

Northwest Regional Welcoming Communities (NWRWC)

Partnership Council – Meeting Minutes

Date: March 11, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Virtual (Teams)

Chair: Abdulmalik Nuhu, ZIP Coordinator

1. Opening

Abdulmalik Nuhu welcomed members and noted that this was the third official meeting of the Partnership Council. He reiterated NWRWC's purpose—to strengthen collaboration across Northwest Manitoba and build welcoming communities under the Zonal Immigration Partnership (ZIP) model.

2. Introductions

Several members were attending for the first time and introduced themselves. Returning members also re-introduced themselves for the benefit of newcomers. Participants included:

- Abdulmalik Nuhu – ZIP Coordinator, NWRWC
- Gillian McGrath – Executive Director, NWRIS
- Zhanna Khomonchak – Settlement Coordinator & ZIP Support Worker, NWRIS
- Emily Kesselman – Program Officer, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- Andre Murphy – Mayor, Town of The Pas
- Tetiana (Tanya) Shkuratova – Settlement Manager, Swan Valley Office, NWRIS
- Hendrik (Hank) Warnar – Chair, Mystery Lake School Division; Regional Director, Manitoba School Boards Association (Region 4)
- Louise Overton – Swan Valley Immigrant Services / NWRIS Board
- Darpil Patel – Settlement Coordinator & ZIP Support Worker, Thompson Immigrant Services
- Duane Whyte – Councillor, Town of Swan River; Member, Immigrant Service Advisory Board
- Takudzwa (Taku) Mushosho – Economic Development Officer, City of Flin Flon and Town of Creighton (new member)
- Chintan Modi – Board Member, Thompson Chamber of Commerce; Local Business Owner (new member)
- Upendra Patel – Local Business Owner (Tim Horton's), Swan River (new member)

3. Guest Presentation – Newcomer Belonging Research

Abdulmalik introduced Akech Jacob Mayuom, a registered psychiatric nurse in The Pas and a second-year master's student in Psychiatric Nursing at Brandon University. Akech was given five minutes to present his thesis research interest.

Akech outlined his research focus on sense of belonging among newcomers living in rural communities. He noted that the topic connects directly to the Council's mandate of attracting and retaining newcomers. Key points included:

- Research evidence shows newcomers experience decreased mental health outcomes upon arrival in Canada; building conditions for belonging can mitigate this.
- He expressed interest in the Partnership Council as a potential partner for his community-based research project, with the aim of ensuring research findings are implemented beyond his graduate program.

Abdulmalik thanked Akech and indicated that once a formal proposal is prepared, it would be circulated to all Council members for input. No further questions were raised.

4. Review of Previous Minutes

Abdulmalik shared his screen and provided a verbal summary of the December 2, 2025 meeting minutes, including updates on key action items:

- The Terms of Reference (ToR) were approved and the governance structure visual was updated.
- Outreach to MMF and OCN for Indigenous representation is ongoing.
- The Immigrant Advisory Table held its first meeting in 2025; a second meeting is planned for March or early April 2026.
- The IRCC Information Seminar was successfully held, with approximately 18 attendees. The session was livestreamed on Facebook, followed by a closed Q&A with IRCC. Follow-up support has been provided to employers.
- Culturama North: Abdulmalik recently visited Thompson to begin on-the-ground planning for the 2026 event. He met with several organizations, including a seniors' group celebrating their 30th anniversary, to explore collaboration opportunities.
- Municipal Immigration Initiative: Still under discussion with regional and provincial partners; no formal announcement yet.
- Linkages Conference: Members were reminded of the April 28–29, 2026 event in Thompson and the possibility of an in-person Council meeting during that time.

Duane Whyte requested a copy of the December minutes be resent to him. Abdulmalik confirmed he would do so.

No further corrections or observations were raised. The minutes were accepted as presented.

5. IRCC Updates

Emily Kesselman (IRCC) reported that IRCC is currently working through a comprehensive management review. No specific updates were available at this time. Further information will be shared as it becomes available.

6. Strategic Planning – Community Welcoming Survey

Abdulmalik advised that IRCC has encouraged the Council to develop a strategic plan for the ZIP project beyond 2026. As a first step, a community welcoming survey has been designed to gather input from newcomers, businesses, organizations, and municipalities on priorities for making the region more welcoming.

Key points from discussion:

- The survey has not yet been distributed. Council approval is required before it is sent to the broader community.
- Abdulmalik confirmed the survey link will be shared with Council members by email after the meeting for review. Members are asked to respond directly to him with any suggested adjustments.
- The goal is to have a strategic and action plan completed before year-end.

