



REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FOR THE THOMPSON-OKANAGAN

March 2022

Abstract

The following report includes a capacity assessment for British Columbia's Thompson-Okanagan region that focusses on the capacity and resources available in the area to properly and effectively help settle GARs in the region.

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Introduction

Purpose of Assessment

The primary purpose of this study is to create a resource detailing available supports and services in 10 different focus areas (Appendix 1) in five communities within British Columbia's Thompson-Okanagan region.

The five communities are served by the following settlement agencies:

- South Okanagan Immigrant & Community Services (SOICS);
- Kelowna Community Resources (KCR);
- Vernon & District Immigrant and Community Services Society (VDICSS)
- Shuswap Immigrant Services Society (SISS); and
- Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS).

Our goal is to work collectively with the above partner agencies, as this will allow for collaboration, disclosure, and transparency of available services and supports to fit the specific needs of each Government Assisted Refugee (GAR).

In October 2020, the Federal Government announced its three-year Immigration Level Plan that will target the highest level of immigration in the country's history. Canada aims to welcome over 400,000 immigrants in 2021, 2022, and 2023. It is expected that nearly half of these immigrants will be refugees.

This assessment report will be used as a guidepost in allocating GARs in the Thompson-Okanagan region, based on their specific needs and the current community capacity at the time of resettlement. This resource will:

- Determine the available services and supports currently available for the anticipated arrival of GARs.
- Identify gaps and needs within agencies and communities of the Thompson-Okanagan and to determine potential partnering opportunities to fulfill these needs.

With this resource, IRCC and the five participating agencies can work in balanced collaboration to make an informed decision on where a GAR is resettled in the Thompson-Okanagan and ensure they become more self-sufficient and self-sustaining in a shorter period of time. Making their allocated community a long-term home, offering a sense of belonging, benefits not only the GARs themselves but all members of their community, socially and economically.

This study will also reveal the gaps of services and supports in the Thompson-Okanagan. It is anticipated that this knowledge will initiate the steps to get these services in place.

An electronic version of this study is also available at www.vdicss.org/gar and will include the hyperlinks to the variety of websites mentioned in this document.

Geographic Focus of Assessment

The Thompson-Okanagan is located in the Southern Interior of British Columbia, Canada and lies on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territory of the Syilx, Secwépemc, and Nlaka'pamux Nations, who have inhabited these lands for over 10,000 years. It covers an approximate area of 71, 600 km² / 27,644 mi², roughly the same size as Ireland. Home to over 90 communities, the Thompson-Okanagan has a hot and dry climate during the summer. The region is known for its orchards and vineyards, as well as its forests and lakes.

The Thompson-Okanagan has a population of 546,287. Unlike Vancouver Island/Coast and Mainland/Southwest, where the bulk of the population is located near the largest urban centres, the population of Thompson-Okanagan is more evenly dispersed.

Central Okanagan, which includes Kelowna, is the most populous regional district (~194,882). Kamloops is the biggest urban centre in Thompson-Nicola, which has the second-largest population (~130,100) in the region. Penticton and Summerland are both located in the Okanagan-Similkameen (which has a total population of 82,400). The largest city in North Okanagan (population ~83,466) is Vernon. Salmon Arm and Revelstoke are in the Columbia-Shuswap regional district, which has a population of ~53,000.

About 12% of BC's population lives in the Thompson-Okanagan.



Historic Placement of Refugees in British Columbia

Historically, Government Assisted Refugees arriving in British Columbia have been supported through Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS of BC) in Vancouver. Kelowna Community Resources (KCR) has then been subcontracted to support GARs destined for the Thompson-Okanagan. This system has proved successful in many ways and this study does not wish to discredit that process; however, it aims to shed light on our agencies' collaborative strengths at holding control of the contract regionally moving forward. The Syrian Crisis taught the settlement sector a great deal and allowed for honing of systems and strategies to best serve multiple refugee families in a short period of time effectively and efficiently.

Katelin Mitchell, Director of Services at KCR, shared about the early days of welcoming GARs during the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative. There were many lessons learned and challenges faced;

balancing the needs of individuals with drastically different life experiences and expectations with the necessities for success and sustainability in Canada.

Appropriate and affordable housing was, and still is, often the biggest challenge facing settlement agencies and sponsors supporting refugees. However, the housing landscape varies throughout the region and does beg questions of suitability for families' or

individuals' housing options within these five communities. Does one family need a bedroom for each member as we tend to assume in western colonial culture?



I remember, in the beginning, we were looking for homes for families and thinking 'Oh, we need at least four bedrooms' and we would get a four-bedroom house and they would live in only two of the bedrooms because that's what they were used to, and that's what they chose to do. They wanted the children close, and it was just very different. They didn't want all the fancy toys. In fact, they often said, 'Please stop donating; this is too much for us.' – Katelin Mitchell, KCR

COVID-19 protocols also became major challenges when working with GARs in the last two years. Supporting whole families with testing and registering the results kits without being able to interact with them in person due to quarantine rules was extremely hard for settlement teams. For the GARs, restrictions that came with the COVID-19 pandemic also delayed the process of discovering their new community and support systems, which were somewhat detrimental to their mental and emotional health. The processes were always being enhanced and updated, slowly streamlining the procedures which will most likely be in place for only a little while longer.

What settlement teams discovered supporting GARs during this crisis was the strong support from the community giving their time, services, donations, and more.

We had a local dentist, in Peachland, who offered services and we took approximately 29 individuals to the dentist in one day. We organized transportation; we had a volunteer who brought a little minibus, we had a couple different people in vehicles. I remember we were desperate, so I said, “Mom, you’re driving today.” The next hurdle was getting car seats for the younger children. And the community came together and delivered. We had interpreters come and work so the families knew what was happening when we were at the dentist. – Katelin Mitchell, KCR



The community took a vested interest in the wellbeing of its newest residents and adjusted to the changes that may have resulted from their residency. Katelin urges agencies to “look at being creative together” as this will increase the capacity to support newcomers in the region. If Kelowna has a low vacancy rate or accommodations that are not suitable for a family destined to arrive imminently, perhaps Kamloops, a city with statistically more 3–5-bedroom dwellings, is a better fit due to housing options. Utilizing resources and services regionally, from anywhere in the Thompson-Okanagan, is relatively easy to access and navigate. Strengthening the networks of all communities and their respective agencies through collaborative contributions can only benefit the GARs anticipated to arrive in the coming months and years.

Focus Area #1: Housing Availability

The British Columbia real estate market has become one of the most expensive in Canada. While it had been hot prior to the global health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic helped the province turn up the heat. That said, the Thompson-Okanagan still has a relatively “low” selling price for a single-family house, compared to other major centres in BC.

Region of the Thompson-Okanagan	Average Price of Single-Family House
South Okanagan	\$774,543
Central Okanagan	\$1,000,000+
North Okanagan	\$635,000
Kamloops	\$669,225

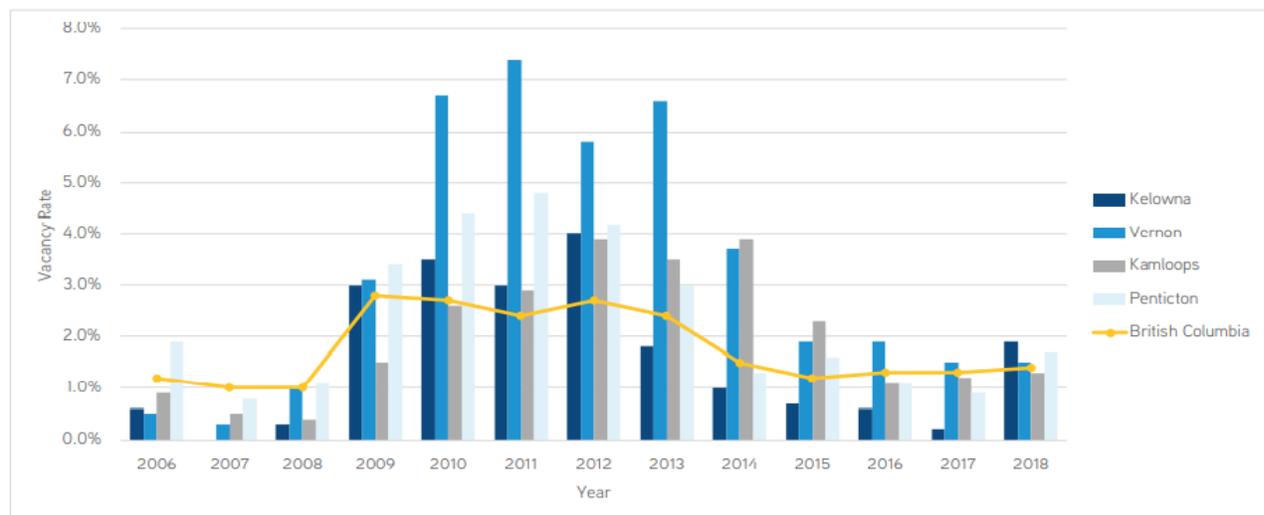
Rental Rates

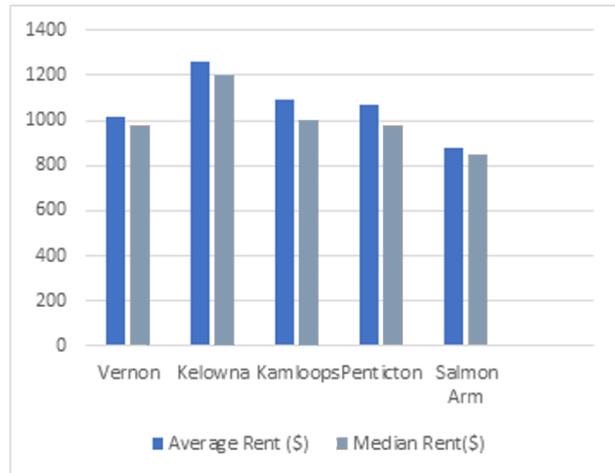
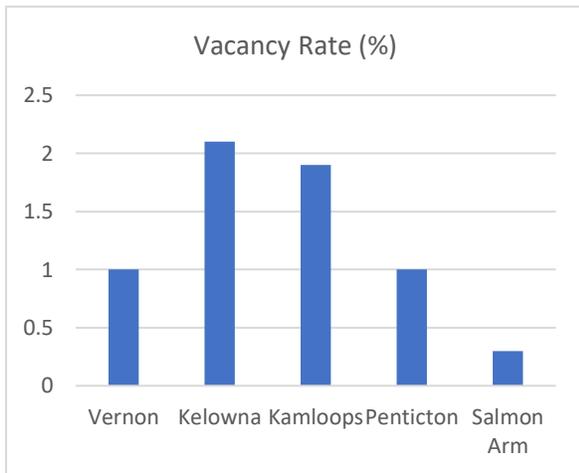
Unfortunately, the same is not true for the rental market. Kelowna was recently ranked as the third most expensive city in Canada in terms of rent prices, just below Vancouver and Toronto. Kelowna had the fastest-growing one-bedroom rent rate in the nation in early 2022, up 5.3 per cent. Over the last year, Kelowna’s average rent price increased by 21% to \$1800 a month, for a one-bedroom unit. For a two-bedroom rental, Kelowna renters can expect to pay an average of \$2150 per month. The average rent for a one-bedroom in Vernon is \$1090 per month, with Kamloops coming in at \$1528 per month.

Vacancy Rates

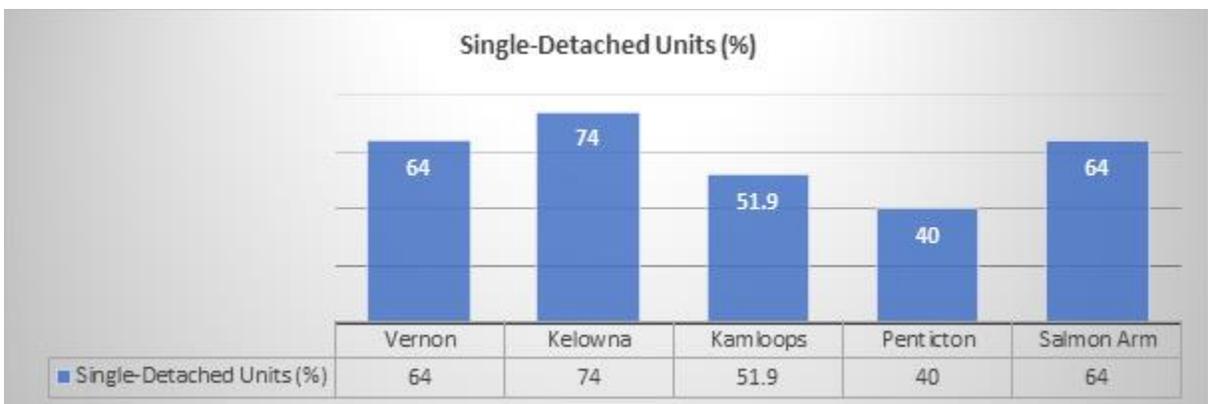
Low vacancy across all markets in the Thompson-Okanagan has continued to exert upward pressure on rent, which in turn has spurred strong interest in the region. This has generated higher sale prices, particularly with many buildings trading off market. A healthy vacancy rate is around 3%; at this rate, tenants will have sufficient options available and rent rates are held at reasonable levels that do not impact housing affordability. As of 2020, the vacancy rate for all five regions is below 3%.

Historical Apartment Rental Vacancy Rates

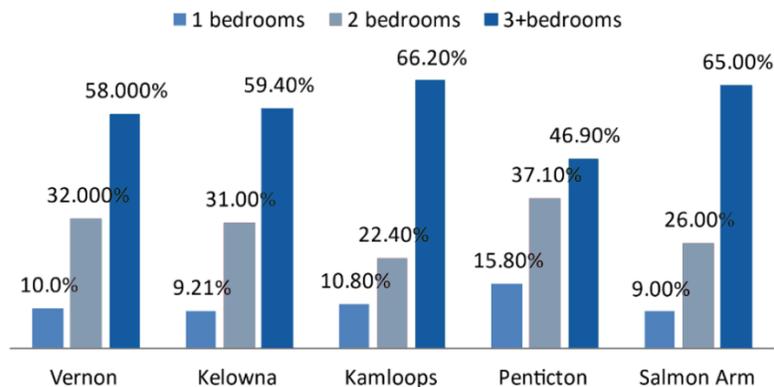




The majority of rental units across the Thompson Okanagan are single-detached units that represent over 50% of the housing stock in each region, except Penticton where 40% of rental units are single-detached units.



The other types of dwellings are spread almost evenly in all the communities in this study, except there are noticeably more apartments with less than 5-storays in Kelowna (21%) and Kamloops (16.2%).



British Columbia— Rental Market Statistics Summary by Metropolitan Areas, Census Agglomerations and Cities, 2020

Affordable Housing

In 2018, the Province of British Columbia released their 30-point plan for housing affordability in British Columbia to address the rising cost of both rent and home ownership in the province. This plan includes a 10-year investment of \$6.6 billion in affordable housing.

Following the first intake of proposals, the Province of British Columbia announced in November 2018 funding for more than 4,900 new affordable mixed-income rental homes throughout the province as part of the *Building BC: Community Housing Fund*. The first set of projects approved included two developments (73 total units) in Kelowna, three developments (78 total units) in Vernon and three developments (199 total units) in Kamloops.

Subsidized Housing

One of the options for people seeking subsidized housing is The Housing Registry. The Housing Registry is a membership-based database used to manage applications for social housing. Information provided by BC Housing notes that of their more than 800 housing partners, approximately 120 of them are members of The Housing Registry. The time an applicant is waiting depends on a number of factors including how many properties the applicant has applied to; an applicant refusing the first available offer; changes to the applicants' needs; and the needs of other applicants are also taken into consideration.

