



SUMMARY REPORT

On November 14th, 2018, the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership and Tri-Cities Organizing against Racism & Hate Network hosted **Welcoming Neighbourhoods**. As our communities grow, there is a growing concern around the lack of social connection amongst residents. The lack of social connection can lead to social isolation, depression, anxiety and the feeling of not belonging to one's own community. Welcoming Neighbourhoods is an opportunity to connect with others, to hear of ways in which others have connected with their neighbours and to learn more about the importance of social connections.

The event welcomed 125 diverse attendees who were established residents, newcomers and community representatives. The evening began with the Diversity Welcome led by the Tri-Cities LIP Co-Chairs, Ryan Drew & Claire MacLean. Keynote speaker, Romi Chandra Herbert inspired the audience by sharing the importance of welcoming communities through his personal story of establishing the first gay/straight alliance in his school and the importance of having allies for marginalized communities. Other guest speakers shared stories of opportunities for residents to participate in their community and to empower residents to meet their neighbours and connect with one another. Guest speakers included:

- *Mayor Richard Stewart (City of Coquitlam)*: From offering recreation programs that cater to diverse needs to establishing a task group to support newcomer refugees in settling into the community, he shared the important role of municipalities in welcoming communities.
- *Heidi Maddrell (Port Moody Foundation)*: With its small town charm and growing population, Heidi shared the unique role that technology can play in bringing Port Moody residents to connect with each other. With 11 social media groups that cater to various interests, residents are able to arrange gatherings, find a missing pet and even help those in need.
- *Dorla Tune (United Way of Lower Mainland)*: The #HiNeighbour campaign, which was part of the United Way Avenues of Change initiative, brought together community residents to meet each other through various interests. Dorla shared the story of two community members who became leaders by sharing their skills and talents with the community. From baking a traditional Persian cake to building a community garden, residents are making an impact in their community.
- *Rory Erickson (City of Port Coquitlam)*: The City of Port Coquitlam Youth Services welcomes youth in the community to participate in activities in a safe space where they can belong. Rory shared the power of safer spaces and belonging through youth-led activities.



- *Councillor Trish Mandewo (City of Coquitlam):* As a newcomer to the community, Trish shared a memory that resonated with her when Mayor Stewart welcomed her family to Coquitlam. Because of this gesture, she was empowered to get involved in her community by volunteering, starting her own business and more recently, successfully run for council. She called for newcomers to be conscious of the Perpetual Foreigner Syndrome and to combat this by participating in their community.

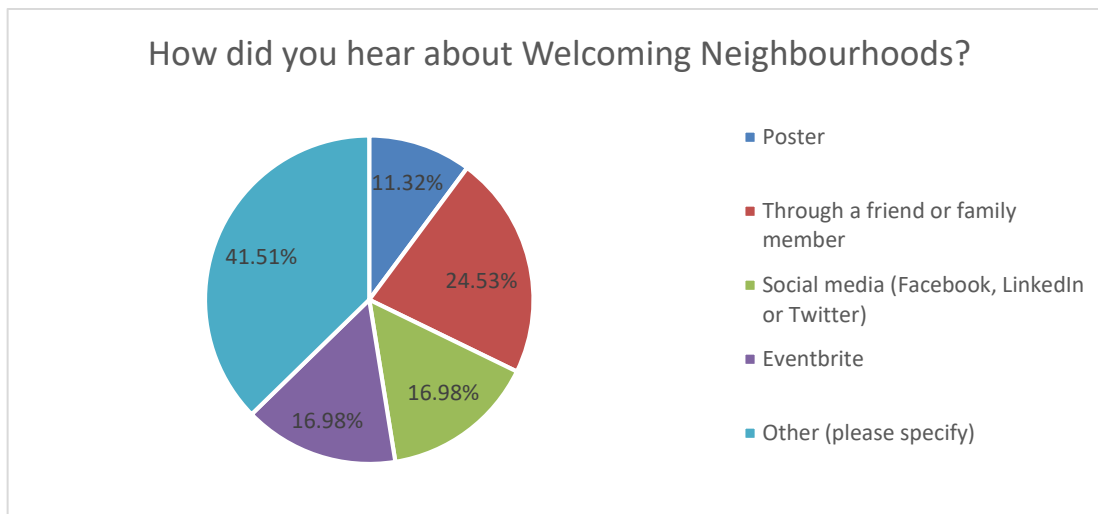
The event closed with a call to action from Romi to step out of your comfort zone, meet your neighbours, and dispel fears and anxieties that you may not know you even hold. By getting to know one another, we grow together in a healthy and inclusive community.

Evaluation

Attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form at their tables. Results from the evaluation are as follows:

- 91% of survey respondents (n=57) agreed that they have a better understanding of what it means to be welcoming
- 87% felt more confident in approaching their neighbours after the event
- 89% felt more confident that they can contribute to welcoming communities after the event
- 91% would recommend the event to others

In asking how attendees heard about the event, 41% received an invitation from LIP/ OARH partners.





Attendees were asked to “Share one thing that you will do to welcome neighbours to your community in the next few days.”

The majority of responses included:

- Say hello, introduce myself- be intentional in getting to know them
- Invite them to join for a walk or an activity
- Volunteer in the community
- Share food

Some suggestions on how we could improve the event:

- Give speakers more time- many wanted to hear more stories
- Include different perspectives, such as Indigenous persons, persons with disability, elderly
- More opportunities for dialogue/ networking: facilitated conversation circles

Suggestions for future topics/ events:

- City’s future plans
- Youth growth/ opportunities/ sports
- Racism/ reconciliation
- Housing/ Immigrants supports
- Parenting in Canada- Challenges for youth & parents
- Careers – studies/ validation process
- Social isolation- address ways to connect
- Parenthood/ Motherhood
- Public spaces- inclusion and participation

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the *Province of BC* and the *Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* for their ongoing support to the work of the Tri-Cities OARH and Local Immigration Partnership, respectively.

We would also like to thank our steering committee for their guidance, direction and support in this event:

- *Ann Johannes*, Tri-Cities Literacy Committee
- *Geri Briggs Simpson*, City of Coquitlam
- *Richelle Foulkes*, Fraser Health
- *Zarghoona Wakil*, MOSAIC
- *Lara Marchionni Jones*, Douglas College Training Group

Welcoming Neighbourhoods is presented by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership.