

# Welcoming and Retention: The case of Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group

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# Outline



History of KLMG



Current Challenges from our community



Learnings and Recommendations (Holistic Approach)



Summary

# Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group (KLMG) was founded in 2008

-Small group of newcomers from non-English backgrounds are feeling isolated

- Decide to meet regularly in each others homes to practice English
- Becomes an invaluable support network, creating social connection and reducing isolation
- Unforeseen advantages included:
  - Sharing of culture
  - Feelings of cultural pride
  - Exchange of food
  - Exchange of stories
  - 'Family' away from home
  - Support group to navigate challenges of living in Northern Ontario





## Early Years of KLMG

- Practicing English
- Learning about local and social norms
- Establish social support network (i.e celebrate family milestones)
  - Family events (i.e. Birthdays, Baby showers)
  - Each country's independence days
  - Celebrate local activities together





# KLMG Takes Root in Kirkland Lake and was incorporated in 2015



# Growth in early years (2015-2019)

- Now run by coordinated volunteers with regularity
  - Place for volunteers to do outreach
  - Some activities were established
  - Reaching out to more people
  - Meeting at local establishments
    - for better access (i.e. coffee shops)
    - for high visibility
    - to reduce barriers
- Attracting new Canadians
  - To offer support
  - To have fun together
  - To reduce Isolation for families (i.e. children knowing others kids)
  - Support of community to fundraise and donate to continue the grow the KLMG
- Offering services and working with the community to raise awareness, fundraise and to continue the grow the KLMG





## Taste of the world Fundraising



‘Social support enhances quality of life and provides a buffer against adverse life events’  
(<https://phctheproject.org>)

# The Stope (2019-Present)

- KLMG moves to a highly visible safe space
- Unofficial welcome center of Kirkland Lake
- Regular planned activities
  - Opportunity for members to share their passions
- First Grant awarded (2022) for Anti-Racism Anti-Hate project







## Outdoor activity allows locals to take the lead to introduce newcomers to northern living

- Snow sledding party
- Snow shoeing
- Fishing / ice fishing

# Newcomers wedding at the Stope



- ‘Social support is considered one of the protective factors of resilience’
- Australian journal of Psychology-



Celebrating Holidays together



# Expansion- KLMG leading the way

- In **welcoming** all newcomers (i.e. Canadians and immigrants) in Kirkland Lake and surrounding areas
- **Connecting/serving as a link** to foster positive relationship between newcomers and locals
- **Giving short and long term support** in the community through orientation, help in settlement, integration and social connection and education opportunities
- **Networking** with institutions and local chambers, schools and other community group driving positive change in the community





# World Chats-Connecting Cultures

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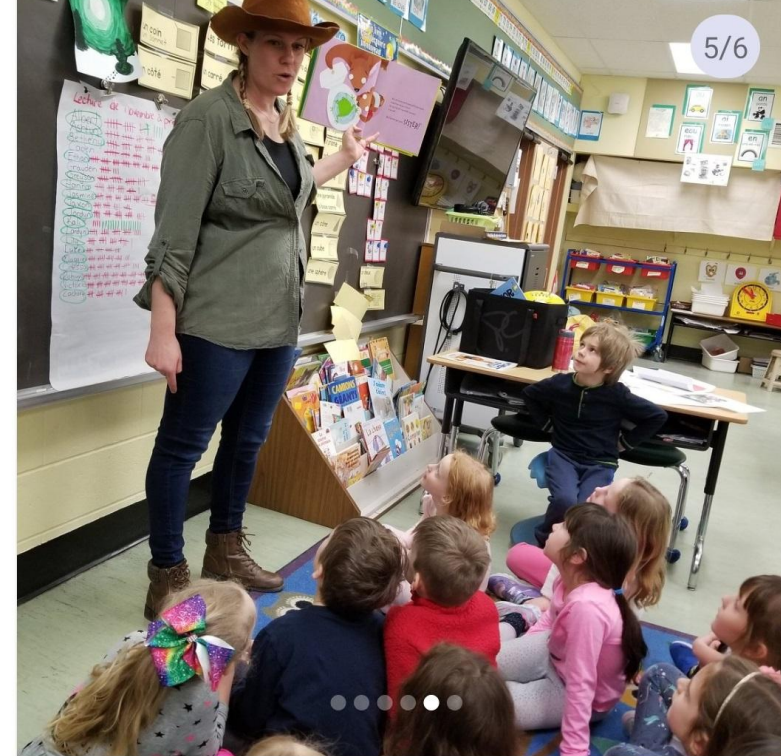




# Education through shared experiences

Neutral space, non threatening and positive experiences:

- Tea Time around the World
  - (What does 'tea time' mean in different countries)
- Stories from Around the World
  - (Stories and craft, for children and families)
- The Blanket Exercise
  - (Education opportunity to understanding Indigenous History)



More cool animals and some jumping like a Kangaroo!



# Partnering with the community



# Welcoming and retention: What are we missing?

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People come and go in Kirkland lake but why can't we retain?  
and where does that leave our community?

Current State:

- Workforce / workplace :
  - Government and employers are looking to new immigrants to fill worker shortages
  - Group of underutilized skilled men and women already in the community
  - FIFO/DIDO workers (growing portion of workers) – ‘taking’ from community
- Community:
  - Stretched /limited resources (Government run settlement services)
  - No connection to community
  - No social support / isolation
  - Some negative perception of local community toward newcomers





# Stake holder buy in: Holistic approach

## Welcoming Workplace:

- Encourage shift work and incentives for workers to move to community
  - Support basic resources ie housing, health care, schools to make this a possibility
- Flexibility of working hours to appeal to untapped skilled community members
  - Job sharing / flexible hours / consideration of spouses and their skills and willingness to work/ volunteer/give to the community
  - i.e. Establishment and support of afterschool/ before school program (childcare)
- Undertaking cultural awareness accreditation courses for employers to be more appealing, welcoming and harmonious
- Recognizing employees who could benefit from social support
  - Sponsoring KLMG membership
  - Including social supports as the orientation package
  - Actively introduce new employees to social /community /interest groups



# Stake holder buy in: Holistic approach

## Welcoming Community:

Acknowledging the importance of social connection and support for employees to be part of the community:

- Part of business mindset/culture/practices/plan to support communities
- Leadership and cultural shift within your own establishments (celebrate differences and similarities) to drive a connection for new employees
- Bridge the gap between employees and the community
  - Bringing community groups to the table
  - Partnering in events
  - Financial support
  - Giving time and attendance to events
  - Supporting, encouraging and recognizing employees that contribute to the community
- Established and continued communication and support between employers, municipalities and those able to provide social support is necessary for long term retention.



# Summary

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- Kirkland Lake is a diverse community, yet isolation and disconnection continue to effect newcomers and their ability to thrive
- KLMG was established due to a need within the community and plays a huge supporting role to our community and industry alike
- KLMG's ability to be further effective is directly impacted by financial constraints, volunteer availability and the level of support of local businesses and municipality
- It continues to seek partnerships to become a more inclusive partner for change.
- Industries also need to take an active role in supporting their new employees and their families to ensure they are socially supported
- By facilitating and fostering integration between locals and newcomers, KLMG continues to be a dynamic force in creating a harmonious, vibrant and thriving multicultural town in Northern Ontario.

**Thank you for your time, we hope you will join us!**

[KLmulticultural@gmail.com](mailto:KLmulticultural@gmail.com)

Facebook: KLMG

FB private group: KL Multicultural



“Neighbors” - people in the area born outside of Canada

The Kirkland Lake Multi-Cultural Group

...the First Peoples on

A multi-cultural group of people...