

To:	Warden McQueen and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	October 8, 2020
Subject / Report No:	EDTC-CW-14-20
Title:	Diversity & Youth Engagement
Prepared by:	Jacinda Rudolph & Melissa Avedesian
Reviewed by:	Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism & Culture
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW173-20; Endorsed by County Council October 22, 2020 per Resolution CC84-20

Recommendation

That Report EDTC-CW-14-20 outlining projects and partnerships that demonstrate an inclusive community and support youth engagement be received for information.

Executive Summary

Grey County acknowledges the importance of retaining and attracting youth and promoting the benefits of diversity in order to grow the economy. Economic development staff in partnership with community stakeholders have taken the lead in developing and implementing many initiatives. New projects will be forthcoming in the immediate future;

This report summarizes current and future projects and partnerships that demonstrate the coordination, connection and collaboration that foster a welcoming and inclusive community and support youth engagement and retention.

Background and Discussion

Labour force retention is a key concern for many communities and entire families need to feel welcomed for workers to stay. Multiple factors contribute to whether immigrants choose to move to and remain in a new community, including perceptions of the community, the presence of family, friends and/or other immigrants, employment

opportunities, educational opportunities, access to cultural and religious amenities, employer support, and their desire for a small-centre lifestyle.

Several factors also contribute to youth outmigration from rural communities, such as a perceived lack of economic/employment opportunities, recreational/social activities and infrastructure, lack of post-secondary education and training and youth engagement.

In 2015, Grey County began to see a small influx of new immigrants coming to the region through private sponsorship groups, entrepreneurial opportunities and/or family sponsorships. It became apparent that our support systems needed to be improved to better meet the unique needs of the new residents as many service providers and rural communities were not well equipped to effectively respond to such diverse needs. Over the next few years, a number of grass roots, faith based organizations, not-for-profits and municipal governments established programs, projects and activities to increase the community's capacity to be more welcoming to newcomers and highlighting the importance of cultural awareness within the rural communities.

At the same time, economic development trends were shining a spotlight on further changing demographics, including youth outmigration (15 to 29), particularly in rural communities. This coupled with a consistently low unemployment rate and increasing labour shortage, demonstrated the important role that newcomers and youth could play in diversifying and enriching the social, economic and cultural vitality of our rural communities.

In 2017, economic development staff began to weave a focus of newcomer and youth retention and attraction into their workplans. The following chronicles resulting initiatives led by Grey County and our partners.

Newcomers & Immigrants

New to Grey (2017/18)

In partnership with the Grey Bruce Welcoming Communities, and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Grey County implemented the "New to Grey" initiative. This was a 15-month project aimed at increasing the visibility of newcomers along with the community and economic benefits of immigration for our region. It assisted social services, employers and educational institutions become more attractive to newcomers through an understanding of their needs and available local resources. It strengthened collaboration among stakeholders looking to build their capacity to include newcomers and helped set the foundation for future attraction and retention efforts.

One significant partnership established through New to Grey was with the Rural Employment Initiative (REI) housed within the Newcomer Centre of Peel. REI has a large client base of approximately 300 immigrants currently residing in the GTA, looking

to relocate to rural communities. This partnership has strengthened over the years and, together with REI, Grey County has:

- Hosted three bus tours (2018 to 2020), bringing more than 100 highly skilled newcomers to Grey County for a community tour and to attend the Regional Job Fair;
- Attended three Rural Ontario Job Fairs (2018 to 2020) in the GTA to showcase the region; and
- Lead one information session (Feb. 2020) for immigrants expressly interested in relocating to our region.

Realizing the value of learning and outcomes over the 15-month project, through report [CAOR-ED-19-18](#), Grey County Economic Development adjusted their staffing and workplans in 2018 to better achieve priority areas, including newcomer and youth attraction and retention with the introduction of an Economic Development Officer dedicated to this work.

New to Grey became the foundational piece of work, leading to an invitation to sit on AMO's Municipal Immigration Committee, the successful receipt of a Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant to host the Regional Forum: Rural Newcomer Integration in 2018 and receipt of a Immigrant, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) contribution agreement to implement a Local Immigration Partnership in 2020.

Municipal Immigration Committee (MIC)

Currently, Grey County sits on AMO's Municipal Immigration Committee (MIC). Through this, municipalities meet with both provincial and federal representatives on the topic of Immigration. The focus of the MIC's work is 1) attraction and retention with a focus on rural, northern and francophone communities and 2) settlement and integration, especially in municipalities that receive large numbers of immigrants. Our participation ensures local challenges and opportunities are shared with upper levels of government to inform policies and strategies around immigration to Canada and in turn, our member municipalities. Currently, the Province may consider a pilot Municipal Nominee Program where municipalities could have greater leverage and control over immigration decisions and aligning immigration intake with the needs of our local communities.

Regional Forum: Rural Newcomer Integration (2018/19)

In November 2018, Grey County partnered with four Counties (Bruce, Huron, Perth and Wellington) and regional partners to host an employer-focused event to support workforce development by creating practical, actionable strategies for newcomer attraction, retention and integration activities. The Forum highlighted best practices from local employers and identified significant barriers (i.e. housing, transportation, welcoming communities) to the successful integration of newcomers in rural

communities. Along with the planning committee and 10 partners, 146 delegates from across the province were in attendance. A [white paper](#) was published to document the forum along with lessons and recommendations. The initiative was funded by a Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant.

Grey & Bruce Newcomer Stakeholder Consultation (March 2019)

Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) is a collaborative of federal and provincial migration ministries; municipalities, municipal, national, regional and local organizations involved in newcomer settlement. Their activities are both national in scope and region-specific, with a focus on comparative perspectives and best practice.

Our region was one of five rural communities selected to conduct research and host a local stakeholder consultation. This [study](#) and connection with P2P helped highlight the need for Federal IRCC funding to implement both settlement services and a local immigration partnership within our region

Local Immigration Partnership (2020-2025)

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) were launched as a pilot program in Ontario in 2008 as a joint venture between Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. LIP presence has since expanded to eight other provinces and 2 territories. Over a decade after they were first created, IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada) no longer considers LIPs to be a pilot but rather an integral part of the settlement and integration landscape in Canada. LIPs come from a recognition that large-scale social change is the result of better cross-sector coordination rather than the isolated efforts of individual organizations.

In April of 2019, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) was accepting applications for new Local Immigration Partnerships. As a result of the funding announcement, Grey and Bruce counties partnered to apply and serve the needs of our region. At the end of February 2020, notice of approval was received for funding to advance the activities and priorities undertaken through a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) for three to five years.

LIPs are community-based partnerships that support planning around the needs of newcomers. Specifically, LIPs are partnerships that:

- Foster a systemic approach to engage settlement programs and other institutions to integrate newcomers;
- Support community-based knowledge-sharing and local strategic planning; and
- Improve coordination of effective services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration.

LIPs do not provide direct services to newcomers. Rather, they seek to make host communities more welcoming by engaging a range of stakeholders and enhancing collaboration at the community-level to improve settlement and integration of newcomers. The Local Immigration Partnership will engage various stakeholders including local employers, school boards, healthcare centres, boards of trades, professional associations, ethno-cultural and faith-based organizations, social services sectors and other service providers.

Report [EDTC-CW-08-20](#) outlined the partnership with Bruce County along with the goals and actions of the LIP. The fully funded program officially launched in July 2020 with the hiring of the LIP Coordinator, Melissa Avedesian.

On September 15, the inaugural Partnership Council meeting was hosted with over 30 regional representatives. Today, the Council has grown to 50 representatives and will meet four times a year. With so many local champions the Council will engage newcomers, employers and communities in strategies and actions that support welcoming communities and two-way integration .

Contracts have also been awarded concurrently for the development of the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership brand and Settlement Strategy and Action Plan. The establishment of this resource will provide community stakeholders with a roadmap to guide and align opportunities for coordination, connection and collaboration through a comprehensive action plan to be implemented over years two through five. The draft Settlement Strategy and Action Plan will be presented to Council for consideration in March 2021.

Youth Engagement

Young Professionals Network (YPN) was [established in 2018](#) providing young people (20-40 years old) with the opportunity to learn, engage and build their networks. YPN addresses youth retention challenges in Grey County by bringing together hundreds of young professionals currently in our area, looking to create a stronger network among peers and learn about social, recreational, economic and community opportunities to ground themselves in our region. Events are held three to four times a year across the County and are routinely sold out with over 100 guests each.

Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) support youth in entrepreneurship through various avenues. Each year the BEC offers a training and grant program called Summer Company, geared towards youth 15-29 looking to start their own summer business. This program provides youth with the tools and mentorship support needed to successfully launch and run their own business.

The BEC also participates in various speaking engagements with local organizations such as Launch Pad, the local high schools and Georgian College to discuss

entrepreneurship as a career option for local youth. These engagements often lead to youth accessing the Centre's resources and one-on-one consultation services.

