programs
3. Welcome and Familiarization Tools
4. Provide Easy Access to Services
5. Safety and Security
6. Build an Anti-Discrimination Cultural Landscape

However, the municipality or local government is not solely responsible for taking action in these areas. Similar to the framework of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), local government can collaborate with partners who can take action on the plans and supports they have developed together. No one entity can tackle a regional strategy for building

a welcoming community, and the ideal leader to set the tone, importance, values and resources is certainly the local government.

Capacity to Serve

Furthermore, Esses et al recommends that local leaders build "the capacity to meet the needs and promote inclusion of newcomers with machinery in place to produce and support these capacities" (2010, p.9). Capacity to serve the needs of newcomers can be described as not only willing to help, but able to. When actors obtain and apply specific knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness of those needs, understanding and capacity grows. Great processes that deeply consider service provider capacity begin with the motivation to help, identifying and removing barriers, promoting a sense of belonging by pinpointing diverse personal needs, and offering services that take into account preferences and client characteristics. This work is complemented by a lens of cultural competency. In order for meaningful interactions to occur, the service provider can take stock of their own unconscious biases, norms and expectations for the client prior to defining a plan for transformation. To be clear, research reveals that service providers representing all sectors can adopt this focus on capacity in order to deliver widespread impact. The region needs more than a prepared and capable settlement agency – settlement outcomes are everyone's business.

"There is an awareness that the provision of basic settlement services is not sufficient for promoting inclusive communities, and that we must also be concerned with achieving higher level objectives, including social engagement, sense of belonging, social cohesion, and strong citizenship." (Esses et al 2010, p.8)

When all sectors are empowered to participate with robust and reciprocal capacity development work, the ownership of settlement outcomes spreads to the community itself, rather than transferred to one government funded agency in isolation.

Focus on Belonging

Strong signals are made in the research to suggest that focussing on the perception and reality of belonging for those newcomers already living in the region can produce powerful information. Leaders can better inform plans to retain newcomers with this understanding. The knowledge can also be utilized as an indirect marketing effort when current residents tell the story to others of acceptance in their new home community. Positive settlement requires inclusion into activities and events which represent the heart of the community.

Integration is a "long-term, two-way process" (Burr 2011; Gilkinson, 2009; Khan and Labute, n.d.; OCASI, 2012; SCLIP, 2014) carried out in millions of small transactions and large transformations every day. Successful integration looks more like inclusion, where it is defined by and based in the perception and lived experience of one's life here.

Imagine a regular day where during each interaction in the community – with a cashier, a colleague, a bus driver, a hiring manager – you felt the difference between you more than the connection. Over time, these tiny grains of sands of exclusion build into monumental piles of seemingly insurmountable barriers preventing contribution to the community and feeling accepted as you are. Although many of these moments of exclusion may be unintended by the host community, self-awareness, empathy, exposure, experience and training is needed to halt and redirect these types of interactions.

Newcomers stay in communities that value their skills and create avenues for them to contribute to themselves, their families and their communities. With a focus on belonging, newcomers are socially connected, accepted as they are and seen as valuable. Evidence also suggests that belonging promotes good health, improves training and work outcomes, helping to build personal satisfaction in life. Belonging is also our universally common truth – everyone wants it.

Measurement

Evaluation is the final critical piece reflected in leading welcoming communities work. Places label

themselves as a welcoming community, but rarely have the robust and dynamic metrics to back up that story. The "critical issue in measuring and working toward welcoming communities that we would like to highlight is that it is essential to look at multiple indicators within and across characteristics in order to gauge the strength of the welcome" (Esses et al, 2010 p.9). Esses et al defined 17 characteristics of a welcoming community in their report and strongly encourage leaders to cross-examine and flesh out quality indicators that demonstrate progress. The Consultant's work in this field also presents thematic key performance indicators that are likely to provide a scorecard of results. She has found that three target areas are needed to be examined regularly using a variety of modes;

1. Perception of Belonging (as defined by the newcomers through their lived experiences locally - self)
2. Capacity to Include (attitudes towards newcomers, awareness of their needs, skills to help, knowledge of local resources to help further and ability to advocate - others)
3. Systemic State Analysis (organizational policies and processes that contribute to 1 and 2 – system environment)

From the newcomer perspective, these three themes are simplified by investigation of self, other and the system around them. All three play a crucial and inter-connected role.

Attraction through Secondary Migration or Regionalization

The reasons for making the move to migrate within a Country from a dense urban area to a rural area or small city is strikingly similar to direct immigration from one country to another in overarching themes. The differences emerge when we examine the relative information held by newcomers embarking on either pursuit.

Rural and Urban Imbalance – Cause and Effect

It is clear that the largest share of immigrants land in Canada's largest cities - 77% or 106,000 people in 2018 according to Statistics Canada. Meanwhile, many of Canada's smaller centres are experiencing declining and ageing populations. This imbalance is suggested to be strongly related to the type and amount of information newcomers obtain about Canada prior to arrival, despite an immigration system design that attempts to target entries. Reportedly, immigrants land in Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal primarily due to the perception of vast economic opportunities, greater lived cultural and ethnic diversity and most significantly, a familiarity with someone, like family or friends, already living there.

In 2012, only 15% of newcomer respondents living in the large cities reported that they would be willing to move, but contemporary information would strongly suggest otherwise. Since then, there has been a rapid increase in population of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), causing a significant out-migration into the bordering cities like Hamilton and London. Places like Niagara felt the impact of this as well, with three-times the fairly stagnant population growth rate, shifting from 0.9% to 3.84% between 2011 to 2016 according to the census. These bordering cities are facing unplanned rapid population growth and are carrying-out reactionary measures to attempt to settle and retain the secondary migrants and avoid increasing the housing crisis.

Motivation to Move

Recently, when probed for the reasons why they migrated out of the GTA, newcomers responded with similar themes as for their primary landing – employment, education or training and family ties/ familiarity – and added affordability. It appears that the cost of living in the GTA is not known prior to arrival, nor is the actual ability to find work commensurate to their skills in a highly saturated workforce. It can also be said that newcomers lack the knowledge about other areas of Canada to some degree. When actors were interviewed who spent time speaking with newcomer job seekers at the Peel Newcomer Fair, all respondents reported that their city or town was unknown to those newcomers living in Peel who attended the event. It can also be

said that since the area was unknown to them, so were the opportunities within it. Also, the research reveals that out-migrations are not often occurring outside of Ontario, except for the case of the oil boom in the west of Canada earlier in the decade. The information newcomers have about the western, northern or eastern provinces or territories appears to be just as limited.

Information and Familiarity

As the amount of and type of information newcomers access grows, they clearly begin to change direction. More information leads to more choice, and more choice leads to choosing differently. The challenge for smaller centres without large numbers of newcomers currently residing there is tackling the familiarity piece which so strongly influences the decision to move. The key question is: How can leaders construct familiarity where little exists? The PPF report demonstrates that the outlook for effective secondary migration is dim, but very few examples of good effort and outcome were available at the time, with Local Immigration Partnerships within smaller centres still in their infancy. Worthwhile models such as the Rural Employment Initiative (REI), operating out of the Peel Newcomer Centre, offers an annual trade show for job seekers and rural areas to connect and business advisors hired to connect buyers in the GTA with businesses for sale in smaller communities. However, these mechanisms and others like them lack evidence to suggest they are working. Information is being shared, but connections, or actually making the move, rarely materialize by proportion.

It is quite possible that the passive medium for sharing information is the issue. The Consultant has examined in detail the approaches currently used to attract like portals, job fairs, marketing efforts and so on and has determined that a more active, personal and targeted method of information sharing is necessary for results to be achieved. One can imagine the clear difference between viewing a promotional video of an area online versus personal vlogs sent to you over time from a potential future colleague describing the neighbourhoods, housing prices or childcare options available in town – all pieces of information hand selected to reflect the direct interests of the potential newcomer resident.

