



**Canadian Council for Refugees Spring 2013 Consultation
“Promoting Security and a Warm Welcome”
30 May – 1 June 2013, Metro Vancouver
Conference Report**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees’ 2013 Spring Consultation was held May 30 – June 1 at the Hilton Metrotown hotel in Burnaby. Over 400 participants from across Canada attended the Consultation, with a very strong attendance from across British Columbia. Several CCR member organizations and volunteers from across Metro Vancouver formed a local organizing committee to host the event, ensuring that logistics were looked after, and that a welcoming team of volunteers was ready to respond to the needs of participants. In conjunction with the Consultation, the Burnaby Planning Table held a forum on the Thursday night on refugee issues, including facilitated discussions and dinner. The Vancouver branch of the CCR Youth Network organized an enjoyable Friday night social event for Consultation participants at a local venue, with live performances, hors d’oeuvres and dancing.

The 2013 Spring Consultation provided a space for learning, experience-sharing and networking among people involved in refugee protection, the immigrant and refugee serving sector, and refugee resettlement across Canada. A particular focus for the Consultation was understanding the implications of recent legislative and policy changes affecting the refugee determination system and selection of resettled refugees. These changes are having an enormous effect on refugees and their advocates, as well as settlement workers and sponsors, so it was considered important to dedicate considerable time to these issues.

New approaches and unconventional workshop formats were also experimented with at this Consultation, including a workshop on the Theatre of the Oppressed, and a talking circle to explore the relationship between settler communities (including newcomers) and indigenous peoples in Canada.

Thirty-three sessions were offered during the three days of the consultation, consisting of two plenary sessions, three orientations, three working group meetings, twenty workshops, five caucus sessions, and the General Meeting of members. The program included three or four concurrent workshops in any given time period, apart from the times when participants met in plenary. Workshop streams focused on (a) immigrant and refugee settlement and integration, (b) refugee resettlement and overseas protection and (c) inland refugee protection.

The Working Group meetings held during the Consultation gave participants the opportunity to discuss emerging issues and share information, best practices and initiatives with others from

across Canada. They also offered an opportunity to prepare resolutions to be presented at the General Meeting, and to develop strategies for action to address issues emerging from the discussion.

The success of the Consultation was made possible thanks to the time, dedication, and hard work of the local organizing committee (LOC), made up of staff and volunteers from organizations including MOSAIC, ISS of BC, Settlement Orientation Services, Kinbrace Community Society, Refugee Lawyers Group, Burnaby Family Life, UBC, DIVERSECity, Rainbow Refugee and Mennonite Central Committee. The LOC coordinated a team of dynamic and helpful volunteers, who contributed to the very friendly atmosphere and the smooth running of the event. The social event organized by the Youth Network with live music, dance spoken word and theatre was enjoyed by all who attended, and those who attended the Thursday night Forum on refugee issue organized by the Burnaby Planning Table gave very positive feedback about it.

At this Consultation, the CCR benefited from the in-kind contributions of MOSAIC, ISS of BC, Settlement Orientation Services, and Burnaby Family Life.

The CCR gratefully acknowledges financial support for the consultation from Tourism Burnaby, Vancity Savings Credit Union, and the BC Association of Social Workers.

II. EMERGING NEEDS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Through workshops, caucus sessions, plenaries and the written feedback we received on the Consultation, a number of emerging needs and priorities in the newcomer settlement sector have been identified.

Family Reunification

Shortly before the Consultation the government had announced proposed changes to the maximum age of dependent children for immigration purposes from 21 to 18, and to the parent and grandparent sponsorship program, which would require sponsors to have a higher income threshold, and to be financially responsible for family members for longer. This announcement gave renewed importance to the issue of family unity/reunification. The workshop My Canada Includes Families offered an opportunity for discussion of emerging issues in family reunification, and a joint [resolution](#) on the proposed age of dependency was passed at the General Meeting.

Youth issues

Newcomer youth are affected adversely by some policies, including certain new policies for immigrants and refugees, such as the proposed change to the maximum age of dependent children, and the recently passed Bill C-43. At this Consultation youth participants not only brought their perspectives to the issues under discussion, but also discussed and shared ideas on how the CCR can better encourage and be inclusive of youth participation.

