



Chamber's Projects Brings New Canadians to Campbell River Receives IEC-BC Leadership Award

CAMPBELL RIVER, BC - Good things sometimes come in threes and when BC Hydro announced its \$1.3 billion John Hart Generating Station replacement project, it came at about the same time that Island Health announced not one, but two new hospitals for the north island. With these added to other large construction projects underway in the Campbell River area, it was no surprise that employers were concerned about how to source the necessary skills.

With more than \$2 billion in construction on the way, the Campbell River & District Chamber of Commerce got creative. They began to assess the skills that would be needed and established a major projects web portal where project owners could list their needs. They found with 360 people to be employed on the John Hart project alone, they would need to play a role in recruiting skilled workers.

"This was a wake-up call for our businesses," said Chamber CEO Colleen Evans, adding employers realized they didn't have some of the specific talent skills the projects would require to meet labour needs and they needed to consider new opportunities that included attracting newcomers and skilled immigrants as part of their solution. Through IEC-BC's Employer Innovations Fund that was funded by the Province of BC, the Chamber created tools to assess employer readiness to recruit immigrants and found many didn't know where to begin.

"We needed to look at how to attract new people and have a welcoming community so they would want to stay," she said.

With partners that included HR professionals and employers who had successfully recruited immigrants, the Chamber began peer-to-peer mentoring and developed resources and support to build employer capacity to hire new immigrants. As employers gained confidence, they reached out to skilled new Canadians.

"It worked. Newcomers are coming to this community," said Evans.

As a pilot partner of IEC-BC's Connector program, the Chamber is also helping to expand the professional networks of newcomers by connecting local job-ready immigrants with local professionals in their occupation and sector. A member of the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance board, Evans has also been spreading the word about the importance of immigrant employment. She shared Campbell River's Connector experience with other employers at a session on workforce development she facilitated in October 2014.

The Campbell River Chamber of Commerce commitment and innovative solutions to immigrant employment and integration were recognized by IEC-BC with a Leadership Recognition Award at its April 9, 2015 awards event.



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Funded by the Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Province of BC, IEC-BC is a provincial non-government organization that stimulates the integration of skilled immigrant talent into the province's workforce by fostering solutions, building connections and being a champion to help employers attract and retain skilled immigrant talent.

To learn more about the IEC-BC Leadership Recognition awards visit <http://iecbc.ca/2015-leadership-awards>