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Magnetic North: Attraction, Retention, and Reconciliation: Priorities for a Prosperous Northern Ontario

Magnetic North 2022 Conference Report

By: Mercedes Labelle

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We recognize and appreciate the historic connection that Indigenous peoples have to these territories. We support their efforts to sustain and grow their nations. We also recognize the contributions that they have made in shaping and strengthening local communities, the province, and Canada.

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The annual Magnetic North Conference is part of a broader three year initiative supported by organizations across Northern Ontario.

About the Author

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Executive Summary

After hosting two Come North conferences, both in February 2020, it became clear that an abundance of work is being done to further reconciliation, welcome newcomers, and combat racism across Northern Ontario. However, connection, coordination, and communication between organizational and individual efforts are needed to maximize the impacts of these efforts.

Approximately 200 people representing more than 90 organizations gathered virtually or in person in Sault Ste. Marie in June 2022 to continue this work. Over two days, participants laid out a plan for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, attraction, and retention efforts in Ontario's Northern Regions.

Unlike previous years' reports, which focused on introducing new initiatives for the upcoming year, this document focuses on themes that have been mentioned continuously throughout the initiative and provides concrete steps to move these items toward completion.

In summary, the themes and actions that should be present in population growth efforts, both on an ongoing and future basis, can be summarized in these key points:

1. The Welcoming Portals have the potential to greatly help those looking to move to or are already residing in Ontario's Northern regions. They require dedicated resources to update and maintain;
2. Small communities are ready and willing to accept an influx of migrants. Still, local services must be in place to ensure successful attraction and retention;
3. Many population growth initiatives are ongoing in Northern Ontario communities. Yet, collaboration and communication within and amongst organizations throughout Ontario's Northern Regions must be prioritized, and
4. Reconciliation is a fundamental pillar underpinning population growth and prosperity in Northern Ontario. Therefore, any initiative and project affecting Indigenous peoples must involve their voice at the onset.

The actions above are meant to guide organizations looking to work collectively to create and maintain welcoming communities in Northern Ontario and are part of the four key themes that have defined the essence of the Magnetic North initiative since its beginning.



Introduction

In June 2022, approximately 200 individuals representing over 90 organizations attended the Magnetic North 2022 Conference, either in person in Sault Ste. Marie or virtually from across the regions of Northern Ontario. There was representation from municipal, provincial, and federal governments, as well as economic development corporations, Community Futures, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), settlement service providers, post-secondary institutions, Indigenous organizations and First Nations, public and private school boards, employment services, Francophone and multicultural organizations, and more.

About Magnetic North

The purpose of the annual Magnetic North Conference is to reset priorities, measure progress, and collaboratively set priorities for the year to come. Although this report focuses on the 2022 Conference and subsequent findings, it is important to note that the event is part of the larger Magnetic North initiative.

The purpose of this initiative is to support community coordination in population growth and welcoming community efforts, including attraction, retention, and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. The initiative, via the Magnetic North Program Officer, will work with individuals and organizations throughout Northern Ontario to implement the action plan produced through the Magnetic North and Come North Conferences.¹

A vital part of this initiative is assessing progress and resetting priorities, which will occur annually at the Magnetic North Conference. Since the initial Come North Conferences in February 2020, it has become clear that an abundance of work is being done to combat racism, further reconciliation, and welcome newcomers across Northern Ontario. Connection, coordination, and communication between these efforts is necessary to maximize their impact.

Adequate resources must be dedicated to carrying out the collective priorities established at the Come North and Magnetic North Conferences. Progress reports and other research will be produced throughout the year focusing on impact and achievements related to retention, reconciliation, attraction, and welcoming efforts in all Northern Ontario communities.

The Magnetic North initiative is not intended to replace existing or future local initiatives. Instead, the intent is to support local initiatives by helping them connect with, learn from, and work alongside one another in seeking common ends. Eliminating duplication, leveraging scarce resources, and avoiding conflicting messages will help every region of Northern Ontario grow and prosper.

It should also be noted that references to communities in Northern Ontario in this report go beyond municipalities unless otherwise specified. This includes unincorporated areas, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, among others.

¹ The first two conferences under this initiative were termed "Come North" and were held in February 2020, one in Temiskaming Shores and one in Thunder Bay. The following year, the name of the initiative formally became "Magnetic North" to represent the need to not only attract people to Northern Ontario's regions, but also retain them.



Priorities Coming out of Magnetic North 2022

The Magnetic North Conference is an annual opportunity to reset priorities for the population growth sector in the year to come. An update on progress from items identified at previous Conferences is available in the appendices; a stand-alone document listing past action items is also available.² Instead of introducing new initiatives for the upcoming year, this Magnetic North 2022 report focuses on themes that have been mentioned continuously throughout the initiative and provides concrete steps to move these items toward completion. At the same time, progress continues on action items from 2020 and 2021, largely covered in the priorities below, and organizations are encouraged to further their current work on these items.

1. Having an online resource to attract, welcome, and retain people to/in our regions has been a consistent theme throughout the Magnetic North initiative — specifically, **updating and maintaining the Northeast and Northwest Immigration Portals** (now termed “Welcoming Portals”). The portals, initially created with funding from FedNor, have not been updated in recent years. As such, dedicated resources about Northern Ontario are lacking for those wishing to learn more about our communities and what services are offered.

a. Northern Policy Institute has entered into an agreement with the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre and the City of Thunder Bay (owners of the Northeast and Northwest portals, respectively) to **rebrand the portals to extend beyond attraction to include retention**, as well as **update the assets** listed on the portals. Services listed on the portal will include, among others, those available for **Francophones and Indigenous peoples**;

b. Northern Policy Institute is exploring a **data-sharing agreement** with **211 North** to systemically collect and display up-to-date information on service offerings in Northern Ontario communities;

c. Northern Policy Institute has committed to employing a four-month **summer intern** for the next **three years**, dedicated specifically to updating and maintaining the portals;

d. Finally, Northern Ontario LIPs and Réseau du Nord are distributing an **Asset Mapping survey** to collect primary data on-the-ground related to the capacity of service providers, services offered, eligibility, and more. This information will be incorporated into the portals to help inform

decision-making and will supplement what is provided by 211 North;

e. **Organizations are encouraged to provide information** about their operations, capacity, and mandate for use when updating and maintaining the portals. Also, additional contributions are always welcome, whether that be human resources, funding for the initiative, or helping to spread knowledge of the portals in networks;

f. In terms of the **continuity** of the portals, Northern Policy Institute is working to ensure the longevity of the tools after the funding agreement concludes. For example, using municipal funding, annual internship asks, or even piloting sponsors and advertisers on the platforms;

2. The expansion of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) to include more small and rural communities is a large step in the right direction. **More work remains, however, to ensure small communities have the capacity and services to welcome and retain newcomers** and the **existing population** adequately.

a. **Services in these communities should be identified**, and gaps in service offerings and capacity assessed. Through the revitalization of the Northwest and Northeast portals, more up-to-date information about capacity, service provision, and groups served should be available. This information is vital to planning the next steps and making concrete progress toward fostering welcoming communities;

b. Communities and/or organizations with limited capacity to do work related to attraction, retention, welcoming, and reconciliation are encouraged to reach out to magneticnorth@northernpolicy.ca regarding the program **Guide by Your Side — Helping to Increase Rural and Remote Capacity**. The Program Officer has the mandate to act as an advisory resource for communities without local dedicated capacity to plan and deliver efforts relating to population growth. In addition, where possible and necessary, the Program Officer can assist in resolving challenges or removing barriers to the introduction, expansion, and delivery of programs promoting welcoming, reconciliation, population growth, and/or retention

² Appendices B and C highlight examples of initiatives in Northern Ontario's regions that align with previously identified action items.

in rural and remote areas. **Magnetic North can help** any community that lacks these dedicated resources or is having difficulty identifying them.