Bridges between the CCR and indigenous peoples

As follow up to the [resolution](#) passed at the Fall 2012 Consultation, session moderators and Working Group co-chairs throughout this Consultation acknowledged the indigenous territory on

which the sessions were taking place (unceded Coast Salish territory). There was also a workshop that consisted of a talking circle led by an elder from the Penelakut First Nation of Vancouver Island. Feedback about this session was very positive, and participants felt that continued dialogue between settler/newcomer communities and First Nations is an important conversation that the CCR can help to facilitate.

New directions in resettlement

As CIC advances on its initiative to restructure the refugee selection and resettlement programs, the CCR has concerns that the changes will narrow access to resettlement for specific groups of refugees and those living outside designated regions of the world. This Consultation provided a forum in which to continue discussion and sharing of perspectives on the implications of proposed changes.

Barriers to Citizenship

Service providers report that their clients are being affected by the onerous residence questionnaires being assigned to some citizenship applicants. There are concerns that some communities are required more than others to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire is very labour-intensive and adds an additional delay of up to three years to processing, which already takes on average around two years.

Also reported are barriers to citizenship resulting from confusion around the language testing criteria required to apply for citizenship. CCR participants reported instances of deaf people being denied the right to apply because they can't complete listening comprehension testing, and of CIC officials being unaware of the equivalencies for different provinces (e.g. ELSA in BC).

Pressures of new refugee determination system

The discussions highlighted the huge pressures on refugee claimants in the new system – pressures which also affect the organizations trying to assist them. While detained claimants are in the minority, their situation is particularly problematic, given their lack of adequate access to assistance in meeting the very short timelines. Participants appreciated the opportunity to share information across regions, provide mutual support and work towards strategies to address some of the challenges.

Networking around LGBT issues

One of the action items flowing from the Consultation was a recommendation that the CCR support networking and resource-sharing on LGBT issues, to ensure better awareness among those working with refugees and immigrants, and to integrate the issues more effectively in all areas of the CCR's work.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARIES

Note: a number of the presentations are available online for CCR members at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/spring2013-presentations>.

Opening plenary

Participants were welcomed and heard from Loly Rico about CCR activities since the last Consultation. Diego Cardona offered a compelling argument for better inclusion of youth.

Catherine Dauvergne gave the keynote speech, exploring the linkages, many of them unfair, made between refugees and security in recent years. She acknowledged the challenging context but encouraged participants to focus on what we need to do to make Canada a secure place for refugees.

Speakers:

Loly Rico, President, Canadian Council for Refugees

Diego Cardona, Youth Network, Vancouver

Catherine Dauvergne, Trudeau Fellow and Professor, Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia

Moderators: Jean Fike and Sherman Chan

Plenary with Furio de Angelis, UNHCR representative in Canada

Furio de Angelis addressed the theme of refugees and security, identified key global challenges for refugees and commented on some current issues for refugees in Canada. He spoke in particular about the response to mixed maritime flows in the Pacific Rim and about refugees in detention. Following his presentation, Mr de Angelis answered questions posed on behalf of the three CCR Working Groups.

Resource person:

Furio de Angelis, UNHCR representative in Canada, Ottawa

Moderators: Loly Rico and Elizabeth McWeeny

General Meeting

Members adopted some resolutions and elected a nominating committee. In addition, they heard from guest speaker, Peter Edelmann, who spoke about the Appulonappa case currently before the BC Court of Appeal. The case deals with the human smuggling provision in the Act (s. 117). The definition is so broad that it can cover refugees arriving as well as humanitarian workers helping refugees. The CCR is applying to intervene in the appeal at the BC Court of Appeal, represented by Laura Best, who was also present.

IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Note: a number of presentations from the workshops are available to CCR members online at ccrweb.ca/en/spring2013-presentations.

New Refugee System Part I - Implementation update from the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB)

This workshop explored, from the perspective of the IRB, the challenges encountered in the first months of implementation of the new refugee system, and how these challenges have been addressed. An overview was given of the IRB statistics after the first six months of implementation of the new system. The stats show a 65% acceptance rate at the IRB despite challenges. The IRB has established two working groups, one on detention and the other on access to information (there have been problems with documenting the claim). A separate presentation was made on the Refugee Appeal Division updates.

