

# Economic Immigration Lab



**Year 3 Summary Report**

**Winter 2020**



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[economicimmigrationlab.org](https://economicimmigrationlab.org)

[immigration.noulab.org](https://immigration.noulab.org)

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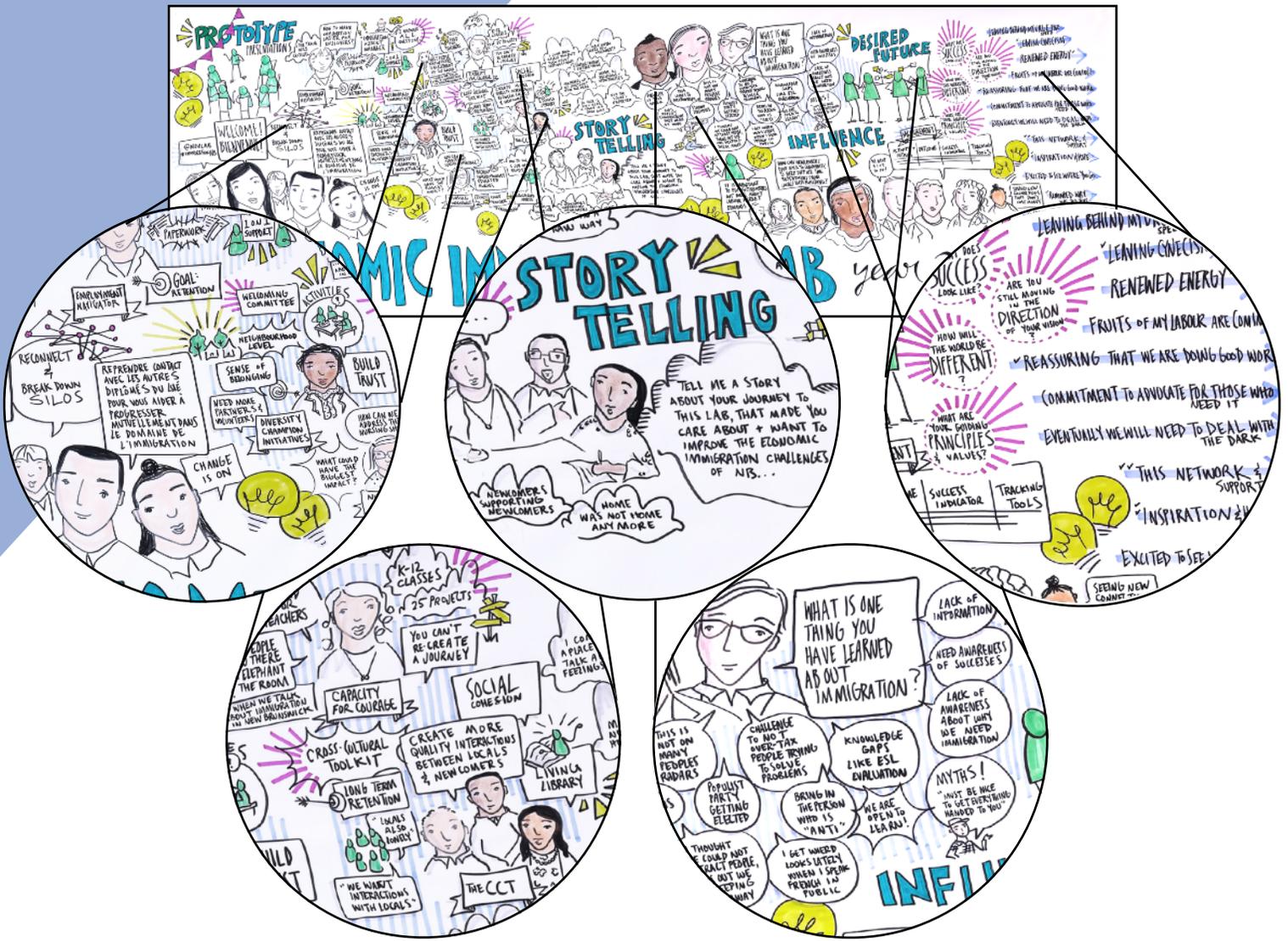
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# Highlights

The Economic Immigration Lab has accomplished a lot in its 3 years of work, introducing a new way of looking at the issue through Human Centered Design and planting the seeds for a culture of innovation within the organizations who have participated.