Projects & Innovative Partnerships

To address the issue of lack of affordable housing, The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Shuswap/Revelstoke Branch and BC Housing are working on the new affordable rental housing project.

Larch Place is the first phase of a 105-unit housing development on a two-acre lot. It provides one-, two- and three-bedroom homes. These new affordable rental homes are available to individuals, seniors and families with low to moderate incomes. The building opened in February 2021 and is operated by CMHA Shuswap/Revelstoke Branch.



At the opening, BC Attorney General and Minister

Responsible for Housing said, ““This development will help more than 100 families and individuals in Salmon Arm find safe and affordable homes. These new homes reflect the commitment our government has made to working with municipalities and community partners to open affordable housing that has the power to transform lives.”

The monthly rents at Larch Place are:

- four one-bedroom units for people with low incomes (i.e., seniors on fixed incomes and people receiving income assistance): \$375
- 20 rent-geared-to-income units (people with low to moderate incomes): \$564 (one bedroom) to \$838 (three bedrooms)
- eight market rental units: approximately \$875 (one bedroom) to \$1,250 (three bedrooms)

Two more buildings are planned, with one project including another 35 homes, including several four-bedroom suites for families, and the third building offering 38 homes with 24/7 support for people experiencing homelessness.

The HousingHub also facilitates new opportunities and partnerships with traditional and non-traditional partners to create new affordable homes. This initiative is to proactively bring together and partner with all levels of government, landowners, and a range of for- and not-for-profit groups to increase people's rental and homeownership options.

Below are HousingHub partnership projects in-development in Thompson Okanagan. For a detailed list of affordable housing project in the Thompson-Okanagan, refer to Appendix 2.

	Vernon	Kelowna	Kamloops	Penticton	Salmon Arm
Very low-income projects	4 projects 288 units	6 projects 228 units	4 projects 180 units	2 projects 116 units	1 project 38 units
Low to moderate income	6 projects 147 units	9 projects 456 units	5 projects 304 units	5 projects 191 units	
Middle Income		4 projects 577 units			
Students	1 project 100 units	2 projects 218 units	1 project 533 units		1 project 60 units

Focus Area #2: Cultural Supports & Community Resources

When first arriving to Canada, GARs will connect with their new community's settlement agency where they will learn about the cultural supports and community resources available to them within the region. Some agencies and/or Local Immigration Partnership Councils (LIPC) have created links or brochures to help guide newcomers as they navigate the services and resources of their new community. SOICS has created a detailed [web page](#) full of resourceful links and Appendix 3 includes an example of a brochure from the North Okanagan LIPC. Most agencies and LIPs are encouraged to create and maintain a resource handout for clients and newcomers. These materials offer clients a trusted and accurate list of what is available to them and the independence to connect to the resources in their own way and on their own time.

Each of the five communities and their surrounding areas in the Thompson-Okanagan also offer an abundance of opportunities and activities for newcomers to engage with that may offer the familiarity and support refugees are looking for, or perhaps, something new that will help support a positive adaptation into their new community.

Religious Supports

Cultural supports for immigrants and refugees often focus on religious/faith practices followed by nationality or ethnicity specific centres. Religion is an important aspect in the lives of many newcomers and refugees. It is what guides them through difficult times and provides some normalcy to an environment that can be stressful and uncertain.

Thankfully, there are hundreds of different religious/worship centres located throughout the Thompson-Okanagan. The faith groups represented are Islam; Hinduism; Judaism; Sikhism; Baha'i; Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon); Jehovah's Witness; Christian, including Orthodox, Catholic, Baptist, and United. The larger communities in this study will have a broader selection of places of worship, especially for faiths that are not under the Christian umbrella of theology.

Places of Worship Thompson – Okanagan



Mosques

- Penticton
- Kelowna
- Vernon
- Kamloops



Churches

- Dozens of churches in each of the five communities and surrounding areas.
- Many sects of the Christian faith represented including Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, United, Presbyterian.



Synagogues

- Kelowna – Okanagan Jewish Community Centre
- Kamloops JCC –no physical Synagogue or building yet



Sikh Temples

- Kelowna – Temple and Cultural Centre
- Penticton – Penticton Sikh Temple Society
- Vernon – North Okanagan Sikh Society
- Kamloops – Temple and Cultural Society



Hindu Temples

- South Okanagan Hindu Temple (Summerland)
- Kelowna Hindu Cultural Society
- Kamloops Hindu Cultural Society



Baha'i Communities

- Penticton and Summerland
- Kelowna and West Kelowna
- Vernon
- Salmon Arm
- Kamloops



Other Faith Centres

There are many other faiths and religions practiced within the Thompson–Okanagan, including The Okanagan Buddhist Cultural Society in Kelowna, Jehovah's Witnesses' Kingdom Halls, Kelowna Unitarian Services, and many more.

Cultural, Heritage and Multicultural Supports

Cultural supports can encompass many aspects of community life: the arts, recreation, food and



beverage, and spaces to connect with others. For example, Leena had a very hard time in her first year in Canada. Family members were worried about how extremely shy and isolated Leena had become. Then her mother found a drawing group through the local Arts Centre and signed her daughter up to join. Within weeks, Leena had found a group of like-minded friends and a way in which to connect with others, just as she had done in her social circles back home. Below is another account from a newcomer Okanagan resident.

"Hello, my name is Andres and I want to share how my life changed in Canada thanks to sports. I arrived in Canada when I was 16 with no English. I was a very shy boy from Colombia that just knew how to speak Spanish. I struggled the first couple months trying to fit into the Canadian culture, but eventually I realized that I could express myself through my passion, football (soccer). I joined the team tryouts and eventually was part of the provincial team. After a few months of playing, I realized I had just needed to put myself out there. My English improved so much, and I started building a lot of friendships. I'll always be thankful for the opportunity that life gave me to come here and learn not just a new language but also remind me how to enjoy life."

All five communities in this study have several cultural, heritage, and multicultural groups. Local settlement agencies, other established immigrants and refugees, and social media searches are the best ways to discover what each community has to offer. Below are links to a sampling of what is available in the region. Appendix 4 includes a list of faith groups from Central Okanagan LIP at KCR.

Community	Links to Cultural Societies/Clubs
Penticton	Luso Canadian Multicultural Society Okanagan Filipino Canadians Penticton-Ikeda Japanese Cultural Club
Kelowna	KCR has developed an online Community Resources site with links to many community resources
Vernon	Japanese Cultural Centre Filipino Group Vernon Zirka Ukrainian Dancers and Cultural Club
Salmon Arm	
Kamloops	Kamloops Multicultural Society Filipino Canadian Association of Kamloops and District Kamloops Japanese Canadian Association

Community Amenities and Attractions

The Thompson-Okanagan is a beautiful region known for its active outdoor lifestyle and amenities. Lakes, mountains, orchards, farms, wineries, campgrounds, artisan markets, and studios are just some of what brings newcomers from around the globe to the region. GARs can also take advantage of all the

area has to offer to connect to nature and the community. Local municipality and tourism sites are a great source for information on community resources, services, attractions, and amenities.

Community	Local Municipality Websites	Tourism Association Websites
Penticton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Penticton District of Summerland Town of Osoyoos Town of Oliver Village of Keremeos Town of Hedley Town of Princeton 	Visit Penticton
Kelowna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Kelowna District of Lake Country City of West Kelowna District of Peachland 	Tourism Kelowna
Vernon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Vernon City of Enderby City of Armstrong District of Coldstream Village of Lumby Cherryville 	Tourism Vernon
Salmon Arm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Salmon Arm Village of Chase 	Discover the Shuswap
Kamloops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Kamloops City of Merritt Village of Ashcroft Village of Cache Creek Village of Clinton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Kamloops Gold Country, BC

Also included is the link to [Fetch – For Everything That's Community Health in the Shuswap North Okanagan](#). It offers resource directories for the Central and South Okanagan. Simply type the community into the search bar and a full directory, categorized by service type is available to the user.



Each settlement agency is also a great resource for individual community support through Mentorship and Community Connections programs. These activities give newcomers the chance to discover local experiences through an organization that they feel safely connected to already. Whether a GAR is in a larger city centre or a more rural area in the region, there are plentiful opportunities for connection to the environment, activities, community, faith, and recreation for anyone of any background, age and stage of life.

Transportation

To navigate around the Thompson-Okanagan most residents rely on a personal vehicle to travel to their destinations. However, many GARs will not have access to a car or a license to drive in BC and therefore must find alternative transportation methods. BC Transit has regional systems in every city in this study. For more information on routes check the [BC Transit website](#).

The local colleges and universities ensure accessible transportation is available to their campuses with multiple regional bus routes.

Seasonal transportation in the Thompson-Okanagan is also very common via cycling or scootering. E-Bike rentals are becoming increasingly more popular, and shops are popping up all along common bike paths.

Both Kelowna and Vernon have shared e-scooter programs. The Bikeshare Micromobility Permit Program allows Kelowna residents to access shared e-scooters as a transportation option. [Neuron Mobility](#) currently operates a fleet of 250 electric kick scooters in Vernon, one of six communities selected by the Provincial government to pilot and assess the use of electric kick scooters for personal transportation in the city. Riders in both cities can find scooters downtown and in surrounding neighbourhoods, unlock them using a smartphone app, and end their trip at a location of their choosing within the service area. Scooter share provides residents and visitors with a convenient, affordable, and sustainable way to get around their community. Kamloops has an advocacy group that hopes to see scooters coming to their city in the near future.

If, and when, GARs are able and ready to procure a vehicle and take their driver's test, there are many options for lessons and resources for auto sales. Settlement agencies are able to refer clients to the appropriate resource in this situation.

Focus Area #3: Employment Opportunities

Newcomers to Canada bring with them a myriad of workplace skillsets, experiences, and education. Government Assisted Refugees are no exception. The Thompson-Okanagan is a thriving region filled with employment opportunities in many different occupations for a wide range of backgrounds. Due to the high cost of living, GARs may need to work more than one job or have both spouses of the household working full time to meet the needs and expenses of the family. This can be a cultural shift, or for some, shock, but settlement agencies offer many services to help families adapt to the labour force in BC.

When GARs arrive and begin to work with their settlement worker, they will learn of local and agency employment resources and supports to help them succeed as a worker in the region. Each agency offers Employment Services and some with specialized Employment Programs.



Agency	IRCC Employment Services	Other Employment Program
SISS	Employment Counselor	
KIS	Employment Counselor Employment Engagement Advisor	
SOICS	Employment Counselor Sector Specific Mentorship Networking Opportunities Life Skills Training (Short Term Certification – e.g. First Aid, FoodSafe, WHIMS, etc.)	WorkBC YMCA Jumpstart Neil Squires (specific to job seekers with disabilities)
VDICSS		WorkBC
KCR		WorkBC

There are also other community employment services that serve newcomers or persons with other identifying demographics, such as women, people with disabilities, people entering the workforce after substance abuse recovery, etc. Below are some of the main free employment service providers within the Thompson-Okanagan:

- [WorkBC](#): There are many Employment Case Managers throughout the region who work with several non-profit organizations, such as Canadian Mental Health Association and Kindale Developmental Association, to provide services and supports to those looking to secure a job.
- Nexus BC Community Resource Centre: [OPPORTUNITY: Training For Jobs](#) is no cost, one-to-one job coaching for immigrants, newcomers to Canada, visible minorities and francophones to help them overcome challenges and see opportunities for success.

- [YMCA of Okanagan](#): With services available in Kelowna and Penticton, the YMCA provides free support from knowledgeable professionals in career and self discovery.
- [Kamloops Community YMCA/YWCA](#): Youth Employment Services are available to those unemployed between the ages of 16-30 in the Kamloops area. Services include resume and cover letter writing, developing job search skills and strategies, career planning, marketing yourself, interview tips and more.

A variety of organization also offer specialized training courses to help jobseekers enter the workforce with in-demand skills and confidence. Some of these centres include:

- [WorkBC – Training and Education](#)
- [Canadian Vocational Training Centre](#)
- [DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society – Skills Training Centre](#)

Labour Market

The Thompson-Okanagan is the third most populated region in the province after Mainland/Southwest (Fraser Valley, Metro Vancouver, Squamish-Lillooet, Sunshine Coast) and Vancouver Island/Coast. As of January 2022, it had a regional population of 512,400 (people 15 years old +) with 293,500 of those employed. Most of the region’s population is of working age (15–64 years old), however that demographic is the lowest share in the province due to such large numbers of retirees residing in the region. Sunny and mild weather, active lifestyle, senior focused amenities, and other factors contribute to the Thompson-Okanagan’s higher median age.

The region’s unemployment rate is consistently higher than the provincial rate, however it is still stable at 5.9%, though Kelowna is over a percentage higher at 7.2%. (Source: [Monthly Labour Force Survey](#), 3-month moving average, seasonally unadjusted)

Top Industries in the Thompson Okanagan	Total Employment in the Province of BC (2020)
Health Care and Social Assistance	325,300
Retail Trade	286,700
Construction	221,600
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	230,600
Accommodation and Food Services	168,300

A large share of BC’s agriculture employment is located in this region as well. The workforce in agriculture consists primarily of Temporary Foreign Nationals who are connected to and supported by area settlement agencies.

Income levels

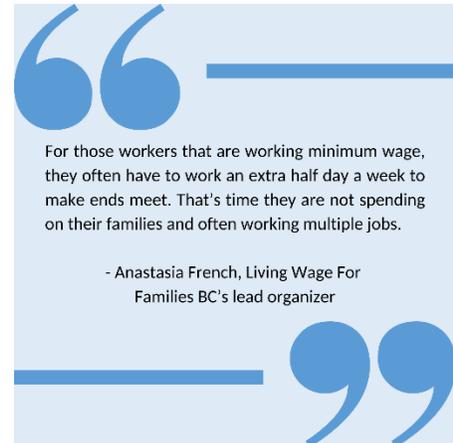
The minimum wage in BC is increasing to \$15.65/hour on June 1, 2022, which is still a few dollars lower than the “living wage” required to live in the Thompson-Okanagan. The living wage is calculated as the hourly amount that each of two working parents with two young children must earn to meet their basic expenses, including rent, child care, food, and transportation, once government taxes, credits, deductions and subsidies are taken into account.

To put into perspective, the living wage in Kelowna is \$18.49, while it is slightly more in Penticton at \$18.55. The living wage in Kamloops is \$16.71.

Though only a handful of them exist in the region, one of the more than 100 BC employers that were certified by Living Wage for Families BC was the John Howard Society of Central and South Okanagan, which means it is now paying all its employees a living wage. Many stakeholders and employees are hoping that living wage employers will increase in the region and throughout the province. Within the main industries in the Thompson-Okanagan, the median hourly rates range from minimum wage to \$24/hour and beyond. Other median wages, by industry are:

- Health Care Worker - \$23.82/hour
- Social Assistance Worker - \$22.95/hour
- Construction trade helpers and labourers - \$20/hour, the same as the provincial median and a dollar less than the national median.
- Retail Trade and Food Services medians are both the minimum wage.
- The Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry is made up of businesses whose employees offer specialized skill sets and knowledge to clients. Wages for both men and women in this industry are above their respective provincial averages. Because this industry encompasses so many sectors it is difficult to define a median wage, but it can offer some of the top wages amongst the top industry sectors.

No matter where they live, families should be able to afford a decent life. There are jobs that need to be fulfilled in every community, and therefore people need homes, services, and a good quality of life in every community.



