



Canadian Council for Refugees Fall 2011 Consultation
“Protecting Refugee Rights: The importance of independence”
24-26 November 2011, Montreal
Conference Report

I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees’ 2011 Fall Consultation was held November 24-26 at the OMNI hotel in Montreal, Quebec. Over 370 participants from across Canada and beyond attended the Consultation. Several organizations from across Montreal pulled together to host the event, ensuring substantial participation by local organizations as well as local youth and refugees.

The 2011 Fall Consultation provided an opportunity for training, learning and experience-sharing among people involved in the refugee protection, refugee resettlement and immigrant and refugee serving sectors from across Canada. The Consultation also created space for policy discussions and prioritizing issues among government and non-governmental representatives.

Twenty-eight sessions were offered during the three days of the consultation, consisting of two plenary sessions, two orientations, three working group meetings, nineteen workshops and training sessions, one caucus and an Annual General Meeting. 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.

A number of workshop sessions were accredited by the Barreau du Québec for the purposes of mandatory continuing education for Quebec lawyers. This professional development opportunity – a first for the CCR – was taken advantage of by 24 lawyers.

The Consultation was preceded on November 23 by a national meeting on trafficking. Approximately 50 participants at the Consultation took advantage of this opportunity to network and strategize on how we improve our responses to trafficked persons. A workshop during the consultation on *Serving Trafficked Persons* allowed this theme to be pursued further. A separate report will be published on the trafficking meeting.

Participants' oral and written evaluations were overall extremely positive. Participants especially appreciated the networking opportunities offered by the Consultation, and the learning opportunity provided by the workshop content and the quality of presentations. The Consultation also received positive feedback for the diversity of participants, the inclusive and friendly atmosphere, the good organization and smooth running of the event, and the excellent facilities. Some suggestions were made for future Consultations, including increasing French content and making greater efforts towards bilingualism, and increasing opportunities for socializing.

The success of the Consultation was made possible thanks to the very efficient work of the local organizing committee (LOC), made up of staff and volunteers from numerous Montreal organizations, as well as some interested individuals. The LOC coordinated a team of dynamic and helpful volunteers, who contributed to the friendly atmosphere and the smooth running of the event.

For this Consultation, the CCR benefited from the in-kind support of several Montreal area settlement agencies, and from the generous financial support of the City of Montreal, the Quebec Ministère d'immigration et des communautés culturelles, AQAADI and the Barreau du Québec.

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.

Newcomer Mental Health

The two workshops on refugee and newcomer mental health were very well attended and received. Front-line service providers who participated found the training very useful, and felt that more should be done to explore this important issue and to offer ongoing trainings. Great interest was expressed in moving toward culturally sensitive and alternative approaches to mental health through practices that go beyond the biomedical model, such as yoga, meditation, acupuncture, etc. It was suggested that the CCR look into how to develop programs and secure funding for alternative mental health services for newcomers who have been traumatized, whether from violence, the migration process, family separation, or other reasons.

Communications and Public Awareness-Raising

Participants at the Consultation greatly appreciated the workshop on "Changing the Narrative: Strategies to counter the criminalization of migrants", which was a follow-up to a similar-themed workshop at our Spring 2011 Consultation in Hamilton. There is a general feeling that in the face of negative portrayals of newcomers by media and government, the CCR and allies should be focusing on communications strategies, public awareness-raising and working with the media. The Mapping Memories workshop equipped participants with some creative tools for effective communication of the realities of refugees and other newcomers, and many commented on the importance of telling the human stories, as a way of countering the negative messaging.

Responding to Trafficked Persons

While by no means a new issue, trafficking was highlighted at the consultation. The need for improved communication and coordination was emphasized, both between NGOs, police and government, and within the NGO community across the country. There was also a call for clear and consistent advocacy, nationally and locally, for solutions to address the gaps in responses to trafficked persons.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARIES

Opening plenary

Participants were welcomed by the CCR and by Mary Deros of the City of Montreal, who spoke about the city's commitment to welcoming newcomers and promoting a diverse society. Furio De Angelis was welcomed as the new UNHCR representative in Canada: he spoke briefly about current priority concerns for the UNHCR and explained the significance of the Nansen Medal, awarded 25 years ago to the people of Canada. Pia Zambelli offered some reflections on the consultation theme of independence, and why independence is crucial for the respect of basic rights. CCR President Wanda Yamamoto reviewed CCR activities since the last consultation.

Speakers:

Mary Deros, Executive Committee, City of Montreal

Furio de Angelis, Representative in Canada, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Pia Zambelli, co-chair, CCR Legal Affairs Committee

Wanda Yamamoto, CCR President

Moderators: Yasmina Chouakri, TCRI and Rick Goldman, Committee to Aid Refugees

Plenary: Widening the Circle: Partners for Refugee Rights and Dignity

The Quebec Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, Kathleen Weil, reaffirmed Quebec's humanitarian commitment towards refugees. She recognized refugees' specific adaptation needs, based on the traumatic experiences many of them have undergone. She highlighted the need for all players to work together to respond effectively to refugees. (See communiqué, <http://bit.ly/sBoUmy>)

Alexandra Pierre and Roch Tassé spoke about how immigration and refugee protection issues overlap with, respectively, women's and civil rights issues. They highlighted areas in which are sectors are engaged in common struggles and underlined the importance of working in collaboration.

