



Living and Working in Vernon, British Columbia, Canada



make it yours

"We moved here to raise our family. We're both professionals and were able to find rewarding careers that still allow us the quality of life we want for our children. We love it here!"

Christina Anabo, Marketing Professional



Welcome to Vernon

Welcome to Vernon, the hub of the North Okanagan and the oldest incorporated city in the Okanagan Valley. A trading centre even before its incorporation in 1892, Vernon has always been known for its business and industry.

Today, cattle ranching and wheat production have been replaced with a broader agricultural base, forestry and an ever-expanding service industry. What remains the same, however, is the strong work ethic and a feeling of community.

Vernon is proud to be home to the Okanagan Indian Band, one of seven bands of the Okanagan Nation. The band's history dates back hundreds of years, prior to the arrival of the first European settlers. As a result, its history and culture play an important role within the community.

With a population approaching 40,000 and a business community that is connected, committed and focused, economic opportunity awaits.

Vernon has so much to offer; isn't it time you called it home?

This guide provides an introduction to Vernon. Please refer to the website www.vernon.ca for further information on all Vernon has to offer.

Employment

As Vernon's economy continues to diversify, so does the area's workforce. A surge in service industries during the last five years has contributed to an influx of small businesses. In fact, 91 per cent of all businesses in the region employ 20 people or less. Not surprisingly, it's here where most job opportunities lie.

Fortunately, Vernon has numerous programs and services to aid people with their job search, including:

- job boards
- workshops
- career coaching and networking
- skills enhancement
- one-on-one employment counselling
- educational planning
- foreign credential recognition assistance

Knowing what's out there can make the search for employment easier, more enjoyable and ultimately more rewarding.



Information Resources

Community Futures:
www.futuresbc.com

Connections Career Centre:
www.connectionscentre.ca

North Okanagan Employment
Enhancement Society:
www.noees.com

Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society:
www.vdiss.com

First Nations Employment Services:
www.fnfcvernon.com

Investment

In 2009, the City of Vernon was ranked by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as the most entrepreneurial city in BC. This prestigious title was a result of the city's high concentration of entrepreneurs, their success rate and optimistic outlook, as well as good public policy – all key components resulting in a successful and progressive business community.

With a new economic development strategy in place, Vernon's business climate will continue to appeal to entrepreneurs. Having experienced continued growth in both the manufacturing and service industries during the last decade, there is now a focus on other sectors including the agri-food industry, composite manufacturing, professional services, aviation, health and wellness and "green" business.

"A lot of our growth relating to job creation is from people who are moving to Vernon and bringing their employment with them," says City of Vernon's Economic Development Officer Kevin Poole. "We are working hard to create a community where people, and businesses, want to be."



Information Resources

City of Vernon, Economic
Development Department:
www.investvernon.ca

Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce:
www.vernonchamber.ca

Business Development Bank of Canada:
www.bdc.ca

Small Business BC: www.smallbusinessbc.ca



"I have found Vernon to be an ideal location to operate a business. The support I've received from the various business associations along with the City of Vernon has been tremendous."

Frank Deiter, Master Distiller, Okanagan Spirits

Lifestyle



Silverstar Mountain/ Don Weixl

For many, living in Vernon is an easy choice to make. A vibrant community with an entrepreneurial attitude, Vernon offers a small-town feel with big city conveniences.

Residents value Vernon's many amenities – an exciting cultural scene, a strong business base, a broad variety of recreational opportunities and the feeling of community. It's a place where people take pride in getting involved, helping out and making a difference.

Vernon's close proximity to three lakes, an abundance of parks and trails and locally grown food add to its appeal. It's also strategically located next to major transportation routes and post secondary facilities and boasts excellent health services and a wide array of businesses. Combined, these attributes make Vernon a great place to raise a family, run a business, or both.

Add in the mild climate, the community programs and the beauty of the North Okanagan then consider all the possibilities... is there anywhere else you'd rather be?

Information Resources

Tourism Vernon:
www.tourismvernon.com

Environment



Whether it's preservation of local beauty, a broadening global perspective or just a need to do what's right, Vernon's residents take the environment seriously.

