



For Immediate Release

July 14, 2022

Chamber luncheon focuses on inclusive workplace culture

Four local panelists discuss how organizations can be more welcoming for people of diverse abilities and backgrounds in joint event

COMOX VALLEY – The Immigrant Welcome Centre’s Welcoming Communities Coalition and the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce have partnered to present a panel discussion and luncheon on *Developing an Inclusive Culture in the Workplace*.

The July 27th event is for anyone who has ever wondered: how can we make our organizations more inclusive and welcoming? How can we attract and retain people of diverse abilities and backgrounds?

Four local panelists will share their lived experiences and expertise around how we can improve our places of work to be more welcoming to all.

Ramesh Lad, the founder of Step by Step Accessibility Consulting, immigrated to Canada from the UK 21 years ago with a background in supporting youth at risk. As a person born with diverse abilities, Ramesh brings with him a lifetime of personal lived experiences in creating solutions to dealing with environmental barriers within education, employment, leisure, housing, travel, and recreation services.

Diane Naugler, the Director of Future Students & Community Engagement at North Island College is a post-secondary leader and educator who decided never to hide their identity from employers, colleagues, students, or community members. The questions, discomfort, and opportunities this decision set in motion has shaped them into a consistent advocate for inclusivity, equity, and change.

Ramon Ramirez, a mortgage broker and business consultant, moved to Canada 20 years ago from Paraguay and experienced first-hand the challenges of adapting to different customs and business practices. He is now a proud Canadian who volunteers on many boards and believes that diversity fosters innovation and a culture of understanding and harmony.



Phil Edgett is a local realtor who will talk about overcoming challenges as a lifelong entrepreneur with diverse abilities (he started his first business enterprise at age 12!). He has extensive experience working with employers and his approach to new opportunities is one of positivity and innovation.

The event will be moderated by Chamber CEO Dianne Hawkins. Coalition coordinator Julie Keumbehdjian will also present some of the insights, challenges, and experiences around equity and inclusion shared by local organizations at the Coalition's annual Collaboratory earlier in the year.

When: Wednesday, July 27, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Crown Isle Resort (399 Clubhouse Drive, Courtenay)

Cost: \$50/ticket

Thank you to our sponsors: First Credit Union – Courtenay Branch, Chinook Business Advisory Ltd., Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)

Tickets are available online at web.comoxvalleychamber.com/events and include lunch, a panel discussion, and a question and answer period.

About the Welcoming Communities Coalition

The Immigrant Welcome Centre's Welcoming Communities Coalition is an initiative supporting service coordination, local partnerships, and community-based planning around the needs of newcomers in the North Island. Through community-level research and strategic planning, the WCC identifies barriers facing newcomers, raises awareness around newcomers' needs, and collaborates with local stakeholders to reduce these barriers. Learn more at immigrantwelcome.ca/community-leadership/welcoming-communities-coalition

About the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce is a professional, membership-based, business organization. The Chamber collaborates with its members to foster growth, community, and best business practices, and works on behalf of its members to provide opportunity for Chamber members and employees.

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IWC Media Contact:

Ann McLeod

250-830-0171

Ann.McLeod@ImmigrantWelcome.ca

Chamber Media Contact:

Dianne Hawkins

250-334-3234

dhawkins@comoxvalleychamber.com

Campbell River

200-1170 Shoppers Road

Campbell River, B.C. V9W 2C8

T: 250-830-0171 | F: 250-830-1010

The Comox Valley

407A 5th Street

Courtenay, B.C. V9N 1J7

T: 250-338-6359 | F: 250-338-6359

www.ImmigrantWelcome.ca

info@ImmigrantWelcome.ca