Marketing and Promotion

Any outreach to potential residents requires well-planned and robust marketing strategies. Dynamic marketing and communication plans must include elements related to the welcoming nature of the community and what is said about it. Inspiring positive perception via word of mouth by preparing and mobilizing a mob of local champions speaking to aligned messages of welcome is one way to curate the story. Developing targeted personal connections with potential new residents curated by a recruitment or liaison service, using digital media tools like vlogs is another way. Digital media captured and distributed widely can be developed and updated continuously, built to include good news stories and celebrations. Passive campaigns or efforts such as job fairs, bus tours, immigration portals and so on can assist in digital tool delivery as well.

Critical Planning Elements

The PPF report describes key elements leaders can consider for attracting potential newcomer residents from the GTA and the Consultant has also discovered additional elements more rural areas should include discovered in a current pilot project taking place in Renfrew and Lanark Counties.

1. Leadership
   - Buy-in to vision among partners
   - Establish indicators for performance with a goal of retaining skills and talents
   - Identify partners' roles and responsibilities
2. Leverage the Provincial Nominee Program
   - Understand it and teach employers how to use it
3. Showcase Jobs and Business Opportunities
   - Consider direct immigrants, secondary migrants and international students
   - Employer engagement is key

- Information sharing, match-making and welcoming workplace culture supports
- Database or coordinated capturing of businesses for sale

4. Marketing and Promotion
   - Effective communications
   - Build familiarity with personal touches
   - Build and showcase social networks
   - Concentrate on pre-arrival information
5. Welcoming Communities
   - Capacity to Serve
   - Racism and Discrimination
   - Employment equity
   - Micro-aggressions
   - Importance of inclusion
   - Find local champions
   - Understand the business case, the history and the future
6. Services and Coordination
   - Mobile, decentralized services reaching everywhere
   - Employment supports
   - Language training offered in a variety of ways
   - Pre-arrival focus

Advocacy

- Rural v. urban imbalance – funding, policy and politics
- Credentials and timeliness/complexity of immigration pathways
- Targeted selection enhancements to the system
- Flesh-out and eliminate exclusion-embedded policies
- Multi-sector mandate for inclusion and service equity

Economic Retention Tactics

Focussing on building and maintaining welcoming communities as an attitudinal strategy is a clear pathway that research points to as a key factor in retaining new residents. However, Valade suggests in the 2016 report Immigrant Attractiveness of Non-Metropolitan Cities in Canada: Is Being Welcoming Enough? that "investing solely on welcoming attributes of communities, such as settlement services, could fall short of their target if not accompanied by an effective local development strategy and job creation policy" (Valade, 2016, n.p.) When you examine the 17 characteristics of a welcoming community presented by Esses et al in 2010, you can see that Valade's findings align with Esses, but dive deeper into the specific topics within education, employment and belonging from a different perspective.

Education and Training

Many newcomers to Canada require or desire re-training, advancing education or language acquisition in order to fully access their communities and realize economic opportunities. Skilled professionals can obtain credential assessments, but many rely on re-training in their field or will train in a new field in order to suit the Canadian workplace expectations and opportunities. Although this re-training norm is a system barrier that requires federal and provincial attention, it is an ongoing reality that access to education and training is paramount for most newcomers. Valade's research, echoed by Esses et al and pronounced by the educationally themed indicators selected in OMAFRA's attractive community assessment tool, reveals that the presence of a wide variety of educational institutions with broad offerings is a key factor in attraction. The presence of post-secondary schools is further emphasized as a significant advantage, not only for the newcomer to have the opportunity to register but also for the prospect of more affordable training-at-home for their children.

