



Minutes

Abbotsford Local Immigration Partnership Council Meeting

January 18th 2018 • 2pm to 4pm

Present	Regrets
Manpreet Grewal Dave Loewen Kanta Naik Sue Federspiel John Potts Harpreet Singh Allan Asaph Hillary Russell Eyerusalem Abebe Lia Bishop Guests: Harold Rosen - AIM Art Turnbull - AIM Connie Thompson- AIM Corrine Vooy - ACS	Ajay Kaushal Dave Sidhu Bharati Sandhu Melissa Giles Nicola Mooney Ghizlane Laghzaoui Balbir Gill Camilla Boisvert

Meeting Opening & Introductions

Thank you for SACRO staff for hosting ALIP Council Meeting

Guest Introductions

Council Roundtable Introductions

Approva

Agenda Approved

Oct 15th Minutes approved

Presentations

Abbotsford Interfaith Movement (A.I.M) – Harold Rosen, Art Turnbull, Connie Thompson

- A.I.M.'s Vision: "To promote understanding, respect and cooperation between diverse faith communities and individuals in Abbotsford" Group has been meeting for 3 years; meets approximately 20 times a year
- Objectives are to promote faith/ religious diversity; increase social justice awareness through events, knowledge sharing opportunities and interconnection among distinct faith-based groups.

- Art Turnbull shares a brief personal history and why religious diversity is important to him; shares his perspective on the ties among social justice and religious harmony
- Connie Thompson discusses her volunteer work with Syrian families, concerned with diversity and diversifying faith groups
- Group has sponsored a refugee family.
- Speakers note that Congolese families new to Fraser Valley; A.I.M wants to support these families and their integration process. They have plans to put on an African Music Concert
- Group to connect with Mission Community Services where there are more new Congolese families. Group mentions they have connected with a faith-based African community in Abbotsford called “Jesus House”.
- Group struggles to retain diverse faith-group membership; Kanta recommends that the leadership of the AIM group should be diverse and representative of the community; suggests that children of sponsored refugee families/ Congolese family are connected to the appropriate school district resources to avoid “falling through the cracks”.
- Group notes that racism does still exist in Abbotsford and works to address this issue, primarily by creating public awareness. Currently they are looking for a public space where people of different faiths can come together to pray in their own ways/languages for peace, justice and rights.

Action Item: A.I.M. Space/ Venue for meetings; Lia/ Sue to discuss with Manpreet

Action Item: A.I.M wants to sponsor an African music concert for April; Eyerusalem to check in with Art and Harold to provide connections.

South Asian Community Resource Office (SACRO) – Corinne Vooyo, Harpreet Singh

- Corinne introduces Council to location and provides an overview of SACRO programs (Moving Ahead Program; Immigrant Youth & Young Adults; In-It-Together; SWIS; counselling, etc).
- **Moving Ahead Program:** Helps immigrant individuals and families with multiple needs and significant integration barriers. Used primarily by Syrian refugees & other refugees, youth with high vulnerability; harder to integrate due to mental and cognitive health needs caused by war, PTSD, etc.
- **Immigrant Youth & Young Adults (IYYA):** For youth interested in better opportunities in life, employment or education. Includes after-school homework help, workshop sessions on pressing needs, recreational and education opportunities, one-on-one supports/mentorship, family support, etc.
- **Family Support/ Mentoring/ Counselling:** Parents also experience barriers; lots of moms come from SARA, halfway house and/or suffer from PTSD, parents are in recovery from war
- SACRO has both adult workers and youth workers); a main objective is bridging youth and parents communication and needs; many immigrant youth and families experiencing a

“Generational Gap”; traditional parenting vs the westernized child poses friction from within families.