3. Perhaps most important, **collaboration and communication** among organizations throughout Northern Ontario should be prioritized. This will help **mitigate issues with capacity, highlight efficiencies, and create a better continuum of settlement and retention.**

The benefits of collaboration and communication will extend to all organizations and initiatives in Northern Ontario.

a. Organizations should **communicate regularly** with those doing similar or adjacent work within their regions and share what projects they are working on, the research they are conducting, the services they are providing, and other relevant information. The knowledge gained through this process could help highlight best practices, share crucial information, and simplify the referral process for those looking to access services;

b. Regarding **data-sharing** and **data-collection initiatives**, collaboration on initiatives such as Measurement Month will help ensure comparable and consistent data is available year-over-year for trend tracking and analysis. In addition, reducing the number of similar surveys being conducted and targeted at the same audience could help mitigate survey fatigue, increase response rates, and produce higher-quality data for analysis. Promoting and partnering on survey design, distribution, and analysis could help maximize synergies and capacity.

4. **Reconciliation** is a fundamental pillar of **population growth** and **prosperity** in Northern Ontario. On average, the Indigenous population is growing at a faster rate than the non-Indigenous population. Still, it faces worse economic outcomes than the non-Indigenous population, such as lower employment and participation rates, as well as income.

a. Indigenous organizations and individuals should be **involved, from the outset, in any initiative or project that affects them.** This includes research, policymaking, service provision, infrastructure projects, and planning.

b. Immigration agencies should **support and assist those working directly to facilitate reconciliation,**

and reconciliation efforts should actively include newcomers. Other organizations should work to promote and amplify Indigenous voices within their programs and structures;

c. A piece of advice mentioned at Magnetic North 2022 was to “**make a friend before you need a friend.**” Relationships with Indigenous peoples and organizations must be genuine, meaningful, and mutually beneficial;

d. In terms of labour force participation, **education and up-skilling programs should be available** that either build on services already in place or are provided in areas where they do not currently exist. These programs should be delivered in ways that are mindful of potential barriers such as connectivity and location. Additionally, welcoming employers should play a large role in this process;

e. Finally, reconciliation is a **lifelong process** that requires dedication, a willingness to learn, and an ongoing commitment.

These four key themes have been a part of the Magnetic North initiative since the beginning. Although meant to cover a wide range of concerns and priorities, the actions outlined above in these themes likely are not comprehensive and might need to be adapted to fit various organizations' mandates or priorities. The actions are meant as a guide for organizations looking to work collectively to create and maintain welcoming communities in Northern Ontario.

The breakout session summaries below detail the conversations at the Conference about the key themes and priorities outlined above.

Breakout Sessions

A main component of the Magnetic North Conference is the breakout session discussions among participants, who represent a wide range of organizations and regions in Northern Ontario.

Breakout sessions were offered each day and included English and French options. Similar to previous years, the sessions were intended to further knowledge, increase capacity, share resources, and identify priority themes to carry forward in each discussion area for the year ahead. The priority set for each session was to enhance local capacity, mutual support, and leveraging.

Breakout session themes³ this year were based on previously identified priority areas from the 2020 and 2021 Conferences, as well as conversations with the Magnetic North Advisory Committee. The selected topics were:

1. Reasons to Stay: Retaining International Students
2. Migration Outside of the Big 5: Rural Population Growth

3. Everyday Reconciliation Practices for Your Organization
4. Effectively Marketing Ontario's Northern Regions
5. Knowing and Measuring Our Regions
6. Housing Resources to Help with Welcoming and Accessibility

Breakout sessions were available in person or online, using a hybrid format where possible. Participants were asked to answer three key questions:

1. Establish a baseline: **What do we currently have?**
2. Identify challenges: **Are there gaps?**
3. Priorities/next steps: **What needs to be done?**



³ For additional information about the six breakout sessions, see Appendix E.

Targeted Advice

1. Effectively Marketing Ontario's Northern Regions

Key Assets

- Benefits to living in Northern Ontario (compared to large cities elsewhere) include shorter commutes, so more time to spend with family and friends; more affordable housing (although prices are increasing); job opportunities; and being in close proximity to many outdoor activities.
- Another benefit is Northern Ontario's rich Francophone cultural communities; immigrants from French-speaking countries should be aware that these exist outside Quebec.

Gaps

- Transportation: many find it difficult to get around solely relying on public transportation.
- Many newcomers do not have credit to buy a car to get around.
- Newcomers might think that cultural communities in Northern Ontario are limited compared to those in large cities. A sense of isolation can also arise if distant from hospitals, settlement services, and other amenities.
- The availability of certain cultural amenities, products, and services (such as grocery items and hair services) is limited.
- Housing is a big issue when trying to attract and retain newcomers. Having the collaboration of real estate investors is extremely helpful, but developing those rewarding relationships takes time and commitment.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Marketing efforts should highlight the fact that money can go further in Northern Ontario — for example, in starting a business, buying a house, and through a generally lower cost of living in many communities.
- Work needs to continue to promote available jobs in Northern Ontario outside the region and to connect employers with immigrants who are seeking employment.

- Marketing should be focused not just outward (on attracting people) but also inward (to those already in the community) to highlight the benefits of living in their community, persuading them to stay, and increasing their knowledge about the benefits of in-migration.
- In marketing Northern Ontario to prospective newcomers, there should be transparency about some of the challenges they might encounter. This will allow newcomers to make informed decisions about where to settle and prepare them for life in a northern community. This should help them to feel satisfied with their situation after arrival and thus aid in retention.

2. Knowing and Measuring Our Regions

Key Assets

- Over the course of 2022, Statistics Canada released 2021 census data. The agency also offers socio-economic data for specific population groups, census profiles, data tables, data visualization, highlight tables, reference maps, and a dictionary of terms.
- Other resources include the Rural Canada Statistics Portal, Ontario Open Data, the Proximity Measures Database, the Canadian Housing Statistics Program, the Business Register, and the Longitudinal Immigration Database.
- Primary data collection is also conducted by organizations and municipalities. For example, the City of Thunder Bay uses "Get Involved Thunder Bay" to gather residents' opinions on projects, gaps, and needs. Community knowledge in Indigenous communities is also a vital resource.

Gaps

- There are discrepancies between First Nations population counts done by Statistics Canada and other government data sources (such as Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada), which makes it difficult to count the number of First Nations individuals correctly.

- There are fewer datasets available for smaller geographic areas (for example, surveys at the municipal level).

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Municipalities and organizations will use whatever data they can find, but they need to know what is available, how to access it, and have the capacity to do so.
- Organizations can highlight efficiencies by sharing the data they collect internationally and externally while maintaining privacy protections.
- Value also needs to be placed on data and knowledge shared through traditional means such as Indigenous Knowledge- and Language-Keepers.

3. Reasons to Stay: Retaining International Students

Key Assets

- Northern Ontario businesses have access to year-long internship programs, such as those offered by the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation and FedNor. Having these internships available to international students could entice them to stay by offering them work experience in their field of study.
- Communities that do best to retain international students through the RNIP are those that spend time and effort educating their community and employers.

Gaps

- Housing affordability and availability pose a challenge to retention.
- There is a gap between the immigration process and post-secondary education, often in the form of the failure of required permits to line up with the post-secondary schedule. This gap continues after graduation, with work permits not aligning with the hiring season or international students not being eligible for certain internships.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- There must be alignment between programs offered at Northern Ontario post-secondary institutions and current and projected labour demand.
- Post-secondary institutions should continue to build relationships with employers to help further with the transition out of education and into the labour force.