In Valade's study, the researchers placed a higher weighting on the presence of Universities over Colleges and having both was weighted as the highest. This weighting suggests a hierarchy of education type, but no evidence was provided to rationalize this ranking because it was informed by newcomers. Reflecting on the notion that more choice leads to different choices, one could ascertain that having access to a variety of educational training centres is the key factor, rather than one over the other. It could also be said that local training centres should and often do reflect the workforce development needs of the region and so

have a great propensity to create strong linkages to employment for in-demand jobs, post-training. This may exclude those highly skilled workers who require University or Graduate level courses and degrees from living and training in some communities, but regional partnerships among institutions like the collaboration between Algonquin College and The University of Ottawa to offer a rural community nursing degree program in Pembroke, can add to the overall inventory of targeted educational opportunities suited to the local skilled workforce needs.

Potential Earnings

According to Valade's study, median income levels related to certain industries or specific jobs was of great interest to newcomers. When planning a move, many people will forecast the potential income and compare that to the potential cost of living there prior to forming a decision. One can imagine doing so when considering taking a new job – balancing the pros and cons of the change in economics for the household – including taking stock of other non-financial benefits related to the change. When smaller communities showcase median incomes for in-demand careers, they will be compared with potentially higher salaries in larger centres. However, if paired with information relating to the non-financial benefits of taking the job and relative cost-of-living, the comparison changes. The differences can be better articulated when percentage rates are used. For example, 25% less average income, but 60% less to own a home is powerful for comparison's sake and changes the lens from "how much less will I make?" to "how much more disposable income will I have access to if I am spending less?" The relative increase in disposable income available to a household may make the difference between acquiring assets sooner or at all. Assets build wealth and wealth brings stability, further improving the likelihood for retention and planting roots long-term for the family – especially true with respect to home ownership.

Value of Contribution to the Workplace

Newcomers desire employment equity and salaries commensurate to their skills just the same as anyone else. If earnings fall short of the cost of living, are imbalanced between certain worker groups or are precarious in nature due to part-time or seasonal work, newcomers that migrated to the region may become mobile again in order to correct these issues. Any signal that the work provided by an immigrant is less valuable than the work of a Canadian-born person is powerful to predict out-migration and plays heavily on the welcoming communities score. The subtleties of this topic must be carefully and intentionally managed by leaders within any strategy to recruit for workforce development needs.

Underemployment and unemployment are prevailing and expanding conditions for newcomers living in the GTA and elsewhere and are viewed as the primary reason to leave. This condition speaks directly to the relationship between self-confidence and dignity held by the newcomer and their state of employment. When we examine the narrative derived from newcomer job seekers attending the Peel Newcomer Fair and local respondents, they clearly expressed that accessing a job in their chosen field at all was the target. This suggests that newcomers may be willing to accept traditionally lower wages of smaller communities if they can feel the dignity of working in their area of choice and be recognized as valuable contributors to the workplace.

It is essential then for targeted efforts to be carried out to remove any stigma or bias against the perceived value of the newcomer at work. Language barriers, lengthy adjustments to cultural norms, assessment of foreign credentials or even ethnic names unfamiliar to the hiring managers can present major obstacles in searching for, gaining and retaining employment. Employer engagement and capacity building in equity, diversity and inclusion workplace practices is paramount to ensuring that this key factor to retention is well-managed and optimal for all parties to benefit from. Although Valade suggests that job creation strategies must be

tied to welcoming communities work, the Consultant argues that moreover, any job creation or economic development planning should embed professional development for more inclusive practices in hiring, managing, leading, compensating, and ultimately, retaining a diverse workforce. If a lack of lived experience hiring newcomers is the case for employers, they may require support to learn about and adopt best-practices for retaining a diverse workforce.

The Lived Experience of Newcomers

In order to fully capture the lived experience of newcomers residing in the region today, consultations were conducted in the fall and winter of 2019 and compared to qualitative research completed in rural communities by Auroro & Lauzon in the same year, along with findings from the 2012 OCASI report Making Ontario Home.