Following the IRB presentations, settlement worker and legal worker perspectives on implementation challenges (notably timelines) were presented. There is a clear need for ongoing dialogue with the IRB.

Resource persons:

Ross Pattee, Deputy Chairperson, Refugee Protection Division (RPD), IRB
Ken Sandhu, Deputy Chairperson, Refugee Appeal Division (RAD), IRB
Andrew Brouwer, Refugee Law Office, Toronto
Alexandra Charlton, SOS, Vancouver

Moderators: Heberto Reyes and Chantal Tie

New Refugee System - CIC and CBSA

Using case examples, workshop participants explored with CIC and CBSA how the recent legislative changes are being applied in specific situations of concern, such as those involving children. In order to address the many questions and issues that had been identified prior to the workshop, the moderators provided a detailed case scenario and list of questions to the resource persons. A number of points were clarified, and most confirmed previous understandings. On some points government representatives committed to get back to CCR members with answers. Some of the main points:

- CIC will discuss and get back to CCR on whether they can hand out hard copies of forms when people can't afford to download and print them.
- A person arrested within Canada, who then claims asylum, will be given three days to fill out Basis of Claim (BOC) form. This is treated as an inland claim (not Port of Entry claim).
- In cases of inability to fill out the form in three days (e.g. for mental health reasons) some accommodation may be possible (vague response from CBSA). NB – this was identified as a priority for requesting a change in practice (i.e. treat as POE claim) or legislative change if necessary at the Inland Protection Working Group.

- In case of persons called in for removal with pending Humanitarian and Compassionate claims (H&Cs) in the system who are invoking Best Interests of the Child, appropriate recourse is to discuss with removal agent and request a deferral of removal.
- According to CIC, BRO-Vancouver is now doing a quick screening of H&Cs to see if Best Interest of the Child or medical condition is invoked and to possibly expedite. NB – this is not the experience of member groups. It may be that the CIC reps present were presenting overly optimistic view.
- It is not a problem to join a “legacy” claim which used a PIF (Personal Information Form) with a claim that used a BOC.
- If a person is accepted by IRB they will use a new IMM0008 form to apply for permanent residence, because they can correct any errors made on the first one.
- If a mother is detained with a very young child (e.g. nursing) an effort will be made to locate to a detention facility that could accommodate them.

The workshop also looked at what NGOs can offer to complement the responses of CIC and CBSA.

Resource persons:

Omid Maani, Policy, Advisor, Refugees Branch, CIC

John Helsdon, CBSA

Leila Cronfield, Program Officer, Temporary Reception and Refugee Program, CIC Western Region

Janine Millman, Senior Program Adviser, Enforcement Operations, CBSA

Colby Brese, Detention Operations, CBSA

Moderator: Tanny Marks and Rick Goldman

Future Directions in Refugee (Re)Settlement: Part I

The selection, reception and integration of resettled refugees pose challenges to national, provincial and local authorities, receiving communities and implementing partners. Canada’s move towards restrictive selection and integration criteria undermines the protection foundation of resettlement and further limits the right to protection through resettlement, especially for vulnerable refugees and those with high settlement needs. In the first of this two-part workshop experts offered their perspectives on the changes. This workshop was a continuation of the conversation begun in fall 2012 on the upcoming changes from the perspectives of overseas processes and post-arrival issues.

Resource persons:

Michael Casasola, UNHCR, Ottawa

Shauna Labman, Assistant Professor of Law, University of Manitoba

Moderators: Elizabeth McWeeny and Jennifer Mpungu

Future Directions in Refugee (Re)Settlement: Part II

In the second part of this two-part workshop representatives of the settlement and resettlement sector offered their perspectives. Small group discussions focused on identifying how the CCR

can affect the best possible outcomes to these changes. This workshop resulted in two joint resolutions from Overseas Protection and Sponsorship and Immigration and Settlement, one in particular focusing on refugee resettlement.