Ongoing "green" initiatives take place throughout the year, ensuring Vernon's sustainability and dedication to the environment. Residents actively participate in a Blue Bag and Clear Bag recycling program as well as recycling programs for Christmas trees and prunings.

In addition, the City of Vernon hosts various environmental events, like Earth Day, Clean Air Day, Rivers' Day, Bike to Work Week and the annual Sustainability Awards.

Many local organizations also play an active role in ensuring a sustainable environment. With mandates to protect the land, water, wildlife, even local food sources, these groups keep the environment top of mind and at the forefront when it comes to development, preservation and education.

It is easy being green, particularly when the entire community is committed to making Vernon a sustainable and environmentally friendly place to live.

Information Resources

Food Action Society of the North Okanagan:
www.foodaction.ca

City of Vernon: www.vernon.ca/sustainability

North Okanagan Parks and Natural Trust:
www.nopnat.com

Sustainable Environment Network Society:
www.sensociety.org

Allan Brook Nature Centre: www.abnc.ca



"My son and I moved to Vernon from the Ukraine in 2009 because my husband is from here. I really like the nature in Vernon, everything from the mountains and the lakes to the wonderful smells. And there are so many animals! I've never seen so many in my life!"

Yana Palutova

Education

Whether it's families with school-aged children or adults looking to further their education, there are a wide variety of education options in Vernon.

School District 22 provides education for children from kindergarten through grade 12. Elementary, secondary and alternate schools offer numerous learning programs to serve the needs of each child. French immersion, Montessori, English as a Second Language and Aboriginal education programs, as well as a home-based learning program, soccer and hockey academies, outdoor school, fine arts and apprenticeship programs are available. In addition, there are transportation programs in place for most schools.

Adults seeking post-secondary or continuing education also have a variety of options.

Okanagan College provides applied degree, diploma and certificate programs in several fields of study while the University of BC-Okanagan offers several degree programs for graduate and undergraduate students. The Okanagan Valley College of Massage Therapy Ltd. and Sprott Shaw College are also



located in Vernon. And there is a wide selection of community programming that offers several non-credit courses, appealing to a broad variety of interests.

Information Resources

- School District 22: www.sd22.bc.ca
- BC Ministry of Education: www.gov.bc.ca/bced/index.html
- Okanagan College: www.okanagan.bc.ca
- UBC Okanagan: www.ubc.ca/okanagan
- Okanagan Valley College of Massage Therapy: www.ovcmt.com
- Sprott Shaw: www.sprottshaw.com



"We chose Vernon because my wife has a lot of family here. But I like Vernon. I love the nature and the mountains and the lakes, especially in the summertime. I come from a very big place so Vernon feels more like a neighbourhood to me."

Andrés Niño, Student

Childcare

Moving to a new area is much easier for families when they know there are accessible childcare services. In Vernon, the Child Care Resource and Referral Program can help parents find the childcare options they and their children need.

As part of a province-wide program, the Vernon Child Care Resource Program is a one-stop shop for parents and offers free consultation, support and referral services for childcare. Parenting information, a resource library and parenting workshops are available, as are special family events, a toy-lending library and information on child care grants and subsidy programs. Parents can bring their children to drop-in play times, allowing them to meet other families in the community and share resources.

Families can also access other childcare programs, including after-school activities, day camps, early childhood programs, outdoor activities, programs for children with disabilities and much more.



Information Resources

- Child Care Resource and Referral Program: www.childcarechoices.ca/main/Interior
- Government of BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development: www.gov.bc.ca/mcf
- Child Care Association: www.wcfca.ca/parent_resources.php
- Can We Help You Directory; Youth and Family: www.canwehelpyou.ca



"Vernon is known for its strong sense of community..."

Annette Sharkey, Social Planning Council

Housing

Numerous housing options exist in Vernon, ranging from single family homes to multi-family complexes. Still, finding the home that meets the entire family's needs, including budget, can sometimes be challenging in BC. However, the City of Vernon, together with its community partners, has been working diligently to ensure attainable housing is at the forefront of Vernon's development plans.

The Attainable Housing Strategy, developed in 2008, has resulted in a number of recommendations, some of which have already been implemented. Future projects are being planned that will increase multi-family housing as well as provide ownership opportunities and affordable renting options.