1. Social Conditions – This theme appeared across the spectrum of newcomers interviewed and appears to vary significantly based on the newcomer's use of local services and the social or support network they belong to. Newcomers reported that the most significant contributors to social inclusion were their sponsors, neighbours, fellow students, teachers and co-workers who embraced them and helped them to settle and feel included. These individuals supporting newcomers are unofficial settlement volunteers, acting a branch of welcome on behalf of the community – true allies in welcoming community work. Newcomers who lack these social opportunities or who are not using services experience the opposite condition – feelings of isolation, lack of social networks and challenges in feeling at home here. Some reported that they perceive that the domestic-born residents are unwilling to become friends, and this is pronounced for them without the presence of a similar or same community of immigrants originating from the same country or region of the world.
2. Cultural Amenities – The local respondents reported that they do have access to the religious places and spaces they require to uphold the spiritual components of their cultural norms. They also feel open to express religious symbols in dress and otherwise outside in the community, at service locations and at work. Nearly every local respondent spoke to the difficulties in accessing the foods they prefer to cook with for the family. They reported commuting to Toronto or the GTA to find these foods or food products and storing them in freezers for future use. Newcomers consuming Halal or Kosher foods desire to have more fresh options that they trust so as to avoid the need to store food and its associated risks. They wish to use fresher ingredients and to be able to shop for these items when they prefer, rather than during a planned trip to the city.
3. Inclusion – Very little was reported during the consultations about direct racism where overtly hateful comments or acts of violence occurred. However, newcomers reported that if they identified as a visible minority, they did feel excluded or discriminated against while living in the community at times. Many of these negative comments they noted were rationalized by the newcomer to reflect "lack of exposure" rather than "intent to exclude" on the part of the host community member. This demonstrates the newcomer's compassion and tolerance for the lack of lived experience one from a fairly homogenous community may have with respect to visible diversity or multiculturalism. It was noted, however, that clear moments of a lack of understanding of situational privileges held by Canadian-born residents were obvious to the newcomer. The newcomers interviewed hoped for a deeper understanding of life as a new immigrant to be adopted by those who have not experienced this journey.
4. Commuting – Driving and expansive geography were the most clear, repeated and frustrating complaints received by the newcomers interviewed. With vast regions between communities in Canada, it is likely that this condition is new for most arriving here. Having to

own a car, navigate rural roads and snow-covered highways, running from place to place for children's activities and so on was difficult for the newcomers to manage. Those originating from the GTA were accustomed to neighbourhood-style living, where shopping, activities and schools were all located within a short drive, bus ride or walking distance. Newcomers also reported that a lack of family living in the region meant they struggled to utilize friends and family for childcare needs. Some commute to the GTA to obtain informal childcare support through their social networks. However, when probed about schooling, newcomers reported that they felt their children were accessing a higher quality of education in the smaller community. Smaller class sizes, dedicated teaching staff and the ability to be seen and understood as an individual child, was promising to the parents interviewed.

5. Training and Education – Newcomers often upgrade or obtain training and education upon arrival to Canada to suit the Canadian workplace expectations, system and norms. The objectives for learning the newcomers reported ranged from community navigation, social advantages, job readiness, professional development, compliance, to general curiosity. The training they are most likely involved in locally is as a student learning English. The students consulted with at Loyola Adult School for Continuing Education in Belleville all spoke to the quality and care of the instructors and staff there. Many referred to their English teachers as their most valuable ally and that they are much more than teachers to them – they go above and beyond. Many international students also study at Loyalist College in the city of Belleville and return in greater and greater numbers each year – with registrations closing in on 50% of the total student population this school year. A recent questionnaire provided to international students concerning housing indicated, with considerable representation, that they are satisfied with housing in Belleville and surrounding area. They reported using family, friends or popular search sites like Kijiji to find lodging. Stories collected from international students indicate that they feel uninformed about available jobs in the area for post-graduation. It is clear that students want to stay in the area but are unsure of the pathways to doing so.
6. Employment – Newcomers reported that they are experiencing highs and lows with respect to employment. Some told stories of disappointing credential assessment processes that deeply affected their self-confidence and dignity. Some told stories of struggling to obtain Canadian workplace experience, which was considerably important to the companies they applied to. Many knew that learning English was primary to positive employment outcomes, creating a frustration related to the delay of earning money until their language skills improved. Others reported that they felt like you could not obtain a decent job here without a network of people who knew you first-hand. This was challenging for them, as they did not have such expansive networks so as to obtain the jobs they may not even know about. However, a few newcomers told the story of incredible support from the community, so much so that they were inspired to open a business and earn income independently. They were assisted by local actors and volunteers in learning how to run the business and help with operating it.
7. Pace of Life – In each and every case, the respondents spoke strongly about the advantages for their family with the quieter pace of life in the smaller community. They enjoy the light traffic, short lines and affordable lifestyle. This environment connects well with the newcomers interviewed when it comes to family life. Safety and security found here is paramount for achieving the life the families desire. Those who first landed in the GTA emphasized this point, describing life before and how it has improved for them now. It is important to note that all of the stories collected are centred in family life – the newcomers arrived here to join family, support family, provide a better life for

their children, obtain a life-long dream of owning a home, find safety for their families or build a stable and forward-moving life as a pivotal period in the family legacy.

Local Initiatives Supporting Settlement and Welcoming Communities

Targeted supports are an essential part of retaining newcomers because they significantly impact the weight of the welcome in a community. Traditional settlement services, Local Immigration Partnerships, Equity and Diversity committees, Multi-cultural events, library-based social groups and endless other initiatives contribute to the mix of supports for community inclusion. There are many examples of agencies, projects and events that make-up the widespread effort to demonstrate and act on welcoming principles within the region. The following are highlighted examples of inclusion in action:

1. Quinte Immigration Services (QIS) – A long-standing settlement service agency originally established in 1986, operating today with eight staff members and providing services to eligible newcomer clients in the Quinte region. The Board of Directors, working alongside a robust Executive Director, overseas program funding from a variety of players, including Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Government of Ontario, the United Way of Quinte and through private donations. The agency delivers formal settlement services and carries out unfunded social events, in addition to special projects they pursue in response to client needs and opportunities within the community. They describe two main objectives: assist newcomers directly through the settlement process and encourage the characteristics of a welcoming community including the value of diversity, meaningful participation for newcomers in the community and intercultural understanding. Some of the services they offer include:
   - Monthly information sessions geared towards smooth integration (social, financial, health)
   - Legal Immigration Services
   - Translation and Interpretation
   - Volunteering
   - Economic Development Through Immigration Program
   - Partnership with Magnet for Job Seekers
   - Newsletters
   - Client-centred Settlement Services

   Newcomers report that the services they can access here are helpful in accelerating their settlement journey, obtaining critical information and navigating the immigration system. Partners involved with the agency report that the Executive Director regularly attends community meetings and advocates well for the immigrant population here, helping to develop an understanding of their needs and to foster informed action with respect to welcoming communities. As any government-funded agency does, they struggle with maintaining the funding levels required to carry out excellent work, functioning in a precarious political environment with ever-changing priorities at the provincial and national level.

2. Bay of Quinte Welcome Portal – Primarily a passive tool for attraction and information access, the portal offers a great deal of information about life in the region split into relevant thematic sections. The site connects you with additional information about the areas and supports within the region, helping viewers to navigate through the characteristics of each community. The portal also offers case studies of positive settlement stories where newcomers explain why they now call Belleville home. The site provides living information, including quality of life, where to find help, housing options, ethnic groups, cultural events and a guide for the seasons in the region.
   Some of the links within the portal were broken when the scan was completed by researchers, but information is very accessible for anyone who fluently speaks English and is accustomed to traditional Canadian website formats. It could

be said that post-arrival information was missing, leaving the user asking "and now what?" if they used the portal during pre-arrival. However, the consultations revealed that none of the newcomers we spoke with, including another group of newcomers selected for a focus group with the Bay of Quinte Regional Marketing Board in late 2018, knew about the portal at all. When provided with the website to view and examine, newcomers reported that this tool was far too text heavy for an English language learner and that short videos and pictures they could "see themselves in" were more effective for communicating the same messages.