Chambers of Commerce

Each of the five cities, and some of their surrounding villages and municipalities, have Chambers of Commerce. A Chamber of Commerce is responsible for improving the local business environment through advocacy, campaigning, and networking. They can strengthen the community by acting as a line of communication for business owners to governing bodies and furthering the interests of small businesses in the area through many diverse activities such as hosting networking events, charitable fundraising, and lobbying regional representatives.

For GARs that decide to pursue a path of self-employment or work for community small business employers, the local Chamber of Commerce can be a great resource for support their economic success in their new home community.



- [Kamloops Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Salmon Arm Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Armstrong Spallumcheen Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Lake Country Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Kelowna Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Summerland Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [South Okanagan Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce](#)

Provincial Outlook and Economic Plan

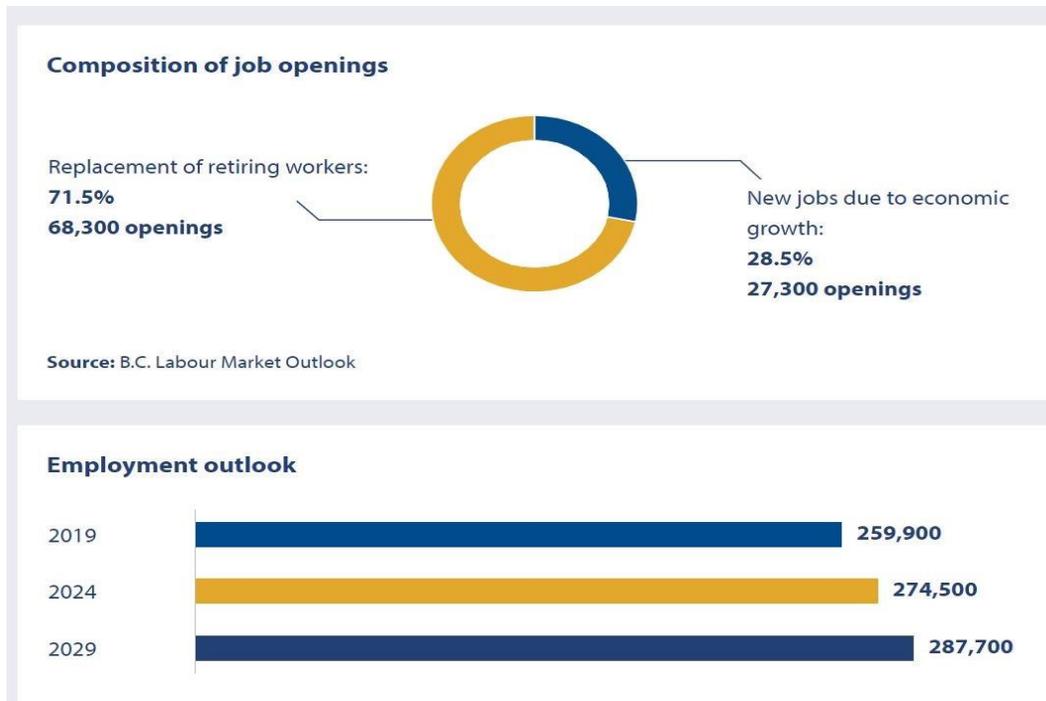
In early, February 2022, the Government of BC announced the provincial labour market outlook and their economic plan for the coming decade. The outlook includes many hopeful and exciting opportunities for immigrants and refugees within our province and region. The province is expecting to lose 600,000 workers to retirement over the next decade. In addition to filling these position, another 370,000 jobs are expected to remain open due to economic growth and COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

Job openings by Major Industry over the next decade



Courtesy: Labour Market Outlook 2021

The below charts show the BC Labour Market Outlook (2019-2029) for the Thompson-Okanagan region:



Also laid out in the *“The Stronger BC Economic Plan”* is making sure every home and community in BC has access to high-speed internet. In light of the changes the COVID-19 pandemic has caused to the running of many industries and businesses, remote work is becoming more and more prevalent. It is also nearly impossible to do schoolwork and many other necessary functions for participating in life in Canada without access to high-speed internet, therefore this promise will benefit many residents throughout the region, especially those in rural and remote areas. We hope that with access to high-

speed internet also comes equitable affordability to use it; another factor affecting newcomers on a limited income, especially GARs.



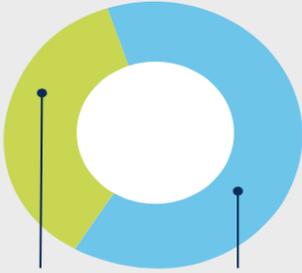
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Labour Market Outlook

provides a 10-year forecast of the flow of supply and demand for labour in the province. The forecast is updated every year to give British Columbians the latest information they need to make informed decisions on careers, skills training, education and hiring. The Labour Market Outlook projects a continued recovery from the pandemic and further growth in employment, including strong growth in tech and health care occupations.

2021 – 2031

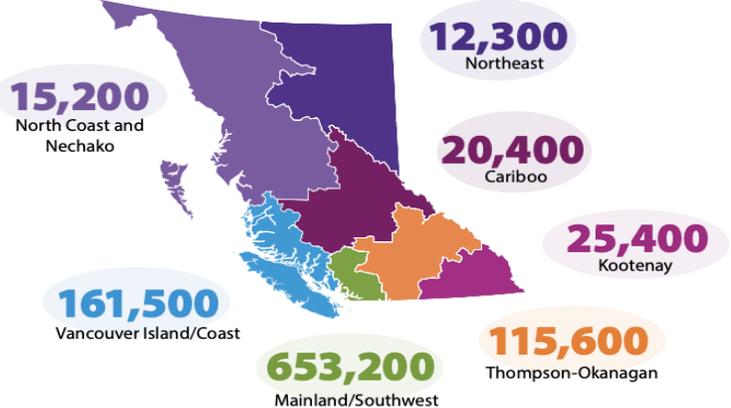
B.C. IS EXPECTED TO HAVE 1,004,000 JOB OPENINGS



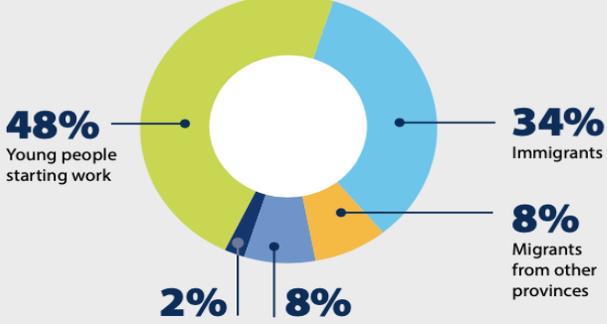
37%
will be new jobs from expanding the economy

63%
will replace workers leaving the labour force

JOB OPENINGS BY REGION



HOW WILL B.C. FILL THESE JOBS?



HIGH OPPORTUNITY OCCUPATIONS

are those with stronger demand and higher wages than others.

To learn about high opportunity occupations and obtain more information about the forecast, visit www.workbc.ca/Labour-Market-Industry/Labour-Market-Outlook.aspx

Indigenous communities are a fast-growing group in British Columbia. Strong labour demand conditions will benefit Indigenous people and their communities. The Indigenous working-age population is growing at 3.9% per year, twice the overall population rate of 1.8% per year.

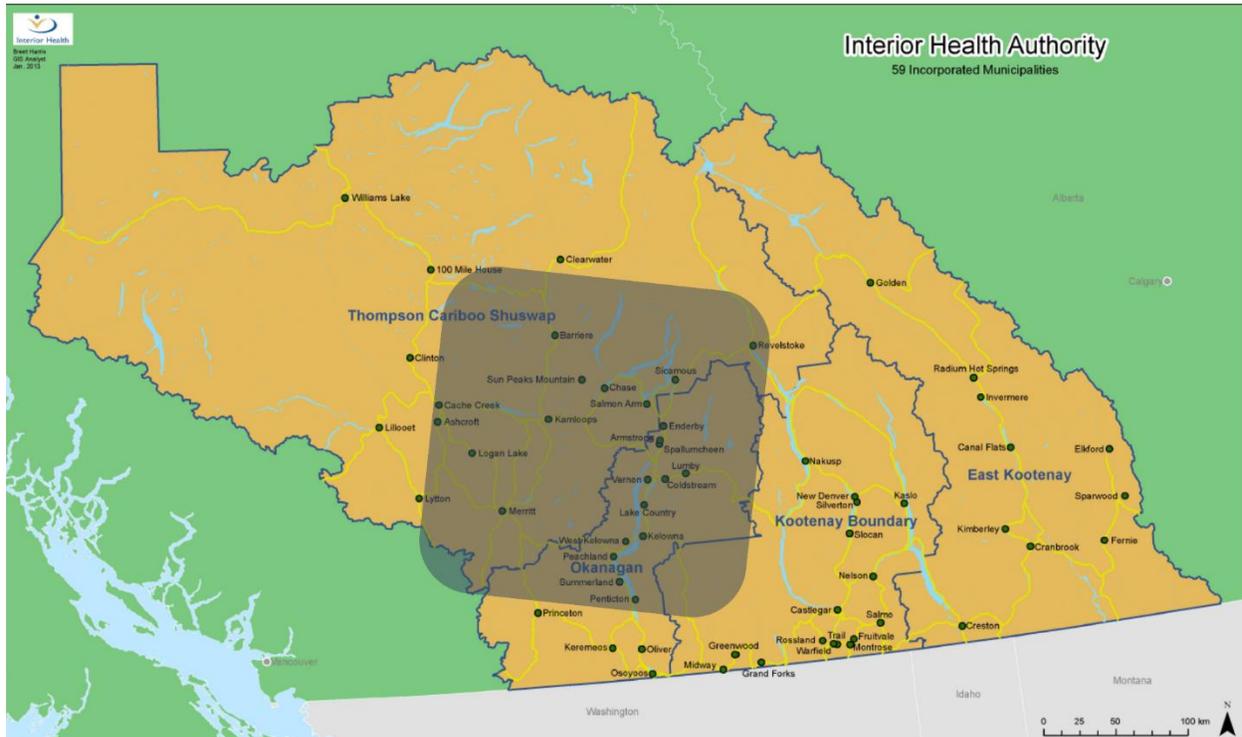
The four largest of the five cities within this study are participants in Economic Development Organizations, with plans for ameliorating the labour market in their respective areas. Below are links to their plans and resources.

- [City of Penticton](#)
- [Central Okanagan Economic Development](#)
- [Venture Kamloops](#)
- [City of Vernon](#)

Though Government Assisted Refugees are already on a Permanent Residency path and therefore do not need to tie their employment to their immigration stream, it is worth noting that The BC Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) has recently (March 2022) added to their in-demand list of occupations, Health Care Workers and Early Childhood Educators, allowing them priority access to the program. With that in mind, BC will be encouraging the recruitment of newcomers to the province in top regional sectors which helps strengthen the diversity of the labour market and demonstrate to employers the benefits of having immigrants and refugees in their workforce.

Focus Area #4: Medical Health Care

The Thompson-Okanagan region is serviced by the Interior Health Authority (IH) and provides health care services to 59 incorporated municipalities.

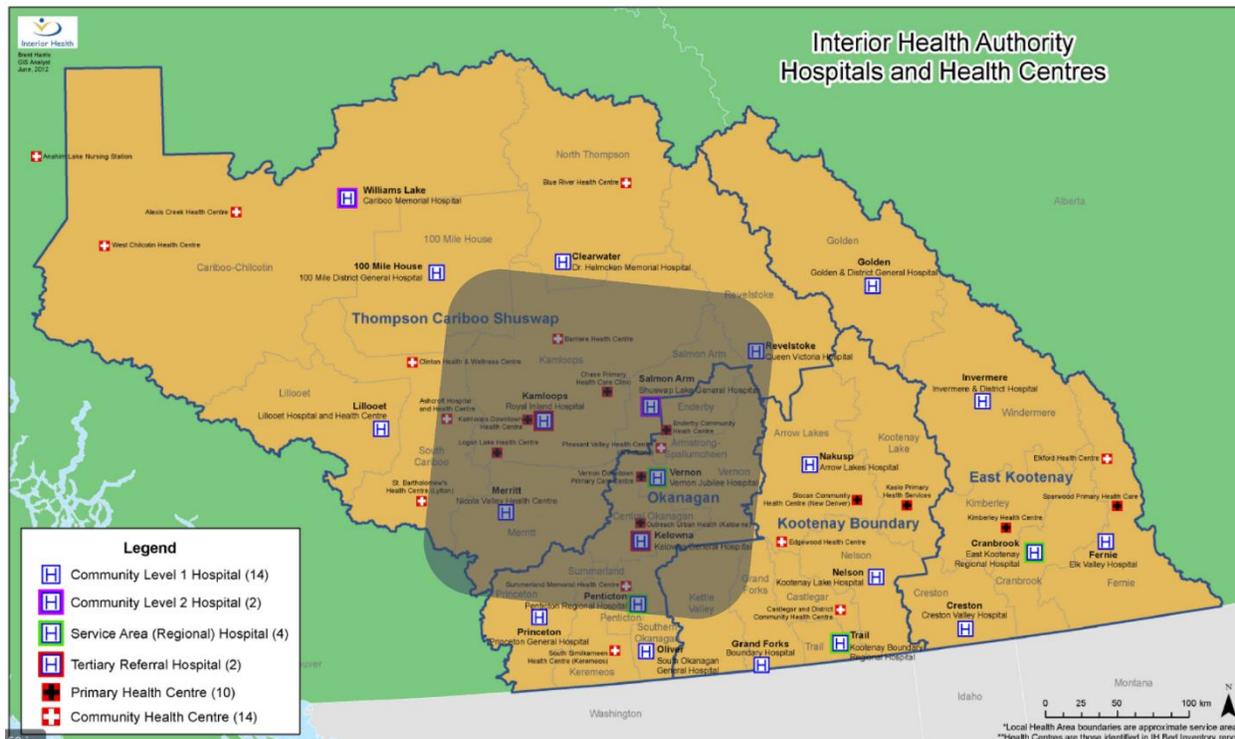


Reach of the Interior Health Authority. Shaded area represents the focus of this study.

Interior Health is committed to providing compassionate, high-quality care and services to patients and families living within the BC central and interior region. They work to ensure *Every Person Matters* through their relationships with employees, physicians, and communities, and in their efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and protect and improve the health of the local population.

Delivery of health services is coordinated through a health authority wide “network of care” that goes beyond access to hospitals; it extends further by offering a wide variety of other important services that includes prevention and health promotion, home and community health centres, long-term care and assisted living facilities, housing supports for people with mental health and substance use issues, primary health clinics, urgent and primary care centres, environmental safety and public health protection, lab and diagnostic imaging services; and much more.

More specifically, each of the specified regions in this assessment, have access to hospitals, primary health centres and community health centres.



Building for Better Health

In 2013, IH developed a 10-year Capital Strategy to ensure a sustainable network of health care. The strategy includes a long-term plan for capital investment and includes the major key considerations associated with delivering health care services to a large population across a vast geographic region. Considerations include: i) population factors such as health status, growth, and aging; ii) sustainability of health and human resources, economic conditions, and fiscal environment; and iii) the need to maintain the provision of quality, safe care with consideration for critical mass and competencies.

The Capital Strategy also aligns with goals identified by Interior Health and recognizes that many of Interior Health’s strategic objectives associated with these goals require capital investment. Interior Health Goals are:

- Goal 1: Improve Health and Wellness
- Goal 2: Deliver High Quality Care
- Goal 3: Ensure Sustainable Health Care by Improving Innovation, Productivity, and Efficiency
- Goal 4: Cultivate an Engaged Workforce and Healthy Workplace

Moving forward, prioritization of capital investment requests will be critical to ensure that capital funding capacity aligns with Interior Health capacity to address the most critical capital needs.

Interior Health is expanding and modernizing hospitals and care facilities across the region to ensure it will continue to provide high quality care and help improve health within the communities it serves.

Accessing the Primary Health Care Providers

Primary health care would be a GARs first contact with the health system in BC Primary care helps British Columbians stay healthy, get better, manage chronic conditions and die with dignity. The people

who provide primary health care are usually the first people a new resident would see when they have a health concern or question. They include health professionals like family doctors and nurse practitioners.

In general, BC residents are struggling to find a family doctor, especially in the BC Interior where doctor shortages are among the greatest. This is a statistic that is not expected to change anytime soon, as there are still challenges for many residents to find access to primary care.

According to the Ministry of Health, the proportion of British Columbians without a regular family doctor was about the same as the average Canadian in 2014 – approximately 15 per cent. A 2014 survey of Central Okanagan residents showed that 25 per cent of residents do not have a family doctor.

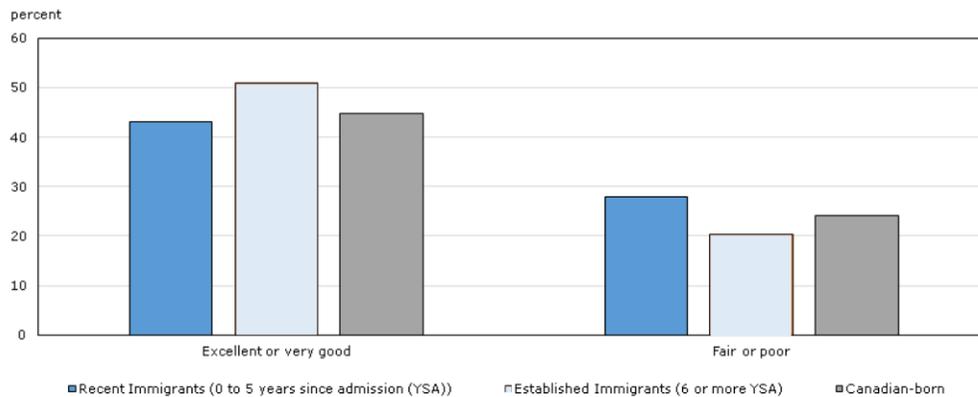
It is recommended that new residents, access care, for non-life-threatening conditions, at a walk-in clinic and to use the same clinic to ensure some consistency and continuous care. Alternatively, Urgent and Primary Care Centres are also available in the communities listed below. These facilities are accessible to anyone with a BC Services Card, who many have a non-life-threatening condition and need to see a health-care provider within 12 to 24 hours, but do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, can not access a walk-in clinic, or are unable to get an appointment with their regular primary care provider that day.

Location	Address	Phone Number
Kamloops	311 Columbia Street	250.314.2256
Vernon	3105 28 Avenue	250.541.1097
Kelowna	1141 Harvey Avenue	250.469.6985
West Kelowna	2484 Main Street	250.469.6010
Penticton	437 Martin Street, Suite 101	250.770.3696

Focus Area #5: Trauma and Mental Health Supports

As research continues to show, refugees are at a high risk for mental health problems and disorders. Compared to family class immigrants, refugees were significantly more likely to report experiencing emotional problems and high levels of stress. The stages of migration, including pre and post, impact one's mental health along with many other factors, including trauma. More than 80% of refugees have experienced trauma. Additionally, the mental health of both immigrants and refugees tends to worsen with time in Canada. Compounding these and a myriad of other individual factors, highlights the need for trauma and mental health support as an important service accessible to GARs.

A recent survey by Statistic Canada showed that 28% of recent immigrants reported fair or poor self-rated mental health, compared to 20% of established immigrant participants and 24% of Canadian-born participants. The higher proportion of recent immigrants reporting fair or poor mental health could be related to the pandemic.



Source: Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians – Your mental health.

Within the Thompson-Okanagan there are several service providers for mental health support ranging from peer support groups all the way to individual private counseling with special areas of expertise focus. Many community service providers are free of charge or charge using a low-cost sliding scale related to income level. The other category of care is private counseling.

Funded Services – Provincial

The Interior Health Authority of British Columbia (IH) and partner agencies provide a range of mental health and substance use services for all ages. They strive to ensure that services are welcoming of all peoples, gender identities, cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Persons seeking support through this service are invited to connect with the Access Services Program at one's local Mental Health & Substance Use Centre (MHSU). The Access Program is the point of entry for a client when they are referred to community MHSU Services. IH will gather information, provide brief intervention, immediate assistance, and support the client's transition to appropriate services. Interior Health provides a detailed list of resources on their [website](#).

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a national organization that promotes mental health and supports people recovering from mental illness. Each city in the Thompson-Okanagan has a branch of the CMHA where clients can access national and local programs and services. National programs

include Canada Suicide Prevention, Peer Support Canada, Workplace Mental Health, and more. Some local programming includes youth support groups, virtual counseling (Kelowna), housing support, drug and alcohol abuse programs, wellness courses and groups. Each branch caters to the population they serve but the mandate remains the same for the region.

CMHA Location	Website	Phone Number
National Website	www.cmha.ca	1.833.456.4566
Interior Crisis Line, available 24 hours a day		1.888.353.2273
Kamloops	www.kamloops.cmha.bc.ca	250.374.0440 310.6789 (Mental Health Support Line, no area code required)
Vernon	www.cmhavernon.ca	250.542.3114 1.888.353.2273 (Interior Crisis Line, available 24 hours a day) 310.6478 (Mental Health & Substance Use Services)
Salmon Arm Region	www.shuswap-revelstoke.cmha.bc.ca	250.832.8477 310.6789 (Mental Health Support Line, no area code required)
Kelowna	www.cmhakilowna.com	250.861.3644 310.6478 (Mental Health & Substance Use Services)
Penticton Region	www.sos.cmha.bc.ca	250.493.8999 310.6789 (Mental Health Support Line, no area code required)

VAST (Vancouver Association of Survivors of Torture): VAST supports the mental health of refugees who arrive in British Columbia with psychological trauma as a result of torture, political violence, and other forms of persecution on the basis of race, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Established in 1986, VAST has become BC's largest centre for refugee mental health. Many newcomer clients have been referred to the virtual services provided by VAST as there is nothing similar in the Thompson-Okanagan. Twelve languages are supported by VAST programs and services, including Arabic, Farsi, French, Mandarin, and Spanish. They provide trauma-focused psychological counselling in one-on-one and in group settings.

Psychoeducation, emotion self-regulation, and information sharing prepare clients for the refugee claim and settlement process. They also offer refugees many different support groups in many languages, such as *“Beyond Borders and Binaries Group,” “Grupo Para Familia Latinas,” “Survivors Advocate Program.”*

Regional Services

Located within each community are a number of organizations that can also provide trauma and mental health supports.

Penticton

[Foundry](#) – Foundry Penticton offers young people, aged 12-24, access to mental health and substance use support, primary care, peer support and social services.

[SOS Mental Wellness Centre](#) – The mission is to alleviate the suffering caused by mental illness and improve the quality of life for those affected, their families, and their friends. They provide support and free education for families, friends, and those with mental illness.

Kelowna

[Foundry](#) – Foundry Kelowna is a wellness centre where young people, aged 12-24, and their families can find hope, help, and support, when they need it.

Partner agency, KCR supports community mental health through [The Interior Crisis Line Network – Kelowna Site](#)

[Okanagan Mental Health Services Society](#) – Improves the quality of life for people in the Central Okanagan area who struggle with serious and persistent mental health challenges by providing supportive housing and therapeutic work.

Vernon

[Family Resource Centre](#) – Provides counselling and family services, building a resilient community by empowering one child, one individual, one family at a time.

[Archway Society for Domestic Peace \(formerly Vernon Women’s Transition Society\)](#) – Archway is a leader in empowering women, children, and families to live with dignity and respect, free from domestic and sexual violence. They provide a wide range of supportive services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Services provided include safe shelter (transition house program), counselling, child and youth advocacy, outreach services, and collaborative community projects. All services are free of charge.

Salmon Arm

[The Shuswap Family Centre](#) – The Centre support families and individuals of all ages, cultures, and socio-economic backgrounds. They offer programs delivered individually or in groups as well as providing a referral service to other services found in the community of Salmon Arm and surrounding areas. The Centre works with individual and family strengths to encourage personal growth, wellness, and positive change. They seek innovative and best practices approaches to finding solutions to issues in the community.

Kamloops

[Sandstone Counselling Centre](#) – The Sandstone Counselling Centre website provides tips and links to local and provincial resources to assist clients, without access to funds or funding, in finding affordable assistance for mental health concerns and/or counselling services in Kamloops and BC.



[Kamloops Community YMCA-YWCA – Mental Wellness Programs](#) – The YMCA-YWCA understands the important role that stress and mental wellness play in the lives of community members. For this reason, they have a variety of mental wellness groups that support individuals of all ages and families to learn healthy coping skills, connect with others in the community, and get support all in a safe and friendly environment.

Private Counseling

Every major community within the Thompson-Okanagan has several, if not dozens, of mental health professionals that range from Psychologists, Clinicians, Therapists, Clinical Social Workers, Psychiatrists, Psychiatric or Mental Health Nurse Practitioners. [The British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors \(BCACC\)](#) is the professional association that represents Registered Clinical Counsellors (RCC) in the province. Today, BCACC represents over 5,000 Registered Clinical Counsellors across BC. If a client is seeking counselling through private practice in BC, it is recommended to use this resource. The site allows one to search by area, language, field of expertise, and more. Rates for private services can cost a patient anywhere from \$100/hour to \$150/hour (with certain clinics perhaps charging even more).



Barriers to Accessing Mental Health for Refugees

Wait times and cost: It has been stated by private practicing counsellors and those working for funded service organizations, that wait times can be shorter when seeking private support. The largest factor is a shortage of qualified counsellors at non-profit organizations due to a lack of adequate government funding. Since the 1970's mental health services have been reported as underfunded but very little has changed since then, even though population growth has steadily increased throughout the two decades making the need for funded services even more substantial. Practitioners and support workers were happy to report that there have been major advancements in funding for survivors of sexual assault in recent years. However, there are still many categories of care going without proper funding, such as men/male mental health support. The Family Resource Centre in Vernon explained that they seek additional funding from other sources other than their primary government funding to support their men's peer groups, making its status precarious each fiscal year.

Language: Most mental health service organizations in the region have clinicians that speak only English, therefore the need for home language interpreters is high. Finding interpreters who are familiar with mental health services, the healthcare system, and/or trauma-informed care are very hard to find in the area. Often when interpreters are used in counselling sessions, they are not professionals, rather, friends or family of the client or they come from the same cultural community. The relationship between the client and interpreter can make it more difficult for a client to communicate with their counsellor openly and vulnerably. This scenario also runs the ethical risk of having the interpreter include their own personal beliefs or ideas into the session.

Knowing available resources in the community: As stated in The Family Resource Centre’s Study *“Newcomer Women and Trauma: Establishing mental health supports in the North Okanagan* by Alix Longland, MSW Outreach Coordinator, “Settlement service organizations may not know to refer clients to mental health services as it might be out of their service mandate scope or they may not be trained to assess their clients’ mental wellbeing.” Since settlement agencies are almost always the first point of contact for GARs, if the settlement worker is not able to identify mental health support needs then a client may never learn of what could be available to them within their community. Also, in some communities, there is a lack of community organization/resource information sharing and so it could be possible that settlement agencies are as unaware as their client of what services there may be within their community, city, or region.

Promising Practices

Fostering an inclusive and safe environment where clients feel comfortable expressing and identifying their wellbeing needs is important in supporting the mental health of newcomers and refugees to Canada. Including peer support groups in Community Connections programming is one way to work towards this goal. A women’s peer group is being offered at a few of the partner agencies to offer this type of environment.



Currently, VDICSS is running a very similar women’s group through a partnership with the Family Resource Centre. It has become a time for women of all backgrounds to socialize, connect, and share emotionally with one another. The success of these groups can be measured by the continual growth in monthly attendance and the positive feedback from clients. This success

confirms the desire from clients for more mental health support for newcomers and refugees. There is so much opportunity to offer peer groups for many intersecting demographics within the newcomer and refugee populations, such as LGBTQIA2S+ groups, men’s groups, youth groups, etc.

In partnership with Thompson Rivers University, KIS ran the program *Building Resilience in Newcomer Students through Experiential Learning and Story Telling*, a pilot project where newcomer students could practice experiential learning through a microbiology summer camp. Clara Kong, SWIS at KIS said, “Past research demonstrates the psychophysiological healing effects of the natural environment. Therefore, the agency would like to expand our pilot project by integrating social-emotional learning strategies into the science curriculum while conducting experiential learning in nature. The objective of this program is to bring forth healing, learning and environmental stewardship among newcomer students.” Taking a cue from this program by including social-emotional learning into workshops or programming for clients can help their emotional wellbeing while learning about and adjusting to life in Canada.

Recommendations

When it comes to supporting Government Assisted Refugees, and other newcomers to Canada, the need to offer, or where to access trauma and mental health supports is essential. The following are

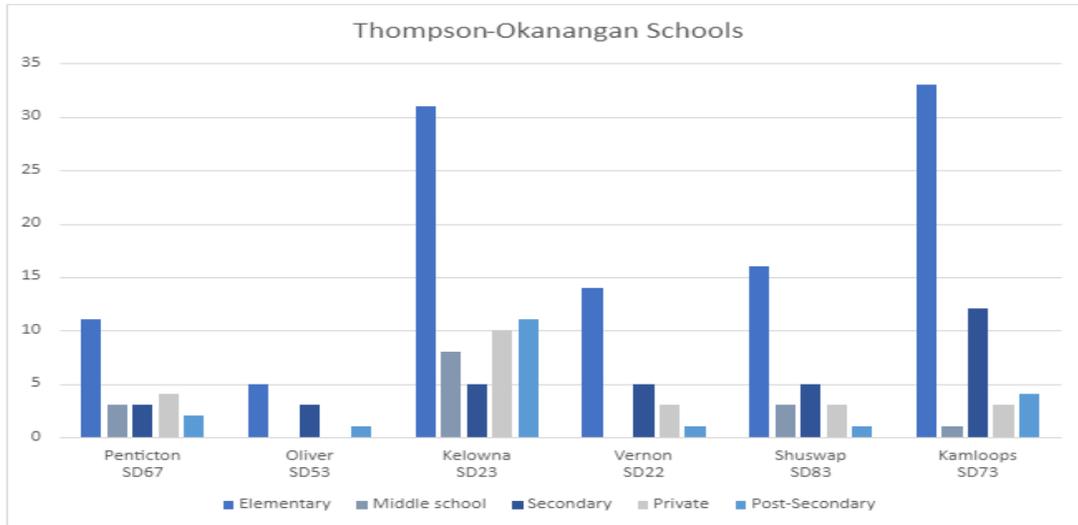
recommendations that could help lower the percentage of refugees and newcomers who self-rate themselves as having fair or poor mental health.

- Provide funding to agencies for multilingual interpreters 1) For settlement agencies – hire interpreters with experience/education in the ethics of interpretation and trauma informed care. 2) For counselling practices – hire in-house practitioners who speak languages other than the official languages of Canada.
- Provide funding to settlement agencies to hire an Art Therapist, or consider seeking a partnership with a certified Art Therapist, to work directly with refugees through non-verbal creative modalities to support their mental health and wellbeing as they begin their resettlement journey. This form of therapy helps to eliminate the reliance on English language proficiency or interpreters.
- Settlement agencies in the Thompson-Okanagan should work collaboratively to create a community wellbeing resource list for clients, staff, stakeholders, and partner organizations.

There are many cultures around the globe who seek therapeutic counsel through faith leaders and community elders. For this reason, we also recommend that agencies connect clients to the cultural supports in the community mentioned in Section #2: Cultural Supports & Community Resources.

Focus Area #6: Education

The Thompson-Okanagan offers a comprehensive K-12 education program including provincial and locally developed educational programs and services in Mathematics, Sciences, Physical Education, Humanities, and Fine Arts. There are six major school districts that serve over 150 elementary, middle, and high schools. Many school districts also offer academies and specialized programming, including Alternative Schools, which enhance the traditional curriculum for students by providing personalized learning opportunities.



Student Support Services

Each district offers Student Support Services, also known as Inclusive Education, for students with varied learning challenges to ensure equitable access to education for all learners, while honouring the diversity that each learner contributes to our society. Student Support Services are dedicated to working collaboratively with families, community agencies, and school personnel to meet the academic, physical, and social/emotional needs of students with unique needs. The schools and district staff work together to offer students with special education needs a broad and effective spectrum of programs and services, presented in the enabling and inclusive educational environment. Student Support Services staff provide both direct and consultative services to students with exceptionalities and the staff that supports them. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Speech Language Pathologist
- Counsellor
- Psychologist
- Physiotherapist
- Teacher for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Occupational Therapist
- Vision Resource Teacher
- Behaviour Intervention Support Teacher

English Language Learning Program (offered in all six districts)

The Ministry of Education, through the Government of BC, supports the ELL curriculum across all the school districts in the province. An English Language Learning (ELL) student is defined as a student enrolled in a BC school who needs additional English language development support in order to access the provincially prescribed curriculum and succeed in the academic environment. This includes the following students:

- **English as an Additional Language (EAL) / Apprentissage de la Langue Anglaise (ALA)**
 - Students with an immigrant or refugee background who need English language development support
- **French Language Learning / Francization (FLL)**
 - Students in the Conseil Scolaire Francophone (CSF) who need French language development support
- **English as a Second Dialect (ESD)**
 - Students who speak a variation of English significantly different than that used in school are referred to English as a Second Dialect (ESD) services.

School districts provide ELL supports and services, enabling ELL students to develop their language and literacy skills, to achieve the expected learning outcomes of the provincial curriculum and to become capable young people thriving in our diverse society.

For more information on the Ministry standards for the ELL Program visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/teach/pdfs/ell/ell-standards-full.pdf>

Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) Support

SWIS is a bridge between settlement agencies and schools to inform and support parents and students as they navigate the school system in BC.

Within the Thompson-Okanagan, four of the five settlement agencies retain Settlement Workers in Schools to offer families and students specific support in partnership with each city/region's school district. Kamloops (KIS), Vernon (VDICSS), and Penticton (SOICSS) hold the contracts within their agencies for SWIS programming. Kelowna's SWIS team works directly through School District 23 within the offices of the International Student Program. Shuswap Immigrant Services Society (serving the greater Salmon Arm area) has staff that are able to offer similar supports as the SWIS program and ensure all school aged children and their families receive the support they require to navigate the BC school system and other student and community related services.

Transportation

All six school districts offer bus transportation for students K-12, to and from school. Each district has different criteria for eligibility and varying rates for fees. Please see Appendix 4 for bus specifics.

Food Programs for Students and Families – School/Community Supported

Most schools in the five larger districts (SD67, SD23, SD22, SD83, SD73) offer a hot lunch program for a fee per meal; fees range between \$2/meal to \$8/meal.

Each district supports students and their families' food insecurity needs in various ways. Free school breakfast programs, school pantries, garden programs, weekly hampers, and weekend backpack programs are among them. These programs are free for families and students and are primarily funded through community partners/sponsors, such as Rotary, Parent Advisory Committees, and Community LINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) through the Government of BC.

Below are sites to programs and funders who support and deliver these initiatives:

- Starfish Pack: www.starfishpack.com
- Food for Thought Pantry: www.oklearns.com/food-for-thought
- Power Start Program: www.bgckamloops.com/children-programs
- Food for Thought: www.hopeforthenations.com/agents/food-for-thought

Extracurricular Activities at School and within the Community:

All districts offer a wide range of extracurricular activities for students from the intermediate grade level (4-7) and middle/high school level (8-12). Many of these activities cost little to no money to participate. Of the activities that require a fee, such as high school basketball for uniforms, tournaments and more, each school and/or Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) have financial aid plans in place to ensure equitable and accessible inclusion of all interested students.

School field trips also offer access to extracurricular experiences many families, especially newcomer and refugee families, may not have had the opportunity to enjoyed yet. These may include trips to skating rinks, ski hills, lakes, parks, and sport complexes. Parents are encouraged to contact their school principal to find out what the school offers as far as extracurricular activities. Below is a list of examples of sports and activities offered at several of the schools within the six school districts:

- Basketball
- Football
- Band
- Volleyball
- Theatre
- Leadership
- Soccer
- Choir
- Gymnastics

Post-Secondary Education Options

Within the Thompson-Okanagan there are three main post-secondary institutions: [University of British Columbia Okanagan](http://www.ubc.ca) (Kelowna); [Thompson Rivers University](http://www.thompsonrivers.ca) (Kamloops); [Okanagan College](http://www.okanagancollege.ca) (Salmon Arm, Vernon, Kelowna, Penticton campuses, and a smaller satellite campus in Oliver for short term programs). All five area settlement agencies work closely with one or more of these institutions to provide support to newcomer clients. English as a Second Language courses are also offered at these institutions.

Smaller, more industry specific colleges also offer programming throughout the region: [Sprott Shaw College](http://www.sprottshawcollege.ca) (four campuses across the region) and [Okanagan Valley College of Massage Therapy](http://www.okanaganvalleycollege.ca) (Vernon).

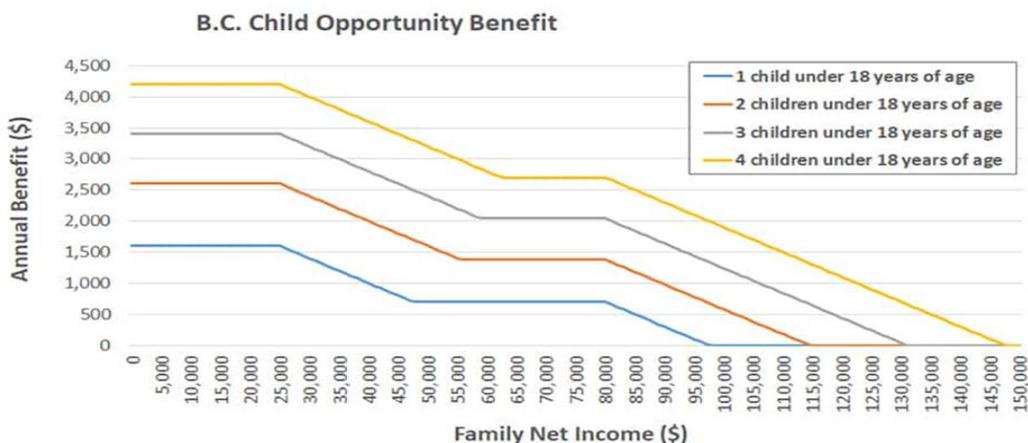
Focus Area #7: Childcare

Federal and Provincial Supports

For families with young children, which is often reflected in the demographics of the GARs resettled to British Columbia, childcare is often required. The federal government and the Government of BC support residents needing childcare through different programs.

- **The Canada Child Benefit (CCB)** is administered by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). It is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. It is often recommended that some of these funds be used towards childcare.
- **The CCB Young Child Supplement (CCBYCS)** provides up to four tax-free payments to families with children under the age of six, to help pay for a wide range of expenses. Families may be entitled to receive up to \$1,200 per child under the age of six. You must be entitled to receive the [Canada Child Benefit](#) (CCB) for a child under the age of six in January, April, July or October 2021 to receive the CCYCS. (This is adjusted each year.)
- **The Affordable Child Care Benefit** is a monthly payment to help eligible families with the cost of childcare. Factors like income, family size, and type of care determine how much support families can get. Families need to renew their application every year. The Affordable Child Care Benefit replaces the Child Care Subsidy as per the [Child Care Subsidy Regulation](#).
- **The BC Child Opportunity Benefit**, which replaced the BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit effective October 1, 2020, provides a tax-free monthly payment to families with children under the age of 18. The maximum BC Child Opportunity Benefit payable per child, per year is as follows:
 - 1st Child: \$1,600 (\$133.33/month)
 - 2nd Child: \$1,000 (\$83.33/month)
 - Each subsequent child under 18: \$800 (\$66.67/month)

The image below shows how child benefits vary with family net income for one to four children.



Source: www.gov.bc.ca

Affordable Child Care Benefit Rates by Childcare Type

Group childcare / multi-age childcare	Maximum Monthly Funding
Children under 19 months	\$1,250
Children 19 months and over but under 37 months	\$1,060
Children 37 months and over but who have not reached school age	\$550
Family childcare / in-home multi-age childcare	Maximum Monthly Funding
Children under 19 months	\$1,250
Children 19 months and over but under 37 months	\$1,000
Children 37 months and over but who have not reached school age	\$550
Children of school age	\$415
Other	Maximum Monthly Funding
Preschool (children 30 months + who have not reached school age)	\$225
Care surrounding school day (children of school age)	\$210

Once parents are aware of the benefits available to them and have applied to all the programs they qualify for (settlement agencies are able to assist with this part of the process as well), they must still secure childcare.

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) centres make it easier for families to find and access responsive and inclusive quality licensed and registered childcare by providing information, support, resources and referral services to parents and childcare providers across the province. The Ministry of Children and



Family Development provides funding to CCRRs, which work in partnership with the provincial government to improve the accessibility, affordability, and quality of childcare in all BC communities. CCRRs are often able to help with subsidy applications as well. They are considered to be centres connected to other parenting resources such as BGC (formally Boys and Girls Clubs), which can connect newcomer families to parenting and family support and play groups, or early

year/family navigators. Supporting families with childcare needs can lead to a holistic individual support plan to help ensure a positive community adaptation for the whole family unit.

To address the ever growing need for childcare, the province of BC is training more people to become Early Childhood Educators, building better facilities, and creating thousands of quality, affordable child care spaces – including [universal child care prototype sites](#). The provincial government has also added six childcare sites in the Thompson-Okanagan to the \$10 a day childcare program. A news release from the Ministry of Children and Family Development states families will pay no more than \$200 per month

per child for full-time enrolment during regular business hours. By the end of 2022, a total of 309 new childcare spaces are being added to:

- YMCA Child Care at Kelowna Secondary school (28 spaces) – Kelowna;
- OneSky Community Resources Society, Little Learners Academy (52) – Penticton;
- Queens Park YMCA Child Care and Preschool (50) – Penticton;
- The Bridge Educational Society, Early Years Centre (59) – Lumby;
- Kamloops Christian School Early Learning Centre (92) – Kamloops; and
- Yellowhead Community Services Society, Riverside Child Care (28) - Clearwater.

However, the immediate demand for childcare in certain areas and for certain age groups (primarily infant/toddler spaces, and before/after school care for ages 5-12) is far greater than the current availability. According to the CCRR, throughout the Thompson-Okanagan, there are two main reasons for this gap; firstly, a lack of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and assistants (ECEAs) to teach and care for the earliest years of childcare, and secondly, competitive and living wages for these ECEs and ECEAs.

Just announced in March 2022, the BC Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) will be giving ECEs priority access to apply, which provides a better chance for assessment under the program's eligibility criteria. Allowing for this change will enable qualified ECEs to fill the childcare job openings in the region for this in-demand occupation.

The provincial government has additional programs to help support the training and education costs for these roles and for wage subsidies for employers. Many stakeholders are positive that with the changes coming in, the long waitlists for families will diminish as more educators come into the industry. In the meantime, CCRRs sometimes recommend alternative solutions to address the childcare gaps, such as caregivers who are able to watch their own children also take in 1-2 more children to support in their own home. This could be an interim option for certain GAR families in the early months and years they are settling into their communities.

Childcare is a need for so many residents of BC, but it can also provide many great learning and adaptation opportunities for young newcomers.

“Children in high-quality early childhood programs have been found to form closer and more secure attachments with care providers, show more positive interactions with peers, have larger vocabularies, and have better pre-reading and pre-math skills.”

- Child Care Matters; A parent's guide to choosing quality childcare. Created by the Eastern Fraser Valley Child Care Coalition in partnership with Success by 6.

As clients of the settlement agencies within the region, GAR families may also be able to benefit from free childminding when they access certain services such as LINC classes, employment resources or settlement specific appointments in their communities. VDICSS, SOICSS, and KCR all offer childminding services. An added benefit of childminding at a settlement agency is the multicultural awareness and appreciation that is interwoven in the care and curriculum the childminders offer.

Many communities in the province have plans to serve more young families in the most equitable and accessible ways possible. Below are the strategic childcare action plans from each of the five communities of our study.

[Penticton Child Care Action Plan](#)
[South Okanagan-Similkameen Child Care Action Plan](#)
[Kelowna Child Care Action Plan](#)
[Vernon Child Care Action Plan](#)
[City of Vernon new childcare spaces article](#)
[Salmon Arm Child Care Action Plan](#)
[Enderby Child Care Action Plan](#)
[Kamloops Child Care Action Plan](#)

For more information or to access up-to-date childcare spaces available for each of the five communities, visit CCRR sites – [Kamloops](#), [Salmon Arm](#), [Vernon](#), [Kelowna](#), [Penticton](#) – and the [Government of BC's CCRR page](#).

Focus Area #8: Settlement Agencies

The five agencies included in this study offer a variety of services and supports to immigrants and refugees. Individually, each agency is very capable of fulfilling its contracts with IRCC, however when it comes to welcoming and assisting Government Assisted Refugees, working collaboratively, the region has the potential to provide a service that is all encompassing, thorough, inclusive, and sensitive to the individual needs of a single GAR or entire family. The follow is a summary of each agency.

Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Services Society (VDICSS)

Founded in 1989, VDICSS is a registered society and non-profit organization in Vernon, BC focused on serving immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, visible minorities, first generation Canadians and other groups within the North Okanagan. VDICSS's primary mandate and focus is to provide settlement services and assist newcomers in making the North Okanagan their new home. Other government funded programs within VDICSS are selected and designed to enhance and augment our settlement programs to provide our clients the best possible services available.



Number of employees: 14

In-house languages available: English, Russian, Spanish, German, French.

Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS)

Since 1982, Kamloops Immigrant Services has been a leader in the settlement sector devoted to welcoming immigrants to Kamloops and the surrounding areas. Its primary goal is to support newcomers through integration services in settlement, language, employment and community connections. Its secondary goal is to inform and sensitize the region on immigration, settlement, integration, and to promote the elimination on racism. Through its reach and influence, KIS is committed to creating communities where immigrants feel safe and can fully integrate in all aspects of community and Canadian life.



Number of employees: 25

In-house languages available: English, French, Spanish, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Gujrati, Swahili, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Tagalog, Pangasinan, Ilocano, Shona, Bengali, Korean, Dutch, Kapampangan, Sinhalese, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish.

