

Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre Going Concern

As soon as the doors opened at the Saint John City Market Building's newest third floor tenant, the phones haven't stopped ringing at the Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre (SJMNRRC). Whether you have moved to the Saint John area from the other parts of the province, the country or arrived from the other side of the world, it is a welcoming presence and font of useful information and support. It is a non-profit organization that provides an integrated approach to settlement services for newcomers including one-on-one employment related counselling, referral and placement services to immigrants.

Forging partnerships with many community organizations is critical to success. The mandate of the SJMNRRC is to:

- Facilitate the integration of newcomers to Saint John and helping to retain them,
- Create a road map for newcomers;
- Build a centrally coordinated service delivery model that connects the existing service providers, community stakeholders and clients;
- Support the programs offered by existing settlement and multicultural organizations; and
- Serve as an advocate for newcomers and the multicultural community in the Saint John region.

The Centre is overseen by Board of 13 Directors and currently two full-time staff, an MBA co-op student, and a third full time position to be hired shortly. Tim Lui is the board's treasurer who explains theirs is an all-inclusive model based on the premise that the goal is to motivate newcomers to make the Saint John area their permanent home. The Greater Saint John Community Foundation's Saint John's Vital Signs reports are clear that we need to grow our population to prosper. If the numbers of births are declining it is the only other way to grow our community.

Paul-Émile Chiasson heads the Board of Directors with enthusiasm. He is a past member of the former Saint John Immigration Board and has experience on several committees related to immigration. Other board members, appointed by the five Mayors of Greater Saint John, are: Thorbjorn Bordevik, Michel Côté, Linda Estabrooks, Anne Marie Gillis, Carolyn Gupta, Yuki Huang, Vijay Kawatra, Chol Kim, Tim Lui, Juliette Ramzi-Trofimencoff, Janet Thompson-Price and Heather Ann Scott.

Saint John's settlement and multicultural services are unique in the province. Unlike Moncton and Fredericton, that have one central agency, Saint John has several organizations who deliver a variety of services. Funded by the Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour, the City of Saint John, and the Population Growth Secretariat, the SJMNRRC utilizes a de-centralized model based on collaboration and complementary services, to avoid duplication.

Luisa Montoya is the Project Coordinator and is finding there has been a pent-up need which is finally being met by the Centre. She is amazed at the calibre of newcomers' skills and education. "It is incredible" she states, "they are doctors, engineers and have PhDs". Their number one priority is finding work. They also need language training as a rule.

The SJMNRRC provides help and support in finding the right information for families with school-aged children. One of the primary motivating factors in leaving their homeland for Canada is to find a better future for their children.

Xina (NaNa) Wang her mother and father, who have recently moved to Saint John are one of the families who are taking advantage of the SJMNRC to help become accustomed to their new home. They find it a comfortable, friendly atmosphere where counsellors like Mary Stack and the computer access centre can be very useful. Ms. Montoya says that the largest groups come from China, Korea, Iran, and Colombia.

On June 18, 5:45pm, at their office, the first of many public information sessions and workshops will feature lawyers Janet Thompson-Price and John Gillis, the Saint John Police Force and Murielle Prevost of Emergency Preparedness, who will address “Know Your Rights and Responsibilities”. Light refreshments will be served and all are welcome.

The SJMNRC’s long-awaited opening was welcomed by an appreciative, large and supportive community audience only a few weeks ago. It is located on 47 Charlotte Street, 3rd & 4th floors of the City Market Building, in Saint John. The presence of and support of the five surrounding municipalities that day, as well as various private sector and non-profit partners including Enterprise Saint John, PRUDE, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Service Canada bode well for its success.

Info:

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Photo : Janet Thompson-Price, Board Secretary and Tim Lui, Treasurer, standing, join Luisa Montoya, project co-ordinator and Mary Stack, employment counsellor, seated, to welcome UNBSJ student and newcomer from China, Xina (NaNa) Wang, centre, to the recently opened Saint John Multicultural and Newcomers Resource Centre in the City Market Building.