Member suggestions:

- Andre Murphy (Mayor, The Pas): Advised keeping the survey questions open-ended and simple to maximize response rates. He also noted that Swan River and The Pas are wrapping up Community Safety and Wellbeing Plans that include pillars on welcoming and immigration; there may be existing data and contacts that could be leveraged.
- Chintan Modi (Thompson Chamber of Commerce): Suggested partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to distribute the survey, given their established business contacts.
- Duane Whyte (Swan River): Highlighted the importance of integrating the broader community—not just settlement organizations—into welcoming events and initiatives.

7. Governance – Council Chair and NWRIS Board Representation

Abdulmalik raised the matter of nominating a Council Chair, as required under the Terms of Reference. He noted the chair should ideally be a community member rather than staff.

Discussion summary:

- Duane Whyte nominated Gillian McGrath, citing her expertise.
- Gillian McGrath declined, indicating she preferred the role go to a community member and offered to support any chair in a behind-the-scenes capacity, as is done in other NWRIS-supported groups.
- Emily Kesselman (IRCC) confirmed there is no rule preventing a staff member from serving as chair.
- Given the discussion, it was informally agreed that Abdulmalik Nuhu will continue facilitating meetings in his capacity as ZIP Coordinator.

Gillian then explained the governance implications: as per the planned bylaw amendment, the Partnership Council will send three representatives to the NWRIS Board. The chair of the Council automatically becomes one of those board members. The board meets every two months (approximately 30 minutes, on Teams), with occasional email decisions between meetings.

Board representation nominations:

- Chintan Modi (Thompson Chamber of Commerce) volunteered to serve as a board representative. He noted he does not yet have permanent residency and raised the question of conflict of interest. Gillian confirmed there is no conflict of interest.
- Abdulmalik nominated Takudzwa Mushosho (Flin Flon) as a third representative, pending approval from his municipal council.

Gillian confirmed that the bylaw amendment will be prepared for approval at the NWRIS Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May 2026, at which point board positions will be formally enacted.

8. Community Updates

Abdulmalik shared two employment-related updates from The Pas:

- Tim Horton's: Following a staff shortage, Abdulmalik connected the employer with suitable candidates, resulting in three full-time hires.
- KFC Transition: The local KFC location is undergoing a change in ownership, creating uncertainty for workers—some of whom hold closed work permits tied to the employer. Among the affected workers are three Francophone employees. Abdulmalik is liaising with IRCC and the Manitoba representative to explore pathways to open work permits, including Francophone immigration streams, and will keep the Council updated.

9. Next Meeting

Members agreed the next quarterly meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at 10:00 AM (Teams). Abdulmalik will send a calendar invitation following the meeting.

Members planning to attend the Linkages Conference in Thompson on April 28–29, 2026 are encouraged to notify Abdulmalik so that an informal in-person gathering can be arranged.

10. Closing

Abdulmalik thanked all members for their participation and engagement. He confirmed the following will be circulated after the meeting:

- The community welcoming survey link for Council review and approval.
- December 2025 meeting minutes (resent to Duane Whyte).
- Calendar invitation for the June 3, 2026 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:47 AM.

Action Points

Action Item	Details / Lead
Resend December 2025 Minutes	Resend meeting minutes to Duane Whyte. (Lead: Abdulmalik)
Community Welcoming Survey – Council Review	Share survey link with all Council members for review and feedback by email before distribution. (Lead: Abdulmalik; Input: All members)
Strategic Plan Development	Begin development of strategic and action plan based on survey results; share progress with Council periodically. (Lead: Abdulmalik & NWRIS team)
Bylaw Amendment for Board Representation	Prepare bylaw amendment to add three Partnership Council representatives to NWRIS Board for approval at May 2026 AGM. (Lead: Gillian)
NWRIS Board – Confirm Representatives	Confirm board representatives: Chintan Modi (confirmed), Takudzwa Mushosho (pending council approval), and Council Chair. (Lead: Abdulmalik & Gillian)
Flin Flon Board Nomination	Takudzwa Mushosho to seek approval from City of Flin Flon council before formally accepting board nomination. (Lead: Taku)
KFC Worker Support	Continue liaising with IRCC and Manitoba representative to support affected KFC workers with open work permit pathways, including Francophone streams. (Lead: Abdulmalik)
Linkages In-Person Gathering	Confirm attendance for April 28–29 Linkages Conference in Thompson; coordinate informal Council dinner/lunch during the event. (Lead: Abdulmalik; Input: Interested members)
June 3, 2026 Meeting Invitation	Send calendar invitation for next meeting: Wednesday, June 3, 2026, 10:00 AM (Teams). (Lead: Abdulmalik)
Guest Presenter Follow-Up	Circulate Akech Mayuom's research proposal to Council members for review and input once available. (Lead: Abdulmalik)