

Commentary | April 2024

# Magnetic North:

## Toward a Thriving Northern Ontario: Fostering Population Growth, Advancing Anti-Racism, and Building Indigenous Reconciliation

2023 Conference Report

By: Mercedes Labelle and Graeme Dick

**NORTHERN**  
POLICY INSTITUTE  
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# Project Partners



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

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Mercedes Labelle was born in Bilbao, Spain, and lived in the United States before moving to North Bay, Ontario. Mercedes attended McGill University, earning her B.A. in Political Science and Urban Systems and graduating in 2020. Through her role at NPI, Mercedes has worked on various projects related to population growth, demographics, and migration. In her free time, Mercedes enjoys running, hiking, and listening to podcasts.

Mercedes was a Senior Policy Analyst at NPI and currently studies law at University of Ottawa.

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Graeme Dick is originally from Sault Ste Marie, ON, and graduated from Wilfrid Laurier University in June 2023, receiving an Honours Bachelor of Arts with a double major in both global studies and political science. Throughout his undergraduate studies Graeme formulated a dynamic understanding and interest in the areas of international affairs, political economics, and both domestic and foreign relations. He currently studies at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University.

As a policy analyst for Northern Policy Institute, Graeme put his degree to use in his hometown for the facilitation of sustainable and welcoming policies for Northern Ontario's varied regions.

In his spare time, Graeme enjoys playing tennis, physical fitness, and watching European football.

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# Executive Summary

After hosting two Come North conferences,<sup>1</sup> 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 their impact. There were approximately 130 individuals representing 70 organizations who partook in the 2023 Magnetic North Conference hosted online on June 12–13. Over the course of two days, participants were involved in conversations regarding reconciliation and anti-racism, attraction, the settlement of domestic and international immigrants, as well as the retention of existing populations. The following document focuses on the key themes that were thoroughly discussed at the 2023 Magnetic North Conference.

The themes and actions can be summarized in the following key points.

1. There continues to be a high degree of misunderstanding in contemporary Canadian society regarding Indigenous culture. While progress has been made in terms of reconciliation, Indigenous populations in the region continue to face worse economic outcomes compared to non-Indigenous populations.
2. There are many organizations in Northern Ontario whose work touches on or revolves around anti-racist initiatives. While significant progress has been made, there is still work to be done regarding the awareness of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) peoples throughout the region.
3. Retention strategies are just as critical as attraction strategies in Northern Ontario. It will be paramount to build a sense of community throughout the region and show immigrants that there are stable and rewarding experiences available to them in the north.
4. There are still noticeable gaps in critical services in Northern Ontario compared to other parts of the province. These services include but are not limited to health services, public transportation, and rural ICT coverage. Moving forward, the region will benefit from more tailored public policies that are unique to its specific needs.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

# Introduction

In June 2023, approximately 130 individuals from 70 organizations attended the virtual 2023 Magnetic North Conference. By holding our annual Magnetic North conference online, the conference fee became more affordable and we were able to accommodate increased participation from across the vast region of Northern Ontario. Participants represented municipal, provincial, and federal governments, economic development corporations, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), settlement service providers, post-secondary institutions, Indigenous and First Nations organizations, public and private school boards, employment services, Francophone and multicultural organizations, and more.

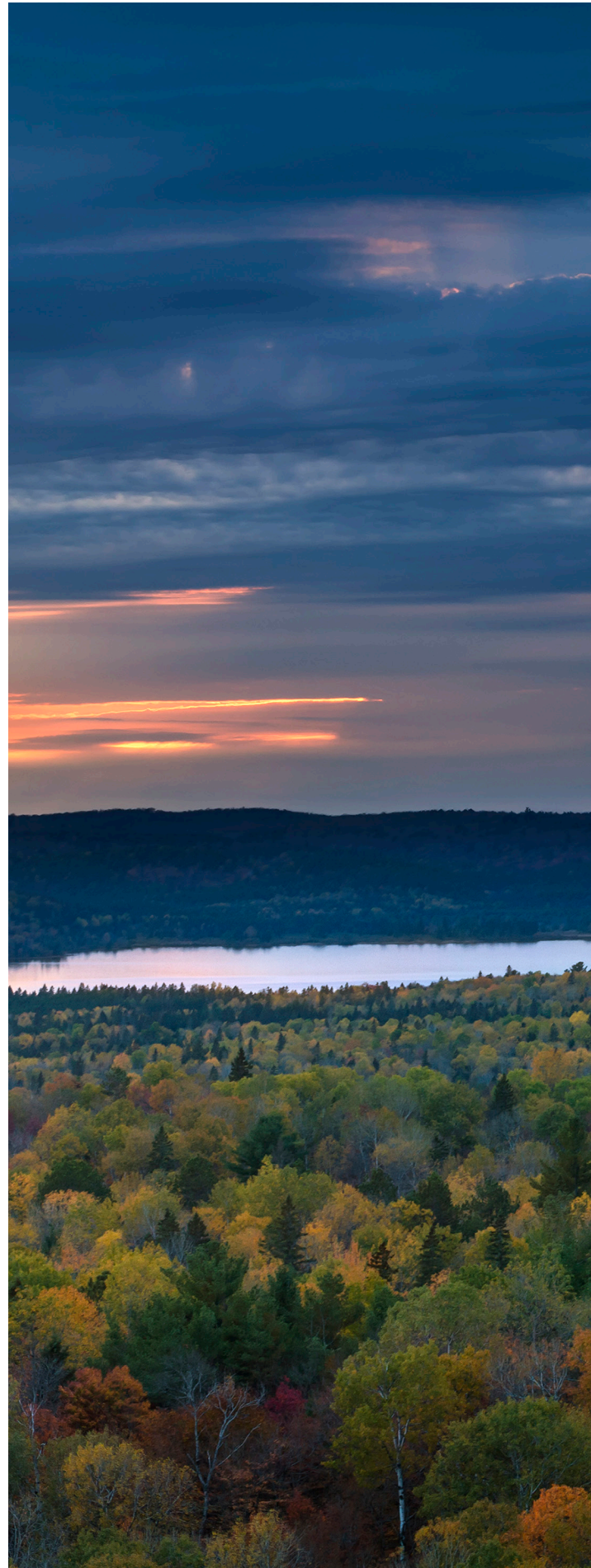
## About Magnetic North

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 2023 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 Magnetic North program officer works with individuals and organizations throughout Northern Ontario to implement the action plan produced through the Magnetic North and Come North Conferences.

A vital part of this initiative is assessing progress and resetting priorities on an annual basis at the Magnetic North Conference. Since the initial Come North Conferences in February 2020, it is clear that a lot of work is being done to combat racism, further reconciliation, and welcome newcomers across Northern Ontario. Connection, coordination, and communication between those involved are key to maximize the impact of all their efforts.

Importantly, 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.

References made in this report to communities in Northern Ontario go beyond municipalities unless otherwise specified. This includes unincorporated areas, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, among others.



# Priorities Coming out of Magnetic North 2023

The Magnetic North Conference is an annual opportunity for the population growth sector to reset priorities for the year to come.

The following report from the 2023 Magnetic North Conference elaborates on the topics and activities that have been the focus of the Magnetic North Initiative from the beginning. An update on progress since previous Conferences is available in the appendices.<sup>2</sup> A separate document listing past action items is also available. It is not the purpose of this paper to introduce new initiatives for the upcoming year.

The core themes of the 2023 Magnetic North Conference were reconciliation, anti-racism, attraction, the settlement of domestic and international migrants, and the retention of existing populations. Below are a few highlights.

Progress continues on action items from 2020, 2021, and 2022.

**1. Reconciliation is crucial for population growth and prosperity in Northern Ontario** and was a key pillar of the 2023 Magnetic North Conference. Indigenous populations throughout the region continue to face worse economic outcomes compared to non-Indigenous populations. This includes lower levels of income and rates of employment.

