

IMMIGRATION BY THE NUMBERS

The Tri-Cities depend on immigration more than almost any other Canadian community.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

36.9%

OF THE TRI-CITIES' POPULATION WAS BORN OUTSIDE CANADA*

6%

OF THE TRI-CITIES' POPULATION LANDED IN CANADA BETWEEN 2006 AND 2011*

23%

OF TRI-CITIES RESIDENTS SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME**

The proportion of immigrants in the Tri-Cities is now virtually identical to Metro Vancouver as a whole. *2011

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THE TRI-CITIES WELCOMING COMMUNITIES PROJECT

much more likely to stay in the community and contribute positively. A key factor is the perception of enjoying the same access to amenities, services and spaces. In this program a team of Community Engagement Ambassadors will carry the message and help people in charge develop a more welcoming face.

The Tri-Cities Service Map, currently being developed, will provide a comprehensive, community-based database, representing and highlighting the services and supports of the Tri-City area as a whole community, rather than three separate municipalities.

And Our Home, Our Stories identifies and highlights the nature and special features of immigration within the Tri-Cities—such as the North Road Korea Town phenomenon outlined here. Our communities have become much more dynamic and cosmopolitan. It's exciting to know who lives here.

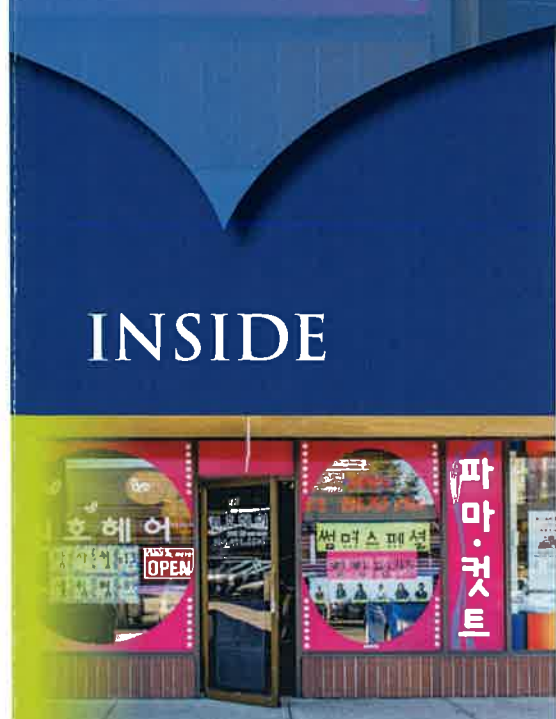
Burnaby and Coquitlam. It could end up as a smaller version of Metrotown, or perhaps something more like the mid-rise Cambie corridor, just south of the Cambie Street Bridge in Vancouver. Al-

most certainly North Road will be lined with condo buildings of varying heights atop two and three-story retail complexes that extend to the street. Several development proposals are currently in progress north of Lougheed, and more are expected from the core of Korea Town, on the south side. "It's an exciting time right now," says Carolyn Oraziotti, executive director of the North Road Burnaby Business Improvement Association, which represents roughly 200 businesses on the Burnaby side of the street. (Coquitlam business owners have yet to establish a BIA.)

"Several development proposals are currently in progress north of Lougheed, and more are expected from the core of Korea Town, on the south side."

Back at North Road Centre, where every space in the parking lot is currently taken and cars are circling the property looking for spots, James Lee has walked down the stairs to visit the only tenant whose presence there

predates his own. Hassanali Fassal opened his North Road Optical way back when the mall was built in 1983 and now thinks he is the only non-Korean left. A few years back another optical centre opened just a couple of doors down, but the two operators get along well, he says. "They are one of the best communities," he believes of the Koreans who now make up almost all of the mall's traffic. "Very honest and very sincere." That said, at 68 Fassal is now contemplating whether he will renew his lease when it comes due later this year. If he opts not to, there will be no shortage of other businesses happy to take it on.



INSIDE

OUR HOME, OUR STORIES

This is the first in a series of information packages prepared by the Tri-Cities Welcoming Communities Project.

NEXT Refugees in The Tri-Cities

NORTH ROAD'S NEW FLAVOUR

THE FIRST ROAD NORTH OF THE FRASER RIVER WAS IN DECLINE UNTIL AN INFLUX OF KOREANS REVIVED IT.

Jeannie Chung doesn't get to North Road as much as she used to. Back when she lived a couple of kilometres away in central Burnaby, the 58-year-old did most of her shopping at the malls that line the street, which divides Burnaby and Coquitlam.

Groceries could be picked up at one of two supermarkets, and errands of virtually every sort carried out at Korean-run shops and services that run into the hundreds. A meal out could be enjoyed at one of well over a dozen Korean restaurants. Two years ago Chung moved to Richmond, and gradually found other places to shop. That doesn't stop her from returning every few weeks, though. "Whenever I make kim chee," she says.

As a Korean-born Canadian, Chung is a member of one of the least visible immigrant communities in Greater Vancouver. Yet it is also one of the largest and fastest growing, especially in the Tri-Cities area of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody. In recent years Korean immigrants have arrived in greater numbers than any other nationality.

Between 2006 and 2011, Koreans accounted for 17% of arrivals, compared to 12% from China, and 11% for each of the Philippines and Iran. During that period the immigrant population of the Tri-Cities increased by almost 17%, compared to less than 10% for Metro Vancouver as a whole. Today some 37% of Tri-Cities residents are immigrants.