BEC has also partnered with Grey Bruce Settlement Services (YMCA) to deliver a workshop on how to start a business. This workshop was geared towards newcomers and included newcomer entrepreneurs to share their experiences, challenges and milestones as a business owner in Grey County. Collaborations such as this allows newcomers to see themselves in the stories that are told and helps them to understand that there is a place for them in their new community.

Attraction & Retention of People

Grey County Economic Development staff work closely with our education partners from Bruce Grey Catholic District School Board, Bluewater District School Board, Georgian College and Launch Pad to enhance engagement and skills development opportunities for youth. Staff see youth retention as a key priority to grow the Grey County economy and advance our communities in the long term.

Past and current discussions with employers in our region paints a concerning picture of recruitment and retention concerns. In response, Grey County Economic Development has been working to better understand the regional labour force and the on-the-ground circumstances that challenge both attraction and retention. Sydenham Campus is intended to play an integral role in the attraction and retention of youth, entrepreneurs and workforce more broadly in our region.

With the endorsement of the Economic Development and Planning Advisory Committee and County Council, in 2019 Grey County drafted the [Attraction & Retention Campaign](#) with a focus on youth, international students and newcomers. The intent is to strengthen access and opportunities through strategic partnerships with the school boards, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) and Georgian College. The inaugural campaign was slated to launch with Committee and Council approval in spring 2020 but has been placed on hold until 2021.

Grey County and Georgian College are also working together to support international students. The international student population in Owen Sound has increased significantly over the past two years and was poised to continue with a doubling of its enrollment. Through report [EDTC-CW-03-20](#) Grey County committed to partnering with Georgian College to facilitate community integration for International Students in Grey County. The position was placed on hold due to the pandemic and will be re-evaluated in 2021.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

There are no legal or legislated requirements relating to this report.

Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications with this report. All initiatives have been included through approved annual budgets and workplans.

Relevant Consultation

Ongoing with all stakeholders.

Appendices and Attachments

The following community organizations are also leading change to advance diversity and youth engagement in our region. Grey County Economic Development is connected to each.

YMCA Settlement Services

The YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce has received funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to provide Settlement and Language Services direct to newcomers across Grey and Bruce counties for the next three to five years. Drawing upon the support of multiple agencies, organizations and businesses across Grey and Bruce counties, this project brings a full range of settlement services to our rural area in which no formal settlement service has existed previously, and where lack of transportation is a barrier for many newcomers.

Under a “mobile” service delivery model staff will travel, as needed, to meet with clients in their own communities to assist them in accessing the services, supports and connections needed for successful integration, including: assessment and referrals; orientation; community connections; language training, including customized workplace language training as required; and employment related services. Customized services will also be provided to encourage employers to hire newcomers, to make their workplaces welcoming of newcomers, and to assist them in responding to the needs of newcomers in their workplace. Staff also provide services and supports to help newcomers to overcome barriers associated with recognition and/or licensure processes (accreditation).

Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce (WCGB)

Recently incorporated as a not-for-profit, WCGB has been an active leading group within our community advocating for the needs of immigrants (permanent residents), refugee claimants and temporary residents. Their ten person Board represent a number of different cultures and backgrounds and brings knowledge and personal lived experiences to the discussion. Grey County has worked with WCGB from the onset of New to Grey and the executive board members continue to act as advisors on the

Settlement Services Committee, the LIP Partner Council and the Rural Pathways project.

Making Grey Bruce Home

Around the same time as New to Grey, the communities of Grey and Bruce also received funding from the former Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to deliver the Making Grey Bruce Home Project (MGBH). As a partnership between the United Way Bruce Grey and Welcoming Communities Grey Bruce, this project was guided and delivered on a grass roots level by a diverse advisory committee of community members. The project implemented and evaluated a rural model to enhance community capacity and service system responses through various activities. The creation of a Newcomer Hub, a Mentoring/Peer Support Network, a Rural Toolkit, and delivering training and workshops for local service providers on working with newcomers were just a few of the activities.

Rural Pathways for Newcomer Women in Grey & Bruce:

The Rural Pathways project is currently underway and working closely with a number of local stakeholders to test and develop new tools for employers to attract and retain newcomers. Some of the workshops include:

1. Creating Diverse and Inclusive workplace
2. Overcoming Cultural and Language Barriers
3. Addressing Barriers of Education, Credentials and Skills Recognition

These tools and resources will be available for all employers in our region and will continue to be promoted and shared amongst partners even once the project has ended (December 2020).