

Northwest Regional Welcoming Communities (NWRWC)

Partnership Council – Meeting Minutes

Date: December 2, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Virtual (Teams)

Chair: Abdulmalik Nuhu, ZIP Coordinator

1. Opening

Abdulmalik Nuhu welcomed members and noted that this was the second 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

Participants introduced themselves, including several new members:

- Abdulmalik Nuhu – ZIP Coordinator, NWRWC
- Gillian McGrath – Executive Director, NWRIS
- Zhanna Khomonchak – Settlement Worker and ZIP Support Worker, NWRIS
- Emily Kesselman – Program Officer, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- Jonathan Lalonde – Economic Development Officer, The Pas CDC
- Andre Murphy – Mayor, Town of The Pas
- Tetiana (Tanya) Shkuratova – Settlement Manager, Swan Valley Office, NWRIS
- Hendrik (Hank) Warnar – Manitoba School Boards Association Regional Director; Chair, Mystery Lake School Division; Dean, University College of the North
- Louise Overton – Chair, Swan Valley Immigrant Services and NWRIS Board Chair
- Jennifer Early – HR Consultant and Recruitment Manager, Northern Health Region
- Darpil Patel – Settlement Coordinator & ZIP Support Worker, Thompson

3. Review of Previous Minutes

Abdulmalik referred to the September 2025 meeting minutes and provided updates on the key action points:

- The Terms of Reference (ToR) had been revised to incorporate suggestions from the previous meeting, including clearer governance structure, corrected area descriptions, and strengthened Indigenous representation.
- A visual governance chart was added to illustrate the reporting lines between the Host Organization (NWRIS), the Council, and IRCC.
- Outreach to Indigenous communities (OCN and MMF) was initiated, with follow-up ongoing.
- Representation from the Manitoba School Boards Association was now in place through Mr. Hendrik Warnar.

4. Governance and ToR Update

Gillian McGrath presented updates on the governance structure:

- NWRIS, as host organization, currently operates under a board composed of three representatives from each of its three regional advisory groups (Swan Valley, The Pas, and Thompson).
- At the next NWRIS Annual General Meeting (AGM), the organization plans to amend its bylaws to include three representatives from the NWRWC Partnership Council as part of its official governance structure.
- The final version of the ToR will be circulated to all Council members for review and confirmation before the next meeting.

5. Updates on the Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT) and Working Groups

Abdulmalik shared that preparations are underway for the first meeting of the Immigrant Advisory Table, which will ensure newcomers' lived experiences inform the Council's decisions.

He also noted that working groups and sector tables would likely be established regionally (Thompson, The Pas, Swan Valley) rather than centralized, to ensure adequate local engagement and coverage.

6. Planning for 2026 and Proposed Activities

6.1 IRCC Information Seminar

Abdulmalik proposed hosting a regional IRCC seminar for employers and HR professionals to better understand newcomer documentation (work permits, extensions, visa types, etc.).

- Members agreed that this should be held collectively across the region rather than by community.
- Abdulmalik will follow up with the IRCC promotions team and the National Secretariat to confirm support.
- Council members (e.g., municipalities, school boards, employers) will send in specific questions and issues to be addressed during the session.

6.2 Cultural Event Expansion – Culturama North

The Council discussed expanding the Culturama multicultural festival—currently hosted in The Pas—to Thompson in 2026, led by NWRIS Thompson office.

- The event promotes cultural exchange through performances, food, and community engagement.
- The goal is to encourage community-driven sponsorship and participation rather than external funding dependency.

6.3 Municipal Immigration Initiative Update

Jonathan Lalonde provided an update on the Northwest Manitoba Immigration Initiative, coordinated through The Pas CDC.

- The proposal is in final review, with an announcement expected in January 2026.

- The initiative will allow communities to proactively identify and attract needed workers, aligning with provincial and federal immigration pathways.
- Key priorities include:
 - Supporting newcomers already living and working in the region to transition to permanent residency.
 - Recruiting from other provinces and internationally for in-demand occupations such as healthcare aides.
- Jennifer Early (Northern Health Region) noted this initiative directly aligns with healthcare recruitment needs.

7. Meeting Frequency and Scheduling for 2026

Members reaffirmed that quarterly meetings are appropriate at this stage.

Following discussion, it was agreed the next meeting will be held in March 2026 (second week) to avoid fiscal year-end reporting pressures.

A scheduling poll will be circulated to finalize the exact date and time.

Hendrik suggested the possibility of aligning a future in-person meeting with the Linkages Conference in Thompson (April 28–29, 2026), to strengthen connections among Council members.

8. IRCC Updates

Emily Kesselman (IRCC) reported that IRCC is currently undergoing budget reviews and internal restructuring, with more information to follow.

Abdulmalik shared insights from his recent national conference in Halifax, noting that IRCC is working toward reforms to improve newcomer integration and community partnership models. A summary report will be circulated once received.

9. Closing

Abdulmalik thanked all members for their continued commitment and participation.

He will circulate the final ToR, meeting summary, and question framework for the IRCC seminar before the end of the week.

An introduction email for members of the Immigrant Advisory Table will follow once established.

Meeting adjourned at 10:42 AM.

Action Points

Action Item	Details / Lead
Finalize ToR	Circulate final draft for review and confirmation before next meeting. (Lead: Abdulmalik & Gillian)
Bylaw Amendment	NWRIS to include NWRWC representatives in board governance structure at next AGM. (Lead: Gillian)
IRCC Seminar Planning	Coordinate with IRCC promotions team and collect community/employer questions. (Lead: Abdulmalik; Input: All members)
Culturama North (Thompson 2026)	Begin community engagement and sponsorship outreach for the new cultural festival. (Lead: Abdulmalik & NWRIS Thompson team)
Immigration Initiative Launch	Await formal approval and support municipal communication for January 2026 announcement. (Lead: Jonathan)
Indigenous Representation Follow-Up	Continue outreach to OCN and MMF for official participation. (Lead: Abdulmalik)
Meeting Scheduling	Circulate Doodle poll for March 2026 meeting; explore in-person option during Linkages (April). (Lead: Abdulmalik)
Conference Update Summary	Share summary of key takeaways from Halifax national immigration conference. (Lead: Abdulmalik)