

## Board **President's** Report for AGM, 2/2/17: Melindria Tavoularis

Thank you all for attending this evening. It is a privilege and pleasure for me to welcome you to this AGM as we celebrate our first full year at this office. It is unfortunate we had to postpone our plan to meet on January 25th, due to last week's severe storm, and do appreciate your adjusting your schedules on short notice to be here this evening.

Before beginning my report, I would like to thank Mayor Michel Soucy of Atholville for serving as our Master of Ceremonies.

Special thanks go to our Executive Director, Carol Perkison for her leadership, which has made it possible for our Association to progress and move forward. I would like to add as well, Justin and Vasanthi have played an essential role in the running of our office.

And, of course, I can never thank enough the board of directors, for their dedication and positivity. A lot has been accomplished this past year, because of the team approach we developed between our staff and board.

Our government funder, the New Brunswick Population Growth Division, a division of the New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour have made it possible for us to be here today. As have all our other supporters and partners in this region who have contributed to our successes.

Lastly, I would like to read part of a message Carol received from Alex LeBlanc, the Executive Director of the New Brunswick Multicultural Council. He wanted to be here this evening, but was unable to due to his own busy schedule:

"Please share my regrets with the board. You've done amazing work at the RMA this past year – rebuilding, reconnecting, and reasserting the importance of a strong and vibrant multicultural association in your region. Keep up the great work and I look forward to seeing you in the coming weeks."

There are several categories I will be addressing, the first one is:

### Serving Newcomers:

Soon after moving to this office, newcomers to our region arrived at the RMA. We had inherited limited funds from the previous administration, and knew we were in need of more in order to service our clients. We sought a grant from Les Filles de Marie-de-l'Assomption, who answered our need. They gave us a generous sum of \$20,000 to provide settlement services for our new arrivals which also included Syrian refugees who might come to our region. In the last year, we have serviced 30 clients. Since becoming mayor, Stephanie Englehart-Paulin has been meeting and welcoming each newcomer to Campbellton. Carol's efforts to pursue much needed language courses for our immigrants through the language department of CCNB Bathurst have come to fruition in this last month. We can report, small classes have been developed to accommodate 11 of our clients' schedules in order for them to be taught either French or English at CCNB Campbellton.

### Funding:

Our governmental funding continues to be through the province's New Brunswick Population Growth Division, and we are grateful for their support. We still lack federal funding as there are no new federal calls for grant applications at this time. Based on the first few months of progress made, the New Brunswick Population Growth Division gave us a small increase of funding this past year. In addition, we are thankful to Victor Landry from the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour for supporting short term employee work placements to our office so that Carol can continue to promote multicultural growth in Restigouche.

#### Collaborations, Partnerships and Networking:

Carol is working to expand coordinating with employers in the region to seek employment for our clients.

The RMA recently joined the Restigouche Chamber of Commerce as well, and we are planning a booth for the upcoming Promotion Plus event.

In the spring of 2016, Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour Campbellton initiated a project with Diversis, a consulting firm led by Lori-Ann Cyr, to guide us in developing a strategic plan for the RMA - a first in its history.

We met twice with the Mayors Forum this past year - first to introduce them to our association and inform them of our developing a strategic plan. The second was to update them on our Association. Lori-Ann Cyr returned with us, as well, to present our strategic plan. We intend this year is to visit with each mayor's office in Restigouche county to promote collaboration in providing services and support to newcomers in their communities.

We have had two meetings with Donald Arseneault, as well as a meeting with René Arseneault to inform them about our Association and present status.

The organizations we partnered with in the past year are:

- The New Brunswick Multicultural Council
- Chaleur Multicultural Association of Bathurst
- North West Resource Center for Newcomers, Inc. of Edmundston
- Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick Campus de Campbellton et Bathurst,
- Restigouche Inclusion Network
- YMCA Campbellton
- Campbellton Centennial Library
- Les Montagnards at Sugarloaf Park.

Funders this year have been:

- New Brunswick Population Growth Division
- Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
- Les Filles de Marie de l'Assomption
- Listiguj Mi'gmaq Development Center
- Canada Summer Jobs
- Heritage Canada
- Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick

Events:

In February 2016, we participated in David Gdongbor's yearly presentation and celebration of Black History Month at Sugarloaf H.S.

In March, we organized and hosted a Canada Winter Fun Day at les Montagnards in Sugarloaf Park. It was attended by 90 + people from 19 different countries. Outdoor activities were held throughout the day and into the evening. The event included a delicious international Potluck.

We also presented in March a Francophone Pride Day event held at CCNB Campbellton. Our visiting French stage student, Solène Dupont, MC'd the event. An invited speaker made a presentation about the French language in New Brunswick, and a delightful group of Acadian musicians, singers and dancers performed.

On Canada Day, we provided international flags to be carried by the public to raise awareness of the diverse cultures in our region. They were carried and viewed on the Friendship Walk across the Van Horne Bridge. Our staff, board and clients participated, as well as over 100 people from the community. Refreshments were provided by the City of Campbellton.

On Multicultural Day, we organized an event which ran from morning to evening, again at Les Montagnards. More than 150 people attended. During the day, our tents provided a variety of multicultural activities for children and adults. There were also guided nature walks, and an historical encampment to demonstrate the tri-culture history of our region. In the evening, there was an Asian feast for the volunteers, staff and board.

In the early fall, the RMA clients and staff participated in a trip to the Edmundston Botanical Gardens with the Chaleur Multicultural Association, and their Syrian refugee clients.

In September, CCNB Campbellton and the RMA organized a Meet and Greet Picnic with the International students.

Last week, after needing to postpone our AGM, due to a severe snow storm we decided to hold a social event at our office to enjoy the Indian food which had been prepared for that meeting. Our timing was fortunate, as this past Friday we were honored to be able to recognize and celebrate India's Republic Day as well as the arrival of the Chinese New Year. A group composed of about 30 people from 9 different countries - board, staff, association members, clients and supporters - took a break from their day to enjoy delicious cuisine, to share information about themselves, and to hear a presentation on the history of India's Republic Day, as well as the significance of the Chinese New Year.

#### Internal Growth:

During this year, Carol and some board members have attended numerous professional workshops focusing on the entry of permanent residents and their special needs.

Carol and two board members participated in the three day New Brunswick Multicultural Council's annual province-wide meeting. The focus was on the unique immigration challenges the province is facing this year.

#### Office advances have been:

Developing a filing system which follows governmental standards.

Creating a bilingual website which we update regularly. You can visit it to view pertinent information, as well as see the activities I described to you earlier.

Developing an employee manual.

Fine-tuning our Constitution and Bylaws under the guidance of Aldéa Landry, who has been working with us through Diversis. It will soon be submitted to the board for review, and then presented to our members at a special members meeting for a final vote.