



WELCOMING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

E-Bulletin - May 2010

In This Issue....

- Announcements & Updates
 - ❖ Networking
 - ❖ Website Updates
 - ❖ Student Awards
 - ❖ Changes in Leadership and Representation
- Governing Council & Regional Research Leads Meeting
- WCI-LIP Meeting
- Opinion Leader Interviews

Announcements and Updates

Networking

Following the launch of our website, the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as well as the Ontario Senior's Secretariat expressed interest in knowing more about the WCI. Vicki Esses and Meyer Burstein met with representatives of both groups on April 29th to present an overview of the Initiative and to describe how stakeholders and policy agencies can get involved and support research. Both presentations were well received.

Website Updates

We are happy to report that we have arranged an excellent working relationship with Zing Media whose programmers will be helping us with our website needs. Please watch for these upcoming additions to the site:

- "Characteristics of a Welcoming Community" report posted under Documents
- materials from the WCI-LIP Meeting held April 30-May 1 posted under Events, with a full report to follow
- new bios added under the People section
- new Local Immigration Portal website links under the Community section
- WCI Protocols document under Governance
- a chart depicting the Executive Committee and Secretariat

If you have any documents and announcements that you would like to recommend that we post on the site or wish to have your bio included in our list of people affiliated with the WCI, please send them to Tasha Williamson at wci@uwo.ca. There are sections in the site for news items, current research, publications, research releases, partner releases, events, and documents.

Student Awards

We would like to congratulate the following student members of the WCI on their awards and scholarships!

Erin Tolley is the recipient of one of 15 prestigious Trudeau Scholarships from the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation. Please click [here](#) for more information about Erin and her work.

Caroline Bennett-AbuAyyash and Stelian Medianu, both graduate students at Western, are recipients of Ontario Graduate Scholarships.

Stephen Lin received a Graduate Teaching Assistant Award at Western.

Changes in Leadership and Representation

Xinyin Chen has stepped down as co-domain leader for the Children and Youth Domain and we are now searching for someone to replace him in the role. If you or someone you know may be interested in filling this position, please contact Tasha Williamson at wci@uwo.ca.

Governing Council and Regional Research Leads Meeting

The Welcoming Communities Initiative will be holding a two-day meeting of the Governing Council and Regional Research Leads on June 14-15 in Hamilton. Project leads who have been responsible for the "Welcoming Communities: Promoting Inclusive Ontario Cities" projects funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region will present an overview of their work to an audience that will include all university and community representatives, domain leaders, and representatives from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The objectives of this meeting include building awareness about the new research that has begun on these projects and making participants aware of the Initiative's progress. On the second day, we will hold a Governing Council meeting to evaluate the WCI to date and to discuss the WCI governance structure in order to place the organization on firmer administrative footing. A report of the meeting will be made available on the WCI website under the Events section.

WCI-LIP Meeting

On April 30-May 1 the WCI hosted a meeting in London of the Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) from across the province. There were over seventy people in attendance, including a majority of the LIP project leads, WCI personnel, representatives from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, from Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, from the

Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and one participant who joined us all the way from British Columbia!

As mentioned in the last e-bulletin, the purpose of the meeting was to facilitate discussion between the various groups, to learn from each other, to share knowledge and practices, and to explore options for maintaining contact and further action.

The WCI-LIP Action Research leads, Caroline Andrew and Neil Bradford, began the meeting with a warm welcome to all in attendance and a brief presentation to "set the stage" for the WCI's Action Research on the Local Immigration Partnerships. Elisabeth White of the London and Middlesex LIP moderated introductions of all the group members where we learned about successes and challenges each of the LIPs had experienced. This was followed by a discussion related to information about further funding for the LIPs which was part of the session led by Tim Rees of the Hamilton LIP, "Networking Session for Local Immigration Partnership Councils."

The two sessions leading off the following day were panel discussions moderated by Meyer Burstein, WCI Policy and Coordination Fellow, the first of which covered what is currently in place regarding LIP Structure, Composition, Roles, and Activities, followed by a session on building partnerships. We were then introduced to the leads of the three Francophone Immigration Networks, from whom we learned about the composition of these networks, their objectives, and their strategic plan. Neil Bradford then moderated a panel discussion exploring the building

of strategic action plans, which was followed by a presentation by Vicki Esses about progress to date and potential for additional links between the LIPs and the WCI. The final session of the day was a free discussion moderated by Cathy Woodbeck which allowed people to revisit ideas already considered during the meeting plus additional points of interest not yet touched upon.

The two day event was a whirlwind of exciting exchanges, networking, newly formed and further strengthened connections, and idea building. The feedback has been extremely positive and a number of participants indicated that they will revise their approaches as a result of the meeting. Thank you to everyone who was able to come and share in this wonderfully successful venture!

The agenda, presentation notes and slides, as well as a full report highlighting key ideas from the meeting will be made available on the WCI website under Events.

Opinion Leader Interviews

The WCI project entitled "Opinion Leader Interviews: Views on Cultural Diversity and Immigration" focuses on understanding local receptivity to immigration and diversity in 14 small- and medium-sized cities across Ontario. The study, funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region, is based on confidential telephone interviews with five local government representatives and five non-governmental opinion leaders (e.g., business leaders, media leaders) in each community.

Environics Research Group, a national polling firm, is currently conducting these interviews in which participants are asked about local government interest in seeing more immigration to the area, and about local perceptions of immigrants' contribution to the community's identity, economic growth, and social, cultural, political and civic life. Another set of questions taps into the opinion leaders' views on local capacity to serve the needs of recent immigrants, and their suggestions for how the community can improve the way in which it welcomes immigrants and provides opportunities for them to find meaningful work. A final set of questions probes the respondents' views on the community's receptivity to visible minorities and assessments of visible minority participation in local political and civic life.

Opinion leaders in the initial locations in which interviews have occurred - London and St. Catharines-Niagara - expressed considerable interest and enthusiasm for the study. Lead researchers Livianna Tossutti (Brock University) and Victoria Esses (The University of Western Ontario), with assistance from Nathan Brown (Brock), Stephen Lin (Western), and Samantha Lundy (Brock), are very pleased by the level of community engagement in these interviews. They anticipate a similar response when the study is fielded over the next five months in the remaining twelve communities: Barrie, Brantford, Durham Region, Greater Sudbury, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, Ottawa, Peterborough, Thunder Bay, Waterloo, and Windsor.

The research will serve policy practitioners and researchers alike by identifying and comparing levels of local receptivity to immigration and diversity, the factors that drive community attitudes, and strategies to improve the welcome that Ontario's second and third tier cities provide to newcomers and cultural minorities.

Thank you

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