4. Migration Outside the Big 5: Rural Population Growth

Key Assets

- A major asset in small communities are the local service-providing organizations, even those not directly related to immigration. Community organizations tend to be very active and knowledgeable about community realities.

Gaps

- Immigration-related organizations in small rural communities often lack sufficient staff and resources to serve their large catchment areas properly.
- Promotion of smaller communities and existing services are insufficient or unsuccessful.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Local organizations need more funding, staff, and training, and immigration services broadly should be more responsive to the actual needs and wants of newcomers (who will be concerned not just with employment).
- In communities where services are limited, employers could take an active role in welcoming newcomers and providing initial help, such as finding and securing housing.

5. Everyday Reconciliation Practices for Your Organization

Key Assets

- Some organizations have departments assigned to work on initiatives related to learning about Indigenous cultures and peoples, such as Makwa Waakaa'igan at Algoma University or the Local Employment Planning Council's Guide to Developing Indigenous Inclusion Policies.
- Organizations are increasingly working toward having Indigenous representation and participation on boards and committees.

Gaps

- There are no well-established practices for connecting newcomers and Indigenous peoples so they can learn from and about each other.
- More forums are needed to encourage relationship-building between community and business leaders within both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- There is often a lack of recognition of traditional ways of sharing knowledge and education. This can include not adequately recognizing life experiences in lieu of some educational or work experience requirements.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Relationship building needs to happen before there is a need on either side, and truth must be shared to begin reconciling.
- Many organizations are creating resources and working toward reconciliation, but better coordination is needed. A database could be established to create a central location for organizations looking to engage in meaningful efforts at reconciliation.

6. Housing Resources to Help with Welcoming and Accessibility

Key Assets

- Larger communities in Northern Ontario have settlement service providers or LIPs funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) that provide a first point of contact for new immigrants trying to find housing. Some post-secondary institutions have housing resource pages as well.
- A practice that has worked in some communities is for employers to buy houses and rent them out to their newcomer employees, or at the least to assist new employees in the housing search.

Gaps

- It is difficult to find, identify, and refer people to reliable, up-to-date information to help them find housing and know their rights.
- Housing availability and affordability are hindering attraction, retention, and welcoming.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- More housing development and construction are needed, but research needs to be done on what types of housing are needed for each community.
- Update webpages and resources regularly, with links to reliable webpages and/or rental agencies.



Panel Discussions

In addition to the breakout sessions, three panel discussions were held each day to facilitate knowledge and information exchange between panelists. Each panel had a set of predetermined questions, followed by a live, audience-driven question-and-answer session.⁴

Day 1, Panel 1: Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Learning Resources

The panel to start the Conference consisted of three panelists: Jane Omollo (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Manager, Algoma University), Audrey Gilbeau (Executive Director, Nookiwin Tribal Council), and Gajith Jinadasa (Economic Development Officer, Town of Rainy River). The purpose was to provide a cross-cultural learning opportunity by asking panelists to share experiences with and perspectives on cultural diversity in the regions of Northern Ontario.

Key Themes

- Cultural competency is a process, not an end point. It involves lifelong learning, it needs to be intentional, and it is reciprocal.
- Diversity and inclusion should be embedded in our leadership and be equally as important as respect.
- Relationships need to be established and maintained throughout this ongoing process.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- There is more room for school boards and educational groups to incorporate cultural awareness so future generations can be understanding and aware of other cultures.
- Structures and systems also need to change. Policies that are not working or are exclusionary need to be identified and adjusted.

Day 1, Panel 2: Case Studies in Indigenous-Driven Innovation

The second panel of the Conference consisted of Kevin Eshkawkogan (President and CEO, Indigenous Tourism Ontario) and Dwayne Nashkawa (Strategic Advisor, Nipissing First Nation) and was moderated by Dr. Sean Meades (Director of Research, NORDIK). Panelists were asked to consider how historical projects and lessons learned have contributed to innovation that is evolving practices of consultation and collaboration.

Key Themes

- The consultation process has become a checkbox exercise with predetermined plans and objectives.
- Relationships need to be established well before either party “needs something.” This involves getting to know each other, working collectively, and providing ongoing support. Relationships should always be mutually beneficial.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Planning should always include Indigenous peoples from the outset.
- Meaningful conversations should continue.
- An example of a successful practice was the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) bridge connecting Nipissing First Nation and the City of North Bay. Nipissing First Nation formed a limited partnership with the MTO to build the bridge itself and share in profits and long-term benefits.

⁴ The questions asked of each panel are available in Appendix F. Individuals and organizations are encouraged to view the questions and, if desired, use the questions for their own initiatives.

Day 1, Panel 3: Supporting Culturally Diverse Group Involvement in Decision-Making

The last panel of the day consisted of Adolphine Mukamanzi (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario), Mariette Sutherland (strategist, advisor, planner, evaluator, engagement specialist), and Ali Juma (CEO, Algoma Family Services). Lisa Demmer (Chair, Greater Sudbury Development Corporation Board of Directors) was the moderator. Given the importance of representation, our panelists were invited to share with attendees their experiences in getting to the table and how communities and organizations can better support culturally diverse involvement in decision-making.

Key Themes

- Systemic discrimination and lack of awareness are the biggest barriers for people from diverse backgrounds to participate in decision-making.
- Representation matters. It is important for diverse groups to see themselves represented at the highest levels of an organization, government, etc.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Education, awareness raising around biases, and dismantling systemic barriers are critical to representation and building safe spaces.
- Organization-wide awareness-raising will equip employees with the tools and skills they need to support culturally diverse groups; it will also remove the burden currently placed on visible minorities and marginalized groups.

Day 2, Panel 1: Building Welcoming Communities – A Research Perspective

Kicking off the second day of the Conference were panelists Dr. Victoria Esses (Professor and Co-Chair, University of Western Ontario and Pathways to Prosperity), Dr. Natalya Brown (Associate Professor, Nipissing University), and Karly Mabee (Policy Analyst, Northern Policy Institute), who discussed welcoming communities research. Dr. Nusrate Aziz, Associate Professor at Algoma University, moderated the discussion. The panelists discussed the foundational understanding of what defines a welcoming community.

Key Themes

- A welcoming community is one where people's freedoms and rights are lived out (e.g., living free of fear, fear of discrimination, etc.), and their needs are met.
- Communities have agency and should engage in activities that create a place where individuals feel welcomed and valued. This means creating positive outcomes, structures, and processes.
- People's perceptions of their communities (economic, social aspects, etc.) have both direct and indirect effects on population attraction and retention.
- Many promising practices exist, and we should learn from one another.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Transportation should be improved across the North. There are multiple challenges with public transportation in terms of time, infrastructure, accessibility, and more. These contribute to dissatisfaction and feelings of loneliness when there are transportation barriers to participating in employment, community events, and other social opportunities.
- Employers should continue to take on a larger role (beyond employment) in assisting newcomers to settle, such as help finding housing and guidance in obtaining necessary documents.
- Housing affordability and availability is a multifaceted issue that can contribute to lower satisfaction and out-migration from the community. Resources and education for landlords could help mitigate issues related to discrimination in the housing search, but housing supply, in general, should also be addressed.
- In the context of evidence-based management, outcomes measurement is increasingly important. Re-evaluation needs to take place on an ongoing basis, along with monitoring the community's status and following through with concrete action plans.

Day 2, Panel 2: Building Welcoming Communities – An Applied Perspective

Complementing the research perspective, welcoming community practitioners Stacey Parks (former coordinator, Northwest LIP), Anna McPherson (Director, Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group), and Moïse Zahoui (Immigration Services Coordinator, Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury) were invited to discuss actionable takeaways to improve welcoming in Northern Ontario communities. Jennifer Johnson, CEO of interCultural Avec Immigration Inc., moderated the discussion.

Key Themes

- Welcoming communities need to be fostered at the local level, not only through institutions and systems but also through welcoming actions carried out by people living within them.
- Immigration is vital to economic development in Northern Ontario communities. Economic development organizations have a role to play in the welcoming process, such as connecting with employers, post-secondary institutions, and newcomers themselves to ensure meaningful employment opportunities and welcoming workplaces.
- Identify and check in with key community touchpoints. These are the connectors that can help disseminate information.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- An IRCC office in Northern Ontario could help increase welcoming and knowledge of the region, as well as promote accessibility to immigration information in both official languages.
- A wider array of immigration and settlement services is needed in small and rural communities, as they cannot rely solely on larger urban centres to provide these services.

Day 2, Panel 3: Magnetic North Progress Updates

The final panel of the Conference asked Thomas Mercier (Project Coordinator, Réseau de Nord), Holly Parsons (former Magnetic North Program Officer), and Shannon Costigan (Program Coordinator, North Superior Workforce Planning) to review the strides that have been made toward meeting the priority goals established at the previous population growth conferences. Sean Halliday (Cultural Complexity Trainer and Management Consultant) moderated the session.

Key Themes

- Organizations and individuals have limited resources that should be leveraged through collaboration and communication.
- Work has been undertaken to further the priority actions established in previous Come North and Magnetic North Conferences, including the Measurement Month initiative, the rebranding and revitalization of the Move to NW Ontario website at <https://www.move-tonwontario.ca/>, the creation of promotional videos for certain communities, and the Réseau du Nord Community Coordination in Northern Ontario project, but further progress is required. Specifically, collaboration and communication among organizations in the population growth sector should be prioritized to highlight efficiencies and maximize capacity.

Efficiencies to Pursue

- Organizations' travel budgets can often be a barrier to participation at in-person events, meetings, and forums, especially considering Northern Ontario's 800,000 square kilometres area.
- Organizations feel they cannot keep up with demands; they and individuals have limited resources that must be leveraged through collaboration and communication.
- Duplication of efforts occurs in the absence of a collaborative set of priorities. This can limit the capacity of organizations.

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Conclusion

Conference attendees, who represent actors across sectors throughout Northern Ontario, once again contributed to the discussion and made their needs heard. What resulted was a re-focus on past goals with concrete, actionable steps to move them towards completion. Specifically, participants identified is the need for an online tool or resource that is up-to-date and can act as a resource in Northern Ontario's attraction, retention, and welcoming toolkit. In addition, expanding outwards from larger northern communities to ensure smaller communities have the capacity and services to welcome and retain newcomers, as well as their existing populations, was recommended. Another key priority included a focus on collaboration and communication to highlight efficiencies and reduce duplication of efforts. Lastly, underpinning all population growth efforts should be the theme of reconciliation and the involvement of Indigenous peoples at the onset of this work.

Most importantly, creating and maintaining welcoming communities in Northern Ontario is an ongoing process with no set endpoint. As such, actors working in this sector should continue to meet annually to provide updates on progress toward previous priorities and identify actionable priorities and steps to move our communities forward. Despite notable efforts to improve attraction, retention, welcoming, reconciliation, and anti-racism, this is just the beginning of what Northern Ontario communities, organizations, and individuals could achieve through collaboration, communication, and coordination.



Appendix A: Organizations at the Conference

Attending the Magnetic North 2022 Conference, either in person in Sault Ste. Marie, or virtually from across Northern Ontario, were 183 individuals representing the more than 90 unique organizations listed below.

- 101 Experiences
- Actions interculturelles
- Algoma Family Services
- Algoma University
- Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC)
- Anishinabek Employment and Training Services
- Anishinabek Nation, Union of Ontario Indians
- Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario (AFNOO)
- Brock University
- Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation
- Canadian Mental Health Association, North Bay and District
- Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury
- City of Greater Sudbury
- City of North Bay Economic Development
- City of Sault Ste. Marie
- City of Thunder Bay
- Collège Boréal
- Community Living Fort Frances and District
- Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario
- Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord
- Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario
- Discover Your North
- District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services
- FedNor
- Garden River 14 First Nation
- Geraldton District Hospital
- Gillies Township
- Grand Council Treaty #3
- Greater Sudbury Economic Development Corporation
- Greenstone Economic Development Corporation
- Huron North Community Economic Alliance
- Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada
- Indigenous Tourism Ontario
- Intelcia
- interCultural Avec Immigration Inc.
- Keepers of the Circle
- Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group
- Lakehead University
- Laurentian University
- Mid North Network
- Municipality of Neebing
- Municipality of West Nipissing
- Newcomer Legal Clinic
- Nezaadiikaang (Place of the Poplars) Lac de Mille Lacs First Nation
- Nipissing First Nation
- Nipissing University
- Nokiwin Tribal Council
- NORDIK Institute
- North Bay & District Multicultural Centre

- North Superior Workforce Planning Board
- Northern College
- Northern Policy Institute
- Northland Adult Learning Centre (Algoma District School Board)
- Northwestern Ontario Local Immigration Partnership
- Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Affairs
- Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Pathways to Prosperity
- Réseau du Nord
- Rural Ontario Institute
- Sault College
- Sault Community Career Centre
- Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre - Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN)
- Sault Ste. Marie Local Immigration Partnership
- Sean Halliday Consulting
- Service Canada
- Services d'établissement du nord-est de l'Ontario
- Société Économique de l'Ontario (SÉO)
- Statistics Canada
- Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership
- Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre
- Superior East Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)
- Talent Beyond Boundaries
- Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
- Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC)
- Thunder Bay Multicultural Association
- Timmins & District Multicultural Centre
- Timmins Economic Development Corporation
- Tonnerre Translation and Writing Services
- Town of Fort Frances
- Town of Rainy River
- Town or Smooth Rock Falls
- Township of Manitouwadge
- Township of Terrace Bay
- ULU (Uluntu Lungisa Usawa)
- Université de Hearst
- University of Guelph
- University of Waterloo
- University of Western Ontario
- Weeneebayko Area Health Authority
- Weenusk First Nation
- YES Employment Services (Nipissing)

Appendix B: Priorities Identified at the Magnetic North 2021 Conference — Short-Term Actions (Update)

This section of recommendations is based on ideas expressed in the breakout sessions and the panels during the 2021 Conference. The purpose of the recommended actions and projects is to build on those ideas and establish steps to achieve efficiencies. Both short-term and medium-to-long-term action items have been proposed to achieve this goal. Progress on the short-term items could begin immediately. The medium-to-long-term projects will involve additional funding; progress on those items should be targeted over the next 12 to 18 months and should be led by the agency or agencies prepared to make the resources available to fund the change.

The information provided below is intended to highlight initiatives throughout Northern Ontario that align with previously identified short-term action items. The examples given below are by no means comprehensive; if you or your organization is working toward any of the actions below, please reach out to magneticnorth@northernpolicy.ca to have your initiative accounted for in upcoming work. The action items resulting from the 2021 Conference are listed below, with the progress made on each item over the past year in blue type.