- a. There is still considerable work to be done to educate non-Indigenous populations about Indigenous cultures, ways of life, and ways of knowing. Despite recent signs of progress, there continues to be a high degree of misunderstanding in contemporary Canadian society regarding Indigenous culture.
- b. Prolonged intergenerational trauma continues in modern Indigenous society that results in complex challenges such as high incarceration rates, as an example.
- c. FNMI peoples continue to be underrepresented in their communities. They are often not reflected in the landscape or art mediums and find it difficult obtaining spaces and advocating for representation. Regional/local organizations could allot specific spaces on boards for Indigenous peoples and, at various levels of government (municipal, provincial, federal), ensure the inclusion of Indigenous peoples.
- d. A direct quote from Magnetic North 2023, "If you want to be an ally and stand up with Indigenous peoples, then sit down and learn with Indigenous peoples." – Stéphane Paquette.

**2. Several organizations throughout Northern Ontario are working on anti-racism initiatives.** While there is significant progress made, continued work is needed.

- a. There is still work to be done to increase awareness of BIPOC peoples throughout Canada, including stereotyping, language, and educational settings.
- b. The continued work of numerous organizations in Northern Ontario who are dedicated to anti-racism efforts and cultural awareness such as: NOBEEP, the Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association, the Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group, among others.

**3. The attraction and retention of both domestic and international newcomers was discussed extensively at this year's conference.** While it is important to attract new populations to Northern Ontario, **it is equally important to dedicate resources to make these people want to stay in the region.**

- a. Programs, such as those offered by ACCES Employment, are specifically designed for international immigrants coming to local, more rural/northern communities, away from large urban centres.
- b. Top priority for immigrants coming to Canada is immediate, sustaining, and long-term work. If this criterion is met, the size of the community is often not a key determinant.
- c. Retention strategies are as critical as attraction strategies. It is paramount to build a sense of community among newcomers and show them the opportunities available to them over the long term.
- d. Innovative responses are required to solve key challenges that greatly affect newcomers in Northern Ontario. Explore potential solutions in other parts of the country. In British Columbia, there are both incentives for people to provide affordable housing units, and renovations of abandoned buildings. Within Ontario there are multiple organizations that could help solve this problem such as post-secondary institutions, municipalities, multi-cultural centres, and members of the community.

<sup>2</sup> Appendices B and C.



4. Capacity building was discussed extensively throughout the 2023 Magnetic North Conference.

**Discussions revolved around the capacity of Northern Ontario services, governance, and infrastructure.**

Growing the capacity of these sectors is essential for wider attraction and retention efforts.

- a. There continues to be more noticeable gaps in critical services in Northern Ontario compared to other parts of the province. Limited funding, a large geographic area, and declining labour market are all factors that contribute to strained capacities. Increased capacity to achieve more efficient service delivery with limited resources is possible with greater collaboration between organizations throughout the region.
- b. Northern Ontario is often faced with broad policies by provincial and federal governments that are directed toward the rest of the province. Moving forward, the region would benefit from more policies tailored to its unique needs moving forward.
- c. Infrastructure in the north often lacks capacity compared to the rest of the province. While there is a solid base of ICT infrastructure suitable for the emerging trend of remote work, other services such as public transportation and healthcare do not meet the standards of the rest of the province.



# Keynote Presentations

There were two keynote presentations at the 2023 Magnetic North Conference. The topics were Best Practices for Indigenous Cultural Education and Bridging the Gap to Meaningful Employment for Newcomers. Each keynote presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session.

## Keynote #1 – Best Practices for Indigenous Cultural Education, Stéphane Paquette

Stéphane Paquette works with Sudbury's French public-school board as a cultural mediator in Indigenous education. Stéphane has developed a project titled "Vous l'avez astheure", an archive of educational videos to engage students and community members in discovering Indigenous culture as well as raising awareness to the history of First Nations peoples.

### Key Themes

- There is still much work to be done in educating those who are not of Indigenous descent on the culture, values, and history of Indigenous peoples.
- People of all backgrounds are still learning about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures. It is important to recognize and reflect on generational trauma that continues to persist today.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- There is still room for improvement when it comes to the general population's education about Indigenous cultures.
- Education is essential in moving forward to enact positive change. Stéphane explained, "If you want to be an ally and stand up with Indigenous peoples, then sit down and learn with Indigenous peoples."
- Indigenous peoples are continuing to reclaim the names of their own communities/individuals. It is up to non-Indigenous peoples to learn these names.

## Keynote #2 - Bridging the Gap to Meaningful Employment for Newcomers, Cameron Moser

Cameron Moser, Senior Director of ACCES Employment, discussed the organization's work facilitating immigration outside the MTV (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver) by providing immigrants with information and job opportunities in small, northern, and rural communities. He discussed the barriers faced by immigrants securing meaningful employment and how different organizations, individuals, and levels of government can support employers in navigating the international hiring process.

### Key Themes

- There are many potential international immigrants who may not be aware of many Northern Ontario communities, meaning they do not consider them for long-term residency.
- Meaningful employment opportunities act as a "pull" factor in attracting immigrants to rural and Northern communities.
- Employers in rural and remote communities are currently facing labour market shortages that can be filled by immigrants from wide educational backgrounds.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- While a high proportion of international migrants settle in large urban cities, immigration to smaller/rural regions has been on the increase in recent years. The continued advocacy for these regions, coupled with the awareness of migrants that these regions exist, will be critical to the long-term sustainment of these communities.
- Continued attraction events, networking events, and hiring events to screen these new immigrants and inform them of the opportunities for immediate, sustaining, and long-term work opportunities that are available to them in the Northern Ontario.

## Plenary Sessions

The 2023 Magnetic North Conference included a field trip plenary session during which the City of Greater Sudbury showcased the McEwen School of Architecture, the Northern Ontario Black Economic Empowerment Program (NOBEEP), and the Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association. The presentations focused on innovative welcoming practices in Sudbury, the largest

### Aliki Economides, McEwen School of Architecture, Laurentian University

- The McEwen School of Architecture is in the heart of downtown Sudbury, a community-initiated school operating in partnership with the City of Greater Sudbury.
- Unique features of the school's programs include the Design-Build and Community-Design projects that expose students to real community issues and hands-on building experience.
- Students develop an appreciation for the integration of indigenous and natural materials in building and site design.

### Charles Bekai, Northern Ontario Black Economic Empowerment Program (NOBEEP)

- Part of the Afro Heritage Association of Sudbury composed of individuals who are passionate about bringing the black community together in Greater Sudbury.
- Positioned to be the regional leader not-for-profit, black-led organization that will deliver new programs to support the growth of black-led entrepreneurship.
- Business can be done with NOBEEP through multiple streams: clients, partners, sponsors, mentors, and volunteers.
- Pursues activities through workshops, business trade shows, consultation services, conferences, networking events, individual activities, and annual general meetings.
- Provides services to economically empower black community members in Northern Ontario.

### Bela Ravi, Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association

- The Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association maintains 17 elected board members, numerous volunteers, and serves over 30,000 clients.
- Its mandate is to ensure equal access to and opportunity for all immigrants/refugees to Canadian society, provide connection to their heritage groups and to the City of Sudbury.
- Clients have either specific or a broad range of needs, such as aid with housing, community connections, and employment.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Increase retention levels and sense of community throughout the region with continued involvement of communities in various forms of public engagement.
- There is still a need for more staff and additional funding dedicated to community-building initiatives throughout Northern Ontario.
- Continued collaboration among other local, regional, and national organizations that maintain similar goals and interests.
- Continued recruitment of additional staff and volunteers who share our common goal and who are interested in working alongside these organizations.
- NOBEEP - Continuing to provide resources and events for the black community in Northern Ontario.

# Paper / Project Presentations

In preparation for the 2023 Magnetic North Conference, Northern Policy Institute called for paper/project presentations for a wide range of fields. These presentations included academic research, case studies, and project updates that are applicable to Northern Ontario or other rural, remote, and northern communities. Accepted submissions were presented at the conference as 15-minute oral presentations. Categories of presentations included Anti-racism, Diversity, and Inclusion; Indigenous Reconciliation; Welcoming and Retention, and Population Attraction/Settlement/Support.

- Anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion showcased research, case studies, and other project updates on the themes with respect to welcoming Northern and rural communities. Subjects included breaking down systemic, institutional and or organizational racism, removing barriers for diverse groups, inclusivity of 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, and more.
- Indigenous reconciliation (social, economic, individual, and workplace) showcased research within the context of Northern and rural communities. Subjects included meaningful engagement, reciprocal relationship building, decolonization, deinstitutionalizing discriminatory practices, and more.
- Welcoming and retention included presentations of research, case studies, and other project updates in the scope of welcoming migrants - whether international, inter-province or intra-province - to Northern regions and retaining populations in these Northern and rural communities. Subjects included creating communities where residents feel welcome, building social capital, reducing outmigration, mitigating rural population decline, and more.
- Population attraction, settlement, and support showcased research on the broader theme of Northern Ontario's population, more specifically population attraction, population settlement, and population support. Subjects included revitalizing and reinvesting, service availability, accessibility to resources, transportation, housing, infrastructure and more.

## Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (\*French only session\*)

### 1. Health Habits of Francophone Immigrants in Sudbury, Boroma Sanou

Research on the health of immigrants to Canada suggests that they generally arrive in good health but that their health soon deteriorates and merges with that of the host population. French-speaking immigrants from Africa, the subject of this research, are among the groups most affected by this phenomenon known as the "healthy immigrant effect". While we are aware of certain barriers such as language, financial means, socio-economic conditions, discrimination, organization or knowledge of the healthcare system, and poor access to and use of healthcare services, these barriers are not sufficient to explain this deterioration. Cultural factors are often mentioned but insufficiently studied.

Indeed, most of the research available is not designed to specifically address immigrants. Moreover, their health is only studied in the host environment, without considering their past. In addition, the models used to study health (biomedical, biopsychosocial, ecological) do not sufficiently take cultural factors into account.

An interdisciplinary study of immigrants' health habitus (according to Bourdieu) will provide a more holistic perspective, taking into account their health practices both in their country of origin and in Canada. This more global approach will contribute to a better understanding of their logic of action, their impact on health dynamics, and help identify strategies to improve their participation in public health programs.

#### Key Assets

- Extensive study looking at health changes Francophones often experience when coming to Canada. Mental health challenges, depression, diabetes, and infectious diseases are all more common among immigrants.
- Study looks to close the gap that exists in literature compared to what is available for other people in similar conditions.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- While the research is still in its early stages, exploration of social inequalities, cultural factors, and medical practices will continue.

## 2. Pathways and Experiences of Immigrant Women Living in Northwestern Ontario and the Effects of the Pandemic on their Well-Being, Claudette Gleeson

Recognizing the social and economic integration challenges faced by French-speaking immigrant women, Centr'elles commissioned a consultation to better understand the journeys and experiences of these women in Northwestern Ontario. To this end, a community researcher conducted two focus groups, each with six women, in May 2022. The results revealed several factors that contribute to the exclusion of these women from the host society in general and the economic system in particular. The participants described major challenges in terms of integration, adaptation, and access to services.

These challenges were more pronounced for women living in remote regions or communities than for those living in metropolitan Thunder Bay. Participants identified various problems of access to services, including health, transportation, food, housing, etc., often linked to their status as Francophone, racialized or immigrant women. On this point, it should be noted that immigration statuses such as study permits, closed and open work permits linked to spouses, were perceived by the participants as precarious statuses that "imprisoned" them in precariousness and lack of rights.

In contrast, permanent residency and citizenship were seen as the gold standards that brought positive changes to their lives, including the feeling of having more freedom to decide on their employment without worrying about immigration constraints, to travel or change their place of residence whenever they wished, and to have access to more services and resources. The findings of this study highlight the importance of systemic action on the part of community organizations, employment agencies, and government to improve the well-being of these immigrant women and their retention in Northwestern Ontario.

### Key Assets

- Research on gender equity in two studies, one of Francophone woman during the pandemic, and on Francophone woman immigrants/refugees.
- Highlights the difficulties among women in their ability to obtain jobs, ability to move with family, and existing resources that are in place to access help/support.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Some issues noted were difficulties in integrating into communities, as well as accessing existing services, especially for Francophone populations during the pandemic.
- Further investment acknowledging linguistic and cultural barriers.
- There continues to be a severe lack of public transport throughout Northwestern Ontario, outside of Thunder Bay.
- Difficulties in accessing affordable housing, health services, and community resources for Francophones in the region.

## 3. Cultural Diversity for Employment Excellence, Achille Kaba

A leader in diversity management, Actions Interculturelles is an organization that, for 32 years, has been contributing to the socio-professional integration of immigrants and the enhancement of cultural diversity in our society. One of its objectives is to offer employers a personalized service to help them improve their cultural diversity management practices. They support organizations and companies in implementing tools to attract, integrate and benefit from the talents of workers from cultural communities and visible minorities. The project, "Diversité culturelle au service de l'excellence en emploi", aims to help employers create conditions conducive to the successful integration and retention of people from immigrant backgrounds within their teams. Actions Interculturelles offers a structured approach to Canadian companies and organizations seeking solutions and a humane, practical, and professional approach to managing cultural diversity.

### Key Assets

- Actions Interculturelles actively supports networking between employers to share best cultural practices.

**Key Assets (cont.)**

- By addressing practices that constitute indirect and unconscious discrimination, one can create a more inclusive workplace.

**Efficiencies to Pursue**

- The current state of the labour market in Northern Ontario has created a need for employers to become more inclusive in recruitment, hiring, welcoming, integrating, as well as retaining employees (5 steps on inclusive employer roadmap).

## Reconciliation & Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion

### 1. Promoting Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Integration: Best Practices from Global Case Studies, Anthony Scaffeo

The proposal presents a comprehensive review of 13 case studies focused on initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, inclusion, and social cohesion around the world. The case studies cover a range of topics, including cultural awareness training, refugee support and integration, anti-racism strategies, and multicultural services and resource centres. The key outcomes of these initiatives are improved educational outcomes for marginalized communities, enhanced social integration, increased understanding and respect among different communities, and strengthened diversity and inclusion. The best practices identified in these case studies include collaborative approaches with stakeholders, tailored support services, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and proactive outreach to newcomers. This proposal offers valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and organizations seeking to promote diversity, inclusion, and social cohesion in their respective communities.

**Key Assets**

- Digital Vibes Inc. AI consultation firm, methodology based on machine learning generative AI.
- Themes include integration, cultural exchange, economic empowerment, civic engagement, and inclusive urban/civic planning.

**Efficiencies to Pursue**

- Recommendations for newcomers: engage with the local community, foster collaborative partnerships, implement culturally responsive practices, monitor and evaluate initiatives, promote intercultural dialogue and exchange, raise public awareness, and challenge discrimination.

### 2. Reducing Racism Through Shared Experiences, Sandra Licuime and Ivy Guevarra-Segura

The proposal presents a comprehensive review of 13 The Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group (KLMG) was established in 2008 by newcomers in the town who were struggling to fit in their new home. From meeting in each other's homes, then in a local coffee shop, an opportunity was finally presented to KLMG in 2019 to expand into a permanent home on the main street in town. "The Stope" is a multicultural space run and maintained by its volunteer members. Regular activities are held in a safe and welcoming environment for locals and newcomers where they can congregate over health, social and educational events, and activities. Activities are inclusive thus allowing locals the opportunity to get to know the newcomers and vice versa.

The weekly "World Chats" is an open house where everyone can sit and talk in a friendly, welcoming, and safe environment. "Teatime Around the World" and "Stories from Around the World" offer a relaxing ambience where people can listen and learn other cultures through stories. Food festivals and take-out dinners are also hosted showcasing different cuisines from the different countries and allowing them to have a positive gastronomic experience from other cultures. Whereas its original intent was to create a socialization avenue for newcomers from different countries, cultures, and races, it naturally evolved into an organization that embraces diversity and promotes tolerance between members.