Taking new approaches to solving challenges can be a difficult process. We applaud all the participants and thank Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency and the Government of New Brunswick's Department of Post Secondary Education Training and Labour for the effort and trust that continue to make this lab a success.

This report gives an overview of:

- the lab process,
- context to the immigration challenge,
- how the lab has evolved,
- participant feedback,
- systems impact, and
- three teams from 2019/20.

Next steps and new teams are detailed near the end of the report with more information to come as their journey evolves.

# Numbers

**100+**

NouLAB staff hours supporting prototype teams

**30+**

Spin offs (subsequent smaller projects)

**15**

Prototypes

**100s**

of new relationships

**68**

Participants

**49**

Unique organizations

**2**

Positions created

**\$43,750**

Invested to support prototype testing and development

**100%**

Post-lab interviewees that have adopted prototyping, systems thinking and a multi-stakeholder approach into their work



# Three Years of Innovating

In September, 2017 a diverse group of 34 stakeholders from the settlement sector, the private sector, newcomers, all levels of government, and academia, set out to discover innovative solutions to the economic and population growth challenges of NB.

Since then, there has been iterations on the facilitation process, new teams formed, prototypes tested, prototypes dropped, many new relationships and policy changes. Throughout the lab information has been flowing from participants to NouLAB coaches and to the leadership council. Strong networks have formed and new relationships fostered, all in the pursuit of a better immigration process for New Brunswick.



## Context

The initial spark for the Economic Immigration Lab happened during NouLAB's Academy program, an introductory workshop on social innovation labs. At this workshop, Alex LeBlanc, Executive Director of the New Brunswick Multicultural Association and Adrienne O'Pray, CEO of the New Brunswick Business Council found themselves talking about the dire need for immigration to the province, and a new approach to solving this challenge. Alex, Adrienne, and the NouLAB team became the convening team, and started the planning of the Economic Immigration Lab. The first step was to bring major stakeholders to the table. An

advisory group known as the Leadership Council was formed, with a purpose of making connections, fundraising, and help shape the lab's objectives. Funding and willpower was committed from Post-secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL), Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), McCain, and Imperial Manufacturing and the stage was set for the first year of a 3 year lab on economic immigration. The plan was to have two "cycles" of the lab per year - a cycle being one cohort of lab participants going through the lab process to develop prototypes.

Through discussions with the Leadership Council the problem was scoped and focused with the guiding question: **How might we become leaders at attracting, welcoming and retaining newcomers to contribute to the economy of New Brunswick?** It was from this initial question that conversations and work flowed. The value of having such an open question is that it allowed participants to think big, step back, and select an issue that their areas of expertise and interests could effectively tackle.

**How might we become leaders at attracting, welcoming and retaining newcomers to contribute to the economy of New Brunswick?**

## Why a Social Innovation Lab?

**“We need to keep the idea that employers are a key piece of the puzzle at the centre. If we could find a way to expand that, it would make a big shift.”**

***Elisabeth Stronach***

*Director, Digital Journey Transformation,  
Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada*

The challenges facing New Brunswick’s economy are multifaceted and complex. According to New Brunswick’s former chief economist, David Campbell, the province’s declining population is the biggest public policy challenge of our time. The labour market is in structural decline and there is a dire need for workers to grow existing businesses. The combined out-migration of working-age New Brunswickers with a higher than national average median age is putting serious pressure on the labour market’s ability to supply workers to grow and support business in the province.

Tackling this pressing issue requires planning and action. The Social Innovation Lab format requires the right amount of both, bringing the experts together and building small projects or prototypes to test ideas to move things forward allows valuable insights to be gained from the immigration system.



# How has the lab evolved?

The first lab convening was held over four months between September and December 2017, with two or three day convenings every month with fieldwork in between. It started with an open call for experts working in immigration and we secured involvement from 34 people who then organized into eight prototype teams. Five of these teams continued the development of these prototypes in the 'real world' and received NouLAB support and funding through the following year. How long NouLAB tracks and supports a project is determined by the amount of support from the team to keep the project running. The goal of prototyping is to test ideas and if they don't work, either adjust them or leave them.

After assessing the outcomes from the first round, the NouLAB team and the leadership council decided to use an accelerated model in order to go deeper. Instead of an open call for individuals, there was a call for people to come with specific topics and challenges that had been identified by the leadership council as

important to immigration in New Brunswick. Two new, more specific calling questions were developed:

**How might we help newcomers to find meaningful employment and feel part of the New Brunswick community?**

**How might we help employers find talent to grow their businesses?**

In April 2018, three teams convened for a one-week process designed by the team at NouLAB modelled after Google's Sprint methodology. The teams focused on:

**Diversity and inclusion in the Parkton community of Moncton where many refugees live;**

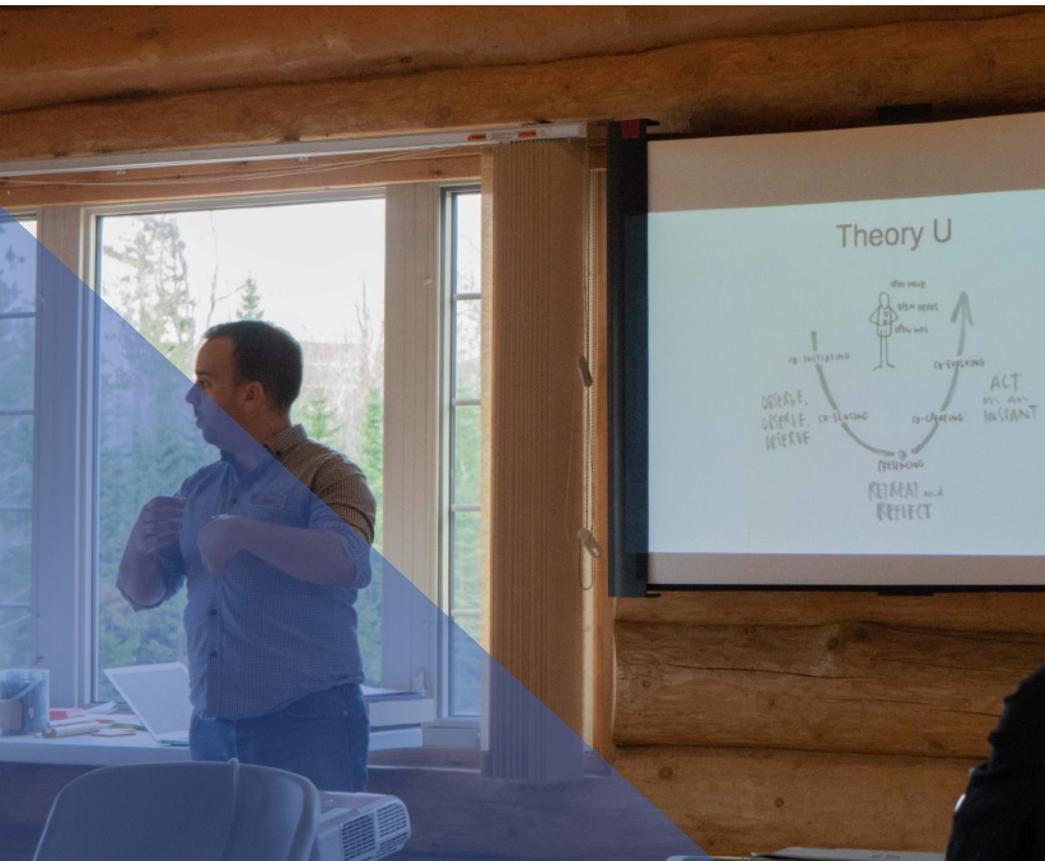
**How to bring more Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) to the province; and**

**Streamlining the process of immigration for employers in New Brunswick.**



Involvement from major employers and the federal government were highlights of this round. The three teams that went through this week all continued to work at varying levels on their challenge by evolving the prototype developed during the sprint. To continue to offer support and invest in further innovation and prototype iteration, a NouLAB team member became a partner and coach to all active EIL teams. This blend of coaching, prototype design skills, and implementation support was found to significantly hasten progress. The continued convening support that NouLAB offered functioned to keep teams active and in a prototype mindset, as well as, keep the leadership council informed on any significant hurdles, which they might be able to help teams surmount.

A unique and essential element of the Economic Immigration Lab is the connections facilitated between government and other sectors. Because these longer-term working relationships are somewhat of a new phenomenon, NouLAB has found it important to continue convening partners. The feedback we have had thus far is that this process has been extremely valuable because of NouLAB's neutrality as a convener. We are bringing stakeholders together for the betterment of immigration on all fronts. Although our leadership consists of the New Brunswick Business Council, the New Brunswick Multicultural Council and the government of New Brunswick, no one partner is in charge, dictating how the findings of lab are used. The organic relationship development serves all parties involved equally.