- **In It Together(IIT):** Gang Reduction Program, partnership with APD/ SD34- dealing with both the offending and victim side.
- One line referral program developed in partnership with the Division of Family Practice. Phone line for resource help/ guide connecting youth and immigrant youth with doctors/ medical help and advice.
- Diverse Settlement Workers- representative of all ethno-cultural groups, each with their own specific needs and support systems.
- **Culture Clubs** – During lunch at school for half an hour youth workers bring all kids together to a safe spot within the school to play games, do fun activities in an effort to create positive relationships and interaction between newly arriving immigrants and their classmates.
- On average 50 youth come through the doors each day.
- Structured similar to a “one-stop shop”; clients are facing multi-dimensional issues/ layers, therefore programs are flexible, working at all levels to bridge resources (school- to- home- to mental health- to recreational activities)
- Program employs a holistic strategy of prevention and evaluation; success is long-term when youth are integrated into programs from early stages of socialization and development.
- Programs address all different trends with youth needs (sex& relationships, money and scams, gang/drugs, etc); categorized by age-bracket.
- Youth are referred to program through schools, self-referrals, family, etc.
- Mental health is an issue many youth struggle with, including anxiety, depression, emotional withdrawal, connection. Particularly, refugee kids come with a different emotional intelligence given their past experiences compared to a Canadian-born youth.
- Youth are very resilient; accomplishing a lot considering everything they are going through (immigrant, cultural, language, stigma components)
- Community Education is key to success; staff work with partners (APD, SD34, etc.) to host public forums, meetings, presentations, specifically targeting stakeholders and parents.
- Sometimes it is discouraging work, especially when clients’ lives are lost; despite all the successes and relationships built, broad discourse around gangs, shootings and South Asian youth prevent an awareness of successes and common ground.

Discussion:

- Harold points to Character Abbotsford’s culture clubs, and suggests there may be some partnership/ bridging opportunity.
- Kanta gives an overview of the challenges in school district with new immigrant youth and children; having this space (SACRO) is very key to academic success and gives vulnerable youth needed resources for long-term success.
- Art: asks why programs seem to be split among “Caucasian youth” and “South Asian youth”

- The equitable model design is not about exclusiveness, but about access and acknowledging and tending to specific needs within a vulnerable population.
- It is not unusual for graduated youth clients to become volunteers for the next generation; practicum students from UFV gain a lot of insight when placed here, especially for those in the Criminal Justice/ Social Work realms.

New Business: Action Item: Refugee Response Protocol – Manpreet Grewal . To be on the agenda for next ALIP Council meeting

Mapping refugee skills and employer needs in Surrey and Abbotsford

- Allan presents the report published by Immigrant Employment Council of BC and prepared by the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce and Surrey Board of Trade.
- Report shows there is shortage of skilled workforce and stresses the need to better facilitate and match refugee skills with the needs of employers
- The report mapped refugee employment challenges as well as opportunities through establishing focus groups and gathering data.
- Level of engagement shown by employers during this study was surprising; this gives hope for more possibilities and opportunities. Employers were engaged in identifying specific barriers they faced as employers, for example, how to document refugee's talents and skill sets. Furthermore, they recommended strategies to improve the process of recruiting and retaining employees (page 3). One of the big needs noted was better connection between employment services and immigrant and refugee serving agencies. (Page 6- chart of findings)
- Barriers to refugee employment include self-esteem, language, family, health, child-care issues

Roundtable Updates

Immigrant Advisory Table: Eyerusalem

- Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT) Working Group has selected 12 final candidates for the Table. Two interview times have been set up for January 23rd (1:00 – 4:00) and January 25th (9:00am – 11:00am) to confirm membership. Eyerusalem invites ALIP members to join the interviewing panel if they are interested in being involved. Eyerusalem also invites ALIP members to take a look through the IAT Terms of Reference to familiarize themselves with the Table.

Event Update: Lia and Eyerusalem

Newcomers Bus Tour: The event was a success. In the evaluation form, participants noted the bus tour was informative and very useful. Lia presents her report of the bus tour event and thanks the City for supporting the project.

We are Abbotsford: the project under the Social Integration Working Group was successful in bringing the community together to celebrate our multicultural community; around 200 people attended the event at the Reach Gallery on the evening of November 7th. Video recap of the event to be sent by the next meeting.

- **UFV MA Citizenship and Migration 2018:** It will be a combination of research to improve employment opportunities. Certificate level will start in the fall.

Tour: Staff at Abbotsford Community Services George Ferguson location take ALIP members on a tour around the location and discuss the programs they offer.