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North Bay & District
Multicultural Centre
Immigrant Settlement Services

NEWSLETTER

From Don Curry, Executive Director

Not-For-Profit of the Year!

We were thrilled to be honoured by the North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce as the Not-For-Profit of the Year recipient during the awards night at the Best Western during Small Business Week in October. We were nominated in 2009 but didn't win, so 2010 was our year. Unfortunately I was out of town and couldn't attend, but Acting Program Coordinator Deborah Robertson and other staff members were on hand to accept the award and enjoy the evening. Congratulations go out to the others nominated in our category.

Deborah Robertson, left, Acting Program Coordinator at the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre, accepted the Not-For-Profit Of The Year Award from North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce President John Strang and Maureen Brazeau, Manager of Rebuilt Resources, which sponsors the award.

Access us by Skype

We are pleased to be partnering with the Business Centre of Nipissing-Parry Sound with its computer kiosks in the Callander Public Library, Mattawa-Bonfield Economic Development Office in Mattawa and West Nipissing Economic Partners office in Sturgeon Falls. Immigrants living in those areas who can't get to our downtown North Bay office can make an appointment with a settlement counsellor and hook up with Skype software, where you can see one another as you are talking. We have clients in those locations so this will be a great way for them to connect. The Business Centre has an office in Parry Sound at 1A Church Street and that will be available for clients to access us as well.

Check out our podcasts

As we produce new podcasts about immigration issues, the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre and the North Bay Newcomer Network Local Immigration Partnership project, we post them at www.northbayradio.ca and link to them from various websites, especially the North Bay Immigration

Portal at www.northbayimmigration.ca under the Features heading. That website continues to receive a massive number of visitors. Our latest podcast features Joe Daniel of TeleTech and Laura-Jane Coté of NNN talking about the new immigrant employers' council in the city. Next up are Darlene Jamieson and K'Sah Woodley of Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Bay & District, talking about their Youth Host program.

Welcoming Communities Initiative

The Welcoming Communities Initiative continues to gather steam across Ontario. That is Ontario excluding the GTA, and that is by design. The network of university researchers and settlement agency leaders has many projects under way, including one here in North Bay. John Nadeau of Nipissing University and I are the North Bay representatives on WCI and John has student, Michaela Clark, leading a research project to establish a baseline database of agencies and services addressing the settlement needs of newcomers. That project is now under way and more are coming.

I attended a WCI meeting in Gatineau in September where we discussed the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program and how it could work in Ontario. We may see something similar in Ontario down the road. Employers would be able to move a skilled immigrant to the front of the waiting line to Canada if there was a firm job offer.

In October WCI held a joint meeting with the Local Immigration Partnerships (locally the North Bay Newcomer Network) in Ottawa and we discussed how the two can work together for the betterment of Ontario communities.

November 11 I spoke with Meyer Burstein and Vicki Esses of WCI and we brainstormed holding a Northern and Rural Ontario conference in North Bay in February or March to identify approximately four research themes that will help all our communities attract, retain and welcome newcomers. Hopefully the details will be finalized by the time the next newsletter goes out. The Conference Board of Canada is hosting a conference in North Bay around the same time, so there could be a partnership opportunity. We'll have it sorted out soon.

OCASI conferences

I attended the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants Executive Directors Forum November 1-3 in Alliston, and staff members Deborah Robertson and Cindy Collins attended the professional development conference at the same location November 3-5. We learned that Citizenship and Immigration Canada is looking at a reduction of $53 million nationally in its settlement services budget beginning April 1, 2011. That is likely a $30 million hit for Ontario. We also heard that serving under-served areas is a priority and some agencies may close, due to duplication of services in a community. That may put us ina stronger position.

Immigrant Employers Council

Chair Joe Daniel of Teletech and North Bay Newcomer Network project officer Laura-Jane Coté have lots of initiatives planned for the Employers Council. Joe is filling some gaps, finding representatives from the service and retail sectors to augment the folks he has on board already. Stay tuned for some exciting initiatives coming from this group. For a preview have a listen to the podcasts mentioned above.

Client numbers

Seven new clients were matched with volunteers in the Host program in October. Four new volunteers were trained and we now have 34 active volunteers. We have five active francophone matches and eight French-speaking volunteers now. Our French-speaking capacity among staff is currently 40 per cent of our 10 staff members.

We have 40 new Citizenship and Immigration Canada eligible clients since April 1, with 22 in their first year in Canada. They have paid 395 visits to our offices in that period. In addition we have another 23 clients deemed ineligible, because they are temporary foreign workers, plus 18 through the City of North Bay and North Bay Newcomer Network relocation efforts. In case you're lost, that's 81 total since April 1. Funding from the City of North Bay and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation enables us to serve a wider clientele.

New city mayor

We're sad to see Mayor Vic Fedeli leave his post at the end of this month. He has been a very strong supporter of the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre and the North Bay Newcomer Network. We all wish him well. Our new mayor, Al McDonald, visited our offices twice in the past month and is up to speed on what we are all about. It was great to see both our new mayor and Councillor Judy Koziol mention us in their election material. We expect our solid relationship with the City of North Bay, Mayor and Council will continue.

International Cooking Club

Staff members have asked me to stop talking about our International Cooking Club because it's over capacity. It has been a huge hit and matches seniors with newcomers in a friendly kitchen cooking environment once a month to get to know one another. We have been using the kitchen at Les Compagnons but the numbers outgrew it and we are now at the Golden Age Centre, where 35 people attended the November 14 event. A New Horizons for Seniors grant is helping out with the costs involved. Participants are compiling recipes for a cookbook as they go.

Anti-Racism Lending Library

A reminder that our Anti-Racism Lending Library has a wealth of resources on anti-racism and cultural diversity. The resources are described by grade level on our website at www.nbdmc.ca and they are available free of charge to teachers and the general public. Send me an email at doncurry@nbdmc.ca and I'll make sure you get what you need. A crack team of representatives from all four school boards selected the resources, and they are in both English and French.

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