Several services are available within Vernon to help people with their housing needs. Real estate agents, property management companies, as well as various community service and government organizations can provide assistance, from rental listings and subsidized housing to information on mortgages, new homes and the resale market.



Information Resources

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation:
www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en

Subsidized Housing:
www.bchousing.org

Can We Help You Directory; Housing:
www.canwehelpyou.ca

Okanagan Info Net:
www.okanaganinfo.com/real_estate_agents.asp#Vernon



"We came to Vernon (from South Africa) to experience a different way of life. The people here are friendly and curious about other cultures, which is nice. Vernon as a city has given a lot to us, and helped us grow as individuals. I'm glad we've made Vernon our home – we've never looked back."

Bronwyn Phillips, Premier Relationship Manager, HSBC

Transportation/Safety

Transportation

Getting around Vernon is getting easier, thanks to the City of Vernon's 2008 Transportation Plan. With a focus on transit, cycling and walking, residents can expect to see a number of new initiatives that will encourage alternate modes of transportation.

Additional trails, multi-use paths, sidewalks and dedicated bike lanes will enhance safer travel and improve Vernon's natural landscape.

The City is working closely with BC Transit and has significantly expanded transit service. Together they will continue to improve services, via the Transportation Master Plan, which outlines the long-term plans for the next 20 years.

Even School District 22 is on board and is implementing a School Travel Plan, focusing on safe walking and biking to school.

Other initiatives, like Bike to Work, Clean Air Day, Car Free Day and Carpool Week also encourage residents to consider alternate forms of travel. Travelling smart is just one more way to keep Vernon a safe and healthy place to live.

Information Resources

Vernon Visible Strategies:
vernon.visiblestrategies.com

City of Vernon Sustainability Initiatives:
www.vernon.ca/lifestyles/sustainability/index.html

Greater Vernon Cycling Advisory Committee:
www.gonecycling.com/gvac

Safety

The City of Vernon has made the safety of its citizens a top priority. In addition to services provided by the RCMP, the Vernon Community Policing office has implemented several Safe Communities programs.

These programs include Speedwatch, an awareness program designed to show drivers their exact speeds in school zones and other areas. Crime Stoppers has a tip line so people can provide information anonymously on suspected crimes. Citizens on Patrol allows volunteers to become the "eyes and ears" of the police when patrolling their own communities.

Other initiatives have also been implemented to enhance family safety, including anti-bullying campaigns as well as internet, home, bike and wilderness safety programs. Workplace safety, shoplifting and armed robbery prevention programs, as well as the Business Block Captain Program are in place to enhance safety amongst the business community.

In addition, the City of Vernon also has an Emergency Management department that prepares and responds to emergencies and disasters, safeguarding the public and reducing damage to the environment.

Vernon Regional Transit: www.transitbc.com/regions/ver

Can We Help You Directory; Transportation:
www.canwehelpyou.ca

City of Vernon, public safety:
www.vernon.ca and click on Public Safety

Recreation/Arts/Culture

Recreation

An abundance of recreational opportunities are available in and around Vernon.

Regardless of age, income or ability, people can participate in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities. Organized clubs, free programs, drop-in classes and various facilities make it easy for families to be active year round.

Close proximity to lakes, mountains, trails and parks means outdoor activities are a natural option. A recreation centre complete with gym and aquatic facility as well as a curling rink, arenas and seniors' centres provide a wide array of indoor options.

Extensive recreational programming offers a variety of activities for all ages, ranging from extreme sports to more leisurely options like gardening and walking. Summer camps and school break activities are also available, and seniors can pursue new hobbies and pastimes throughout the year.

Information Resources

Greater Vernon Recreation:
www.greatervernonrecreation.ca

Vernon Community Arts Centre: www.vernonarts.ca

Arts Council of the North Okanagan:
www.vernonartscouncil.ca

Vernon Centre for the Performing Arts:
www.ticketseller.ca

Vernon Public Art Gallery: www.vernonpublicartgallery.com

Arts and Culture

Arts and culture is alive and well in Vernon! The North Okanagan Arts Council and the Vernon Community Arts Centre support numerous artistic and cultural projects within the community.

