

Buddy Program



What the Welcome Network Buddy Program is:

This pilot program connects Welcomers and Newcomers based on shared interests and demographics, with the goal of fostering friendships, community connections, and building inclusive communities.

How it Works:

1. **Complete the Buddy Program form** linked on the [Welcome to Cape Breton webpage](#) or contact the Welcome Network Coordinator for the link. You can sign up as a “Welcomer” (local volunteer who has lived here for at least two years) or a “Newcomer” (recently arrived community member). To learn more, visit (www.welcometocapebreton.ca/live/settling-into-cape-breton/welcome-network/)
2. **The Welcome Network Coordinator will contact you and walk you through the required steps for completing a Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector check.** All participants in the Buddy Program, both newcomers and volunteers, are required to provide proof of a Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Check. The fee regularly associated with these checks is waived since it is for volunteer purposes. **Newcomers with a valid study or work permit issued within the last two to three years are exempt from this requirement, as a background check is already part of the permit application process.**
3. **The Welcome Network Coordinator will try their best to match you with a “Buddy”** from your community. **Matches depend on the number of participants, shared interests, and demographics. While we aim to connect everyone, matching is not guaranteed, however we will absolutely try our best!**



Participating in the Program:

Once matched, we encourage Buddies to commit to regular communication for at least three months. After that, you and your Buddy can decide how often you'd like to connect going forward. The Welcome Network Coordinator will also check in after one month to see how things are going and provide any needed support.

Suggested Activities:

To help build your connection, here are some activities Buddies can enjoy together:

- Exploring local markets or coffee shops
- Attending community events (e.g., festivals, local fairs)
- Going for walks in parks or scenic areas
- Sharing a meal or preparing a dish together
- Joining a local club, group, or hobby organization



What the Welcome Network Buddy Program is Not:

- The Buddy Program is not a lifelong commitment, although it could lead to long-term friendships! If the connection doesn't work out, that's okay. If it does, that's great!
- The Buddy Program is not a formal counseling, mentoring, or professional service. While Welcomers offer friendship and support, they are not trained service providers or advisors.
- The Buddy Program is not a quick fix for building deep connections. Friendships take time to grow, and it may take a few meetings before you and your Buddy feel fully comfortable. Be patient and open to letting the friendship develop naturally.

Cultural Sensitivity:

We encourage all Buddies to approach each interaction with curiosity and respect for each other's cultural backgrounds. Be open to learning about different traditions, customs, and communication styles, and be mindful of any differences.

Boundaries and Privacy:

It's essential to respect your Buddy's privacy and personal boundaries. Share only what you're comfortable with, and always ask for permission before passing on contact information or other private details to third parties.



Important Information:

- For safety, we recommend meeting your Buddy in a public space for initial interactions, such as a public library, park, café, or restaurant.
- If you're unsure about an answer to any question your Buddy asks, it's perfectly okay to admit it! You can always look it up later or contact the Welcome Network Coordinator for guidance at welcomenetwork@capebretonpartnership.com. The [Welcome to Cape Breton](http://www.welcometocapebreton.com) website also provides useful resources for community supports and services.
- Activities within the Buddy Program, such as dining out or visiting a museum, are self-funded and are at the discretion of the individuals involved. The Welcome Network does not provide financial support for these activities.

The Welcome Network Coordinator is here to support you along the way. They can be reached by emailing welcomenetwork@capebretonpartnership.com or calling 902-562-0122 at any point for guidance and support. Here's to community connections and friendship!