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS)

SOICS is a non-profit organization and a registered charity dedicated to building a welcoming and inclusive community by promoting cultural harmony and diversity based on the mutual respect and full participation of all people from all backgrounds.



**SOUTH OKANAGAN
IMMIGRANT AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The society was incorporated in 1976 under the Province of BC's Society Act as a not-for-profit organisation and is a registered charitable organisation under the Income Tax Act. SOICS is a one-stop shop that provides a range of free services to all immigrants, temporary foreign workers, post secondary international students, and refugees through education, advocacy, and projects, which assist in their integration. SOICS has been managing community projects, building partnerships, and achieving integration and multicultural outcomes in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region for over 45 years.

The service area includes Summerland south to Osoyoos and west to Princeton, including Naramata, Kaleden, and OK Falls. With a head office in Penticton and outreach throughout the South Okanagan. Client needs are met through language training, childminding, skills development workshops, community connections, employment, and settlement services. Indirectly, they serve the broader community by enhancing its capacity to increase the pace of social and economic integration for newcomers so that they are contributing to the community as civically minded members.

Number of employees: 21

In-house languages available: English, French, Punjabi, Tagalog, Kapampangan, Patois, Urdu, Hindi, Mandarin, Spanish, Italian, Farsi, Arabic, Slovak, Czech, Russian, Portuguese, German, Russian.

Kelowna Community Resources (KCR)

KCR has been providing services to the Kelowna and surrounding area for almost 40 years (since 1983) as an incorporated Society and a Registered Charity. KCR is a BC registered legal entity. KCR's approach fosters independence and promotes diversity, regardless of race, ethnicity, faith, social status, or economic background in all our programs. KCR supports and encourages participants toward true physical, economic, and social community integration and independence, through Settlement and Immigration programs, through the Community Information and Volunteer Centre and through the various services available to families and children in need in the community.



KCR strongly supports the notion of self-reliance, participant involvement, innovative partnerships, identified outcomes and accountability as a philosophy and articulated in our core values. It has been their experience that individuals accessing services have tremendous resiliency and strength and if presented with opportunity, can overcome significant challenges. Many of the programs address issues of the marginalized and advocate for understanding and acceptance of diversity and recognition of strength and contribution.

KCR works closely with individuals, voluntary organizations, not for profit societies, registered charities, businesses, and governmental bodies to address gaps or perceived gaps and to make Kelowna and the surrounding area a more inclusive community.

Number of employees: 73

In-house languages available: 23, with translation services available for 47 different languages.

Shuswap Immigrant Services Society (SISS)

Shuswap Immigrant Services Society is a registered non-profit organization that has served and empowers new immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, and temporary foreign workers in the Columbia-Shuswap since 2008. We value diversity, collaboration, and respect. Encouraging participation in community life and assisting new Canadians in settlement are key elements of organizational work.



SISS offers service in multiple languages and works directly with immigrants, creating strong relationships with vulnerable populations. We have clients of all ages who come to Canada from many different unique contexts all around the world. Our aim is to stand alongside them as they settle into life in the Shuswap, act as a bridge to resources in the community and support as they navigate any challenges that arise in the process. We currently offer settlement services, employment services, language classes, social events, and emergency support in times of crisis.

As a settlement organization, SISS works closely with visible minorities and racialized individuals. Because SISS is located in a small town (population approximately 17,000), the organization serves many ethnicities. SISS has also initiated anti-racism awareness work over the past two years to help community inclusion for newcomers to the area. We are driven by the dream of a community that celebrates diversity and is free of discrimination.

Number of employees: 7

In-house languages available: Tagalog, Spanish, Swiss-German.

General Program Descriptions

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) – Settlement Program

Through our Settlement Program, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) works with many partners to support the delivery of services to newcomers and refugees to Canada. These initiatives help them integrate into Canadian communities.

Eligible clients under this program are defined as follows:

- Permanent Residents of Canada
- Protected persons as defined in section 95 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection act (IRPA)
- Individuals who have been selected, inside or outside Canada to become permanent residents (pending verifications) and who have been informed, by a letter from the Department.
- Convention refugees and protected persons outside Canada who have been selected for resettlement in Canada by the Department.

- Live-in Caregivers: Temporary foreign workers who hold or received approval of a work permit under section 112 or received initial approval for permanent residence under section 113 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR) are eligible for all settlement services with the exception of language training.
- Temporary Residents (principal applicants and their families) who have applied to the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP) and are deemed eligible to receive needs and assets assessment and referrals, information and orientation, and community connections program components for the duration of the pilot.



Programs under IRCC include:

- Settlement services
- Community Connections
- Settlement Workers in Schools
- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Levels 0-8
- Child Minding Services
- Digital Literacy program
- Mentoring, Empowerment and Tutoring (MET) for Newcomer Children and Youth
- Women Empowerment program (WE)

BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS)

The purpose of the BC settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS) Program is to support the social and economic integration of newcomers to the province. The program targets newcomers who are not eligible for federal settlement services. VDICSS is a “hub” as part of the “hub and spoke” approach. VDICSS’s spokes are Shuswap Immigrant Services Society and the Okanagan College in Revelstoke. SOICS is also part of the “hub and spoke” approach with Penticton being the main hub and spokes reaching service areas of (a) Oliver and (b) Osoyoos, Summerland, Naramata, Kaleden, Cawston, Keremeos, and Princeton.

Eligible clients under this program are defined as follows:

- Foreign workers who hold a valid work permit
- Provincial nominees waiting for permanent residency approval from IRCC (including provincial nominee candidates who are here in BC to implement a business plan)
- Post-secondary foreign students who hold a study permit
- Refugee claimants including asylum seekers who are applying for refugee protection status.
- Naturalized Canadian Citizens

Agency Program Summary

The below table provides a summary of all the services offered by the five agencies included in this study. It is clear to see the Thompson-Okanagan region is more than capable of supporting the resettlement Government Assisted Refugees to the area.

Programs	VDICSS	KIS	SOICS	KCR	SISS
IRCC - Settlement					
- Settlement	X	X	X	X	X
- Community Connection	X	X	X	X	X
- Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS)	X	X	X	X	
- LINC	X	X	X		X
- Child Minding	X	X	X		
- Digital Literacy Program		X			
- Mentoring, Empowerment and Tutoring (MET) for Newcomer Children and Youth		X			
- Homework Club	X		X		
- Women Empowerment Program		X			
Employment Counselor		X	X		X
Volunteer Program					X
BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS)	X	X	X		X
WorkBC	X			X	
BC Community Gaming for KIS Diversity program		X			
Youth Advancement Program			X		
Local Immigrant Partnership (LIPs)			X	X	
MOSAIC	X	X			X
Resilience BC		X	X		X

Focus Area #9: Government Support

While the agencies may have the capabilities and internal capacity to assist and welcome refugees to the area, the support of local governments is also required.

Kelowna Anti-Racism Policy

A local Kelowna resident of colour recently said since moving to the area nearly a decade ago, she's noticed there is a lack of safe spaces for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour to share and hold their stories. "There are no [public] spaces that are coded specifically for us to be ourselves in," she says. "No



place where a group of walking Black People or People of Colour is safe."

In response to this problem, she and a friend organized the Ubuntu conference — a public event focused on how to "make this city more inclusive in a non-performative way." They say they invited city leadership, including all council members and the mayor, but no one from the City of Kelowna responded to their invitations or showed up to the event. "It was no surprise at all

because this is not a priority for them. There's no sense of urgency," she concluded.

In a recent media interview, Kelowna mayor Colin Basran was asked where he sees systemic racism showing up in Kelowna, Basran replied, "That's a pretty big question ... not one I've really pondered to a great degree, but certainly it's everywhere. It's within our RCMP, it's within our court system. It's within local government — all levels of government.

"And I would say that this pandemic has given rise to people to behave in ways outwardly that maybe ... they wouldn't normally. And that's not acceptable, but I think it's just pushing people to act a lot more primitively. And as a result, unfortunately, we're seeing some ugly side of humanity."

Vernon Anti-Racism Policy

In the summer of 2020, Vernon's City Council defeated a motion to draft an Anti-Racial Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, saying it was redundant of the already existing policies in place against bullying and harassment. The City Director of Human Resources reminded City Council that a draft Anti-Racial Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy had been sent to them prepared and ready to tailor for specific municipalities. Moving forward, without an Anti-Racism policy, any complaints related to racism

reported within the City of Vernon would be treated under the bullying and harassment policies currently in place.

The Social Planning Council of the North Okanagan is undergoing an anti-racism community capacity resource project, that is funded through the Province of BC and Resilience BC. The data collected will allow City Council to better understand the gaps and barriers experienced in order to better address racism in Vernon. This will be the initial framework for anti-racism policies moving forward.

[Kamloops Anti-Racism Policy](#)

In Kamloops, KIS together with the Kamloops North Shore Business Improvement Association, holds The Walk to Embrace Cultural Diversity. This event coincides with the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The date, March 21st, marks a turning point in the institution of Apartheid in South Africa: the Sharpeville Massacre. In 2019, staff from KIS made a presentation to Kamloops City Council requesting that March 21, 2019 be proclaimed “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.”

Kamloops City Council went on to declare “We, Kamloops City Council, declare our active opposition to racism and discrimination and our support for programs and initiatives promoting diversity and inclusivity in our community... Our population is very diverse and includes immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers to Canada; aboriginal people; persons with disabilities; youth; elders; LGBTQ2S communities; people of different genders; visible and other minorities; and people of faith and spirituality; as well as Canadians who do not identify with any such designations. We consider social and cultural diversity to be an asset to, and an indicator of, a healthy society and hope to guide the whole of society to become more welcoming and inclusive of all people. Together we’re better!”



[Salmon Arm Anti-Racism Policy](#)

In February 2021, the Directors of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD), which includes Salmon Arm, unanimously voted to adopt an Anti-Racial Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy for the organization. The new policy was added to reinforce the CSRD’s commitment to conducting its day-to-day operations and governance in an anti-discriminatory and anti-racist manner. The policy applies to all elected officials, employees, contractors, volunteers and students working for the CSRD or providing services to it who will be required to sign a document acknowledging they have read the policy and will abide by its provisions.

[Penticton Anti-Racism Policy](#)

The City of Penticton is an active member of the [Respect Network](#), drafting the community protocol responding to instances of racism and working on anti-racism initiatives. They are also an active partner in supporting the OneWorld festival and bringing trainers on Diversity and Inclusion. In July 2020, the Town of Osoyoos approved and Anti-Racial Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy.

Based on some of the anecdotes provided, it is clear there is still some room for improvement from some local municipal governments. At the same time, the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Vernon-Monashee area, Harwinder Sandhu, recognizes and appreciates the need for refugees in our local communities.

“This country was built by immigrants,” said Sandhu. “The skills and talents they continue to bring are much needed in our community, especially now with the labour shortage we are facing both for skilled and entry level positions.”

When asked what support the government can provide, Sandhu said “Refugees are a federal government jurisdiction but provincially we also provide some support. The Province of BC recently announced The Refugee Readiness Fund that will provide a boost to local services and supports to successfully welcome Afghan individuals, families, and children. The Provincial Nominee Program for immigrants or refugees is also supported by provincial government.

“Unfortunately, there is still some ignorance and denial in the community regarding refugees and there is still work to be done around anti-racism. The MLA office strongly supports and advocates for the multicultural strategy under the Social Planning Council of North Okanagan. There continues to be a lot of work done to create a society that is inclusive and welcoming.

“No matter where you come from, what situation you come from, British Columbians, and us as a government, are here to support.

We want to send the message to the refugees that Vernon can be your home as well. We are a great community, and we have many wonderful people to welcome and support them.”

Harwinder Sandhu,
MLA for Vernon-Monashee



Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)

Local Immigration Partnerships represent a new form of multi-level governance involving municipal, provincial and federal partners. Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are community-based partnerships that brings together representatives from a wide range of sectors (government, business, community services, financial institutions, education, libraries, health, etc.) to develop and implement a settlement and integration strategy for newcomers to the region.

The long-term vision for LIPs is to support the development of multi-sectoral partnerships at the local community level to:

- Integrate newcomer needs into the community planning process.
- Identify community-specific strategic priorities.
- Implement a settlement strategy and action plans to improve newcomer outcomes.

Currently, there are 17 LIPs across BC and 80 LIPs across Canada supported by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). In the Thompson-Okanagan region, the following communities have LIPs:

- [South Okanagan–Similkameen Local Immigration Partnership \(SOSLIP\)](#) includes the municipalities of Summerland, Penticton, Okanagan Falls, Oliver, Osoyoos, Cawston, Keremeos, and Princeton.
- [Social Planning Council for the North Okanagan](#) serves the Greater Vernon area.
- The [Central Okanagan LIPC](#) includes members from and services the four Central Okanagan communities: Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, and Peachland.
- While not an official LIPs committee, the [City of Salmon Arm’s Social Impact Advisory Committee](#) assist City Council in an advisory capacity regarding social impacts defined within the municipal boundaries.

The City of Kamloops does not have a LIPs, but they are hopeful that a study will be conducted in 2022 in collaboration with Thompson Rivers University to see if a LIPs is wanted and viable in the community. KIS does sit on the [City of Kamloops Social Planning Council Engagement Group \(SPEG\)](#).

Focus Area #10: Refugee Feedback

Refugee feedback is perhaps the most important of all the Focus Areas in the study. Hearing directly from refugees who have gone through the arrival and settlement process in our communities can benefit our agencies, IRCC, and our communities greatly as we work collectively to support GARs as effectively and compassionately as possible.

At the onset of the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative of 2015, 60 GAR families were destined for Kelowna International Airport to then resettle in their new communities throughout the Thompson-Okanagan. Since the start of the crisis many more families and individuals from Syria, and all over the world, have come to our region as GARs.

According to Doreen Rosvold, the Refugee Resettlement Program Coordinator at KCR, the vast majority of GARs have stayed in their arrival community and of the individuals and families who have moved to other cities or provinces, they cited the desire to be near family and/or friends as their reason for moving away. The decision of choosing to move to another city usually starts early on in their settlement journey, often upon arrival, knowing that they would like to put down roots in the same place as their loved ones. The opposite has been seen to happen as well, a GAR family has arrived somewhere else in Canada but has connections in the region and decides to move to the Thompson-Okanagan area, proceeding to connect with the settlement agency in their new community to ensure a smooth transition.

Another reason a number of GARs have left the region is because of the high cost of living, primarily the cost of housing. (See Focus Area #1: Housing Availability for more information, but as an example, a 3-bedroom house in Kelowna can cost anywhere from \$2,000 to \$3,500 a month to rent on average.) As Doreen pointed out, knowing so many families have chosen to stay in their destined community is a great indicator that the resettlement process is a positive and supportive one for GARs.

And why do they stay? After conversations with settlement workers and refugees themselves, this study affirms that a sense of connection to community is the top reason for residency retention.

Masud and Safiya's Story

Masud and Safiya (names changed) and their two children at the time (they now have three) came to Canada as Government Assisted Refugees in November of 2016. They flew into Vancouver and continued on to Kelowna, BC. According to local settlement agency contracts, the family was expected in Vernon, however the visa documents said their final destination was to be Kelowna. They explained that it was a shock to realize they would be moving to a much smaller community than they anticipated. Five and a half years later, this is still something the couple struggles adjusting to.