Hate grows from unfounded fears, worries of losing power or change in the status quo. Because of its multicultural nature, Kirkland Lake is experiencing hate due to racism. There is vandalism to businesses in town owned by peoples of colour. Racism stems from limited negative experiences or biased perceptions toward certain people or culture. KLMG's inclusive activities allow for shared experiences from newcomers and locals alike. Racism, fear, and hate are replaced by new, positive, and actual experiences of various cultures in a passive manner.

**Key Assets**

- The Kirkland Multicultural Group was founded in 2008 with a focus to support, have fun together, and reduce isolation for newcomers to the community.
- Celebration of local events together such as weddings, local events, holidays, and sporting events.
- Various programs and initiatives such as "World Chats", education through shared experiences, and shared experiences to combat racism.

**Efficiencies to Pursue**

- There is still work to be done in integrating newcomers to Kirkland Lake, whether they are from within Canada or international.

- As a result of the changing landscape due to immigration and population increase from immigration, there is increased racism throughout the community.

### 3. Proposal for Change – Dialects for Indigenous People, Koral Hamilton

The paper presented describes a new concept of clinical psychotherapy for Indigenous people. This therapy is intended to begin in the homes and is meant to be a program to help Indigenous families cope with intimate partner violence, substance use, trauma, criminalization, and other socio-economic factors that affect well-being. Prisons are the new residential schools. Although Indigenous people make up only 5% of Canada's population, they are grossly overrepresented in Canada's prison system. According to the most recent statistics from Statistics Canada, in 2020/2021, Indigenous men represented 30% of male admissions to provincial and territorial custody and 32% to federal custody. Indigenous women represented 42% of female custody admissions to provincial and territorial custody and 40% to federal custody in 2020/2021. Indigenous youth represented 48% of youth male admissions to custody, while female Indigenous youth represented 62% of youth female admissions to custody (Statistics Canada, 2021).

The increasing levels of Indigenous youth incarceration support the theory of intergenerational trauma and colonization being the root causes of most issues faced by Indigenous people. It also supports the need for early intervention, starting in Indigenous homes. The therapy is derived from Dialectic Behavioural Therapy (DBT) which was developed and evaluated by Dr. Linehan in 1993. It was originally developed as a treatment for borderline personality disorder (BPD). BPD is theorized to be the result of untreated high levels of trauma. This is indicative that this therapy has the potential to heal intergenerational trauma.

The therapy provides people with healthy coping mechanisms and skills in mindfulness, emotional regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness. Given the effectiveness of DBT for individuals with complex trauma and impulsive, destructive behaviours, it is hypothesized that when adapted to suit the cultural needs of Indigenous peoples, this therapy is the way to healing and reconciliation.

#### Key Assets

- Unique Get Together Society, work with the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) communities through services and supports.
- Paper focuses on Indigenous peoples' issues with criminalization.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Indigenous peoples are being incarcerated at a much higher rate compared to the rest of the population, which stems from intergenerational trauma resulting from colonization.
- Dialectic Behaviour Therapy differs from traditional Western therapy, with an emphasis on learning to be comfortable with strong emotions and learning to love the good and bad parts of oneself.
- This program is designed to replace the standardized court ordered treatment programs.

### 4. KA tho i:kéhse': I am here, Michelle Kennedy

Sudbury, Ontario, is on the lands of the Anishinabek Nation. However, it has become home to many non-Indigenous people who have shaped the landscape over hundreds of years to reflect their perspectives and worldviews. This presentation looked at the visual representations in Greater Sudbury that reflect Indigenous voices, experiences, and worldviews. They shared the detailed meaning behind murals created by BIPOC artists in the downtown core, which boasts several murals funded by Up Here, an independent urban art festival. The presenters shared best practices for supporting and initiating projects that support Indigenous youth in taking on large-scale murals. Looking toward the future of the North, ensuring Indigenous representation and naming of places is essential to maintaining respectful relationships and ensuring Indigenous peoples in the urban centre are reflected in their territory.

#### Key Assets

- In recent years, there has been a general increase in awareness of FNMI people and their presence in the community. Actions such as land acknowledge statements only go so far.
- Outland Youth Employment Program (OYEP) grants: the application process is friendly and encompasses the true meaning of giving; the grant is there to support the youth.
- Initiatives to uplift the youth and gather to hear their ideas, to make an image that represents what they are going through.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- FNMI people continue to be underrepresented in their communities. They are often not reflected in the landscape or art and find it difficult obtaining spaces and advocating for representation.
- This project allows people to assert their identity in this space, tell stories of their land, reclaim colonial space, and build/foster relationships between non-FN and FN people.
- Will be important to continue to support local Indigenous art, work with FN members to find out who the artists are, support opportunities for youth-led initiatives, provide direct financial support, and include Indigenous voices in decision making from youth to the elderly.

## Welcoming and Retention

### 1. Creating a thriving multicultural community: The Case of Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group (KLMG), Anna McPherson and Sarah Phillips

Since 1919, Kirkland Lake has attracted migrant and immigrant families because of gold and its complementary industries. However, the unfamiliar community could make newcomers feel isolated, negatively impacting their mental health and ability to function to their full potential. Language and cultural barriers, limited resources, and the unique geographical and environmental experiences of Kirkland Lake can combine to place immeasurable pressure on a new family and dictate their ability to survive or thrive in the community. Often the conditions are such that new families struggle, resulting in them leaving the town. In 2005, Sandra Reygada Licuime from Chile was in such a situation. Far from her family, unable to speak English or French and without any other support in town, she found herself feeling isolated from the community. Sandra eventually met other people who were in the same situation. The need to connect instantly bonded them together and the group became known as Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group. It conducted free and inclusive activities such as sports events, beach days, and food festivals.

KLMG was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2015 and served as an instant support group for newcomers offering resources such as town orientation, housing, employment, community groups, schooling, English conversation circles and children's activities. The group also networks with business owners, local government, and official settling services. In 2019, KLMG moved to its permanent home, 'The Stope'. It became a safe and welcoming environment that allows newcomers and locals to congregate over health, social and educational events. Through these shared activities, locals get to know the newcomers and vice versa.

The permanent space also allows everyone to showcase and share their talents and skills allowing them to make valuable contributions to their community, fulfilling purpose and self-worth and supporting them as productive partners, while building community connections. True to its mission of connecting cultures, the KLMG is continuously seeking partnerships with other local organizations in its bid to become a more inclusive partner for change. By facilitating and fostering integration between locals and newcomers, it continues to be a dynamic force in creating a harmonious, vibrant, and thriving multicultural town in Northern Ontario.

### Key Assets

- The KLMG is a group of newcomers to the community fostering a sense of community in Kirkland Lake. The group aims to help newcomers practise their English, learn about local/social norms, and establish support networks.
- Regularly planned activities and opportunities for members to share their passions.
- Provide short- and long-term support in the community through orientation, integration, social connection, and educational opportunities.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Both government and employers are looking to new immigrants to fill worker shortages, yet there continues to be groups of underutilized skilled men and women in the community.
- Critical to acknowledge the importance of social connection and encourage employees to be a part of the community, part of the business mindset, culture, and practices.





## 2. The accessibility of autism services for children in Northern Ontario: The role of spatial factors and children's travel behaviours, Julien Bonin

This research examined how spatial factors and travel-related behaviours of children on the autism spectrum impact the ability to access autism services in Northern Ontario. The region is characterized by an extensive geographic area with low population density resulting in lower accessibility and availability compared to other parts of the province. The Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel (2019) identified that children living in rural, remote, and northern communities face additional service barriers; however, to date, there have been no specific practical recommendations to overcome these challenges.