“There is more collaboration in the immigration space - there are still silos but we are doing better.”

- Alex Leblanc,  
Executive Director,  
NBMC

# Evaluation Interviews

At the two year mark, NouLAB's evaluation team conducted a series of interviews with past and current participants as well as the leadership council to get a pulse on the lab's progress. The answers provided important insight to where we have come and where we are going on the issue of immigration in New Brunswick.

This section provides a glimpse into some of the perceptions and learnings from the evaluation process.

When participants were asked **if they agreed the lab provided an innovative process** for addressing the immigration challenge in New Brunswick, **100% of the respondents agreed.**

When asked about **what resources were gained through participating in the lab** the majority of respondents answered with something related to **human capital**; new networks, people they now are connected with, and teams they are now a part of.

**A stand-out answer** from a leadership council member was:

"We were able to leverage the dedicated service channel because we invited them [Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)] in. A lot of networks and relationships built through IRCC."

When asked **what resources are still missing**, some of the answers were:

"The funding and support for the prototype went a little sideways. Reason was that resources needed to go other places."

"We have a solid community of practice now, we just need to be able to fund this work."

"You need systems approach with each community and they all require different things."

When asked **what theories people are using to explain why the problem still exists** some of the answers were:

"Employers still have a hard time changing."

"We don't have the technical capacity to deliver the experience people expect."

"I think what I'm facing is the balance of how much we give to newcomers and some still have the misconception that newcomers are given money or access to education."

"We are some how deficient in our ability to retain people, if we were more welcoming we would be doing better."

When asked **what should we keep doing**, some of the answers were:

"The learning has been incredible, we have more and more people that understand the full process."

"If you build capacity there will be successes in 5-10 years. The next generations are going to have it, it is built in the culture now."

"The monthly meeting of (IEN) stakeholders because they need to keep talking."

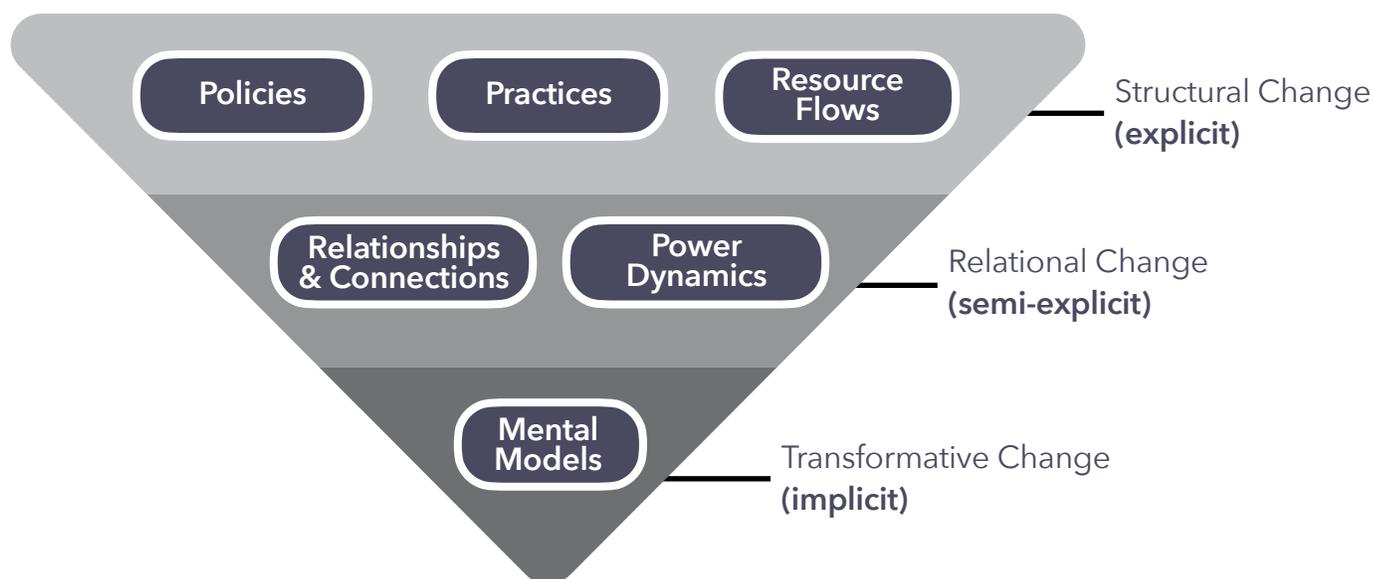
"The AIP [Atlantic Immigration Pilot] is tied to a position and the family that is coming too needs to be plugged into the workforce. Those partners could be highly-skilled and need support."