Resource persons:

Chris Friesen, Immigrant Services Society of BC and NGO Focal Point, ATCR
Paulette Johnson, Catholic Social Services, Edmonton

Moderators: Elizabeth McWeeny and Sherman Chan

Dialogue with Deborah Tunis, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

Deborah Tunis provided information from the CIC perspective on regional structures, settlement services and integration, including on the plan to transfer administration of settlement services from BC and Manitoba to the federal government. She informed participants about the new CIC structure with particular reference to changes in Western Canada, and on the CIC settlement model. On pre-arrival services, she explained that there was no agreement at CIC about the importance of pre-arrival vs. in-Canada services. She also answered questions on a range of settlement and integration issues. Generally the discussion was broad ranging, and touched on clarifications of how CIC funds and functions, translation of documents, supports for Group of five sponsorships, family reunification delays, ineligible clients, etc.

Resource persons:

Deborah Tunis, Special Advisor, Strategic and Program Policy Sector, CIC

Moderator: Jean McRae

Building Bridges between Indigenous Peoples and Newcomers

In a talking circle participants expressed themselves to build a shared understanding of the nature of the treaty relationship between First Peoples and members of settler communities and each of our roles as treaty people. Several participants with refugee or newcomer experience told their story of migration as well as how they became aware of Canada's First Peoples. Many related to the experience of indigenous peoples in Canada as they also identified as displaced peoples. The talking circle's facilitator and her sister shared perspectives from their experiences as First Nations people and residential school survivors.

Facilitator:

Jill Harris, Elder, Penelakut First Nation

Regional Perspectives on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program: Moving Forward

This workshop aimed to provide an overview of some of the recent initiatives across Canada to protect the rights of migrant workers, including provincial legislative changes. Gil Aguilar spoke from his experience supporting migrant agricultural workers in rural BC, addressing the problems and challenges faced in the region. Karl Flecker gave an overview of the weaknesses and problems with the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and summarized

Saskatchewan's *Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services (FWRIS) Act*, the implementation of which is anticipated this year. The FWRIS Act will be the farthest-reaching piece of provincial legislation in Canada, modeled on Manitoba's *WRAPA*. Gina Moynan spoke about the services and protections for migrant workers in Nova Scotia, giving information on services available through her organization – ISIS, and on the newly adopted *Worker Recruitment and Protection Act (WRPA)*. There was time at the end for a question and answer session, and for discussion.

Resource persons:

Gil Aguilar, Agricultural Workers' Alliance, Surrey

Karl Flecker, Canadian Labour Congress, Ottawa

Gina Moynan, ISIS, Halifax

Moderators: Erie Maestro and Amy Casipullai

Academic Research on 'Canadian Humanitarianism' and Current Challenges for Refugees

Scholars from three disciplines: history, geography, and law, discussed the content of their research, how they pursue research and research subjects, and how academic work on refugee issues can encourage a fair and welcoming approach to refugee protection in Canada. They especially explored the link between research, advocacy, settlement and all refugee issues. During the discussion it was suggested that research continue to be disseminated via the CCR, and that researchers be engaged in an ongoing way to give webinars for the CCR.

Resource persons:

Jenny Francis, doctoral student, University of British Columbia

Laura Madokoro, SSHRC post-doctoral fellow, Columbia University

Shauna Labman, Assistant Professor of Law, University of Manitoba

Moderators: Shauna Jimenez and Eunice Valenzuela

My Canada includes Families: Emerging issues in family reunification

Changes in Canadian immigration policies have had negative impacts on family reunification. They are more severe for refugees who face systemic discrimination because of race, gender and other factors. This workshop began with a role play featuring a family's struggle with obstacles to being reunited. The session aimed to step back to look at the broader picture. In a country that honours "family values," participants looked at barriers to family reunification, how human rights are being violated and strategies to counter these violations.

Lesley Stalker spoke about family reunification as a human right, and the complexities of this in terms of international law. Some of the questions raised include how to define what constitutes a family, and how to reconcile the rights of states to control access to their borders with the individual right to live with family members. International instruments around family reunification were explored. Proposed changes to the regulations to reduce the age of dependent children and restrict sponsorship of parents and grandparents were brought up. There was a question and answer period, after which participants split into smaller groups for discussion.