Short-Term Actions

1. Capacity continues to be an issue for organizations throughout Northern Ontario. Thus, there needs to be a focus on building collaboration and communication so that efficiencies are highlighted, resources are shared, and duplication of effort is reduced. The Magnetic North Program Officer will help start this effort, but community-level organizations should play an equal role in identifying and maintaining these relationships. Specifically, taking on this initiative will be organizations that already act as regional connectors, such as Local Immigration Partnerships/Réseau en immigration francophone (LIPs/RIFs), system service manager(s) when applicable, tribal councils, planning boards, and provincial territorial organizations.

a. Réseau du Nord launched the Community Coordination in Northern Ontario program to create a baseline assessment of Francophone immigration supports in Northern Ontario communities, with the help of the five LIPs in Northern Ontario (North Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, and Sudbury). b. In addition, funding has become available through IRCC and Réseau du Nord for three small communities to increase Francophone immigration capacity in their communities. A call for proposals was sent out, and the three communities/regions selected to participate in this initiative were:

- Temiskaming Shores/Kirkland Lake
- Dubreuilville/White River/Wawa
- Kenora

c. Also, the Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre (SWEAC) hosts regular meetings for the Northeastern Ontario Non-Profit Network, where representatives from multiple non-profits meet to provide updates on projects and initiatives, discuss concerns, and exchange knowledge of the sector.

2. Identifying services available to potential migrants and those already in the community could help reduce duplication of effort and identify gaps that need to be filled. Instead of spreading ourselves too thin with multiple platforms that continuously need to be updated, we should pursue a collaborative resource that can be maintained and updated through the cooperation of organizations and municipalities. Northern Policy Institute, in collaboration with one organization in the Northwest and one in the Northeast, should work to coordinate, update, and maintain these tools. Again, the two partners participating in this initiative ideally would be regional connectors that already communicate and collaborate with local organizations.

a. Northern Policy Institute (NPI) has received funding from FedNor to update and maintain the Northeast and Northwest immigration portals, now rebranded as “welcoming” portals. NPI has committed one summer intern over three years to bring the portals up to date and maintain the assets afterwards. The goal of this work is to create a business case for the portals, so they can become self-sustaining after the funding expires and for another organization to continue this work.

b. NPI has reached out to form a data-sharing partnership with 211 North to collect and update data consistently while continuing to supplement 211 North's data with data collected via other primary data collection efforts (for example, LIP asset mapping, Measurement Month service provider capacity survey, etc.). In addition, LIPs in Northern Ontario are distributing an asset mapping survey on an ongoing basis, whose data will be used to keep information on the portals up to date. c. Réseau du Nord and Northern Ontario LIPs are working on updating the mapping of Francophone services in Northern Ontario communities.

3. The messaging for current marketing and attraction efforts needs to extend beyond “the great outdoors.” Northern Ontario communities have many promising features, such as post-secondary institutes, affordable housing, restaurants, and cultural activities and events. Tourism operators, municipalities, economic development organizations, post-secondary institutions, immigration agencies and so on could expand their current messaging to encompass all that Ontario’s northern regions have to offer.
 - a. Alberta recently launched a campaign⁵ called “Alberta is Calling,” which boasts of the province’s low taxes and cost of living, coupled with high wages and opportunities. Communities in Northern Ontario could benefit from also appealing to residents in larger, more expensive urban areas by promoting lower living costs, less crime, and better access to programs.
 - b. In 2021, the City of Greater Sudbury launched “Hit Refresh,”⁶ targeted at Southern Ontario residents to inform them about the benefits of living in the North, and specifically aimed at those looking for a fresh start in a city with a slower pace, good job opportunities, and affordable housing. Another campaign by the City targeted at Southern Ontario and potential international students is currently underway to highlight the benefits of studying and working in skilled trades in Greater Sudbury.
 - c. Increasingly, information about available jobs, a lower cost of living, short commute times, and post-secondary institution programs is being promoted, both domestically and abroad.
4. The ongoing success of welcoming efforts requires support at the individual, organizational, community, municipal, provincial, and federal levels. Everyone has a role to play in promoting and fostering welcoming communities. Crucial in achieving this goal are local chambers of commerce, educational institutes (K-12 and post-secondary), media, police, and municipal services.
 - a. Community partners in Timmins, including the Timmins Economic Development Corporation, hosted a local version of “Welcome Week” to recognize and celebrate the people, places, and values that help everyone feel welcome and that they belong in their local community, no matter what their origin. Many events were held by organizations such as Employment Options Emploi, Timmins Public Library, the Business Enterprise Centre, the Timmins-Temiskaming Community Legal Clinic, Collège Boréal, and the Timmins and District Multicultural Centre.⁷
 - b. Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) communities continue to host workshops and information sessions for employers to educate them on the value immigrants bring to their workplaces and communities.
 - c. The Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group hosts conversations with employers about what needs to be done to attract and retain newcomer employees, the role of employers, and the benefits of immigration.
5. Inclusive education (detailing the history of different groups and how they contribute economically, socially, and culturally to our communities) would be valuable for everyone. Organizations that could coordinate this initiative include educational institutes (K-12 and post-secondary), local museums and heritage centres, groups dedicated to anti-racism and anti-discrimination (e.g., Equity Inclusion North Bay, Thunder Bay’s Anti-Racism and Respect Advisory Committee), provincial and federal park offices, and student groups.
 - a. Indigenous Tourism Ontario and Science North have partnered to host a travelling exhibition titled “Indigenous Ingenuity: Timeliness Inventions – Northern Tour.” This exhibition presents a mix of science and culture intended to stir a sense of pride among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and celebrate the diversity, interconnectedness, and resourceful ways of knowing and being that Indigenous knowledge and innovations provide in the global community.
 - b. Northern Policy Institute, in partnership with Réseau du Nord, has published a report detailing the economic impact of temporary residents (work permit and study permit holders) on Northern Ontario communities.⁸ It is calculated that temporary residents earn at least \$279 million annually, much of which is reinvested in Northern Ontario by buying groceries, paying rent, and supporting other local businesses. Adding tuition paid to Northern Ontario post-secondary institutions to the income of temporary residents (because they spend their income in our communities) totals \$455 million worth of income spent in Northern Ontario.

⁵ See Julia Knope, “Priced out of Toronto’s housing market? Alberta wants you to turn your eyes west,” CBC News, September 26, 2022; online at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/priced-out-of-toronto-s-housing-market-alberta-wants-you-to-turn-your-eyes-west-1.6595228>

⁶ “Hit Refresh in Greater Sudbury,” online at <https://hitrefreshudbury.ca/>

⁷ For more information about Timmins’s Welcome Week, see <https://timminsedc.com/septembers-welcome-week-promotes-message-of-inclusion/>

6. Space needs to be set aside for immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and groups that identify as marginalized to sit on municipal and organizational committees and boards. Seeing yourself represented in positions of power, policy, and influence contributes to a feeling of welcoming and belonging in a community. If your organization has a board or committee, review the bylaws that govern it and ask yourself if the membership is representative of Northern Ontario's communities.
 - a. The federal government, Canadian businesses, and diversity organizations have created an initiative termed the "50–30 Challenge," whereby Canadian organizations are challenged to increase the representation and inclusion of diverse groups in their workplaces while highlighting the benefits of giving all Canadians a seat at the table.⁹
 - b. Northern Policy Institute's Board of Directors has informally followed the 50–30 rule for several years, and the Board recently agreed officially to pursue the initiative. This includes gender parity (50 per cent of women and/or non-binary people) and significant representation (30 per cent) of members of other equity-deserving groups.¹⁰
 - c. In the 2022 municipal election, women were elected to a number of key positions throughout Northern Ontario, including the position of Mayor in Timmins, West Nipissing, Nipigon, Rainy River, Oliver Paipoonge, Shuniah, and Red Rock.¹¹
7. Population growth needs to be discussed in terms not only of attraction and settlement of international migrants, but also of reconciliation with Indigenous people in Northern Ontario so that they feel welcome and want to stay. These conversations, and subsequent actions, could be continued by economic development organizations at the local and regional levels, along with tribal councils, post-secondary institutions, local immigration partnerships, and others.
 - a. The Northern Directions Conference in November 2022 brought participants on a "field trip" to Nipissing First Nation to learn about innovative projects and economic opportunities for the First Nation community. In addition, a session was dedicated each day of the Conference to reconciliation education and discussions, and there was also a panel on Reconciliation in Rural and Northern Regions. Community leaders, policymakers, private sector representatives, academics, and others took part in the sessions.
 - b. The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation has an Indigenous Workforce Development Stream that offers internships to Indigenous persons with the goal of strengthening and developing Northern Ontario's Indigenous workforce through business partnerships. Building capacity and strengthening labour market integration among the Indigenous population is reconciliation in action.¹²

⁸ See Samrul Aahad, "Temporary Residents, Permanent Benefits: How Temporary Residents Fill Vacancies, Pay Taxes, and Keep the Local Economy Rolling," Commentary. Thunder Bay: Northern Policy Institute, August 2022; online at <https://www.northernpolicy.ca/economic-impact-tr>

⁹ To learn more about the 50-30 challenge, visit <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/50-30-challenge-your-diversity-advantage>.