This research consisted of two phases: phase one uses secondary data to determine the locations of Applied Behaviour Analysis, speech-language pathology and occupational therapy providers. They then geocode them within a geographic information system (GIS) to estimate travel time using an automobile to access these services. Phase 2 involved asking parents/guardians via a questionnaire about potential service barriers and their child travel behaviours. Variations for urban and non-urban families were also explored. Little information exists concerning the personal effort required to transport an autistic child; sensory, anxiety or communication issues can result in unsafe travel behaviours.

This research will help determine not only the autism services in rich and poor areas, but also whether families with autistic children can safely travel the distances required to access services. This research is timely as it is not known how changes to the Ontario Autism Program influenced Northern Ontarian families' ability to access autism services, and how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted autism service delivery methods.

### Key Assets

- A specialized study of Northern Ontario and the services that are available for parents of children with autism - an extensive geography area with a very low population density.
- There are 46 different service providers in Northern Ontario, however urban areas maintain 45 of the 78 locations in the region, with significantly fewer locations in rural areas.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- 75 dissemination areas in Northern Ontario did not have all season access to service providers.
- On average, takes longer to access services in rural areas compared to urban ones.
- Spatial factors have been identified as key challenges, in addition to 70 per cent of those polled noting that driving with children with autism can be distracting.

- Common challenges continue to persist: Urban caregivers, lack of capacity, and wait-listing.

## 3. Being proactive in rural Canada: Creating mechanisms for inclusive workplaces that support employers and employees, Elaine Flores

The Temiskaming Shores & Area Chamber of Commerce (TSACC) consists of 19 cities and townships (30,000 residents). Like many small towns, engaging newcomers is exceptionally difficult due to various barriers, e.g. less access to resources, less experience or willingness among locals to engage with newcomer cultures, and lower levels of diversity. As new immigrants and refugees to Canada are predominantly from highly religious and non-religious countries, our community networks have expressed a need to support newcomers and marginalized groups in rural areas, but they do not have the resources or support to do this effectively and systematically where diverse religious supports for building community are absent.

To help employers address a strong desire to welcome and recruit immigrants and refugees, while struggling to attract or retain them, six organizations have piloted a cross-sector project: TSACC, the City of Temiskaming Shores, Keepers of the Circle Indigenous Hub, Rural Development Network (RDN), the Centre for Civic Religious Literacy (CCRL), and the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.

The two-year project started in December 2021 with the goal to pilot: 1. An employee resource group that reflects the needs of the local immigrant and refugee population to increase employers' and employees' understanding, policies, and practices to recruit and retain staff; 2. Faith and belief-friendly workplace certification to meet local needs, based on the success of such initiatives in multinational organizations.

This presentation shared their process, lessons learned, and considered why and how this is important for other rural communities. This includes why it is important to have Indigenous voices and perspectives in this work and how it can be done. This project builds on previous work between the City, Keepers of the Circle, RDN, and CCRL in Temiskaming Shores (2021–2022).

### Key Assets

- The purpose of this program is to co-create and pilot two key business initiatives that will support recruitment and retention of newcomers, and employee resource groups.
- Aimed to be self-sufficient after the program ends, builds community, and promotes understanding and religious literacy.
- More multilateral learning from other employees and a greater sense of community.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Continuing challenge making this project sustainable and long-term in the community of Temiskaming Shores.

#### 4. Culture of the North, BIPOC Youth Taking Action, Kamilah Francis and Kerry Young

##### Key Assets

- Extensive study and research about what it is like to be a BIPOC student in the Northern Ontario education system.
- Provides spaces to share lived experiences, perspectives, and ideas.
- Youth-led and arts-based opportunities for cultural celebration.
- Equity action teams aim to engage youth in learning, celebration, and understanding of diverse cultures within the districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin.

##### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Will be critical to increase the hiring of BIPOC students where possible as well as establish clear anti-racist policies and protocols.
- To create workshops, training, and youth-led information sessions that discuss the topic of racism.
- To increase BIPOC youth representation.

## Population Attraction, Settlement and Support

### 1. Access to a Francophone and Bilingual Workforce: A Proven Strategy in Northern Ontario, Stéphanie Cotnoir

Over three years ago, a Francophone and bilingual immigrant recruitment strategy was established for the Northern Ontario region. The strategy connects the needs of employers in the region with potential candidates, locally, nationally, and internationally. The project is now resulting in the regular arrival of new Francophone families throughout Northern Ontario. The strategy grew out of Northern Policy Institute's (NPI) Matchmaker programs. In this presentation, the speaker set the context for the development of this initiative, presented the process currently underway in Northern Ontario, and highlighted the effective results for Northern Ontario.

Following the presentation, participants learned of best practices for employers and municipalities in Northern Ontario. This work is made possible by the Ontario Northern Economic Development Corporation, in collaboration with all Northern Ontario settlement services.

##### Key Assets

- Mandate: To assist Francophone permanent residents and accepted refugees in the labour market, offering training and recruitment events assisting employers in hiring international candidates.

- Organization that wants to support Francophones who are in a minority setting.
- There is greater availability of foreign students and temporary workers throughout the region.
- At la Société économique de l'Ontario (SEO) continued services offered through matchmaker programs and offering resources to employers who employ eligible candidates for the initiative.

##### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Smaller companies require more resources when it comes to linking employers with employees, especially in Northern Ontario.
- Look to narrow the gap between the need and supply of university students in Northern Ontario.
- Presenting employers with strategies that would allow them to access more person power.

### 2. A la rencontre de la Nordicité : le cas de l'université de Hearst, Samantha Loiser and Michael Dieazet

Faced with the vast green spaces of Northern Ontario, marveling at the beauty of the white snow that envelops the conifers in winter, but far from family, friends, and cultural references, it's easy to feel disoriented... In short, it's easy to "lose the North"! It's in this reality that Université de Hearst seeks to play a key role by integrating nordicity into the student experience in order to improve the welcome and retention of students in the northern region.

Aware of the importance of welcoming and supporting the international student population, it is important to provide them with the best possible conditions. The University also aspires to instill in students an appreciation, even a love, for the region and its hobbies that we hold dear to our hearts. The focus is on sharing with all students the values of nordicity, as well as the cultural and natural riches of our region.

For more than 10 years, the University's mentoring team, under the direction of Student Affairs and in collaboration with the International Office, has been offering students the chance to discover the activities that make our northern lives come alive. These include snowmobiling, skating, field hockey, skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.

These activities create the right conditions for sharing our values and spending quality time together while fostering community living, collaboration and team spirit, exchange, appreciation of differences, and the development of a sense of belonging and well-being.

With a view to continuous improvement, l'Université de Hearst is now considering the following questions: To what extent can Nordic activities strengthen students' social skills? How can we further stimulate the curiosity and openness of our entire student population, so that these activities can become part of their everyday, more "nordicized" lives?

### Key Assets

- Research on international students who have come to study at the Université de Hearst, mostly those who come from Francophone regions.
- Inquiry into how international students experience post-secondary education in Northern Ontario.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Important to continue to explore/understand how newcomers to Canada experience the Northern regions of Ontario.

## 3. The State of Discrimination in Sudbury, Ines Bouguerra

This study is part of our efforts to make Sudbury a welcoming Francophone community. Its objective is to consult with Black Francophone immigrants in Sudbury to identify the extent of discrimination they face. The research was carried out in two stages. First, a questionnaire was administered to Black Francophone immigrants (N = 173). Secondly, individual interviews were conducted with several of Sudbury's black community (N=30). The quantitative approach enabled us to collect data on general perceptions of discrimination in Sudbury, to identify the rate of inclusion of Black immigrants in the Francophone and Anglophone communities, and to apprehend the immigrant's experience of discrimination (lived or witnessed).

The population consulted for this study confirms the existence of this phenomenon in Sudbury. However, we found a discrepancy between perceived and experienced discrimination. Perceptions and experiences of discrimination vary according to age, gender, years of residence in Sudbury, immigrant status and language skills. According to the qualitative study, many manifestations of discrimination in Sudbury are more pronounced in the employability sector, particularly in the teaching field.

According to the qualitative study, many manifestations of discrimination in Sudbury are more pronounced in the employability sector, in this case, in the teaching field. Certain characteristics of the host community (political vulnerability, demo linguistic portrait of the Francophone population, language insecurity, institutional incompleteness, identity discourse, etc.) appear to have an impact on the integration and socio-economic inclusion of visible minority immigrants. This study has resulted in some forty recommendations for action to combat discrimination. These actions are aimed at the various levels (federal, provincial and municipal) and sectors.

### Key Assets

- Purpose of this project is to consult black, Francophone immigrants who live in Sudbury to determine the scope of discrimination they confront.

- The City of Greater Sudbury is part of 14 communities selected in Canada for this pilot project.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Discrimination is still evident in Sudbury, 80 per cent of respondents stated that there continues to be discrimination in Sudbury.



# Roundtables

Roundtable sessions aimed to identify current needs, challenges, and opportunities in Northern Ontario for the next 12 months. The purpose of each roundtable session was to allow for information exchange, capacity assessment, as well as priority and goal setting for the coming year in each area. The three key areas are: Establishing a baseline, Identifying challenges, and Identifying priorities/next steps. The focus of discussion touched on enhancement of local capacity, mutual support, and leveraging resources.

## Concurrent Priority Setting Roundtables: Actions for the Next Year

### 1. Knowing Your Neighbour: Collaborating to Increase Capacity and Service Delivery

**Facilitator: Pierre Riopel - University of Sudbury**

Northern Ontario's landmass is over 800,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is impossible to know about everything that is happening in our regions. But there are ways to highlight efficiencies to increase capacity and service delivery, by knowing, sharing, and connecting. What are some best practices related to service delivery and partnerships? How can we work to remove silos and highlight efficiencies? Are there efficiencies that can be highlighted, or is there broader, systemic change that needs to be undertaken?

#### Key Assets

- The general feeling was that there is a strong social support system in various Northern Ontario communities that allows individuals to stay in the region.
- Collaboration between communities in Northern Ontario is present.

#### Gaps

- Access to professional services remains difficult, especially for those in more remote areas.
- Services often operate with limited funds and merge with services offered in the 'Big 5' of Northern Ontario.
- There continues to be obvious gaps in pre-settlement services. Northern Ontario boasts attraction but because of weak funding, makes it increasingly difficult to support.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- There needs to be a balance between equity and funding for small rural communities.
- There needs to be ways to retain people rather than wholly focusing on attraction efforts; a balance between the two strategies.
- Breaking silos with social gatherings, supports, and community connections.

### 2. Making Existing Programs Work for YOU

**Facilitator: Jasmine Morin - Service Canada**

Federal, provincial, and municipal programs are claimed to be ever prevalent in our regions – though, that might not reflect the reality end users are facing. What programs related to population growth currently exist in Northern Ontario? Are these programs being utilized? Can they be made more effective?

#### Key Assets

- The Outreach Support Centre Line already exists for those who are not near a Service Canada office (150 km or more), for those who are living in remote communities.
- There already exists several organizations that are based in and serve Northern Ontario. These include but are not limited to the Timmins and District Multicultural Centre, the Northern Immigration Pilot, the Timmins Learning Centre, the Thunder Bay Adult Learning Centre, and the Literacy Council of Temiskaming.

#### Gaps

- The housing crisis is being felt across Northern Ontario, which has been most evident through the lack of affordable housing and lengthy waitlists for available units.
- In regions like the District of Kenora, attraction efforts have slowed down due to severe shortages of affordable/adequate housing.
- Large gaps in public transportation are also an immense challenge.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Explore what is currently being done in British Columbia in response to the housing mandate. There are both incentives for people to provide affordable housing units as well as renovations of abandoned buildings.
- Language acquisition services represent a significant need for newcomers, especially those without permanent resident status.
- Important to recognize that retention is just as crucial as attraction. The best retention efforts are those that create a feeling of community for people who might otherwise feel alienated or not welcomed.

### 3. Capitalizing on Change While Playing to Our Strengths

#### Facilitator: Gisèle Regimbal - Keyword Communications

There has been unprecedented change the past three years: people out-migrating en masse from large cities, remote work becoming the new norm, and people wanting more for their money. Northern Ontario is perfectly poised to capitalize on these changes, are we ready?

#### Key Assets

- There has been a considerable effort regarding connecting resources in the North through initiatives such as Measurement Month and programs offered through organizations such as the Sikh temple in Sudbury, which provides services to international students.
- Northern Ontario is well positioned for the emerging trend of remote work. A solid base of ICT infrastructure already exists, yet room for improvement.
- Improvement in work opportunities for international students: IRCC has lessened required paperwork; students can now work on/off campus and are not bound by 20-hour workweeks.

#### Gaps

- It is important to manage expectations as there continues to be a disconnect between universities/colleges and the local economies in which they operate. There are certain graduates/positions that simply cannot be retained.
- Limited data for those who have recently arrived in Canada; it is critical to establish a baseline for data as it often varies between geographies.
- Limited data for those who have recently arrived in Canada; it is critical to establish a baseline for data as it often varies between geographies.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- What can make a difference to newcomers? More invitations to socialize and discuss may lead to more welcoming communities; the more newcomers are curious about their community, the less hesitancy felt.
- Promote jobseekers who are willing to go to places such as Kapuskasing.
- To combat the housing crisis: Housing studies at the municipal level, environmental scans, and the utilization of dual infrastructure.

### 4. Working with Employers to Ensure Prosperity, Equity, and Inclusion

#### Facilitator: Dania Kuzbari, Sault Ste. Marie Career Centre

With an aging labour force, it is now more important than ever to both attract talent to our regions and ensure the existing population is fully participating in the labour market. What are some best practices to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in workplaces? What support do employers need to help with this process? What are the new challenges these institutions/companies/organizations are facing? What are some of the strategies that are being employed to keep things moving forward?

#### Key Assets

- There are presently lots of resources available for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) training (NOBEEP, AFNOO, etc.)

#### Gaps

- Lack of information available to employers on where to access training, as well as a lack of time to do this work/training.
- When there is information available, there is often insufficient promotion.
- There is often a lack of willingness on the part of the employers.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- EDI resources need to be promoted by municipalities to encourage the uptake from businesses.
- There should be provisions of incentives to employers that meet diversity targets, such as tax credits from governments.
- Need to educate employers about immigrants (myth busting), success stories and communicate the desire that immigrants have to succeed and integrate into the community.

# Panel Discussion

In addition to breakout sessions and roundtables, panel discussions were held allowing for knowledge and information exchange between panellists. Each panel had a set of pre-determined questions, followed by a live, audience-driven question and answer session. Topics of the panels at the 2023 Magnetic North Conference included fostering welcoming communities for Indigenous peoples, population retention, and successful community governance models.

## Panel #1: Fostering Welcoming Communities for Indigenous Peoples

- Panellist 1: Regina Mandamin, Senior Specialist-Indigenous, Deloitte
- Panellist 2: Beverley Roy, President of Kenjgewin Teg
- Panellist 3: Connor Lafortune, Speaker, Master's student at Laurentian University
- Moderator: Jennifer Johnson, Regulated Integrated Immigration Consultant at interCultural Avec Immigration Inc.

Sustainable population growth cannot happen without the involvement and direction of Indigenous peoples. Communities and organizations should empower Indigenous peoples to facilitate and lead conversations around reconciliation as an important step toward creating welcoming communities. Two industry professionals discussed the importance of internal and external welcoming practices. An Indigenous student provided an individual-level perspective on ongoing welcoming efforts. The goal was to provide attendees with knowledge on reconciliation practices and how to implement them in their personal and professional lives.

### Key Assets

- Indigenous institutions in Ontario have can advance conversations while also building and contributing to meaningful Indigenous participation.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- Indigenous education has been chronically underfunded in addition to being largely project-based.
- Cultural stands must be put in place, such as creating policies and expectations for future leaders to have the necessary framework to continue doing the work.
- It is important to reach out and meet with local organizations and Indigenous organizations/ service providers to develop an action plan, build a community of interest and share what is happening.

