

INFORMATION PACKAGE

Retaining Professionals in Labrador Communities.... A Guide to Establishing Welcoming Committees

DRAFT

**Labrador
Come Work and Play !**

October, 2003

This is a partnership initiative between;

The Combined Councils of Labrador, Health Labrador Corporation, Grenfell Regional Health Services, Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Labrador School Board – District 1, Northern Peninsula Labrador South School Board – District 2, College of the North Atlantic, Department of Human Resources and Employment, Human Resources Development Canada and the Strategic Social Plan office in Labrador.

To arrange for a presentation or workshop on establishing a welcoming committee please contact Jamie Snook at 896-8989 email; at ed@combinedcouncils.org or Alicia Sutton at 896-5152 email; at suttona@gov.nl.ca

Table of Contents

Background and Introduction	4
A Success Story	5
Issues on Recruiting and Retaining	6
Solutions – How Municipal Councils can help	7
Key Points to Remember	8
A ‘How To’ Guide for Welcoming Committees	9
You Have A Committee in Place...Possible Actions	9
Contact List of Human Resource Personnel in Labrador	10

Background and Introduction

Everyone has a role in recruiting and retaining professionals in Labrador communities. Health Labrador Corporation, Grenfell Regional Health Services and School Districts 1 and 2 are reporting ongoing problems in keeping staff positions filled in Labrador communities.

Surveys conducted with professionals that left Labrador communities indicate that the *Leavers* are; younger, unattached, professionally and socially isolated, and have difficulties adapting to the culture. Given this information, and a large turnover rate (approximately 70% for teachers), partners working with the Strategic Social Plan are in the process of developing strategies to reduce the high turnover rates in communities.

Examples of other strategies include; Opening the Door to the North - A Human Resource Forum that was held in May 2003, cultural guides to introduce professionals to Labrador's diversity, DVD's on life in Labrador communities and information folders for marketing the region, have all been developed as tools to help with the recruitment and retention problems. In May 2003, Forum participants identified a possible role for municipal councils, in establishing welcoming committees, to help with the isolation and cultural adjustment for new employees. There are several other recommendations that are being developed including; cost of living analysis that compares Labrador to other northern regions, marketing and recruiting in adventure based/environmental magazines, creating Labrador specific labour market products, addressing housing etc.

The retention of professionals is the responsibility of several groups including; employers, councils and communities. This Information Package has been developed as a possible guide to assist municipal councils in setting up welcoming committees in their communities. It provides councils with some general information to keep in mind, as well as some suggestions for actual set up, should a community be interested in proceeding. People who live in a community know the community best. This wisdom will help you determine which activities will be most successful.

A Success Story

This past September (2002), the school council and members of the community in Hopedale, took extra efforts to welcome new teachers to the community!

The new teachers were met at the airstrip, which represented a significant first point of contact for the newcomers.

The school council and the community even organized socials when family members from away, came to visit their sons and daughters. The parents left with a good impression of the community and felt comfortable that their children were happy, safe and in good hands!

The following September there was a drastic improvement with the retention of teachers.

ISSUES ON RECRUITING AND RETAINING IN LABRADOR

The following list highlights some **issues that municipal councils need to consider** when educating themselves and community members about keeping staff in their communities.

- ✚ New staff may be lonely or missing family members back at home. Coping with this loneliness is significant in their wanting to remain in a community for more than one year.
- ✚ Lack of orientation and proper introduction to communities can be problematic as the new staff are not sure how the community operates or what is acceptable.
- ✚ Keep in mind that staff may be moving into 'foreign environments' with different cultures and customs. They may need tolerance and help adjusting.
- ✚ Community residents need to understand that the role of a service provider is to deliver services in an effective and efficient manner, not just job creation. Employers sometimes need to make staff and program changes in communities to remain effective.
- ✚ Support and encouragement to new residents from existing community members, to participate as volunteers on boards, on committees, with fundraising, etc., goes a long way.
- ✚ Interference with board/employer protocols when dealing with community concerns, can impact how long the professional will stay. A negative experience in dealing with issues can have a long-term impact on the community and those who live there year round.
- ✚ Small town issues / gossiping can be very damaging.
- ✚ Educating your community about use of services is important. Residents should be educated on not abusing the system and professionals. Some professionals are the 'one of' in a community and cannot be expected to be on call 24 hours a day – 7 days a week.
- ✚ Additional incentives are always good! Town council incentives will help communities remain competitive in a global market. We are competing with the country for some professionals, so every little bit helps. Eg. Snow clearing, reduced poll tax etc.

SOLUTIONS – HOW MUNICIPAL COUNCILS CAN HELP!

- ✚ Know when your new staff are arriving, advise them of community activities, recreation facilities and what you have to offer. Organize a welcoming delegation to meet your new staff. Organize a social for all new staff and the community.
- Preparing new staff for what to expect when they get to a new community can be provided by local residents. Be sure to encourage your greeters / ambassadors to be positive.
- Communities can also have a role at recruitment fairs. For example send pamphlets and pictures of your town to your boards for promotion, consider sending delegates to recruiting fairs, etc
- ✚ Respect individuals and let new staff know what is acceptable in your culture or community. Show them where they will be living and where service are located.
- ✚ Avoid creating an uproar when jobs are lost due to board efficiency. In most cases, resources are transferred / reallocated to fill identified gaps.
- ✚ Town councils can promote volunteerism in their communities by getting a list of volunteer opportunities for residents.
- ✚ Follow protocols / procedures when dealing with community complaints about staff in your community.
- ✚ Always discourage negative and gossiping discussions.
- ✚ Councilors can work with professionals in educating residents about services. For example, residents should know that a negative consequence of using a health service unnecessarily, is that staff get over-worked and leave.
- ✚ Communities may be able to offer signing bonuses, snow clearing, waive poll taxes or business taxes and help advocate for appropriate housing.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- It is everyone's long term goal to have local residents trained to fill jobs in Labrador communities. Until we have a sufficient base to draw from we are reliant on attracting people from away.
- After the professional begins work, the community plays a higher profile than an employer in keeping a staff person. If professionals remain in your community longer, there will be less of a recruitment crisis. Your families and children will get better and more consistent services.
- ✚ Make living in your community a positive experience; it will extend an individual's stay! It will be a win – win situation for all!
- ✚ Never take for granted that all positions will be filled in the community. It takes a combined effort to fill positions. Your community must buy into the value of a service offered by various professionals and the negative impact of having vacant positions.
- ✚ News of a bad experience travels faster than a good experience. A negative incident in a community can travel through professional circles and discourage other professionals from coming to your community.
- There is a very short supply of some professionals and they have many options available because the demand for their service is so high.
- Welcoming Committees may be easier to set up in smaller municipalities but larger towns may be able to partner with specific employers to work on joint strategies / committees.

A 'HOW TO' GUIDE...SETTING UP A WELCOMING COMMITTEE

- ✚ **Public process.** Advertise to the community, about a meeting that will help fill professional positions. Invite key people that your council feels would be effective on such a committee or a good ambassador for your community.
- ✚ **First community meeting.** Host a community meeting, possibly have it chaired by a town councilor. (*SSP and the CCL staff are willing to attend this first meeting if needed*). The chairperson may potentially be a staff person with the town council. This person must have a full time commitment to the position as chairperson, be willing to take the lead, do invitations and work out logistics.
- **Presentation.** Deliver community presentation on the importance of filling positions, a community's role, an outline of what a welcoming committee would do and invite people to participate on the welcoming committee.
- **Committee set up.** This does not have to be very formal, just a group of people who are interested and willing to commit to welcoming newcomers to your community.
- **Identify Resources.** Develop a list of interesting things to see, resources and services in the community, arrange for a tour (if they are interested).

YOU HAVE A WELCOMING COMMITTEE IN PLACE... POSSIBLE ACTIONS

- Make contact with the health and school boards, or other major employers, several times throughout the year, to identify whether or not new professionals will be entering the community. (See contact list)
- Give contact information from the welcoming committee to the health and school board staff/directors. Have them agree to call you once they have been given your contact names and numbers, to notify your community of new staff arrivals.
- ✚ Determine dates, times and names of arrival for new professionals.
- ✚ Meet and greet at the airport, dock or at their home (if arranged).
- Develop an information kit to include: recreation schedule, possible community discounts, list of benefits available from the town council, list of annual festivals and events, list of key people in the community, public buildings, frequently called numbers, and suggested things to see and do.

YOU HAVE A *WELCOMING COMMITTEE* IN PLACE...POSSIBLE ACTIONS (continued)

- Consider scheduling follow-up house visits or phone calls a few weeks after they have settled in. Be sure they are interesting and comfortable with your group contacting them for follow up.
- If you do an actual visit, be sure to bring welcome kits, maybe baked goods or other ideas the community comes up with. Follow up with new professionals to ensure things are going well. Try not to let a person be alone in a community without some contact for a long period of time.
- ✚ Organize community meet-n-greets or socials at different times in the year, perhaps in October and January.
- ✚ Send personal invitations to community events and festivals, follow up with a phone call.
- Remember - Even the little things count!
 - Send Christmas cards in December month;
 - Invite them to a traditional Christmas dinner;
 - Don't let them spend Christmas alone or other traditional times like Thanksgiving, Easter and others;
 - Provide them with local recipes;
 - Possibly determine birthdays;
 - Offer to take them on a boat ride or skidoo trip;
 - Let them know about cultural / community gatherings
 - Include cultural descriptions i.e. The meaning of Inukshuk, the purpose of tea dolls etc.
- ✚ Organize cultural outings with professionals in the community, for example a boating, fishing, hunting or snowmobiling excursion.
- ✚ Raise public awareness to the importance of professionals in the community and the challenges of keeping them.

Contact List of Human Resource Personnel in Labrador

Employer	Contact Name	Contact Numbers
Labrador School Board School District 1	Roger Taylor Assistant Director of Education Human Resources	(709) 944-4069 (709) 944-5717 { fax }
Labrador School Board School District 1	Jeff Thompson Chief Executive Officer Director of Education	(709) 896-2431 ex.224 (709) 896-9638 { fax }
Northern Peninsula Labrador South School District 2	Roland Parrill Assistant Director of Education Human Resources	(709) 475-2053 (709) 475-2118 { fax }
Northern Peninsula Labrador South School District 2	Jesse Payne Chief Executive Officer Director of Education	(709) 475-2052 (709) 475-2118 { fax }
Health Labrador Corporation	Sam Mansfield Human Resource Manager	(709) 897-2359 (709) 897-4741 { fax }
Health Labrador Corporation	Boyd Rowe Chief Executive Officer	(709) 897-2350 (709) 897-4032 { fax }
College of the North Atlantic	Winnie Montague Assoc. District Administrator	(709) 896-6320 (709) 896-9533 { fax }
College of the North Atlantic	Robert Simms District Administrator	(709) 896-6311 (709) 896-9533 { fax }
Department of Human Resources & Employment	Mary Jane Dyson Human Resources	(709) 896-3306 (709) 896-7023 { fax }
Department of Human Resources & Employment	Agnes Rumbolt Regional Manager	(709) 896-3306 (709) 896-7023 { fax }