

BANFF ACTION GROUP MINUTES – 29 October, 2008

Kate Rive AIDS Bow Valley	Lisa Cohen-Wallis Mental Health	Alison Gerrits, Town of Banff FCSS
George Belcher, St Georges	Janet Sommer Mental Health	Ruth Pryor Town of Banff FCSS
May Guach, Parentlink	Ian Wilson YWCA	Shawn Carr Town of Banff FCSS
Karen Suchowersky Food Bank	Brenda Birch Public Health	Jen Geary Trident Mediation
Rebecca Whithers Mental Health	Leanne Daigle& Amanda Coon, JRC	Bianca Ross, BRRR Outreach

1. WARM UP

'Upstream thinking' - The idea that if people are falling over a waterfall do you want to be at the bottom trying to catch them upstream preventing them get in the water in the first place. 'Definition of insanity' = doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different result. One of the roles of BAG is to be proactive and constantly evaluate what we do and how we can do it better, so used these 2 theories to spark discussion in small groups where do we see ourselves in the stream/ waterfall picture in the services we provide? And are there any areas where we keep seeing the same results or same thing happening again & again or people at the bottom of the 'waterfall' and what can we do differently.

- Foster homes, tried everything but still none in the Bow Valley. Are we doing the same thing again & again? Training commitment in Calgary is the stumbling block. Need large # of families for training to be delivered here.
- Housing – lots of improvements with BRRR but still there are sub standard conditions that some people live in. Also issues with accessing provincial & government funds for housing options
- Residential treatments for addictions – accessing problems, too slow, doesn't meet need of BV young need to give up 3 weeks of time.

Quickly brainstormed some ideas & we'll aim to look into these issues at a next BAG meeting.

2. BRR HOUSING OUTREACH PROJECT – Bianca Ross

- Bianca works Mon – Thurs 9:30-3:30. Outreach project is funded for 2 years.
- Soup & Bread Program every Thursday St.Marys noon-1pm, free or by donation. Soup provided by local restaurants.
- Out of the Cold Fund operating the same for those needing 1or 2 nights of accommodation, who otherwise would be sleeping outside, and no other funding available to them. There is set criteria for who qualifies.
- Starting data collection process to collect info on hard to house & homeless. May be contacting people.
- Other housing info – Job Resource Centre has tracked local housing costs for the last 10 years. Town of Banff has put in a grant application for money to build 4 Hard to House units.

3. FOREIGN WORKERS UPDATE

- Draft report on survey with businesses handed out. Want to meet with them as a group to discuss info when have completed research from foreign workers themselves.
- Starting to collect info from foreign workers. Originally had planned through a survey but people did not want to complete, so finding that one on one meetings or small groups will work better.
- Marian completing a lit review of what other communities are doing, current trends, Alberta stats, possible funds etc.
- Report with all info Jan/ Feb 2009.
- Amanda Coon, Job Resource Centre amanda@jobresourcecentre.com has been seeing approx. 40 foreign workers a month.

Since the spring of 2008, the Job Resource Centre has been operating a Temporary Foreign Worker information service mandated by Alberta Employment and Immigration. We provide Foreign Worker Information services to the general public including TFW, travelers, employers and other community service providers. We can assist all groups with information on the various programs; temporary employment and permanent residency, AINP, deciding on the right applications, filling and completing government forms and answer questions regarding rights and responsibilities of both parties under

IRPA (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act), Employment Standards and current Immigration Canada legislation.

4. INFO TO SHARE

- **Job Resource Centre**

- Very busy as shoulder season and not many jobs. 100 walkins on one particular day. Many from NZ, Australia & Europe.
- Taking part in the Wellness Workshops. Aimed at management & supervisors to give them the tools & resources to deal with issues staff may bring to them. Partnership with public health, mental health, YWCA, AADAC, Victim Services, BanffLIFE. 2nd workshops has 60 signed up. Also request from Lake Louise.

- **Mental Health**

- Community Helpers project to ID natural helpers in community and train & support them with info on community resources, listening skills, referrals etc. Aimed at 18-30 year olds. Mental Health Board funded for 3years, but recent changeover in Health Board has only now guaranteed for 6 months. Banff LIFE is delivering the project.

- **AIDS Bow Valley**

- AIDS awareness week Nov 24 – Dec 1 & Dec 1 is World AIDS Day – wear red! Events include: displays, awareness, booth at Justice Film festival at Canmore High School.
- HIV & life skills at Morley
- Volunteer recruitment evening with BanffLIFE Nov 18 7pm at Hub with free pizza.
- Need finance board member
- Interested in restarting a young adult coalition with BanffLIFE, AADAC & Town of Canmore.

- **Public Health**

- Flu injections available by appt as clinic finished. New kids aged 23 months – 5 years are free.