# Systems Change?

The Economic Immigration Lab is designed to approach the topic in a systemic way. To help understand how the lab is making an impact on the systems level, this section looks at the results through a framework developed by FSG (Foundation Strategy Group) - a leading mission-driven consulting group.

These results are a snapshot in time (March 2020) and are subject to change as the prototypes develop.

## Six Conditions of Systems Change<sup>1</sup>



## Policies

The EIL informed changes to the Atlantic Immigration Pilot including:

- Adjustment to the work permit requirement for internationally educated nurses to **allow them to work at support workers** in care homes while they do their credentialing to become Registered Nurses.
- **Extension of work permit** following graduation for Post-secondary international students from 1 year to 2 years.
- Ability for **spouses of applicants to apply for work permit** upon arrival to Canada.
- Position created in the provincial government to navigate internationally educated nurses through the immigration and registration process.
- The **focus on the end-user** in the AIP has been highlighted by the lab with influence on the process going up the federal immigration level at IRCC.

<sup>1</sup> Framework from [https://www.fsg.org/publications/water\\_of\\_systems\\_change](https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change)

# Systems Change (cont'd)

## Policies (cont'd)

- The one-stop-shop for newcomers at the Fredericton Multicultural Association was inspired by conversations and connections in the lab.
- The silos within government for working on this issue are being removed.
- In the Internationally Educated Nurses program, there is more openness for change from the regulators, they have been **motivated and enabled to take bolder action.**
- A detailed population growth strategy has been named as a prerequisite for municipalities to receive money from the province.

## Practices

- The siloed approach is no longer sufficient. **IRCC is in direct contact with the province's population growth team.**
- All interview respondents replied YES to using the prototyping approach in their work since being in the lab.

## Resource Flows

- \$43,750 has been directed toward teams testing prototypes.
- The Capacity for Courage prototype was able to leverage multiple financial streams to provide its first year of funding.
- Full-time position hired as a part of the nursing workforce strategy.
- **Employment and Social Development Canada hired a full-time staff** to support the Employer Support prototype - data was collected to inform what employers need in the immigration process for hiring international recruits.

## Relationships and Connections

- The new relationships formed between employers and government have created new insights and knowledge flows to better **provide service for immigration processing.**
- The bonds that exist amongst the lab participants have served to inform programs and **avoid duplication of efforts.**

## Power Dynamics

- Bringing the human to the heart of the issue has been central to this work, this has meant designing services that respond to the practical difficulties in the immigration process.
- A finding from the Employer Process team was that a bottleneck in the hiring process was the paperwork so a dedicated position was created to support both employees and employers through this process.

## Mental Models

- The connected nature of immigration in New Brunswick requires a multi-faceted approach. The variety of prototypes hitting on **neighbourhood, community, governmental, education and business levels** has functioned to support newcomers at all levels of immigration, from application to arrival to making long-term community ties.

# Technology Action Group

*"How might we empower skilled IT professional newcomers to find purposeful employment?"*



## Team Members (L-R)

**Maryse Leger**

*Atlantic Human Service*

**Jessica Kennedy**

*Venn Innovation, Inc.*

**Daniela Fernandez**

*The Multicultural Association of the Greater Moncton Area / L'Association Multiculturelle du Grand Moncton*

**Kathie Ouellette**

*Post-Secondary Education Training & Labour*

**Chantal LeBlanc-Maldonado**

*Employment Counselor, WorkingNB*

**Lori-Ann Dubiel**

*3+ Economic Development Corp.*

The **Technology Action Group (TAG)** is a working group between settlement agencies, immigration support, and a technology incubator to **help navigate IT employees to appropriate positions.**

As frontline employees dealing directly with immigrants seeking employment, the TAG team was able to connect on a regular basis to **share issues as they develop with current applicants.**

The information shared between the group members allowed them to **effectively and appropriately triage needs** in terms of language training, technology skills applicability, experience, and others.

**Status: Discontinued**

## UPDATE

Due to restructuring and funding changes at PETL, this team is not meeting anymore. The structure and process of their meetings may be useful for other groups.

Reach out to [innovate@noulab.org](mailto:innovate@noulab.org) to be connected to the group's members.

# Foreign Credential Recognition

"How might we help SME employers understand and recognize how immigrant job seekers competencies meet their job requirements?"



## Team Members (L-R)

**Shannon Brittany-Pollock**

*Workforce Strategy Coordinator, Opportunities NB*

**Philip Bélanger**

*Executive Director, Council on Articulations and Transfer of New Brunswick (CATNB)*

**Jesse Kerpan**

*Coordonnateur, Projets spéciaux et partenariats internationaux, CCNB*

**Charles LeBlanc**

*Manager, Post-Secondary Education Training & Labour*

**Tuy Dinh**

*Director, PTT Consulting and Trading Corporation*

## Status: Active

The team is has done another round of prototype testing interviews and are preparing materials to test a simple digital version.

Team has received funds from PDC to help with their work.

## Next Steps

Firm up team member & roles, determine parameters for data collection & research (scope of "qualifications/competencies") - funding support needed

Explore digital platform options (market research, programmer & UX input) funding support needed

Team has decided to create a parallel Advisory Committee composed of interested/expert parties that cannot commit to core committee roles.

Meet to identify next steps and identify which other partners need to be involved to create an advisory committee.

Jesse Kerpan has been approved by CCNB to officially participate in this project. This comes with access to **CCNB professional & student networks** and other resources.

Phil reported that shortly after our sprint he, was contacted by a number of PLAR/FQR organizations from across Canada (including IRCC and CAPLA) with regards to a **10-year review study the feds are conducting into their FQR funding**. Until now they have been focusing on professional associations, and preliminary results seem to show poor success rates, therefore they are apparently shopping around for a new approach. When Phil explained the concept of our prototype, they were **immediately interested and are flying him to Ottawa next week to present more formally**.

The upshot here is that the concept of approaching FQR from an unregulated, SME, informal qualifications perspective has **caught the interest and potential pocketbooks of nationwide stakeholders**. We will find out more once Phil meets with them on June 14th. Our team's goal is to manage expectations and responsibility, as we can't put the cart before the horse and scale up before we even have a developed value proposition.

There are other similar tools around the world (in particular UK and Australia) that will be of great help in our development phase. **The UK group has already expressed willingness to share best practices**. We will continue research into resources supporting competency & qualification definitions, applications, categorizations, etc.

# Rural Immigration Support

"How might we help female newcomers between the ages of 20-45 call Miramichi home?"



## Team Members (L-R)

**Samantha Murphy**

*Executive Director, Miramichi Chamber of Commerce*

**Craig Silliker**

*Executive Director, Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association*

**David Godfrey**

*Economist, Post-Secondary Education Training & Labour*

**Amy Savile**

*PhD Student Researcher, University of New Brunswick*

**Adam Lordon**

*Mayor, City of Miramichi*

**Rachel Bernard** (not pictured)

*Community Economic Development Executive, Opportunities NB*

The prototype developed by the Rural Immigration Support team is an invitation to new immigrants and longer-term Miramichi residents to a meeting with a social component that focuses on learning what each person could do to **help connectivity between new and existing Miramichi residents.**

**Status: Complete**

## UPDATE

Completed their Annual August BBQ that had hundreds of newcomers show up last year and felt was a valuable event, because it had resources all attendees could easily access (eg. medicare card sign-up), which the prototype interviews reinforced.

Chamber of Commerce also had Karen McGrath, President and CEO of Horizon Health, speak at their AGM and she spoke of the importance of immigration and the Miramichi members are supportive of Sam, the ED of the chamber, investing time in the immigration file.

Built a core team that had time to work on the prototype, testing out invitations with existing residents, and getting clarity on the purpose of the event.

The event went on twice as long as expected.

The team considers the prototype finished and is taking the learnings forward.

# What's next?

At NouLAB we believe in importance of being guided by feedback. Looking to the data received through the evaluation interviews a few themes emerged. There was a theme of differing opinions on the **importance of retention versus selecting the right candidates** at before they arrive in Canada. Another theme was the **lack of public support for immigration** as detrimental to the promise of newcomers helping New Brunswick's economy. Taking these themes and determining potential actions for the stakeholders in the lab will help guide strategic choices going forward.



To wrap up the three years of work on the Economic Immigration Lab, NouLAB has produced a report outlining the high level themes and outcomes from the lab.

Please click through to view the report:





**'If we're not changing our relationships, we'll stay stuck in the same patterns'**





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