In spite of this, the greeting they received from VDICSS settlement workers as they arrived was “very welcoming” and they were grateful to have a new place to call home. The family was connected with a translator for their interactions with services in the community and they were thankful for the extra help. Safiya said, “It makes you feel more comfortable having someone explain your message using your own voice, your words.” They also feel there is good English language learning support at VDICSS, citing that knowing English is necessary to “survive” in Vernon. Within five days of arriving snowstorms set in, and the family experienced their first Canadian winter. “We still hate the white stuff,” Masud laughed, as he went on to say that he and Safiya still find it too cold each winter but that the children love it. They appreciate that there are so many winter activities for the family to do in the area which helps with dealing with the cold.

Recognizing that the Thompson-Okanagan has an abundance of activities to do in nature, Masud wished for more variety of cultural opportunities and events, such as Muslim holiday celebrations. There was a significant difference in the amount of outdoor, nature activities in the area compared to the number of amenities and places to connect with friends from the Muslim faith in Vernon. Though there is a mosque in town, Safiya said that she hopes the local Muslim community will continue to grow and offer more events and activities for the whole community to engage in. She mentioned that loved ones in larger Canadian cities celebrate cultural and religious holidays, festivals with neighbourhood communities, and even find décor for such events at Dollarama; she hoped Vernon would one day be as inclusive and diverse as that. However, the family expressed how much they like being in Canada. Masud desired a peaceful place for his family to grow; it was a priority from the beginning of their migration journey. They believe Vernon offers them this.



Less than a year ago, the family all became Canadian Citizens, of which they are very proud. “Our goal when we moved here was to become Canadian citizens. They give you more respect with a Canadian passport”, said Masud. They have strong ties to the business community locally, having acquired a business in the last year. They are now looking to buy a house. The couple pointed out how hard it is to find housing. This is a recurring theme in the Thompson-Okanagan that we hear from newcomers and long-time residents of all ages, stages, and walks of life. The family plans on staying in Vernon for the long term, only considering a move somewhere else in Canada when their children choose to attend university. They all want to remain close and within the same community. But Safiya said, with a large grin on her face, “If Vernon grows enough between now and then, we can have a university here and my children can attend, and we will all be together still. Our kids are our priority of life. If they are happy, we are happy.” And just at that moment, you could hear all three children giggling in the background of our call.

Alma’s Story

A Syrian mother of four, whom we will call Alma, recently arrived in Kelowna in the summer of 2021, and shared her family’s experience of their settlement journey. After two years of separation from her husband, they were reunited at the Vancouver International Airport, as he flew in from Malaysia and she and their children from Toronto; together they made their final flight to Kelowna. The reunion was a complete surprise for their four children – ages 15, 13, 10 and 8 – filled with tears of joy.

“The best surprise they’ve ever had. I am so thankful that they made sure we could arrive on the same day to the airport to be together again,” Alma recounted. She also explained how IOM (International Organization for Migration) were extremely professional, organized, and systematic as they assisted her family at the airport. She also shared how in the first weeks of their arrival in Kelowna, the settlement



team at KCR helped immensely to ensure they had everything they needed set up, like bank accounts, Social Insurance Numbers, COVID-19 vaccination appointments in time for the start of school, and school district registration for all four children. It took about a month before housing was secured for the family. (The most challenging part of their resettlement journey said Alma. The rent was more than what the government was allotting with the rule of 30% of income

for housing costs.) But they are happy with the result of KCR’s search. The house is safe, clean, close to the children’s schools, and filled with light.

Alma recalls that in the beginning there were many difficulties adjusting to their new community, but she remarked that is usually the case for any move. Everything was new and they were apprehensive about how small the city was from what they were used to back home. Things gradually got better for Alma’s family.

“The services in Kelowna are good. Transit is good. You can walk safely on the street. My children walk to school and home, and it is safe. It’s 5-minutes to the grocery store and 10-minutes to the mall or anywhere that we want to go. In a bigger city you can get lost,” she said. Navigating a smaller city released much of the stress she had about being somewhere new. And most importantly, Alma and her family are happy in Kelowna. The children all have friends. They like their schools and are fully engaged in the community. Each of the four children support other Arabic speaking newcomer students with English translation and interpretation as a way to give back to their new community. Her daughter has started wearing a hijab as part of their heritage and faith, and she was worried about how that might appear to the residents of Kelowna. Alma said her daughter feels proud wearing her scarf and it makes her unique. She continued on saying there has been no racism or discrimination towards them in the eight months they’ve lived in the Okanagan. “The people are all kind, and they look at you as if you are a family member.” Alma concluded her story with these thoughts, “We have found a home here. I am connected to this place.”

The above stories from refugees illustrate the importance of having a strong support system in place when GARs arrive at their destination, with the majority of that support coming from the local settlement agencies. Also demonstrated is the success at retaining GARs in their destined community through community support, engagement and belonging. Becoming a contributing, thriving member of a community is an indicator of a positive resettlement journey.

Conclusion

It is a privilege to live, work and play on the lands of the Syilx, Secwépemc, and Nlaka'pamux Nations in a province aptly dubbed “Beautiful BC.” Newcomers and GARs from all over the globe have found an appreciation and connection to the natural beauty of the region and what this environment can provide themselves and their families. No matter your background, it is a sought-after destination with experiences and opportunities to support a thriving multifaceted and multicultural “Canadian” life.

All five settlement agencies and their respective communities have many strengths when it comes to supporting the successful resettlement of GARs to the region. From settlement support to education, a high standard of living with employment opportunities and community engagement, Government Assisted Refugees can contribute and connect to their community within the Thompson-Okanagan.

Nevertheless, there are also needs that are not yet being met by the region for GARs, such as affordable housing, childcare, and accessible mental health supports. These issues are not exclusive to the region and are seen throughout the province, especially in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island, the two most predominant destinations for GARs, historically and presently. Uncovering these gaps in services and resources also offers opportunities for new partnerships and creative problem solving.

Every section identified what each community has to offer as far as services or resources are concerned. They also highlighted ways in which barriers can be broken down to better assist GARs, or presented suggestions, developments, and promising practices to address current and future needs.

Strengths

- Each settlement agency has passionate, dedicated employees, boards, volunteers and stakeholders that support newcomers of all backgrounds and immigration status on a daily basis. The established programming and services that agencies provide are the greatest strengths this study can highlight. Utilizing the agencies to the best of their abilities and continuing to engage in regional collaboration are the pillars of successful resettlement for GARs in the Thompson-Okanagan.
- The smaller population size and rural setting of the communities are strengths of our regional capacity. Large city centres may have copious amounts of amenities, yet the five cities in the Thompson-Okanagan and their surrounding districts/municipalities have thriving culture, recreation, employment, education and community building opportunities, plus the added bonuses of safer, quieter surroundings and shorter commute times. As one GAR iterated, it is a peaceful place for families to live. “Peace” may also rank high on many GARs lists of preferred destinations, considering why they are refugees in the first place. The Thompson-Okanagan can offer them that.
- Established community organizations offering necessary services to the whole settlement process continuing to partner and connect with all agencies. These collaborations also offer programming and project support to help strengthen the work provided to GARs.

Promising Practices

- Recognizing gaps in services and creating new programming, often through collaboration, to address them is occurring across the region, within each agency. For example,

- Women’s Peer Support Groups
- Social-Emotional Teaching/Leading Techniques
- Municipal government and community stakeholder strategic planning that takes into consideration the needs of refugees to the area. Including what skills and assets they bring with them to their new home communities and how best to utilize those attributes.
- Individualized care and services with a more trauma-informed lens in many sectors including settlement, healthcare, mental healthcare and wellbeing, and the BC school system.
- The provincial government focusing on promoting, training, and wage subsidizing high demand occupations, such as ECEs and ECEAs, to increase availability for families requiring accessible, affordable childcare.
- Focusing on the benefits immigrants bring to our labour market, the Province of BC has a long-term 10-year outlook with refugee at the centre, contributing needed experience and skill sets to boost the economy and strengthen the workforce.

Recommendations

- Employ or contract interpreters/translators or practitioners/workers with fluency in the home languages spoken by the majority of anticipated GARs over the coming years – Afghans (Dari, Pashto) and Ukrainians (Ukrainian, Russian).
- Connect mental health practitioners with interpreters and work with them to support refugees seeking services. Utilizing interpreters with healthcare knowledge and trauma informed care means they can also help support GARs when navigating the general BC healthcare system for appointments, referrals, surgeries.
- Agencies can inquire as to the potential of employing in-house counselling support in the form of a social worker, therapist, or arts/expressive arts therapist. This practitioner can then help identify mental health/wellness needs and refer to and collaborate with the appropriate community support or conduct groups or one-to-one counseling to support clients directly; IRCC contract dependent.
- Agencies can cross-collaborate on establishing regional resource lists for community services. This study can be used as a guide to begin this process.
- Stay up to date on housing availability throughout the region to ensure quick placement of GAR families and individuals. Share upcoming community housing projects with all agencies.
- Look to build relationships with housing non-profit organizations and developers to keep settlement clients as priority candidates for available housing opportunities.
- If childcare is not currently offered at an agency, connect with IRCC to inquire if it is an option. The more affordable, or ideally free, childcare spaces available the more opportunities for GAR families to make the most successful start, especially for women seeking employment or training/schooling.
- Connect with local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) and stay up to date on new centres and new openings – which can become available and taken within days.
- **When possible, establish the needs of the GAR family pre-arrival to delegate which community within the region can best support them.**

Other Community Support

- A local business owner has recently purchased a piece of land in a popular residential neighbourhood in Vernon with plans to build multiple family units. They are hopeful that some of these homes could be used as temporary, initial housing for newly arrived refugees. VDICSS will stay abreast of project developments and create a collective plan with the owner/builder to house refugee clients when housing is ready for occupancy.
- In light of the state of war in Ukraine by Russia, communities across the country, including the Thompson-Okanagan, are rallying together to find housing, necessities, and funds for incoming refugees. Knowing the collective caring of the residents of the region offers great hope and insight into the strong capacity to support GARs and all refugees arriving in the coming months and years.

A final benefit to a regional approach to allocation of GARs is financial in nature. Directly managing the contract cuts down on delegation time, administrative costs, and contract negotiation with IRCC and its previous and current contract holder, ISS of BC.

Working collectively with the five partnered agencies will allow for collaboration, disclosure, and transparency of available services and supports to fit the specific needs of each GAR, as has been done in larger centres, such as Calgary, Vancouver, or Edmonton. This approach will allow us to allocate GARs regionally as opposed to by community and lead to GARs becoming more self-sufficient and self-sustaining in a shorter period of time. Making their allocated community a long-term home, offering a sense of belonging, benefits not only the GARs themselves but all members of their community, socially and economically.

Appendix 1: Areas of Focus

This assessment will analyze 10 areas of focus, in each of the five participating communities and outlying areas, required for successful refugee resettlement, which includes the suitability of either family or single refugee placement.

Housing Availability

- Rental rate
- Vacancy rate
- Subsidize availability
- Single vs Family dwellings
- Future plans and capacity for affordable housing

Cultural Supports & Community Resources

- Language
- Faith groups
- General community services/activities available
- Transportation

Employment Opportunities

- Labour force – main industries/sectors and related wage
- Skills/Trades in need
- Unemployment rates
- Chambers of Commerce support

Medical Health Care

- Hospital/Urgent and Primary care facility
- Interior Health overview

Trauma and Mental Health Support

- Free vs paid services
- Group or individual counselling
- Age, gender, sexual orientation (identity factors)
- Types of services available

Education

- ELL supports
- SWIS support
- Student support services
- Alternative learning options
- Extracurricular/community activities
- Post-secondary options
- Transportation
- School and program capacities
- Food programs

Childcare

- Subsidized
- Before/After school
- Pre-school

Settlement Agencies

- Capacity to deliver services
- Programs available
- LINC
- Language assessments
- Hours
- Delivery of service (virtual/in-person)

Government Support

- Anti-racism bylaw
- LIPs community engagement
- General consultation for comments/concerns

Refugee Feedback

- Consultation from community refugees
- Retention rate

Appendix 2: Affordable Housing Projects, BC Housing 2021

Affordable Housing Projects Kamloops					
Name	Funding Program	Address	Housing Operator	Clients Served	Number of Homes
Kamloops - Singh St	Deepening Affordability Fund	975 Singh St	Lii Michif Otipemisiwak Family & Community Services Society	Low- to moderate-income	31
Kamloops - Fortune Rd	Supportive Housing Fund	654 Fortune Dr	TBD	Very low-income	40
Kamloops Indian Band - Kamloops Way	Community Housing Fund	Kamloops Way & Chilcotin Rd	Tk'emlups te Secwepemc (TteS)/YneT Society	Low- to moderate-income	58
Kamloops - Tranquille Rd	Rapid Response to Homelessness	317 - 323 Tranquille Rd	Ask Wellness	Very low-income	62
Kamloops - Mission Flats Rd	Supportive Housing Fund	805 Mission Flats Rd	Ask Wellness Society	Very low-income	54
Kamloops - Hillside Court	Community Housing Fund	1260 Hillside Court	ASK Wellness	Low- to moderate-income	37
Kamloops - McGill Rd	Student Housing Loan Program	704 McGill Rd	Thompson Rivers University	Students	533
Kamloops - Victoria St	Rapid Response to Homelessness	259 Victoria St W, 265 Victoria St W, 271 Victoria St W	Smithers Community Services Association	Very low-income	24
Kamloops - Victoria St	Community Housing Fund	612 Victoria St	Centre for Seniors Information BC Interior Society	Low- to moderate-income	112

Affordable Housing Projects Salmon Arm					
Name	Funding Program	Address	Housing Operator	Clients Served	Number of Homes
Salmon Arm - Cedar Pl	Supportive Housing Fund	540 3rd St	Canadian Mental Health Association - Shuswap/Revelstoke	Very low-income	38

Affordable Housing Projects Vernon					
Name	Funding Program	Address	Housing Operator	Clients Served	Number of Homes
Lumby - Shields Ave	Community Housing Fund	2211 S Shields Ave	Lumby & District Senio Citizens Housing Society	Low- to moderate-income	20
Vernon - Reserve #1	Community Housing Fund	Reserve 1	Okanagan Indian Band	Low- to moderate-income	16
Vernon - Pleasant Valley Rd	Community Housing Fund	4005 Pleasant Valley Rd.	Vernon & District Community Land Trust Society	Low- to moderate-income	12
Vernon - Coldstream Ave	Community Housing Fund	3400 Coldstream Ave	Vernon Pensioner's Accommodation Society	Low- to moderate-income	48
Vernon - 25 St	Supportive Housing Fund	2600 35 St		Very low-income	52
Vernon - 25 Ave	Supportive Housing Fund	3610 25 Ave, 4005 Pleasant Valley Rd	Turning Points Collaborative Society	Very low-income	124
Vernon - 27 Ave	Supportive Housing Fund	3802A 27 Ave	Turning Points Collaborative Society	Very low-income	112
Vernon - 43 St	Rapid Response to Homelessness	2307 43 St	Elizabeth Fry Society	Very low-income	n/a
Vernon - 27 Ave	Deepening Affordability Fund	5545 27 Ave	Vernon Native Housing Society	Low- to moderate-income	38

Vernon - Okanagan Landing Rd	Community Housing Fund	6309-6321-6335 Okanagan Landing Rd.	Okanagan Village Housing Society	Low- to moderate-income	13
Vernon - 7000 College Way	Student Housing Loan Program	7000 College Way	Okanagan College	Students	100

Affordable Housing Projects Kelowna					
Name	Funding Program	Address	Housing Operator	Clients Served	Number of Homes
Kelowna - University Way	Student Housing Loan Program	3333 University Way	University of Northern British Columbia	Students	2
Kelowna - Celano Cr	Deepening Affordability Fund	165 Celano Cres	Society of Hope	Low- to moderate-income	21
Kelowna - McCurdy Rd	Supportive Housing Fund	130 McCurdy Rd	Canadian Mental Health Association of Kelowna	Very low-income	49
Kelowna - Kneller Rd	Community Housing Fund	Kneller Rd	OMAHS	Low- to moderate-income	45
Kelowna - McIntosh Rd	Supportive Housing Fund	280 McIntosh Rd	John Howard Society of the Central and South Okanagan	Very low-income	52
Kelowna - Commerce Ave	Rapid Response to Homelessness	1642 Commerce Ave	Queen Charlottes Heritage Housing Society	Very low-income	19
Kelowna - Gerstmar Rd	HousingHub	295 Gerstmar Rd	Fernbrae Manor	Middle-income	186
Kelowna - Commerce Ave	Rapid Response to Homelessness	2175 Benvoulin Ct	Queen Charlottes Heritage Housing Society	Very low-income	19

Kelowna - Benvoulin Ct	Community Housing Fund	2175 Benvoulin Ct	National Society of Hope	Low- to moderate-income	122
Kelowna - Kingsway	Community Housing Fund	Kingsway/Cambridge	Society of Hope	Low- to moderate-income	75
Kelowna - Ellis St	Supportive Housing Fund	1055 and 1063 Ellis St	The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Kelowna	Very low-income	38
Kelowna - Clement Ave	HousingHub	726 Clement Ave	PC Urban	Middle-income	157
Kelowna - Cawston Ave	Community Housing Fund	1060 Cawston Ave	NOW Canada Society	Low- to moderate-income	40
Kelowna - Fuller Ave	Deepening Affordability Fund	555 Fuller Ave	Pathways Abilities Society	Low- to moderate-income	68
Kelowna - Sutherland Ave	HousingHub	1165 Sutherland Ave	Columbian Centennial Housing Society	Middle-income	48
Kelowna - KLO Rd	Student Housing Loan Program	1000 K. L. O. Rd	Okanagan College	Students	216
Westbank - Falcon Lane	Indigenous Housing Fund	1920 Falcon Ln	Westbank First Nation (WFN)	Low- to moderate-income	14
Westbank - Fox Road	Indigenous Housing Fund	1910 Fox Rd	Westbank First Nation (WFN)	Low- to moderate-income	3
Westbank - Cougar Rd	Supportive Housing Fund	3235 Cougar Rd	Turning Points Collaborative Society	Very low-income	51

Kelowna - Majoros Rd	HousingHub	2200 Majoros Rd	Highstreet Carrington View Apartments Ltd/ Highstreet Ventures	Middle-income	186
Peachland - 5th Ave	Community Housing Fund	4426-4450 5th Ave	Peachland Seniors	Low- to moderate-income	68

Affordable Housing Projects Penticton					
Name	Funding Program	Address	Housing Operator	Clients Served	Number of Homes
Keremos - 7th Ave	Deepening Affordability Fund	816 7th Ave	Village of Keremos	Low- to moderate-income	16
Penticton - Winnipeg St	Rapid Response to Homelessness	594-600 Winnipeg St	ASK Wellness Society	Very low-income	62
Penticton - Skaha Lake Rd	Supportive Housing Fund	3240 Skaha Lake Rd	BC Housing	Very low-income	54
Oliver - Airport St	Community Housing Fund	5931 Airport St	M'akola Housing Society	Low- to moderate-income	46
Osoyoos Indian Band – 45th st	Community Housing Fund			Low to moderate income	43
Okanagan Falls - 9th Ave	Deepening Affordability Fund	5080 9th Ave	South Skaha Housing Society	Low- to moderate-income	26

Appendix 3: LIPs Brochure of Services and Resources

The [Vernon and District Immigrant and Community Services Society](#) is a central resource for new immigrants, providing settlement services, English language classes, employment services, referrals, and more.

This non-profit society offers many services for newcomers, immigrants, refugees, visible minorities and first-generation Canadians, helping with their settlement and integration into Vernon.

Kids Activities

Vernon has many groups for children and youth outside of school including Boys & Girls Club, sports organizations and more. Pick up your copy of the *Active Living* booklet at the Recreation Centre to learn about a variety of activities, groups and places for children to explore.

Shopping

With over 250 retail and service shops, department, brand, and specialty stores, you will find everything here for your home, family, and entertaining needs.

Be sure to visit our artisans, craft and lifestyle trade shows and indoor and outdoor markets to find something unique and local. Vernon offers vibrant downtown, neighbourhood, and mall shopping areas.

Transportation

Our public transit services run regularly in the City and connect to smaller and larger centers across the region, including Kelowna, the College and University. Private transportation can get you to the airport, up to Silver Star Mountain Resort and to many lakes and wineries on tours.

Vernon also has taxis, seniors buses, handi-buses, and school buses taking children to nearby and special program schools.

We're also just 30 minutes away from the Kelowna airport (YLW) which has direct routes to major hubs in Canada and select US destinations. Vernon also has a commercial [airport](#) with an active flying club and businesses offering services for general aviation, manufacturing, lessons and skydiving.

Health care

Vernon boasts a newly expanded hospital as well as other health services including mental health and addictions services, public health nursing, Aboriginal health, home and community care programs, residential and assisted living facilities as well as laboratory and diagnostic services.

We have resources to help you find a family doctor, naturopath, chiropractor, dentist and other health providers. To apply for your Medical Service Card, visit the BC Services Centre at 3201 30 Street, downtown Vernon.

BC Identification & Driving

To get BC identification and drivers licenses, visit the BC Services Centre at 3201 30 Street, in downtown Vernon. You have 90 days to switch to a BC drivers license.

You have 30 days to register, license and insure your vehicle after arriving in BC. Your vehicle license plates can be transferred when you get your insurance at any ICBC or private insurance agency.



What's in Vernonfor Me?

Information to help you enjoy
moving to and living in Vernon BC



WITHIN 30 MINUTES:

10 beaches, 7 golf courses, 3 lakes, ski areas, bike trails, walking paths, fitness centres, spas, wineries, galleries, international airport, attractions, parks, and more. Visit TourismVernon.com

Vernon is a city with a population of 42,000 in the beautiful North Okanagan. It provides an exceptional, relaxed quality of life with a mix of urban amenities, world class resorts, and amazing recreational opportunities all situated in a natural setting. Vernon is a great place to live and work for all ages.

Activate Your Life

Recreation

Outdoors and indoors, you can enjoy an active lifestyle in Vernon. Lakes, golf courses, and ski areas are nearby, while right in the city are gyms, swimming pools, tennis courts, arenas, bike park and indoor walking. Check out the *Active Living Guide* booklet available at the Recreation Centre for activities for all ages.

For something extraordinary, experience the Atlantis Waterslides, the new Okanagan Rail Trail, or the Allan Brooks Nature Centre.

Culture

Vernon is an active hub for all kinds of cultural activities. We have art galleries, studios, heritage sites and organizations, performing arts centres, live music venues and interactive museum and library.

Dining

Eating out in Vernon is a treat! We have many different styles of food to choose from as well as unique locations on the waterfront, on the top of a hill, in a castle or on the beach. There is something for every taste bud in your group!

Plus, you may enjoy samples from our area wineries, cideries, distilleries and meadery.

Socialize & Get Involved

Making new friends can be fun for all ages and help you get to know your neighbours and community faster. Some ways to start connecting is to look for groups you're interested in such as multicultural groups, faith groups, fitness groups, environmental groups, political organizations. As well check out drop-ins at the library, recreation centre, or seniors centres.

Download the City's events app called *Vernon Connect* from your app store to discover activities through your smartphone. Also, look for events and activities on Facebook, and on posters around the city, especially in coffee shops.

You can also meet fun and friendly people by joining in with charities and fund-raisers to support your favourite cause.

Work Interests?

Vernon has many free services that can help you find employment or start a business. Connect with [Nexus BC](#) and [Community Futures](#) for assistance.

A great way to make your skills known and meet people is to volunteer. Check out the opportunities online at <http://vernon.bcvolunteer.ca/>

Get Settled

Learning

Like many cities, Vernon offers a variety of educational options for pre-school and kindergarten through Grade 12 including specialized sports, language and outdoor

programs. Most neighbourhood schools are within walking distance or on school bus routes.

For adults, the Vernon campus of Okanagan College and the University of UBC Okanagan provide many post-secondary programs allowing students to live at home.

Okanagan College publishes a continuing education booklet promoting classes for non-credit education, personal interest, and business-related training.

You may also be interested in Okanagan Valley College of Massage which is Canada's first Accredited Massage Therapy program.

Finding a home

Vernon has a variety of home types and locations close to community amenities. Some people start by renting while others connect with a realtor to purchase a home before relocating.

There are online places to look. For buying visit [realtor.ca](#) while for renting try [kijiji.ca](#) or [castanet.net](#) websites.

Consider the benefits of various styles of apartments, townhomes, single-family homes, multi-family homes, as well as homes on acreages for farming, ranching or recreational use such as beachfront.

The [CMHC housing market information portal](#) offers information online about the average rental and buying costs.



Appendix 4: Resource List of Central Okanagan Faith & Cultural Centres

Faith & Cultural Centre	Contact Information
Baha'i Faith	P.O. Box 22102 (Capri Mall) Kelowna, BC V1Y 9N9
House of the Caribbean	541 Bernard Avenue, Unit 101 Kelowna, BC V1Y 6L7
Croatian Club	530 Eastbourne Court Kelowna BC V1X 5L2
Dolyna Ukrainian Cultural Society	www.dolynadancers.com
German Canadian Harmonie Club	1696 Cary Road Kelowna, BC V1X 2B9
Gurdwara Guru Amardas Darbar Sikh Society	221 Davie Road Kelowna, BC V1X 3Y7
Okanagan Irish Society Kelvern Celtic Society	2159 Alvarado Trail Westbank, BC V4T 3B8
Islamic Centre – Masjid As-Salaam BC Muslim Association	1120 Hwy 33 West Kelowna, BC V1X 1Z2 kelowna.thebcma.com
Kelowna Japanese Language Society (KJLS)	www.kelownanihongo.ca
Kasugai Sister City Association	Box 30088 RPO Kelowna BC V1V 2M4 www.kelowna.ca/our-community/about-kelowna/sister-cities
Kelowna Bethel Korean Church	2210 Stillingfleet Road Kelowna, BC V1Y 7Y9, Canada
Kelowna Buddhist Temple	1089 Borden Avenue Kelowna, BC V1Y 6A7 www.kelownabuddhisttemple.org
Kelowna Canadian-Italian Club Clubhouse/ Bingo	770 Lawrence Avenue Kelowna, BC V1Y 6L9
Kelowna Lake Country Japanese Cultural Society	#217-1789 Harvey Avenue Kelowna BC V1Y 6G4
Kelowna Liedertafel Society	PO Box 2546 Kelowna BC V1X 6A6
Kelowna Polish Cultural Society	4479 Waslow Road Kelowna BC V1W 1R7

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society	442 Leon Avenue Kelowna, BC V1Y 6J3 www.kfs.bc.ca
Korean Presbyterian Church	1309 Bernard Avenue Kelowna, BC V1Y 6R5
Okanagan Chinese Baptist Church	1025 N. Rutland Road Kelowna, BC V1X 4Y9
Okanagan Chinese Canadian Association	1460 Inkar Road Kelowna, BC, V1Y 5W1
Okanagan French Cultural Centre	702 Bernard Avenue Kelowna, BC V1Y 6P5 www.leccfo.org
Okanagan Hungarian Society	1670 Ross Road Kelowna, BC V1Z 1L9
Okanagan Jewish Community Association	102 Glenmore Road N Kelowna BC V1V 2E2 www.ojcc.ca
Okanagan Korean Culture and Knowledge Society	1460 Inkar Road Kelowna BC
Okanagan Sikh Temple and Cultural Society	1101 North Rutland Road Kelowna, BC V1X 4T7 www.okanagansikh temple.com
St. Ilija Missionary Parish (Serbian)	585 Gerstmar Road Kelowna, BC V1X 4B3
Sons of Norway	4960 Chute Lake Road Kelowna, BC V1W 4M3 www.sofn7.com
UBCO African Caribbean Student Club	3333 University Way Kelowna, BC
UBCO Asian Student Association	3333 University Way Kelowna, BC
Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Assumption	1091 Coronation Avenue Kelowna, BC V1Y 7A8
Ukrainian Orthodox Church	1935 Barlee Road Kelowna, BC V1Y 4S3

Appendix 5: School Bus Table

School District	Eligible Riders Criteria	Courtesy Rider Criteria	Annual Rates
SD 22 (Vernon)	<p>K-12 in-catchment students outside of the 2.4 km walk limits within the budget available.</p> <p>Students enrolled in the following programs of choice are considered eligible riders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montessori • French Immersion • Academy of Inquiry and Adventure Okanagan (AIAO) • Forestry Program 	<p>Students enrolled outside their catchment area school may access transportation services as courtesy riders.</p>	<p>Registration fee for all riders: \$35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible Ride (Catchment area school): \$75 • Eligible Ride (Approved Program of Choice): \$275 • Courtesy Ride (In Catchment): \$175 • Courtesy Ride (Out of Catchment): \$275 <p>*Financial Assistance Available</p>
SD 23 (Central Okanagan)	<p>To be eligible, students must be at least the distances set out below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Schools - 3.0 kms • Middle School - 4.0 kms • Secondary Schools - 4.8 kms 	<p>Courtesy riders are those students who do not meet the eligibility criteria to their English Catchment School.</p> <p>Unless a special route is approved by the Board of Education, busing is not provided for students to attend a school other than their English Catchment School.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Child \$300 • 2 Children \$600 • 3 Children \$750 • 4+ Children \$900 <p>*Financial Assistance Available</p>
SD 53 (Okanagan-Similkameen)	<p>To be eligible, students must be within the walk limit to school of 3.2 kilometers. Any home closer than that is not eligible.</p>	<p>If you are going to a school of choice, your child will become a courtesy rider which</p>	<p><i>No Fees</i></p>

		has certain restrictions attached.	
SD 67 (South Okanagan)	<p>Students are eligible for transportation services if they attend their catchment area school and live outside of walk limits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For grades K-3, the walk limit is 4.0km. • For grades 4-12, the walk limit is 4.8km. 	<p>Courtesy riders are students who travel to schools outside of their catchment area, request a transfer to another school, live within walk limits, or attend a school of choice program, including French Immersion.</p>	No Fees
SD 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)	<p>The student must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend their catchment area school • Live more than 3.5 km from his/her catchment area school • Must be registered in SD83 schools or programs. 	<p>Courtesy Riders must meet these conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an existing bus route • The bus has available space • No additional stops are required. <p>Transportation is not available to students who chose to attend outside their catchment area school or a program of choice.</p>	No Fees
SD 73 (Kamloops-Thompson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Students (Grades K – 3) – walk limit of 4 km • All Other Students (Grades 4 – 12) – walk limit of 4.8 km to school or 3.2 km to a school bus stop 	<p>There is no entitlement to public school bus service or transportation assistance for students enrolled outside their catchment school. Providing space is available on an existing bus run and no route modifications are</p>	<p>No Fees</p> <p><i>*Financial assistance for the use of public transit shall be offered as an alternative to a school bus route.</i></p>

	<p><i>*Students with Special Needs in Ministry Categories A – G who are not able to independently walk to school or access public transportation there is no walk limit.</i></p>	<p>required, students may apply as courtesy riders. Eligibility for a courtesy ride shall be considered in the following priority: School District No. 73 (Kamloops-Thompson) students. Students enrolled in independent schools.</p>	
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