- **Town of Banff FCSS**

- **Storytelling Session for Parents of Teens - Thurs 27 Nov 7pm-8:30pm at the YWCA Great Room, 102 Spray Ave** Join us as we use storytelling & discussion as a tool to increase awareness, understanding & knowledge of suicide prevention & intervention. Local storyteller Mandi Kujawa weaves vignettes of people who have touched her life, and their experiences with suicide. This session is aimed at parents of teens, but anyone interested is welcome to attend. Brought to you by Town of Banff FCSS, Banff Community High School, Banff Mental Health & Bow Valley Victim Services. Thanks to generous funding by ACICIR (Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research) Community Injury Control Fund & Banff Soroptomists. Please RSVP to reserve a spot to Ruth ruth.pryor@banff.ca

5. BAG DATES 2009

All lunch meeting 12-2pm with food :o) at Banff Town Hall Council Chambers (
Wednesday 18 Feb
Wed 17 June
Wed Oct 21

The Banff Action Group meets four times a year to proactively look at opportunities, issues, gaps and partnerships in Banff. This group is facilitated by Banff FCSS.

To become part of the Banff Action Group, or to be added to the email distribution list, contact Ruth Pryor, FCSS Community Development Coordinator at community.services@banff.ca.

Highlight of Foreign Worker Survey – October 2008

A. The Survey

In the spring of 2008 it came to the attention of the Banff Action Group (BAG) that the businesses of Banff were hiring more foreign workers to fill their human resource needs. In response to this issue, the Town of Banff- Family and Community Support Services with input from BAG created an online survey for businesses. The intent of the survey was to get a better understanding of what the situation was in Banff. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with major employers in Banff to get a more in-depth idea of how the businesses are managing temporary foreign workers (TFW). The results of the survey were based on 12 online surveys and 10 personal interviews with local businesses.

B. Employers

A total of 22 businesses, the majority with greater than 100 employees, responded via survey and interview. The costs of recruiting TFW may be prohibitive for smaller businesses which decreased their likelihood of responding to the survey. The following are highlights of the information they provided:

- an average of 24% of current employees were TFW.
- as high as 70% of staff were being recruited from overseas.
- of those organizations recruiting from overseas all of them are committed to continuing to do so or expanding their recruitment efforts.
- the federal government working standards that apply to Canadians also apply to foreign workers. The vast majority of businesses surveyed exceeded the standards by providing additional benefits such as healthcare, dental, transportation, housing and clothing (for work).
- 100% of businesses provided subsidized housing in staff accommodation and only two did not have subsidized meals available.
- the benefits offered by the businesses were the same as provided to Canadian employees. Private health care was provided until TFW were eligible for Alberta Health Care Insurance.
- most organizations have staff orientations for new staff although due to numbers some orientations take place up to a month after arrival. Organizations for the most part rely on their staff orientation to provide information and support for the new workers.
- Information is also shared via staff notice boards
- three of the businesses interviewed have a support person on staff to help foreign workers with issues as they arise.
- half of the organizations work with Banfflife and the Banff's Best program to help educate the TFW about Banff.
- 60% of the businesses provide some form of cultural awareness training to their Canadian staff -no description of this training was available.
- some businesses assist foreign workers in accessing Banff services such as where to shop, bank, doctors' offices etc.
- some employers screen their recruits before they are hired and will take only those who are fluent in English.
- english as a second language (ESL) was provided by 5 employers
- 6 businesses were interested in onsite ESL programming via Bow Corridor Continuing Education. One challenge to ESL programming at a specific time of day, is the shift work and overtime hours of many TFW
- all of the employers provided access to computers and phones (at the employee's cost) so the TFW could remain in contact with home.
- none of the businesses offered flights home for vacations although some paid for the return flights home after their contracts are fulfilled.

- most businesses did not provide specific services to assist the FTW with integration into the workplace or the Banff community.
- many of the employers offered discounted ski lift tickets, fitness passes, trips into Calgary and other activities but did not know how many TFW took part in these opportunities. One business suggested that few TFW took part due to the cost. Free social opportunities put on by some businesses were well attended.

C. Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW)

The initial findings indicated the following:

- the majority of TFW are being recruited from the Philippines with growing numbers arriving from India and Mexico. These countries are targeted because of the availability of educated English speaking workers willing to move overseas to support their families.
- an initial “estimate” of the number of TFW in Banff is between 750-1,000 (by TFW Office in Calgary)
- the majority of TFW are being hired by the hotel/motel sector to work in positions such as housekeeping
- the percentage of TFW having the necessary skills for the positions hired into was 87.27%
- the ratio of males to females is almost 50-50.
- 1.36% of the TFW are with their families in Banff. This may be expected to increase due to the provincial nominees program which, if certain standards are met, allow their families to come. Most of the major employers interviewed are now looking at this option with some TFW hired two years ago.
- The survey found that 93.5% of all TFW are fluent in written English and 95.45% are fluent in spoken English.

Conclusions

The results of this survey do not represent the exact numbers and conditions for all TFW in Banff. The sample size is small and many businesses that are working with TFW did not respond to the survey. Therefore the results are only a sampling of the TFW situation in Banff. Nonetheless it does give a small snapshot of what is occurring in some businesses related to temporary foreign workers and some information on the workers themselves.

With increasing numbers of foreign workers arriving in Banff, there appears to be opportunities to increase the integration of these workers into our community and to enhance supportive services. Further research into this issue, including interviews with temporary foreign workers themselves, will help clarify where the greatest needs are and how to bridge these gaps.