Each group focused on one challenge to reunification or discussion about human rights violations, with the objective of strategizing and finding ways to respond to the barriers that exist. Here are some of the results:

Q: How can family reunification be better presented as a human right? What can you and your organization do to communicate this vision of human rights? How could CCR support you?

- Community clinics, advocating and educating
- Petitions and campaigns to address concerns
- Recommendations to government through media, front-line workers on human stories and issues being faced
- Focus on perspective of separated children

Q: How can we speak more effectively about family reunification as an essential component of family values? What can you and your organization do to communicate this vision of family values? How could CCR support you?

- Use the charter of rights and conventions
- Ask CCR to provide a simplified tool to provide information for families
- Help families to present these to MPs
- Children can provide the same message through art
- Families integrate better if they are unified
- Canadian families include dependent children much over age of 18
- Children over 18 are a support to the family
- Forget focus on what a child is – base it on what a family is.

Resource persons:

Lesley Stalker, lawyer, Vancouver

CCR youth network members

Moderators: Gilbert Iyamuremye and Jennifer Rajasekar

Australia and Canada: Refugee policy parallels and campaign realities

Canadian laws have changed in ways that parallel the Australian experience. This workshop explored some of the realities faced by refugees in Australia, the measures undertaken by refugee rights advocates to address the rights infringements, and the successes and challenges in campaigning for fair and honourable policies to protect refugees. Participants learned about the Australian asylum system, where mode of arrival determines legal rights, and where indefinite detention is permitted. Presenters compared and contrasted the Australian experience with the Canadian Context.

Resource persons:

Radhika Kumar, Senior Solicitor, Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Sydney Australia

Catherine Dauvergne, Law Professor, University of British Columbia

Moderator: Heather Neufeld

Responses to Trafficking in Persons in British Columbia

This workshop provided an opportunity to learn about anti-trafficking initiatives in B.C. including regional concerns and priorities in responding to the needs of trafficked persons.

Victor Porter provided an overview of the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons' (OCTIP) work on trafficking, including current initiatives as well as the history of their collaborations and their experience in building a localized response in B.C. The main objectives and priority areas of the recently launched B.C. Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking were also highlighted.

Ai Li Lim focused on trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association's (WCDWA) experience addressing cases of trafficking of temporary foreign workers and live-in caregivers for the purpose of labour exploitation.

Participants were eager to learn more about trafficking; some were unaware of the issue and of the existence of a specialized office in the province. The need for greater awareness on the issue in the province and in general was raised, as well as the need for greater collaboration between organizations.

The OCTIP Online Training Program was promoted as a useful and accessible training tool on trafficking in persons (<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/octip/training.htm>). An updated version of the online training was announced for 2014 and input was requested from both survivors of trafficking and organizations working on trafficking.

The WCDWA has also developed a pamphlet in collaboration with MOSAIC to raise awareness of trafficking and provide assistance to foreign workers who may have been trafficked (http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/octip/docs/Human_Trafficking_Brochure_English.pdf). It is available in English, Punjabi, Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino.

Resource persons:

Victor Porter, B.C. Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (OCTIP), Vancouver
Ai Li Lim, West Coast Domestic Workers' Association, Vancouver

Moderators: Robin Pike and Saleem Spindari

What's Up Vancouver?

This workshop highlighted some of the organizations and projects in Vancouver that respond to issues faced by newcomer youth populations. Presenters represented a variety of organizations and projects including UBC Learning Centre, Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture (VAST), Action Team and Youth Advisory Team, and Rainbow Refugee. The various agencies were successful in highlighting the intersectionality of issues presented by newcomer youth in the Vancouver area.

Presentations were followed by a discussion around promising practices in these areas of work. Participants were able to learn from panelists, and draw parallels to their own organizations and work in other parts of Canada.

Resource persons:

Rosie Forth, UBC Learning Centre, Vancouver

Eleni Hobuti, Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture (VAST), Vancouver

Diego Cardona, Action Team and Youth Advisory Team, Vancouver

Moderator: Juliana Cortes Lugo

Criminality and Access to the IRB

This workshop explored how changes in legislation recently adopted or currently before Parliament (Bill C-43) narrow access, on the basis of criminality, to refugee determination and deportation appeals at the Immigration and Refugee Board. One presentation also focused on how changes in Canadian law affect rehabilitation provisions under immigration legislation. [NB Aviva Basman gave a version of her presentation at a CCR webinar in June. The recording is available to CCR members at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/webinars>]

Resource persons:

Phil Rankin, lawyer, Vancouver

Aviva Basman, Refugee Law Office, Toronto

Gabe Chand, lawyer, Vancouver

Moderator: Heberto Reyes

Promising Practices in Serving Vulnerable Populations in BC

This workshop focused on several innovative approaches to help meet the needs of refugee claimants, government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees in British Columbia. These programs run the range of needs from those people who have just entered the country seeking refugee status to those refugees who need intensive help with their settlement.

Resource persons:

Fran Gallo, Kinbrace Community Society, Vancouver

Tanny Marks, Red Cross, BC Lower Mainland

Marc Larrivee, MOSAIC, Burnaby

Moderators: Rafi Charif and Jehad Aliweiwi

Proud to Protect Refugees: From statement to action

Launched in early 2013, the Proud to Protect Refugees campaign is a national effort to change the conversation about refugees in Canada. This interactive workshop explored what we need to do to transform Proud to Protect Refugees from a statement into action. The objective was for participants to leave with tools and ideas to use in their local community as part of the campaign.

Resource persons presented examples of campaign initiatives from their communities, and started a discussion where participants gave other examples and made suggestions and proposals

for actions around the country. These ideas were recorded and will be made available to CCR members. There were a lot of newer people from across the country, with representation from a range of large and smaller cities. Four breakout groups allowed for plenty of discussion and circulation of ideas.

Some of the ideas and suggestions emerging from the discussion on how to implement the campaign included:

- Blog listing activities in various cities
- Statistics that are easy to understand
- shareable social media
- Use infographics that are easy to understand
- Need to showcase stories of success
- Videos by young people can be powerful
- Share skits and role plays that can be reproduced
- Need printable materials, videos, posters, suggested activities
- CCR: have available materials: posters, films, online resources, roleplay scripts and other activity ideas
- Draw on experiences of former refugees; work with other groups in the community (eg. Healthcare providers)
- Letterwriting campaigns, event photos in newspapers
- SpeakUp bilingual videos and other similar resources – see: <http://www.youtube.com/ccrwebvideos>
- Exhibits to profile history of organization and community efforts (example: ISSofBC)

Audiences

- Connect with Chambers of Commerce
- Involve teachers, artists, art/communications/film students
- Importance of being in schools and universities – contests: arts, poetry to talk about refugee issues; focus on school kids and inner-city schools
- Connect (small) business owners and refugees who are small business owners
- Have employers who hire refugees speak out about successes
- Create partnerships with other groups, form community-based coalitions (like Immigration Matters in Canada – I'm in Canada, Winnipeg or Ottawa Proud to Protect Refugees campaign)

Activity ideas

- Have common (third) ground conversations/events (ex: about environmental justice where refugee and non-refugee communities work together)
- Community poster campaigns that thank community members for actions in support of refugees and former refugees (example: Winnipeg thanking dentists for a free dental care day for refugees, Night Owls)
- Walk across Canada and tracking mileage
- Empty tennis court: spaces for kids programming and exchanges
- Neighbourhood parties might work in some communities

- Have activities that aren't framed as 'refugee' issues; eg. Chinese New Year, knitting circles, environmental change
- Family-based events
- Change some government events, so that they are more public (like citizenship ceremonies)
- Make sure there are multicultural advisory committees in large cities that include refugee participants
- In Winnipeg: documentary film festival with locally-produced films; locally-produced book with refugee stories; I.M. in Canada organizes public forums on immigration issues
- Host events in high-traffic areas

Resource persons:

Shauna Jimenez and Adem Idris, East Kootenay Friends of Burma, Kimberley and Cranbrook
 Heather Neufeld, South Ottawa Community Legal Services, Ottawa
 Lisa Bamford de Gante, Multicultural Association of Fredericton, Fredericton

Moderators: Roja Bagheri and Rivka Augenfeld

LGBT Refugees – Resettlement Issues

This workshop aimed to highlight the human rights abuses and discrimination faced by LGBT persons in countries of origin and in countries of asylum due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. The workshop also explored the options and processing challenges related to sponsoring LGBT refugees. The workshop led to a recommendation that CCR support networking and resource sharing on LGBT issues among members.