Many recommendations have emerged since the inception of the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program, the initiative that funded the portal, from a variety of players, including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in 2016. The feedback speaks to the validity of the partnerships struck through its creation, but deeply challenges the accuracy of information not regularly updated – a lack of maintenance possibly connected to the temporary nature of the funding to support the site. A consistent framework and site structure was also recommended, so that the province can provide guidelines as to how to better reach immigrants with dynamic portal design. With no call to action buttons on the site, it could also be said that users or visitors are not being captured with prompts for emails, postal codes or otherwise to re-connect post-visit.

The Consultant also conducted a site review using a third party software and discovered some interesting facts:

- Over 700 easy-to-rank keywords appeared, but with another 700+ keyword gaps
- Top keywords were "bay of quinte" by large majority, making up nearly 40% of the originating traffic
- 81 sites link into the portal, where the industry average is 51
- When visitors click in the portal, they do so on average twice in one day
- Visitors spend, on average, nearly two hours on the site when they visit it
- Inquinte.ca is the largest director of traffic to the site
- Popular searches were mostly about events and specific communities

3. Quinte Local Immigration Partnership (QLIP) – With funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Quinte Immigration Services established the Quinte Local Immigration Partnership in 2011. LIPs were established as early as 2008 in Ontario in an effort to coordinate services and community partners in order to improve settlement outcomes for newcomers living in the region. Many partners are listed on the QLIP site, ranging from employment services to faith communities.

   The QLIP website is felt to be a shell rather than a dynamic tool, with a feeling left that it is overshadowed by the QIS website, leaving the user without much engagement. Users can dive into reports to find out more information relating to their strategic projects, but no updates have occurred since 2015. The reports identify how partners work together in teams and a 2012 action plan was readily available to describe the objectives of the project, outlining the following mission:

   - Enhance the region's image as a welcoming community
   - Foster an environment where the education, skills and experience of newcomers are fully employed to make the community economically and socially stronger
   - Support employers in their efforts to attract, hire and retain newcomers as strategic members of their workforce

   Limited research reports were also available on the site along with updated strategic action plans up to 2015 – it is unknown if further action plans have been developed or if the latest one is still directing activities. Quite possibly a new plan is in place, or will be soon, considering the new five-year funding agreement they will embark

upon in the spring of 2020.
One of the concerns for the partnership from the researcher's perspective is the lack of links to the site from identified partner websites. Of the 36 local partners listed, only three link to the QLIP website. During the consultation process, the partners consulted with reflected that QLIP is "more like an information sharing table" rather than an action-oriented partnership grouping. The evidence collected about the links reinforces this. The latest available Strategy and Action Plan, covering the period of 2014-2016 includes these strategic directions:
- Coordination of services in employment, police and health
- Promote diversity and sensitivity through outreach materials, initiatives and communications
- Secure resources from diverse sources
- Find resources to promote and market the Bay of Quinte region
- Represent the Francophone immigrant newcomer community

4. Belleville Inclusion Committee – Approximately seven years ago the Belleville Inclusion Committee was established in response to a call for action for the city to reflect in it's structure what they target for the community – "we must be inclusion". Dr. Aruna Alexander was a pivotal person inspiring the inception of the committee, garnering support and budget from the city to establish it. The mandate of the group is to provide education to the community and to advocate for inclusion broadly. Originally, the focus was newcomers to Canada, but has now expanded to include all people who live in the city and its surrounding communities. A strong partnership with Quinte West exists and collaborations with Hastings County and Prince Edward County are ongoing, especially with respect to the Quinte immigration information portal.
With a modest annual budget and historical leadership from the economic development team at the city (the committee is now led by the recreation department), they have been able to accomplish a great deal of work, including a dynamic branding process involving youth. When the committee was established, they embarked upon a logo creation process where youth from the community were challenged to create images to reflect the purpose of the collective. The process was the most valuable demonstration of collaboration and enthusiasm for the topic, and the product, or winning logo, was and still is used today in a variety of ways. Window clings, shirt buttons, temporary tattoos, signage for public areas and so on display the logo and tag line "Stronger Together", acting as a physical symbol of Belleville's commitment to welcoming and belonging for its residents.

Today, the committee has four sub-committees established:
- Vigilance – anti-racism advocacy and support
- Marketing & Communications – promotion and story telling
- Education & Programming – leadership and community training
- Community Development –investigation and response to community needs
Like any municipal committee, challenges can arise with coordination and leadership when Council changes over and staff revolves. The committee is currently being led by the recreation department of the city and is poised for continuance, as the committee has approved the strategy for Economic Development Investment & Destination Development.

5. United Nations Association, Quinte Branch (UNA – Quinte) – Nearly 25 years ago, Dr. Aruna Alexander spearheaded the Quinte branch of the United Nations Association, under the Ottawa umbrella of UNA - Canada. They are a "volunteer organization that works to promote and further the work of the United Nations in our community". Working in partnership with community organizations and members, the

UNA – Quinte has carried out a great deal of work over the years and is continuing with strength today. The interview conducted with Dr. Alexander revealed that with her leadership, and the participation of many others, several initiatives have also trickled down from the work of the UNA – Quinte. Here are some examples of the initiatives undertaken by the collective:

- Ambassadors for Belleville – retention and social integration focus
- Belleville Inclusion Committee – formerly CMARD (Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination)
- Inclusion Christmas Tree – symbolization of welcome in public space
- Interfaith Quinte – coming together of religious and faith communities
- Leadership Summit – focus on UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- Model U.N. – conference simulating actual UN participants debate for youth
- Welcome of International Students – annual welcome event for Loyalist IS
- Speaker Series – a variety of speakers and a variety of UN related topics

Loyola Adult School of Continuing Education

In order to investigate the service offering of English as a Second Language (ESL) training available at Loyola Adult School of Continuing Education, a focus group of students and an interview with the Principal took place. Principal Robert Gilmour and his staff are clearly leading the way with respect to direct services for newcomers. The school offers a wide variety of classes, broken out into language ability range groupings and carried out during the day and the evening. Transportation from Quinte West to Belleville is also taking place, helping to connect some learners living outside of Belleville with training opportunities. The school leverages a mix of funding to engage in the work, but primarily through contributions made by the Ontario government. It was also reported to the research team that Highline Mushrooms, a significant employer from the region invests time, money and effort into providing their newcomer staff with access to the ESL training offered at Loyola – a significant symbol that the farm is a champion employer and that Loyola's services are well worth the investment. The students also reported that their teachers are true allies in their lives, helping to support them far beyond the role of teaching English. Students feel connected to the teachers, staff and other students there so much so that they revealed they feel at home when they attend school. Student are motivated to learn because of this organizational culture of care and respect offered by the teachers and staff. Learning outcomes are substantial as well, with students reporting that they have improved their skills dramatically due to the nature of the learning approaches and personalization offered to them in and outside of the classroom.

The Principal reported during his interview that they do struggle to reach learners living outside of Belleville or are experiencing other barriers to participation. When presented with the Community Language Support Model and asked to review the Guide for Volunteers Teaching English manual developed in Renfrew and Lanark Counties, Principal Gilmour was optimistic that the model could assist with regional decentralization and outreach. Teachers who also had a chance to learn about the decentralized model designed to complement brick-and-mortar ESL schools reported excitement and enthusiasm to consider adopting it there. This service provider is a true example of a champion organization staffed with people who deeply care about the lives of the learners they reach through a dynamic and effective program.

Given that this list is not exhaustive, there is clearly a strong sense of action taking place in the region with respect to a wide variety of players contributing to a welcoming community reality. The partnerships established to spearhead the creation of this document itself is a significant strength, demonstrating that leaders across local government and major sector agencies are all deeply invested in highly positive rural immigration outcomes.

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