- Will be critical to continue to confront biases and question everything you know and how you have come to know it. The first step is to learn about yourself and build relationships, in addition to engaging with literature, existing organizations, and communities.

## Panel #2: Reasons to Stay: Retaining Our Population

- Panellist 1: Thomas Mercier, Réseau du Nord
- Panellist 2: El Hadji Diop, International student, Project Coordinator at Laurentian University
- Panellist 3: Susan Sinclair, Academic Director at Oshki-Pimache-O-Win (The Wenjack Education Institute)
- Moderator: Martin Lefebvre, Senior Researcher at Northern Policy Institute

Exploring multiple perspectives from individuals and organizations in Northern Ontario: Why do people leave our communities? What would make them stay or bring them back? What does the research show, and what do individual experiences tell us?

### Key Assets

- What people like about their communities: safe and good to raise a family, a high quality of life, physical environment/close proximity to nature.
- Evidence from Northern Ontario that attitudes such as racism and discrimination have not been major reasons for relocation.
- There has been evidence of modest progress in the sectors of education and housing in the north.
- Many Francophone organizations have become more diverse in the past few years through the hiring of more French-speaking newcomers.

### Efficiencies to Pursue

- We know that the three main reasons people leave Northern Ontario are because of social factors, economic factors, and limited educational opportunities.

- There continues to be linguistic barriers as many Francophone students have limited opportunities to “live in French”; the unilingual Francophone labour market in Northern Ontario barely exists.
- It is important to encourage leadership and community development in order to give young people opportunities to become involved in their community (Community involvement helps give students a sense of belonging in their community).
- It will be critical in the future to continue talks between Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the community to determine what is needed in these municipalities, including but not limited to increasing Francophone immigration, welcoming strategies, and population retention.

### Panel #3: Learning from Practitioners: Successful Community Governance Models

- Panellist 1: Sally Dunton, Sudbury Community Foundation
- Panellist 2: Jean-Paul Kalwahali, Réseau du Nord
- Panellist 3: Joanne Gervais, ACFO of Greater Sudbury
- Panellist 4: Julie Léger, Discitus
- Moderator: Martin Lajeunesse, FedNor

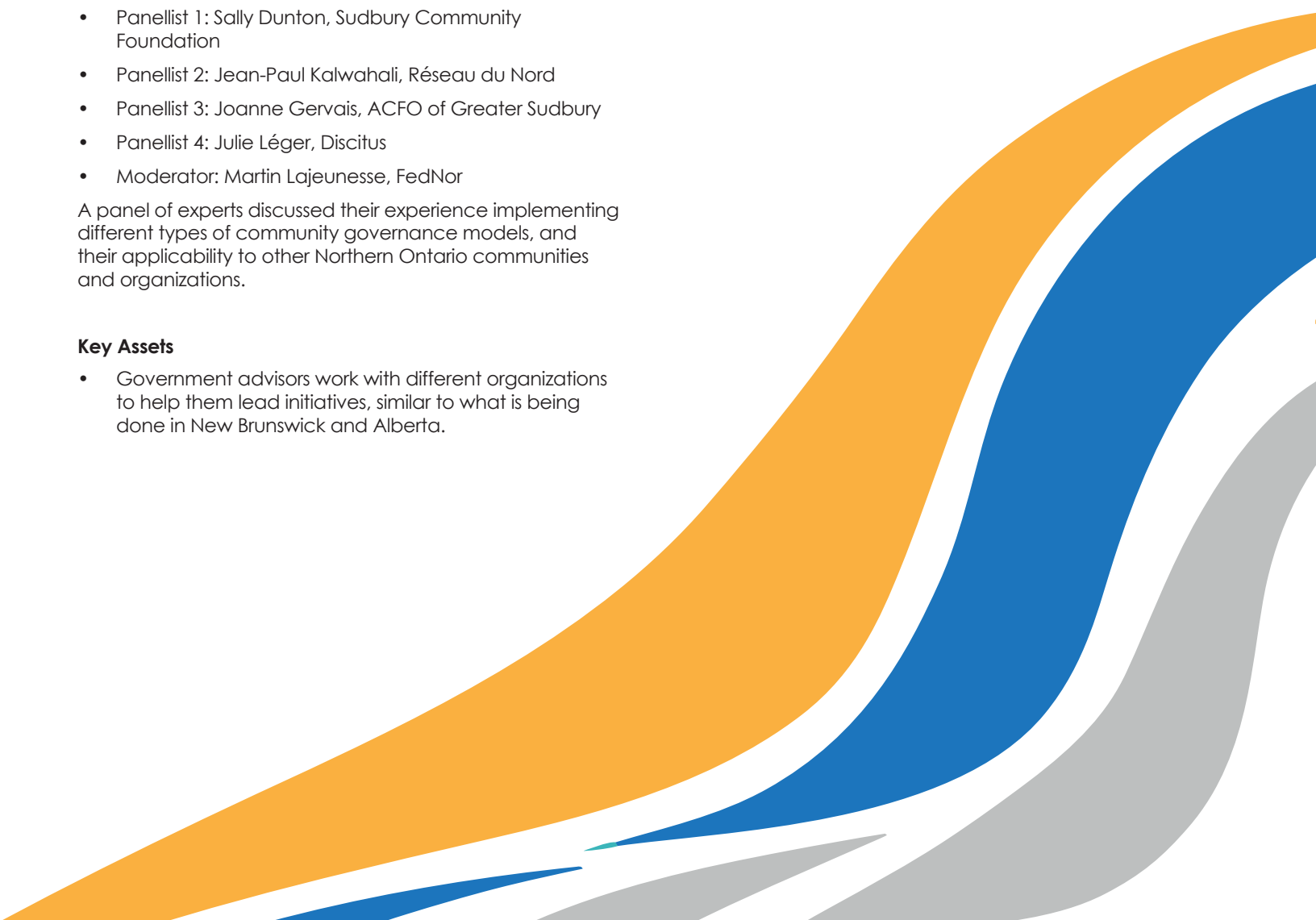
A panel of experts discussed their experience implementing different types of community governance models, and their applicability to other Northern Ontario communities and organizations.

#### Key Assets

- Government advisors work with different organizations to help them lead initiatives, similar to what is being done in New Brunswick and Alberta.

#### Efficiencies to Pursue

- There is often a disconnect in the organizational dynamics; not everyone is at the same level in organizational performance/governance.
- There continues to be limited funding for many projects in the region.
- “Community governance models” is a subject that numerous researchers have addressed. However, Francophone service delivery has not been examined in detail.
- In terms of strategy and attraction, it is essential to incorporate elements of lived experiences from those who have immigrated to the region. There needs to be a willingness and the flexibility needed to change; be open to collaborate.
- Program design must reflect the unique character of Northern Ontario. Development of certain services benefit from local representation and experience.



## Conclusion

Conference attendees represented organizations from across sectors throughout Northern Ontario. They contributed to the discussion and made their needs heard. What resulted was a refocus on past goals with concrete, actionable steps to move them toward completion. Specifically, Magnetic North 2023 was focused on reconciliation and anti-racism, attraction and settlement of domestic and international migrants, and retention of the existing populations.

Participants discussed the progress that has been made regarding Indigenous reconciliation and knowledge-sharing among non-Indigenous populations. Moreover, discussions touched on the activities of multiple organizations whose work touches on or revolves around anti-racist initiatives. These organizations talked about the progress that has been made thus far as well as what will be required in the future to further their agendas. Retention strategies were also paramount to this year's conference, highlighting the importance of retaining existing populations to our northern communities. Finally, there were discussions about the capacity of various Northern Ontario sectors as were the strategies that can be used to narrow the gaps that still exist in the region's services, governance, and infrastructure.

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





# Appendix A: Organizations at the Conference

Attending the Magnetic North 2023 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.

- Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services (ACCES) Employment
- L'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario (AFCO) du Grand Sudbury
- Actions interculturelles
- Association des Francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario (AFNOO)
- Brock University
- Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC)
- Centre Francophone
- Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Migration and Integration - Toronto Metropolitan University
- Chukuni Communities Development Corporation
- City of Greater Sudbury
- City of Kenora
- City of North Bay
- Collège Boréal
- Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario
- Conseil Scolaire Public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario
- Deloitte
- Destination Northern Ontario
- Digital Vibes Inc.
- Discitus
- Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor)
- Future North
- Government of Ontario
- Grand Council Treaty 3
- Greater Sudbury Utilities Inc.
- Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board (CDSB)
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- InterCultural Avec Immigration Inc.
- Kapuskasing Economic Development Corporation
- Kenjgewin Teg
- Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group
- Laurentian University
- Le Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury
- Levert Group
- Mayor's Office, City of Greater Sudbury
- Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
- Ministry of Northern Development
- Mot clé, Keyword Communications
- Municipality of Red Lake
- Municipality of Sioux Lookout
- NEOnet Inc
- North Bay & District Multicultural Centre
- North Superior Workforce Planning Board
- Northern Policy Institute
- Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre
- One Light Diversity Centre
- Ontario Health
- Oshki-Pimache\_O-Win (The Wenjack Education Institute)

- Réseau du Nord
- Rural Development Network
- Sault Community Career Centre
- Société économique de l'Ontario (SÉO)
- Service Canada
- Services d'établissement du nord-est de l'Ontario
- Sudbury Community Foundation
- Sudbury Local Immigration Partnership (SLIP)
- Superior East Community Futures Development Cooperation
- The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy
- The City of Sault Ste. Marie
- Thunder Bay Multicultural Association
- Timmins & District Multicultural Centre
- Town of Cochrane
- Township of Dubreuilville
- Township of Hornepayne
- Township of Terrace Bay
- Unique Get Together Society
- University of Hearst
- University of Waterloo
- Yes Employment Services

## Appendix B: Priorities Identified at the Magnetic North 2022 Conference – Actions (Update)

This section of recommendations is based on ideas expressed in the breakout sessions and the panels during the 2022 Conference. The purpose of the recommended actions and projects is to build on those ideas and establish steps to achieve efficiencies.

The information provided below is intended to highlight initiatives throughout Northern Ontario that align with previously identified 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](mailto:magneticnorth@northernpolicy.ca) to have your initiative accounted for in upcoming work. The action items resulting from the 2022 Conference are listed below, with the progress made on each item over the past year in **blue type**.

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

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. For example, Réseau du Nord continues 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). Also, the Sudbury Workers Education and Advocacy Centre (SWEAC) continues to host 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.
  - 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. Community partners in Temiskaming Shores, including Keepers of the Circle Indigenous Hub, have piloted a cross-sector project to help employers address a strong desire to welcome and recruit immigrants and refugees, while struggling to attract or retain them substantially. This includes why it is important to have Indigenous voices and perspectives in this work and how it can be done.
  - 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.

## Appendix C: Roundtable Session Supplementary Information

### Knowing Your Neighbour: Collaborating to Increase Capacity and Service Delivery

Northern Ontario's landmass is over 800,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It's impossible to know everything happening in our regions. But there are ways to highlight efficiencies to increase capacity and service delivery, by knowing, sharing, and connecting. What are some best practices related to service delivery and partnerships? How can we work to remove silos and highlight efficiencies? Are there efficiencies that can be highlighted, or is there broader, systemic change that needs to be undertaken?

### Making Existing Programs Work for YOU

Federal, provincial, and municipal programs are claimed to be ever prevalent in our regions – though that might not reflect the reality end users are facing. What programs related to population growth currently exist in Northern Ontario? Are these programs being utilized? Can they be made more effective?

### Capitalizing on Change While Playing to Our Strengths

The past three years have shown unprecedented amounts of change: people out-migrating en masse from large cities, remote work becoming the new norm, and people wanting more for their money. Northern Ontario is perfectly poised to capitalize on these changes, are we ready?

### Working with Employers to Ensure Prosperity, Equity, and Inclusion (\*French only\*)

With an aging labour force, it is now more important than ever to both attract talent to our regions, while also ensuring the existing population is fully participating in the labour market. What are some best practices to improve EDI efforts in workplaces? What supports do employers need to help with this process? What are the new challenges these institutions/companies/organizations are facing? What are some of the strategies that are being employed to keep things moving forward?



## Appendix D: Panel Questions

### Panel #1: Fostering Welcoming Communities for Indigenous Peoples

**Question 1:** Regina and Beverley, could you each start by giving an overview of practices your organization undertakes to help further reconciliation, both internally and externally?

**Question 2:** Connor, in your experience, what impacts are reconciliation efforts having in the community/regions of Northern Ontario?

**Question 3:** Regina, what steps should organizations take to introduce and implement internal reconciliation practices? External?

**Question 4:** Beverley, what role do post-secondary institutes play in fostering welcoming communities?

**Question 5:** Connor, what advice do you have for individuals and/or organizations who are looking to become more inclusive and welcoming of Indigenous peoples? Where can we start?

**Question 6:** (All) Who are some key actors that should be involved in promoting and supporting reconciliation practices in the North?

### Panel #2: Reasons to Stay: Retaining Our Population

**Question 1:** Thomas, Réseau du Nord partnered with Northern Policy Institute to conduct research on why Francophones leave Northern Ontario, can you share some of these findings with us?

**Question 2:** Hadji, are there any barriers currently in place that might dissuade young people from staying in Northern Ontario communities? Can you name a few?

**Question 3:** Are there any difficulties to living in Northern Ontario that uniquely affect Indigenous youth? Can you give a few examples?

**Question 4:** Susan, what draws students to your educational institute? Do you have any advice for other post-secondary institutions? Are there challenges to this attraction piece?

**Question 5:** Hadji, what can municipalities and local organizations do to help entice young people to stay long-term? What advice do you have for them?

**Question 6:** What can community-based organizations do to encourage Indigenous youth to prosper in North Ontario? What strategies would you recommend they employ?

**Question 7:** Susan, what should be some priority areas for post-secondary institutes to retain their students in Northern Ontario? Does The Wenjack Education Institute have any innovative practices you'd like to share? Are there specific practices that work best regarding the retention of Indigenous youth?

**Question 8:** Thomas, in consideration of the research findings and the other work Réseau du Nord conducts, can you identify some priority areas for action for the next year? The next five years?



## Panel #3: Learning from Practitioners: Successful Community Governance Models

**Question 1:** Joanne, you were a member of Community Planning, a structure that brings together Greater Sudbury's Francophone organizations. Can you tell us a little more about the community governance system put in place by Sudbury's Francophone community, how it was set up, what the decision-making mechanisms are in this committee and what input government representatives have had on this committee?

**Question 2:** Julie, as a trainer by profession, you have assisted and accompanied several organizations in the implementation of various community governance models. Can you give us a concrete example of your experiences in the context of community cohesion? More specifically, can you suggest ways to reduce non-concerted approaches and individualistic actions and foster cohesion, coherence and collaboration in a community?

**Question 3:** Jean-Paul, how do we put a plan in place, or how do we bring community partners who are recipients of IRCC funding to the table to discuss funding issues? What is Réseau du Nord's vision for Francophone immigration service delivery and the upcoming Call for Proposals from the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada?

**Question 4:** Sally, your organization has a variety of funding sources, and you are one of the recipients of federal government funding from the Community Services Stimulus Fund. Can you explain the contexts in which you received this funding and what criteria and mechanisms you put in place to better distribute this funding to local community organizations? How do you

**Question 5:** In light of what the other panellists have mentioned in their presentations and based on your experiences, do you have any solutions or suggestions to offer regarding the implementation of community governance in Francophone immigration in Northern Ontario?



# 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 and Kirkland Lake. We currently have a satellite office in North Bay. 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**  
Mercedes Labelle

**Come North 2020 Conference Report**

**All Roads Lead Home (series)**  
Mercedes Labelle

To stay connected or get involved, please contact us at:

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