Resource persons:

Walid, resettled refugee, Vancouver
 Chris Morrissey, Rainbow Refugee, Vancouver
 Khwaka Kukubo, United Church of Canada, Toronto

Moderators: Sharalyn Jordan and Niyazi

Dialogue for a Collaborative Framework on Immigrant and Refugee Integration

This workshop explored the critical elements essential to successful community-based collaboration and partnership initiatives specific to immigrant and refugee integration. With the assistance of perspectives from a diverse panel, participants engaged in an open discussion about how to plan, support and evaluate partnerships to promote immigrant and refugee integration.

Sherman Chan provided information about the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table as a model of collaboration, inclusion and participation initiated in Burnaby BC.

Baldwin Wong of the City of Vancouver spoke about how the City is committed to creating a inclusive, welcoming and diverse community for immigrants, refugees and First Nations. He talked about the Vancouver Dialogue Project, initiated by the City, the goal of which is to build increased understanding and strengthened relations between Aboriginal and immigrant/non-

Aboriginal communities. Key funding for this project was provided by the federal government the Province of British Columbia through the BC Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program. The project started in 2010 and ended in March 2013.

Jean McRae, speaking as a representative of the CCR Executive Committee, talked about how her organization, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, together with over 100 local agencies, businesses and institutions has established the Community Partnership Network (CPN). This project aims to build diverse, welcoming and inclusive communities in Greater Victoria. CPN members work to develop their capacity by sharing resources and information aimed at promoting and supporting our increasingly diverse region, with the long term goal of developing the Capital Regional District's capacity to more effectively attract, welcome and integrate newcomers into our communities, workplaces, organizations and institutions. This project is made possible by support and sponsorship of local businesses, School Districts, United Way, Volunteer Victoria, Komosa Community College, University of Victoria, the police department, and media sponsorship. It is partly funding by the Province of British Columbia.

Yasmine Dossal of COSTI Immigrant Services in Toronto (and CCR Immigration and Settlement Working Group co-chair) discussed two successful initiatives in Toronto:

- 1) Five Welcome Centres funded by CIC in York and GTA, each with special mandate and role e.g. Language, Employment, Settlement etc.
- 2) Twenty Local Immigration Partnerships: with collaborative social delivery, coordination and planning council of over 15 organizations including newcomers themselves in GTA. Shared vision and goals makes partnership successful.

Finally, Claudette Legault, executive director of Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS), Halifax presented on her organization's activities. Although Halifax hosts a smaller immigrant community compared to cities like Toronto, they have established a good Local Immigrant Partnership (LIP) with local agencies, the Ministry of Immigration, Halifax Regional Municipality, the school board, IOM, healthcare institutions and immigrant service agencies.

LIPs are municipally-based and collaborative community initiatives designed to promote settlement and integration of immigrants. The project is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and now over 40 LIPs are established in Ontario and eastern provinces. The project builds on communities' strengths and promotes linkages between sectors by engaging a range of stakeholders, including mainstream institutions. Halifax Regional Municipality plays a significant role in partnership with LIPs.

Resource persons:

Jean McRae, Executive Committee member, CCR

Yasmine Dossal, COSTI, Toronto

Baldwin Wong, City of Vancouver

Jody Johnson, Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table

Claudette Legault, Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS), Halifax

Moderators: Eyob Naizghi and John Coward

Security of Refugees in Africa

This workshop examined the security situation for refugees in Sudan, Kenya and elsewhere in Africa. One resource person spoke of the Eritrean refugee experience in Sudan and Sinai. Problems include trafficking, kidnapping, ransom, organ trade and increasing lack of security for both refugees and humanitarian workers. The rise of criminal actors in displacement is a relatively new phenomenon which results in new challenges in negotiating and dialogue. The challenges of providing safety and security in refugee camps was discussed, and participants explored what can be done to secure refugee rights and to provide protection against violence, hostility and crime, for refugees both within and outside camps.

Some suggestions that came out of this workshop were:

- Have a workshop on the mental health impacts of trauma
- Explore need for training visa offices re: interviews and sensitivities to trauma and mental health needs
- Push for broader definition of family and potential to link extended family members
- Find out whether the Dadaab cases that were in the queue (and UNHCR approved) to USA can be referred to Canada to pick up, since the USA stopped processing these cases.

Resource persons:

Furio de Angelis, UNHCR representative in Canada, Ottawa

Laurel Borisenko, ICMC

Bana Tinsheom, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto

Lennart Hernander, Lutheran World Federation, Kenya (recorded presentation)

Moderators: Gloria Nafziger and Fikre Tsehai

Detention in Canada: An anti-oppression perspective

Panelists from Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver examined the detention situation locally from an anti-oppressive perspective. A general overview of detention in Canada was given, and advocates and law practitioners shared their experiences of children and women in detention.

Some suggestion for action came out of the discussion:

- CCR is requested to seek detailed statistics on detention
- Ask CBSA to disclose LGBT policy, and if none, develop one in collaboration
- Reiterate that immigration detainees should not be held in criminal facilities
- Call for the creation of central address change system
- Call for guidelines on Best Interests of the Child
- Call for recording of CBSA interviews

Resource persons:

Nasrin Tabibzadeh, Refugee Law Office, Toronto

Jenny Jeanes, Action Réfugiés Montréal, Montreal

Rochelle Appleby, Legal Services Society of BC, Vancouver

Peggy Lee, Elgin, Cannon & Associates, Vancouver

Deborah Isaacs, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Vancouver

Moderator: Heberto Reyes

Theatre of the Oppressed and the Unspoken Word

This interactive workshop aimed to build participants' skills in the Theatre of the Oppressed. Using experiential learning, participants learned methods to facilitate dialogues around complex issues they may deal with in their work, and to engage community members to share their stories. Groups explored important issues affecting newcomer populations, and possible solutions to challenges faced in the field.

With a brief description of its history and foundations, this workshop built on Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and related it to migrant and refugee experiences in Canada. The workshop facilitators used interactive games and exercises to engage participants in collectively sharing their experiences. The various activities led participants into the gradual creation of scenes from the real stories of their lives. Follow-up exercises to each of the activities incorporated different methods to create community dialogues around important issues affecting newcomer populations, including individual and group responses to these issues.

The facilitators were very effective in bringing Boal's principles to life, and creating an anti-oppressive and inclusive environment. Participants were able to take away tangible and creative ideas to use in their own work and communities. Participants were also given suggestions for books and other resources to use with groups.

Facilitators:

Letitia Annamalai, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
María Escolán, MOSAIC, Vancouver

V. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Participant evaluations of the Consultation were overwhelmingly positive. Most cited among the outstanding aspects of the Consultation were the workshop content and presentations, the networking opportunity offered by the social event and the camaraderie of the atmosphere. Several people mentioned feeling motivated by connecting with their colleagues from across the country, and being inspired by the feeling of being surrounded by others with shared values for refugee and newcomer rights. Several appreciated the variety of attendees from across all sectors, regions, and backgrounds, as well as the practical and meaningful dialogue. Many respondents enjoyed the forum organized by the Burnaby Planning Table, and quite a few reported feeling positive about the level of youth participation and the many youth who spoke up and expressed themselves. The diversity of regional participation, including a significant BC presence, was also cited as positive. Several people said they felt that attending the Consultation would be helpful for them in their work.

Respondents appreciated how participation and inclusion were fostered at the Consultation, for example by allowing ample time for discussion and smaller group work, stronger moderation so that certain individuals don't dominate the microphone, and consistently reminding attendees that we strive to make the Consultation a safe space, free of oppression, in which people can express themselves. Some respondents however would have liked to have more small group discussions, and more experimentation with non-traditional (panel) workshop set-ups.

There were also some useful suggestions to be taken into consideration for future events: although the majority of respondents had good feedback about the venue, some people felt that a more central location would have been preferable, and it was also reported that the set-up of session rooms was not conducive to wheelchair accessibility. Several noticed the lack of use of French and simultaneous interpretation, and suggested that volunteer translators be recruited for this. As usual, people would have liked to have food provided on-site.