¹⁰ Included are those who identify as Racialized, Black, and/or People of Colour ("Visible Minorities"), people with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), 2SLGBTQ+ and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals, and Aboriginal and/or Indigenous peoples. The program and participants recognize Indigenous peoples, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, as founding peoples of Canada and underrepresented in positions of economic influence and leadership.

¹¹ See Alex Brockman, "Women made gains in northern Ontario's municipal elections. Now the work begins," CBC News, October 26, 2022; online at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/municipal-election-northwestern-ontario-gender-diversity-1.6630443>

¹² For more information, see Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, "Indigenous Workforce Development Stream," online at <https://nohfc.ca/en/pages/programs/people-talent-program/indigenous-workforce-development-stream>

Appendix C: Priorities Identified at the Magnetic North 2021 Conference — Medium-to-Long-Term Projects

The medium-to-long-term actions identified at the Magnetic North 2021 Conference continue to require more intensive planning and implementation at the organizational and governmental levels. As such, progress updates might be limited. The action items resulting from the 2021 Conference are listed below, with the progress made on each item over the past year in blue type.

1. Housing remains a significant barrier to settlement and attraction. Access to affordable and suitable housing is generally problematic in many communities across Northern Ontario and needs to be addressed. Provincial and municipal governments should work collaboratively with the following organizations to identify community-level solutions: the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation regional officers, Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, municipal economic development agencies, and chambers and economic development officers in partnership with private employers.
 - a. Housing remains a key barrier to settlement growth in many Northern Ontario communities, despite the lower cost of housing than in many other areas of Ontario, due largely to supply. Work should continue at the systemic and local levels to increase housing supply and affordability.
2. There is great value in creating dedicated services for international students, not simply providing these services “off the corner of your desk.” Accordingly, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism and IRCC should consider providing funding for community-level organizations or post-secondary institutions to offer these services formally. Dedicated services could help international students gain familiarity with the community so that they want to stay after graduation.
 - a. Although not funded by IRCC or the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, the Talent Retention Roundtable in Thunder Bay is a promising initiative for retaining international students post-graduation in Northwestern Ontario. The Roundtable, funded by FedNor, was created to build community connections with post-secondary students and recent alumni with the goal of exposing students to the opportunities that are here for them after graduation. The Talent Retention Roundtable Steering Committee consists of eight members of the Talent Roundtable, who help guide and support the efforts of the Roundtable by documenting the process, planning meetings, supporting project ideas and initiatives, and are responsible for the overall execution of the Roundtable.¹³
3. Consistent, comparable data at the community level would be beneficial for all actors. Informed decisions cannot be made based on provincial-level data or using five-year-old data while waiting for the next census release. Primary data collection efforts would benefit from collaboration among multiple organizations, such as Northern Policy Institute, workforce planning boards, social services administration boards, chambers, economic development officers, post-secondary institutions, immigration partnerships, and Francophone organizations.
 - a. The Community Data Program offers data beyond those released for free by providers such as Statistics Canada. Specifically, the program offers tabulations at the levels of the Census Subdivision, Census Division, Census Agglomeration, Census Metropolitan Area, and Economic Region. These small geographical levels allow decisionmakers to create data-informed policies for their communities. Specifically, the Community Data Program offers access to the Longitudinal Immigration Database as well as target group profiles for the Indigenous, visible minority, immigrant, and recent immigrant populations.
 - b. Northern Policy Institute is a consortium lead for access to statistical data in Northern Ontario through the Community Data Program. This group purchase plan reduces the cost for data users and makes community-level social and economic data available to all organizations in Northern Ontario.

¹³ For more information about the Talent Retention Roundtable, see North Superior Workforce Planning Board, “Talent Retention (FedNor),” online at <https://www.nswpb.ca/what-we-do/talent-retention-fednor/>

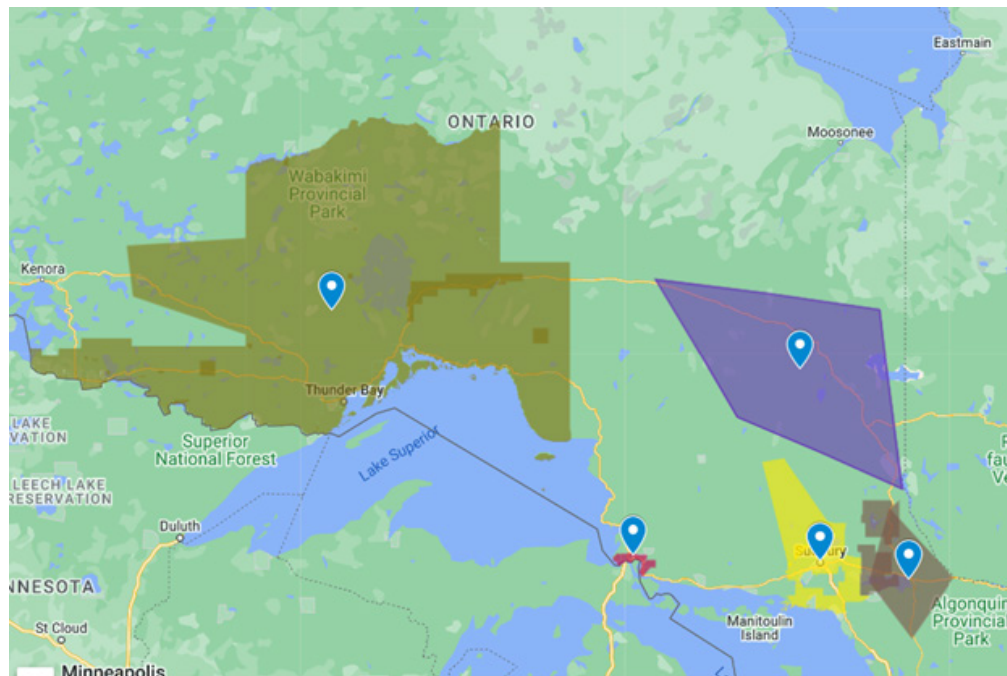
c. In addition, organizations across Northern Ontario have partnered for a primary data collection initiative termed "Measurement Month," through which surveys were distributed to gather comparable, consistent data on employer preparedness, service provider capacity, individual experience, exit, and experience with racism in February 2022. Reports have been drafted based on the findings of the surveys and have been released to the public. Additionally, the second iteration of Measurement Month occurred from February 1 to 22, 2023.

d. Francophone organizations in Northern Ontario have also promoted data sharing and collaboration through their work. For example, those in the settlement and immigration realm are working to align their intake forms, which will allow for comparability and consistency in data collection and sharing.

e. Though, it is important to note the shortcomings of primary data collection at the organizational level, such as limited resources to promote and distribute the survey(s), which could result in low and/or non-representative response rates.