North Road's Korea Town, as it is sometimes called, maintains a profile in keeping with that of Koreans in general. Largely contained within a succession of old-fashioned strip malls on either side of Lougheed Highway (though especially on the south), it flies well below a lot of peoples' radar—observed, if it all, through the windows of a passing car. But all of that is likely to change as the Korean population continues



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KOREANS IN THE TRI-CITY AREA

In contrast to many of their Asian counterparts, Koreans began to arrive in significant numbers only fairly recently. In fact, the first Korean immigrant to BC—a UBC mathematics professor—didn't arrive until 1953, and as recently as 1996 Statistics Canada identified fewer than 20,000 Koreans in the province. Immigration accelerated rapidly beginning in the late 1990s, however, and in 2011 that number exceeded 34,000, with about 90% in Greater Vancouver.

In the Tri-Cities area of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody, Korea has been the top source of immigrants in recent years, accounting for 17.2% of settlers between 2006 and 2011. After English, Korean is the language most likely to be spoken at home, in more than 4% of households. Virtually all Korean immigrants arrive from South Korea, of course, but a few North Korean refugees have landed in the region, always by way of South Korea or another country.

There's an interesting sidelight to the Korean presence—the country's role in providing the region's largest share of foreign students. In 2009-2010, more than 17,000 Korean students studied here. The international education industry is one of Metro Vancouver's most important, accounting for more than 20,000 jobs and adding \$1.8 billion to the provincial GDP.



TODAY THERE ARE FIVE MALLS WITH A PRIMARILY KOREAN CUSTOMER BASE ON NORTH ROAD.

ues to grow, and the North Road area undergoes intensive redevelopment.

One of the reasons Korea Town hasn't achieved the recognition of some other Lower Mainland shopping districts is its relative newness. In fact, North Road's emergence as a Korean district is scarcely more than a decade old. When accountant James Lee moved his business to a third-floor office in North Road Centre in 1999, the mall was home to only a couple of other Korean-run enterprises, one of them the Hannam Supermarket, which had taken over an empty Canadian Tire store on the ground floor a year earlier. Back then, to the extent that Greater Vancouver had a Korean district, it was centred more in the Metrotown area and around Kingsway in East Vancouver.

But things began to change, and quickly. Around the time that Lee moved in, the mall owner decided to sell the shops and offices as bargain-priced strata units. Built in 1983, the place was already very rundown, says Lee, with lots of vacant

units, shuttered businesses and a roof that leaked. At that time the North Road area was known as much for warehousing and light industry as for retail. As well, construction was nearing completion on the nearby Lougheed Town Centre Station on the soon to open Millenium Skytrain Line, so traffic was a mess and access to the mall was difficult. Shops were being offered for barely six figures, offices for much less—not even a third of their value today.



Spotting opportunity and aware that their compatriots were beginning to arrive in much larger numbers, Koreans like Lee purchased a significant proportion of the units, providing the mall with a new purpose (and soon a new blue roof to replace the leaky red one) and adding vibrancy to a stretch of North Road that was otherwise in decline. Four years later, when a mall across the street came up for sale, a Korean partnership that included Lee purchased that one too. They renamed it Hannin Village, and successfully recruited more Korean businesses to what was

still a fairly low-rent area. Today there are five malls with a primarily Korean customer base on North Road.

Lee and his partners didn't realize it, but the business community they were helping to pioneer was centred on a road that possessed a little pioneer credibility of its own.

In fact, in 1859 North Road became the first thoroughfare north of the Fraser River after a trail was hastily blazed from the newly established colonial capital of New Westminster through to Burrard Inlet—and all because an American settler shot a Hudson's Bay Company employee's pig on San Juan Island, which was the object of a sovereignty dispute. The so-called Pig War (in which the pig was ultimately the only casualty) sparked the realization by colonial

authorities that the Fraser River was prone to freezing, and the capital required a communications link with open water in case hostilities broke out. Four years before the first permanent settler arrived in what is now the City of Vancouver, North Road was already open for traffic, sparse though it may have been.

Traffic is hardly sparse any more, of course, and Korean businesses continue to proliferate on all sides of the North Road/Lougheed Highway intersection. That said, changes currently in the works are likely to result in a transformation every bit as dramatic as the one that began around 1999, let alone 1859.

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In 2016, when the new Evergreen Line opens, Lougheed Station will become the link between the new line to Coquitlam and Port Moody and the existing Skytrain system. “It will definitely be a more important connection,” says City of Burnaby planner Karen Hung. “It will bring significantly more people through.”

With that in mind, some Korea Town property owners have begun the process that will see the area converted from low-density strip malls to a high-density, pedestrian-oriented village, as its zoning allows and transit-hub status favours. It's not yet possible to know precisely what the area will look like, says Hung of a neighbourhood that is shared between

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NORTH ROAD'S EMERGENCE AS A KOREAN DISTRICT IS SCARCELY MORE THAN A DECADE OLD.



THE TRI-CITIES WELCOMING COMMUNITIES PROJECT

In 2011 there were 215,773 people living in the Tri-Cities. Of these 37% were immigrants and 6% were recent immigrants. It's true that immigrants and refugees are already offered an array of settlement and support services. But research shows that basic settlement services alone are not enough to integrate and retain new immigrants. What makes the difference is a community's overall receptivity.

The Tri-Cities Welcoming Communities Project was born out of that recognition. In partnership with 21 government and community stakeholders and WelcomeBC, TCWCP aims to dramatically improve our capacity to be welcoming



communities for newcomers to Canada. Several initiatives are underway.

A Workplace Integration program addresses problematic gaps in understanding between newcomers and potential employers. The goal? To grow the capacity of workplaces to be more welcoming, so that newcomers can settle more quickly and in turn contribute more to the local economy.

Welcoming Spaces follows from research showing that when immigrants develop a sense of belonging they are

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