



For Immediate Release

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Forum asks community to walk in an immigrant's shoes

Immigrant Welcome Centre's Welcoming Communities Coalition is hosting an experiential event on November 18

COMOX VALLEY – If you walk into The Immigrant Welcome Centre's Welcoming Communities Coalition's forum in November, you will be given a nametag with someone else's name. This pseudonym will be accompanied by a card that shares a piece of an immigrant's story about settling in the Comox Valley. That card will be just the start of a journey to find and access the services you need to help you settle successfully in your new hometown.

"There are so many pieces involved in settling in a new country. When you look for a job, is your international education recognized here? Do you want to access English language classes? How will you make friends?" Coalition coordinator Julie Keumbehdjian says.

"We hope this experience will help local residents and service providers gain better insight to the challenges of being a newcomer in a place where the culture and language may not be familiar, or where your status as a resident is not always certain."

As they go through the stations, participants may also learn about community services and organizations in the Valley that they were previously unaware of. After going through the story cards, everyone will come together and discuss what they experienced around coffee and tea.

"There will be a chance for meaningful discussion around what surprised people, what challenges stood out, and how we as a community can collaborate and make changes going forward," Keumbehdjian says. "The goal is to create welcoming and inclusive communities where everyone feels welcome, no matter where they come from."

The event will take place at the Native Sons Hall Lodge Room in Courtenay on Saturday, Nov. 18, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. The public is invited to register in advance for free online at form-can.keela.co/wcc-community-forum-courtenay. The first 40 people who register and attend will



receive a \$5 token to the Comox Valley Farmers' Market, which takes place in the same building that day.

Anyone who is interested in more information about the forum can contact Coalition coordinator Julie Keumbehdjian at julie.keumbehdjian@immigrantwelcome.ca or call 250-338-6359.

Comox Valley Community Forum

When: Saturday, Nov. 18, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Where: Native Sons Hall Lodge Room (360 Cliffe Ave., downstairs)

Register at: <https://form-can.keela.co/wcc-community-forum-courtenay>

About the Welcoming Communities Coalition

The Immigrant Welcome Centre's [Welcoming Communities Coalition](#) is an initiative supporting service coordination, local partnerships, and community-based planning around the needs of newcomers in the North Island. Through community-level research and strategic planning, the WCC identifies barriers facing newcomers, raises awareness around newcomers' ideas, and collaborates with local stakeholders to reduce these barriers. WCC's work is funded by Immigration, Refugees, & Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Learn more at immigrantwelcome.ca/community-leadership/welcoming-communities-coalition.

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