

MEDIA RELEASE

February 5, 2020

CHAMBER CO-HOSTING IGNITE SYMPOSIUM MARCH 6

IGNITE

Okanagan 2020

Employer Symposium: Diversity & inclusion practices that work

Fri. March 6 | 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Coast Capri Hotel

Kelowna: 2020 marks year two of a partnership between the Chamber and KCR Community Resources presenting a symposium for local employers on the benefits and opportunities of diversity in the workplace.

A full day of workshops and a keynote luncheon address by Raghwa Gopal, President & CEO of Innovate BC will be held at the Coast Capri Hotel, Friday March 6, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. including a closing reception.

Kelowna's recent Economic Scorecard reinforced a lot of positives about the city but it also showed we still have a ways to go to increase our diversity. Kelowna ranked 10th (C grade) for immigrants and 10th (D grade) for non-visible minorities.

Both statistics represent a challenge we need to tackle and with Ignite, the Chamber is doing so in conjunction with KCR Community Resources and other community partners as part of the Local Immigration Partnership Council.

Creating a welcoming community is not just the right thing to do, it is essential if we are to grow and prosper as a community and region. That's why KCR and the Chamber have teamed up with others to stage Ignite 2020 - A one day symposium for businesses to learn more.

Workshops will cover a range of topics including recruiting, retaining and empowering immigrant talent in an era of labour shortages and in a market with near zero unemployment.

The day features three workshops and a keynote luncheon address from President & CEO of Innovate BC Raghwa Gopal. IGNITE centres around the benefits of opening the workplace to immigrant talent: how recruiting, hiring and retention will increase the region's economic growth and prosperity.

Nikki Csek, President of the Kelowna Chamber says "We are pleased to again partner with KCR. We hear almost daily from our members about their labour challenges and creating more diverse workplaces based on immigrant talent is a strong strategy to increase the labour pool in Kelowna, with its near zero unemployment rate."

Laura Thurnheer, President of KCR Community Resources says "In this day and age, opening our work places to diversity is an economic imperative. Having our work places be open and inclusive is, quite simply, a human imperative. This symposium is a must-do for all employers and employees in the Central Okanagan."

Workshops focus on labour issues for employers; panel discussions; success stories and a networking reception. Practical tools and resources will be covered, which enable employers to access a wider talent pool to improve overall corporate culture.

Registration includes full day of workshops and keynote luncheon: www.kelownachamber.org/events

For more on the Kelowna Economic Scorecard [CLICK HERE](#)

For more information:

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

WORKING GROUP ORGANIZATIONS

1. Accelerate Okanagan
2. BC Construction Association
3. Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
4. Central Okanagan Local Immigration Partnership (COLIP)
5. Interior Health
6. KCR Community Resources
7. Kelowna Chamber of Commerce
8. Okanagan College
9. University of BC Okanagan
10. City of Kelowna
11. WORKBC

PROJECTED OUTCOMES

- Organizations understand the integral role newcomers fill ensuring the Central Okanagan's growing economic needs are met; newcomer talent is highlighted
- Organizations, newcomers, and the entire community understand that successful integration of skilled newcomers into the Central Okanagan labour force is critical to the success of employers
- Organizations learn about service providers and how they assist in integrating newcomers into the community and the workforce
- Employer/Organization ambassadors are highlighted
- Employee/Newcomer success stories are highlighted

PANELS/WORKSHOPS

1. Recruiting and Hiring Diverse, Immigrant Talent - workshop
2. Retaining Diverse, Immigrant Talent - panel
3. Workplace Diversity and Inclusion - panel

COMPLETE SCHEDULE

10:00 am - 10:30 am: *Registration & Employer Showcase/Resource Booths*

10:30 am – 11:30 am: *Recruitment Workshop*

11:30 am – 11:45 pm: *Coffee Break*

11:45 am – 1:30 pm: *Ignite Keynote Luncheon with Raghwa Gopal*

1:30 pm – 2:45 pm: *Ignite Panel # 1 (Retention)*

2:45 pm – 3:00 pm: *Coffee Break*

3:00 pm – 4:15 pm: *Panel # 2 (Workplace Diversity & Inclusion)*

4:15 pm – 5:00 pm: *Ignite Networking Reception*



MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Keynote Luncheon Speaker



Raghwa Gopal is President and CEO of Innovate BC. He joined Innovate BC from Accelerate Okanagan (AO), where he was Chief Executive Officer.

A noted entrepreneur with over 30 years of international business experience and a recognized technology background, Raghwa has a deep understanding of business strategy, operational efficiency and organizational alignment.

Raghwa has guest lectured at UBC's Okanagan campus, in the Faculty of Management (Business) and in the School of Arts and Sciences (Computer Science).

He was Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Okanagan College School of Business in 2012-2013; was named Honorary Fellow of the College in 2014; and has served as the director of numerous community-based commissions and foundations including the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, the Okanagan College Foundation Board, Women's Enterprise Centre, Project Literacy, YMCA and the Okanagan Angel Network of technology entrepreneurs.

A graduate of Central Institute of Technology, Wellington, New Zealand in Information Technology, Raghwa has also received degrees in computer science from the Collier MacMillan School in Australia and the University of the South Pacific. In addition to his IT expertise, Raghwa is a certified Business and Executive Coach and a lead mentor, well known for his ongoing support and mentorship of young professionals, women in business and First Nations entrepreneurs.

Raghwa has a longstanding record of community and international leadership in establishing networks to reduce poverty, improve literacy, support health initiatives, offer disaster relief and encourage charitable works. His numerous awards include the Kelowna Community Leader Award (2016); Kelowna Chamber Top 40 Over 40 (2016); BC Community Achievement Award (2016); Rotary Club Vocational Service Award (2016); Man of the Year, Kelowna Civic Awards (2015); Technology Innovator of the Year (2004); and Kelowna Entrepreneur of the Year (1999).