4. Population growth is also needed in the communities outside the five largest centres or Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) communities, as they face many of the same demographic and labour market challenges as do the larger Northern Ontario hubs. Current Northern Ontario RNIP communities, in conjunction with IRCC, are encouraged to explore expanding RNIP boundaries outward to include other Northern Ontario communities.

a. As announced in August 2022, the RNIP has been extended from three years to five, now to end in August 2024. In addition, the RNIP boundaries of North Bay, Timmins, Greater Sudbury, and Thunder Bay have been expanded so that more employers are able to participate. Below is a map showing the newly expanded RNIP boundaries.



Source: "Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Community Boundaries," Google Maps, September 23, 2022.

Appendix D: Come North 2020 Action Items and Update as of June 2022

In February 2020, the Come North Conferences produced a list of 10 immediate action items. These items were gathered from and informed by conference breakout sessions, presentations, and panels. The Magnetic North Program Officer is responsible for communicating with the lead organization for each Come North priority action item and, where necessary and requested, assisting it in overcoming barriers to move the item toward completion. These action items resulting from Come North 2020 are listed below, with the progress made on each item over the past year in blue type.

1. The Come North Planning Committee should be reconstituted as a Steering Committee to coordinate and monitor progress on these action items. The new committee should have no more than 15 members and be representative of Ontario's diverse northern regions. Northern Policy Institute should coordinate this transition.
 - a. The Magnetic North Steering Committee members for 2022 have been finalized. They include actors from across Ontario's northern regions and are representative of multiple sectors and demographics (e.g., economic development, Francophone, antiracism, Indigenous).
2. Wherever possible, immigration agencies should support and assist those working directly to facilitate reconciliation, and reconciliation efforts should actively include newcomers.
 - a. Initiatives have begun and continue to support and include those working directly to facilitate reconciliation and to include newcomers in reconciliation efforts. For example, Orientation to Ontario sessions, offered by Settlement.org, include workshops and resources on settler history, colonization, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report.
 - b. Additionally, joint youth programming is being offered by some settlement agencies, First Nations, and Indigenous-serving agencies.
 - c. Newcomers have been hired by First Nations and Indigenous-serving agencies.
3. The Steering Committee, via one of its member organizations, should submit a proposal to FedNor to fund a coordinated marketing plan for Ontario's northern regions. This plan should reflect the themes and findings of the Come North event.
 - a. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that this action item should be postponed for at least another 12 months and developed as part of a separate project.
4. The Northeast and Northwest immigration portals should be rebranded immediately as "welcoming" portals to reflect the shift in focus from immigration only to retention, reconciliation, and migration.
 - a. Due to restrictions stemming from initial funding, the establishment of "sister portals" is being explored that focus on reconciliation, attraction, and retention among Indigenous populations and those already in the community is being explored. Together, the portals will form a "welcoming hub" for anyone looking to migrate to or already living in Northern Ontario communities.
5. The Timmins Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) should seek funding to update the Northeast Welcoming portal. This funding should include resources to create a staff position dedicated to keeping the community profiles and other resources on the portal up to date. The LIP should seek a partner organization to assist in populating and maintaining the retention/reconciliation elements of the updated portal.
 - a. The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre supports and maintains the Northeast portal. Northern Policy Institute (NPI) has also committed to providing a four-month intern for each of the next three summers to update and maintain the portal if needed.
6. The Northwest LIP should seek similar responsibility and funding for the Northwest Welcoming portal.
 - a. The Northwest portal was originally hosted by the City of Thunder Bay. NPI and its Magnetic North partners have committed funding to update and maintain the Northwest portal for the next three years. A plan is currently being drafted to transfer the portal from the City of Thunder Bay to NPI. After successfully updating and maintaining the Northwest portal, funding will be sought to update the Northeast portal by either NPI or a partner organization.

7. Communities and organizations that have developed or intend to develop local plans or resources to attract or retain people should make every effort to align their messaging, content, and look with the regional plan and marketing effort. Local groups should contact the Timmins and Northwest LIPs for inclusion and promotion of their efforts on the web portals.

a. Launched at the 2021 Magnetic North Conference, Make Your Pitch provided an opportunity for Northern Ontario communities to submit a video highlighting their community's best assets in the themes of population growth, attraction, welcoming communities, and antiracism initiatives.

b. Currently, funding for this initiative is made possible in part by the original Come North Steering Committee members — specifically, Northern Ontario LIPs and Réseau de soutien à l'immigration francophone, and NPI.

8. NPI should take the lead in developing a common set of success measures for welcoming communities that cover both attraction and retention. These measures should be collected, compiled, and reported annually.

a. Indicators for welcoming communities have been established in collaboration with partner organizations across Northern Ontario. Data collection for these indicators took place in February 2022, using surveys as the primary collection tool. The Measurement Month initiative by NPI allowed for consistent, comparable data to be gathered across Northern Ontario and will allow for updating year-over-year.

b. NPI is not the only organization undertaking this type of work. The key is to ensure the work is not being done in silos, meaning that the alignment of surveys and other information-gathering and dissemination efforts is the goal. An example is Lakehead University's "Employing New Immigrants: Community and Organizational Inclusion Challenges in Northwestern Ontario," the goal of which is to understand community and organizational welcoming efforts from the perspectives of new immigrants, community leaders, and employees to enhance the recruitment and retention literature. Communities involved are Atikokan, Sioux Lookout, and Thunder Bay. The university's final report is forthcoming.

9. Matchmaker and connector positions should be created in Northern Ontario's rural and remote regions to coordinate access to their existing services and fill their service and knowledge gaps as needed.

a. The International and Community Matchmaker program began in Northwestern Ontario. The pilot program ended in June 2021 with the launch of Matchmaker Northeast. This position was created to match newcomer jobseekers with employers looking to fill positions.

b. Currently, the Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario is undertaking matchmaker work in Northwestern Ontario.

c. A connector position has been started by the North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB) in Northwestern Ontario with a mandate to cover all the regions of Northwestern Ontario. A newcomer is introduced to a connector, who then introduces the newcomer to three other people in the connector's network. As the initiative is only operating in Thunder Bay, there is much room for expansion.

d. The NSWPB is working with the Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association to bring the Connector Program¹⁴ to Greater Sudbury. They have recently signed on through the National Connector Program network.

10. Come North should be repeated annually to assess progress and reset priorities. A member organization of the Steering Committee should take the lead in seeking funds to support this effort for the next three years.

a. Come North has been rebranded as Magnetic North to further expand the focus from attraction to retention, reconciliation, and welcoming.

b. Magnetic North 2021 took place virtually on June 22–23, 2021. It covered topics such as attraction, retention, antiracism, reconciliation, and welcoming. Over 250 people registered for the event.

c. The next Magnetic North Conference is scheduled for June 2022. NPI, along with the Steering Committee members and the Magnetic North Program Officer, will set the agenda.

¹⁴ The program participants are connected to business and community leaders in the region to gain a better understanding of the local job market, learn about the community, and are exposed to business and career opportunities in the region.