The Arts Centre provides year-round creative programming and the public is encouraged to drop by, check out the handiwork of local artists, or sign up for a class. There's one to match any interest, from painting and drawing to spinning, weaving, rock hounding and gardening.

Vernon is also home to the Vernon and District Performing Arts Centre, the Vernon Museum and Archives, the Vernon Public Art Gallery, Powerhouse Theatre and numerous other galleries and live theatre groups.

Several festivals take place throughout the year, including the Vernon Winter Carnival, Sunshine Festival, Funtastic Slo-pitch and Music Festival, Creative Chaos and Shoparama. These, along with many other events, displays and shows, add to Vernon's vibrant and vital cultural scene.



Community Services/ Volunteering/Health

Community Services and Volunteering

Vernon is known for its strong sense of community, and for the number of services available to those who live here.

Agencies often work together to create programs as needs arise. The result has been an abundance of services that are easily accessible. Whether you are a senior, a person with a disability, or have a family member in need of special services, Vernon's diverse non-profit sector can provide assistance when needed.

Many of these community services are initiated and run by volunteers. In fact, nearly 1,700 volunteers are registered with the Vernon and District Volunteer Bureau. They are the driving force behind fundraising events, sports groups, emergency services, crime prevention, seniors programs and much more.

Volunteering is a great way to get involved. Meet new people, network with business partners, share skills, experience and expertise – all while making a difference within the community.

Information Resources

Can We Help You? Community Directory:
www.canwehelpyou.ca

Community Links:
www.vernon.ca/doorway/community%20links/index.html

Vernon and District Volunteer Bureau:
www.socialplanning.ca/volunteer

Interior Health Authority: www.interiorhealth.ca

Health

The Interior Health Authority provides a variety of services to meet Vernon's healthcare needs. The Vernon Jubilee Hospital offers acute and emergency care, ambulatory care, medicine and surgery, psychiatry, maternity and pediatrics.

Interior Health also provides several health services within the community, including mental health and addictions services, public health nursing, Aboriginal health, home and community care programs, residential and assisted living facilities as well as laboratory and diagnostic services.

A variety of other health-related services and practitioners are available in Vernon. And, numerous clinics, special events and information sessions take place throughout the year ensuring residents have easy access to complete health care within the community.

For help in finding a family doctor visit:
www.cpsbc.ca/node/216

BC Health Guide: www.bchealthguide.org

HealthLink BC: www.healthlinkbc.ca

Cultural Diversity/Faith Groups



During the last census in 2006, Vernon's population numbered nearly 36,000. Approximately 12 per cent was made up of people who had emigrated from outside of Canada. Immigrants from the United States, Central and South America, Europe, the United Kingdom, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Australia and New Zealand had all chosen Vernon as their new home.

First Nations people make up approximately five per cent of Vernon's population. Half of the band's 1,688 members live on the reserve, while the other half live within the community.

As a result, numerous cultural groups exist, providing people with opportunities to meet others and share familiar customs and traditions. In addition, more than 70 churches and places of worship are located in Vernon and area, representing a wide variety of religions and faiths.

Information Resources

Can We Help You Directory: www.canwehelpyou.ca

- Faith Groups
- Multicultural Organizations
- First Nations Groups
- Gay and Lesbian Organizations

Immigration

People immigrating to Vernon can have many of their questions answered by the Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society. This non-profit society offers many services for newcomers, immigrants, refugees, visible minorities and first-generation Canadians, helping with their settlement and integration into Vernon.

Services are offered in a multitude of languages, and recommendations can be made to link newcomers to necessary community services. Staff and volunteers provide assistance with citizenship and immigration applications, accreditation of diplomas and degrees, coaching for certificates and licenses as well as translation and interpretation.

English as a Second Language and Employment Service programs are available. Newcomers are encouraged to use the resource centre which provides internet access, a job-posting board and labour market information. Numerous workshops are also scheduled and staff can help with foreign credential recognition, career planning and provide information on self-employment.



Information Resources

Citizenship and Immigration Canada: www.cic.gc.ca

Vernon and District Immigrant Services Society:
www.vdiss.com

City of Vernon:
www.vernon.ca/doorway/docs/immigration.pdf

Welcome BC: www.welcomebc.ca



Canada



WelcomeBC

"This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia."