

Being proactive in rural Canada: Creating mechanisms for inclusive workplaces that support employers and employees

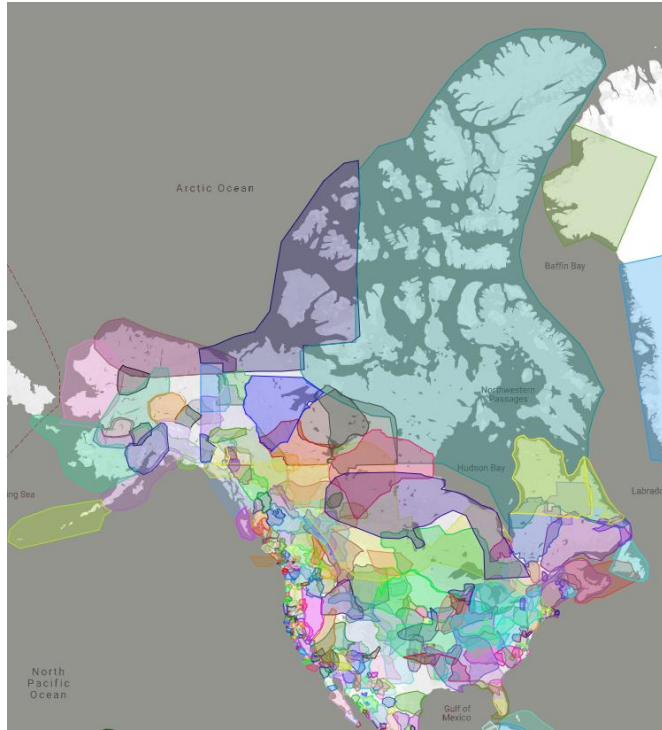
June 13, 2023 | Magnetic North Conference

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CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy
CLRC Le centre de littératie religieuse civique

Gratitude and Acknowledgement



Temiskaming Shores & Area -

traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples, with a well established Anishinaabe and Metis community, on Robinson-Huron treaty land (Treaty 61,1850)

Project Background

- Funding application from [WES Mariam Assefa Fund](#)
- Problem we are trying to solve: Employers have a strong desire to welcome and recruit immigrants and refugees but **struggling to attract and/or retain** them substantially



Image Source: unsplash.com

Project Partners: co-led by six organizations

CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy
CLRC Le centre de littératie religieuse civique

➤ Religious literacy lens



➤ Liaison



➤ International experience supporting faith-friendly initiatives in businesses



➤ Local Support



➤ Rural & intersectoral development lens



➤ Indigenous lens

Project Purpose

Co-create and pilot 2 key business initiatives that will support recruitment and retention of newcomers

- 1. an employee resource group (ERG)** that reflects the needs of the local immigrant and refugee population to increase employers' understanding, policies, and practices to recruit and retain employees.
- 2. faith friendly workplace certification** to create a process to help employers support employees in working effectively while also living in accordance with their beliefs in ways that do not create an undue burden on the workplace.

Project Design and Development Year 1

Relationship Building and Needs Assessment with Employers & Employees

- Interviews with employers and employees
- Invited some of the interviewees to be part of our advisory groups

Employer Advisory Group Members

- Douglas Walsh, EXP
- Julie Pouliot, Grant Home Hardware
- Pat Willard-Inglis, Three H Furniture and Findlay's Drug Store
- Sweta Jadeja, Husky Gas
- Tammy Mackey, Northern College

Employee Advisory Group Members

- Chad Chenette, EXP
- David Cooke, M&M Hospitality
- Rammy Bining, Pavilion Women's Shelter

Employee Resource Group (ERG) Structure

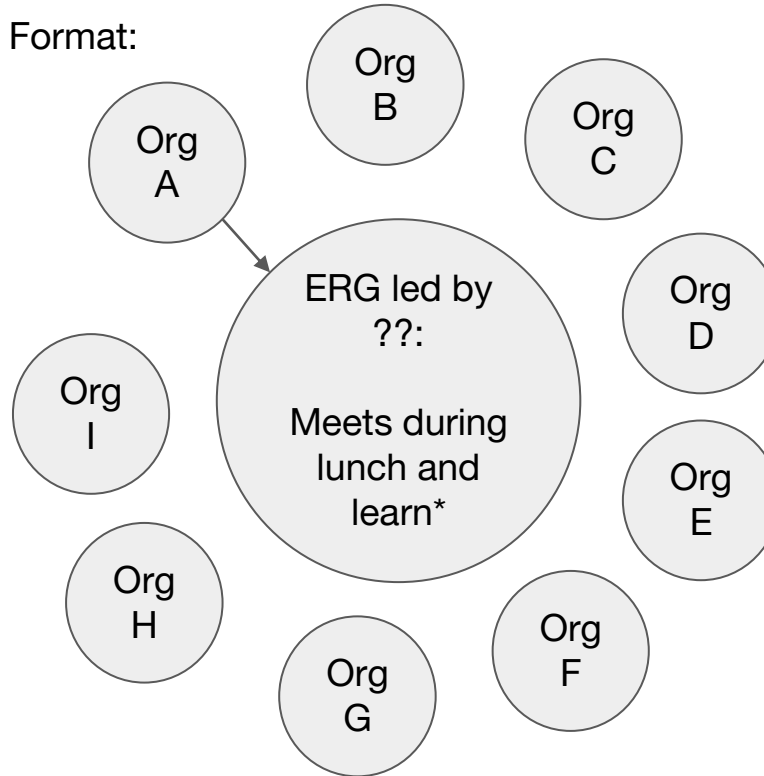
ERG focus:

Self-sustainable
after project
ends

Builds
community

Promotes
understanding
and religious
literacy

Format:



Outcome:

Understanding
and religious
literacy

Service

Other?

*The week of lunch n' learn to be staggered monthly to accommodate for shift work schedules.

Outcomes and Benefits of Project Initiatives

Employer's Perspectives...

- Potential increase in revenue and profit, due to lower attrition rate.
- Improved policies, practices, and religious, spiritual, and non-religious diversity among staff.

Employee's Perspectives...

- More multi-lateral learning from other employees, as some colleagues may become more comfortable in sharing their different perspectives and approaches
- Greater sense of community that blends workplace, personal, and community needs

Year 2

Learning with the Interbelief Employee Resource Group (I-ERG) in Temiskaming Shores

Month	Date	Day of the week	Week of the month	I-ERG learning focus of the month	Notes
Jan	24th	Tues	4th	Intro: Social gathering	Each monthly session was scheduled in relevance to a sacred day for the community group that month. If possible, speakers for each month were locals from that community group.
Feb	22nd	Wed	3rd	Intro to religious literacy: What is it and how does it help build community?	
Mar	30th	Thurs	4th	Speaker/Dialogue: on Hinduism (Holi) and Sikhism (Hola Mohalla)	
Apr	27th	Thurs	2nd	Activity: on Islam (Ramadan)	
May	25th	Thurs	2nd	Speaker/Dialogue: on Buddhism (Vesak & Buddha's Birthday)	

Future sessions: National Indigenous Peoples Day, Diversity Event, Connection to Nature, Canadian National French Immigration Week, Judaism, Christianity

Sessions include:

- Lunch
- 10-15 min local speaker share + Q&A
- Socializing among attendees to foster community



CALLING ALL LOCAL EMPLOYERS!

Join our Interbelief-Employee Resource Group (I-ERG)

- Monthly community building
- Professional development opportunity for employers and staff
- Opportunity to learn and connect with religious, spiritual and non-religious groups and individuals

Why is it important for local employers and employees?

- Creates welcoming spaces for everyone
- Helps in staff recruitment and retention
- Increases community building among staff

First Session:
January 24, 2023
12:00-1:00pm

To join the I-ERG, contact the tsacc at info@tsacc.ca

\$50.00 per organization for 1 year of participation



INTERBELIEF EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS LITERACY? HOW DOES IT BUILD COMMUNITY?

Do you work with an organization with a diverse cultural or religious employee base? Is your business looking to expand, and do you want to create a welcoming environment for new employees with diverse backgrounds?

The I-ERG is a group dedicated to educating local businesses so that they can understand different religious or cultural groups which they may meet while offering employment, and how employees can make individuals of diverse backgrounds feel welcome and included in the workplace. The I-ERG meets monthly to learn together about different religious groups and their practices, how to address and discuss them respectfully, and what it means to exercise religious literacy in the workplace. There is a \$50 registration fee for each business, which covers costs for events throughout the year.

Contact To Register
705-647-5771 carrieg@tsacc.ca

FEBRUARY 22, 12 - 1 PM
TAP THAT KITCHEN + BAR



TEMISKAMING Interbelief Employee Resource Group I-ERG

Thursday March 30
Dialogue on Sikhism and Hinduism with Guest Speaker Kirandeep Kaur

Please join us to learn together about these religious groups, their celebrations, and how employers can create a welcoming space for workers of diverse religious backgrounds.

12 pm - 1 pm
Dymond Community Hall
Lunch provided

Register with the Chamber of Commerce
705-647-5771 or carrieg@tsacc.ca

\$50
One-time business registration fee
no limit on employee attendance after registration



“Creates a lot compassionate community and a culture of kindness.”

Certification

- Approx. biweekly, ½ day
- Scheduled based on registrants preferred date - Thursday morning
- 10 registrants
- 8 completed certificate

Certified receive a hard copy certificate to advertise in their business and stickers to inform staff and clients.

Sticker:



Date	Training Focus	Outcomes
Thurs. Mar 9	Introduction to ERG, certification (outcomes and benefits), and religious literacy framework in Canada	Learning about diversity and religious literacy
Thurs. Mar 30	Religious literacy locally	Learning locally relevant religious literacy
Thurs. Apr 13	The self and how personal perspectives inform work and workplace.	Understanding the self and power dynamics in identities
Thurs. Apr 27	National, provincial, regional, and local norms and how they inform workplace policies, practices, and relations in small towns for small-to-medium sized businesses.	Understanding of power, self, local norms, and impact on employees.
Thurs. May 11	How to structure business to promote and advance religious literacy. Includes time to begin reviewing organizational structures, policies, and practices.	Applying understanding and literacy to the workplace
Thurs. June 1	Identify/Create the 5-6 items to obtain and maintain certification.	Completing requirements for certification



“I learned so much more than I expected.”

“I have found that this course and sharing life experiences has really touched me and made me a better HR person.”

Next steps

Needed: Multi-stakeholder support + Sustainability

Temiskaming Shores model:

- The City
- TSACC
- Keepers of the Circle
- One Light
- Advisory Groups

Seeking more support for long-term sustainable growth.

Kirkland Lake:

- The City
- Chamber of Commerce
- Keepers of the Circle
- Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group

Seeking the right individuals to write a grant and begin this work together.

Question

Most people spend most of their day at work.

It is often the first point of contact people have with the local community.

But, are businesses part of your welcome and retention plan? If so, how?

And, apart from feeling welcomed, do people feel like they belong?