Appendix E: Breakout Session Supplemental Information

Everyday Reconciliation Practices for Your Organization

Reconciliation is defined as a journey of reflection and action. Now is the moment to begin (re)building positive, productive, respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. While there is still much work to do and progress to be made, the past decade has seen a significant increase in the attention paid to reconciliation by governments, businesses, educators, cultural institutions, and media. **This conversation seeks to explore the challenges, current initiatives, and opportunities for implementing practices of reconciliation in organizations.**

Reasons to Stay: Retaining International Students

Every year, students come from across the province, the country, and the world to study at a Northern Ontario post-secondary institution. The ability to retain international students as permanent residents and skilled workers is especially critical for regions with a declining labour force. By retaining international students, these regions can rely on a new source of highly skilled labour that can contribute to the regions' growth and prosperity. Many factors contribute to international student retention: employment prospects, social engagement opportunities in the community, and housing availability, to name a few. Through an engaging discussion, **this session aims to identify some of the current efforts being made across the regions of Northern Ontario, the challenges to retaining international students, and the opportunities for future improvements.**

Migration Outside the Big 5: Rural Population Growth

Small communities offer big opportunities. If there is anything that the pandemic has proven, it is that there is life beyond the big cities. Tens of thousands of people have left urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver in favour of small-town Canada. For these newcomers and domestic migrants, the lure of cheaper housing, more space and more opportunity has them looking beyond traditionally popular cities. **This discussion seeks to identify actionable items for small communities across Northern Ontario to take advantage of and possibly accelerate this new trend. What strategies, incentives, or actions have not worked in the past? What has worked? Are the successful strategies portable and scalable?**

Knowing and Measuring Our Regions

Measurement is key to understanding both the needs of communities and the success of initiatives. However, data and measurement tools are not always accessible or available at the community level in Northern Ontario. **Through this conversation, we hope to identify what tools would be of use to organizations and community leaders, what resources are currently offered, and what improvements could be made to make measurement tools more effective in the future.**

Housing Resources to Help with Welcoming and Accessibility

The lack of suitable and affordable housing is regularly identified as a major barrier to attraction, settlement, and retention. How can we encourage landlords to be more sensitive to the unique circumstances that immigrants and new arrivals in a community face? What resources are available to new arrivals to inform them of their rights as tenants? What can be done in communities to better support our newest community members to find housing that will promote their long-term retention in the community? **This discussion seeks to identify resources that can be used to support community members in finding or providing housing that meets the needs of new arrivals in the community.**

Effectively Marketing Ontario's Northern Regions

Effective marketing of Northern Ontario is needed to communicate the added benefits that both international immigrants and secondary migrants gain from choosing to settle in a Northern Ontario community. Through effective marketing strategies, communities, both big and small, can curate an image that represents what they have to offer. Northern Ontario boasts some of the most robust employment opportunities, the lowest costs of housing, and beautiful landscapes in the province, along with multiple post-secondary institutions. Without effective marketing, however, many people might not even consider Northern Ontario when choosing a community to call home. **This discussion seeks to generate ideas from attendees about some of the challenges and opportunities regarding the marketing of their region and/or Northern Ontario as a whole.**

Appendix F: Panel Questions

Day 1, Panel 1: Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Learning Resources

1. Audrey, can you speak to some challenges individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds face, specifically in workplace settings across Northern Ontario?
2. Jane, does cultural sensitivity play a role in making all individuals feel welcome in their communities? If so, how?
3. Gajith, from your perspective, what impact does feeling welcomed in your community have on the likelihood of retention?
4. Who are some of the key actors who should be involved in promoting and supporting the growth of more culturally diverse and aware communities?
5. What actions could employers take to ensure their workplace is culturally aware and welcoming?
6. What advice do you have for individuals and/or organizations who are looking to become more culturally aware?

Day 1, Panel 2: Case Studies in Indigenous-driven Innovation

1. Kevin, can you name some differences between "consultation" with Indigenous communities and "engagement" with Indigenous communities regarding infrastructure projects?
2. Dwayne, are there best or innovative practices for infrastructure projects involving Indigenous people?
3. Kevin, what are the essential components of a meaningful partnership?
4. Are there lessons to be learned from infrastructure projects that can be applied more generally to Indigenous actions and leadership in other fields? If so, how?
5. Based on the discussion, in the next twelve months, where do you think the greatest improvement can be made through Indigenous innovation? What changes do Canadian governments need to prioritize to make that improvement happen?

Day 1, Panel 3: Supporting Culturally Diverse Group Involvement in Decision-making

1. Mariette, thinking about your career, what role did culture play in shaping your pathway to your current position?
2. Adolphine, what are some challenges that individuals from diverse backgrounds face in accessing corporate decision-making position?
3. Ali, how important is representation of culturally diverse groups in positions of power to inspire the next generation of young leaders?
4. How can organizations better support culturally and linguistically diverse groups?
5. Do you think progress has been made in the past five years regarding the ability of diverse groups to access leadership positions? Where do you see this issue going in the next five years?
6. Do you have any advice for culturally and/or linguistically diverse individuals looking to get involved in decision-making?
7. Based on the discussion, what do you see as the main priorities the people in this room should focus on to enhance cultural diversity among Northern Ontario decision-makers in the coming twelve months?

Day 2, Panel 1: Building Welcoming Communities — A Research Perspective

1. Dr. Esses, how would you define a welcoming community? And why do welcoming communities matter?
2. Karly, based on your respective research and experience, what are some innovative ways and best practices for building welcoming communities?
3. Dr. Brown, what could we learn from your research on this topic? What made you decide to tackle this subject?
4. What progress has been made in the research community regarding welcoming communities since 2010?
5. Based on the discussion, what is one piece of practical advice you would give to actors in Northern Ontario looking to foster welcoming communities?

Day 2, Panel 2: Building Welcoming Communities — An Applied Perspective

1. Stacey, to begin this discussion, could you tell us, based on your experience, why building welcoming communities is critical for attraction and retention across Northern Ontario's regions?
2. Anna, what are some potential opportunities and barriers to newcomers' and immigrants' full participation in the regions of Northern Ontario?
3. Moïse, sustained employment has been recognized as a primary factor in attracting and retaining migrants, but employment alone is not the answer to integration. How could workplaces support welcoming, settling, and reconciling efforts and become a door into the community?
4. It takes a whole community to make people feel welcome in Northern Ontario. How can the whole community get involved in welcoming efforts, and what role does collaboration play?
5. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous effect on populations everywhere. What have been the major achievements of both Northwestern Ontario and Northeastern Ontario in the past few years amid the global crisis? What do you predict will happen in the next 5 to 10 years?
6. Based on the discussion, what do you see as the main priorities for local actors in the next twelve months that will significantly improve the welcomeness of Northern Ontario's various regions?

Day 2, Panel 3: Magnetic North Progress Updates

1. Thomas, what challenges did you encounter while working to identify and then implement collective, as opposed to organizational, priorities?
2. Holly, how can other organizations and communities get involved in supporting the Magnetic North initiative?
3. Shannon, what successes has the Northwest Connector program had? What challenges does the program face, and how are you overcoming these challenges?
4. Are there any groups that are particularly underrepresented in these discussions, and do you have suggestions as to how they could be encouraged and supported in coming to the table to have a voice in these deliberations?
5. Based on the discussion, what do you see as the main priorities in the next twelve months in moving from words to action on our collective goals?



About Northern Policy Institute

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent, evidence-driven think tank. We perform research, analyze data, and disseminate ideas. Our mission is to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts our communities, our province, our country, and our world.

We believe in partnership, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. Our team seeks to do inclusive research that involves broad engagement and delivers recommendations for specific, measurable action. Our success depends on our partnerships with other entities based in or passionate about Northern Ontario.

Our permanent offices are in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Kirkland Lake. During the summer months we have satellite offices in other regions of Northern Ontario staffed by teams of Experience North placements. These placements are university and college students working in your community on issues important to you and your neighbours.

Related Research

Magnetic North 2021 Conference Report, February 2022
Mercedes Labelle

Come North 2020 Conference Report, January 2021
NPI Staff

All Roads Lead Home (series), April 2022
Mercedes Labelle

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