Resource persons:

Kathleen Weil, Ministre de l'immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec

Alexandra Pierre, Fédération des femmes du Québec

Roch Tassé, International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG)

Annual General Meeting

The Consultation concluded with the CCR Annual General Meeting. Elections were held for positions within the Executive Committee. Four resolutions were adopted. The resolutions can be found at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/resolutions-nov2011>. Action requests from Working Groups to members were also presented (<http://ccrweb.ca/en/action-requests-working-groups-november-2011>).

IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Note: a number of presentations from the workshops are available to CCR members online at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/consultnov2011-presentations>

Dialogue with the Immigration and Refugee Board

This session was designed to give participants an opportunity to hear from, and discuss with senior representatives of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Among the questions for consideration was what it means for the IRB to be an independent tribunal.

The discussion explored how the new refugee protection division will be structured and the plans for maintaining independence within the division. There was also a review of the current efforts in the Immigration Division to maintain independence given that it is fully staffed by the civil service.

Resource Persons:

Ross Pattee, Deputy Chairperson, new Refugee Protection Division, IRB
Susan Bibeau, Director General, Immigration Division, IRB
Aviva Basman, respondent

Moderators: Chantal Tie and Rick Goldman

Serving Trafficked Persons

This workshop focused on the experiences of organizations providing front line services to trafficked persons. It addressed the issues relating trafficked persons' access to Temporary Residence Permits and the services available to them. The question of support available to organizations assisting trafficked persons was also discussed.

The RCMP representative went over the provisions of Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) for trafficked persons, and the criteria for identifying human trafficking victims. He described the process of referrals for issuing TRPs, and also addressed the challenges the RCMP is facing, and the partnerships they are working to develop.

Cathy Kolar presented on services for trafficked persons. She discussed the challenges of obtaining TRPs for trafficked persons (policy vs. practice), and described the referrals to her

organization and the process of preparing trafficked persons for interviews with CIC. She also explored the interview process itself, and the possibilities for access to social, legal and health programs once a TRP has been obtained, including the limitations and barriers.

A set of gaps and needs were identified by participants at the workshop:

- It is important that CIC provide adequate information to people receiving a TRP
- There is a need for training and improved preparation of CIC officers regarding the application of both human trafficking and TRP policy in Canada
- An information brochure outlining TRP requirements and interview procedures for trafficked persons, to be made accessible to trafficked persons via organizations and service providers
- Further dialogue between RCMP, CIC and non-governmental organizations

Resource persons:

Cpl. Nilu Singh, RCMP Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre
Cathy Kolar, Legal Assistance of Windsor

Moderators: Louise Dionne, CATHII and Andrea Burkhart, ACT-Alberta

Mental Health

Part I: Best practices in addressing Refugee Mental Health Needs

This was the first session of a two-part professional development training workshop for settlement workers, on the importance of understanding mental health issues, resources and building knowledge on this issue. This workshop gave an overview of current practices in settlement agencies across Canada. Participants heard from workers in the field dealing with clients with mental health issues, and had the opportunity to discuss challenges and gaps.

The first speaker addressed some of the issues that come up for organizations trying to respond to the mental health needs of their clientele, including ethical boundaries, safety for staff, clients' rights and responsibilities, health and safety for both clients and staff, and human resources (e.g. does the staff's job description coincide with responding to mental health needs).

Participants were given an overview of why refugees and newcomers might arrive in Canada with mental health needs, over the three migration phases that can affect mental health: pre-migration, migration, and post-migration. The presenters also gave a service provider's perspective on best practices in service delivery dealing with mental health. Some useful coping skills for settlement workers who might have gone through similar experiences of trauma were touched on, and the counsellor's role in working with clients with mental health needs and the referral process was covered.

The discussion that followed the presentations included the suggestion that collective action be taken to address the issue of mental health as a prerequisite for healthy settlement and integration. It was also felt that mental health should be covered in the information provided to prospective newcomers in the orientation session abroad, so that clients are prepared for certain social conditions, instead of providing clients with a picture of Canada that is too idealized.

Participants highlighted the importance of looking into alternate ways for treating mental health issues such as meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, acupuncture and other alternative approaches, since mainstream Western medicine might not always work.

Resource persons:

Sherman Chan, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Mary Pam Vincer, COSTI, Toronto

Felicien Rubayita, MIIC, Winnipeg

Moderator: Yasmine Dossal

Part II: Training – What Front-line Workers need to know about Mental Health

In this session a facilitator delivered a condensed training module on how to identify mental health signs. The information provided and ideas for communities to move forward with these issues were discussed. Information was also provided on new initiatives.

The training covered:

- Definitions and differences between mental health and mental illness
- Causes of mental health indicators (cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioural)
- Documentation: about, why, what and how to document
- Crisis intervention: about, examples of crisis situations, and how to respond to crisis
- Vicarious trauma: about, importance of self-care, ways to take care of self

Participants felt that it was important for settlement workers to have ongoing training to educate them regarding newcomer mental health as well as ongoing self-care activities. There was also interest in addressing and reducing post-traumatic stress without calling it a “disorder”.

Resource person:

Vince Pietropaolo, COSTI, Toronto

Moderators: Yasmine Dossal and Felicien Rubayita

Mining and Forced Displacement

Mining is both a direct and an indirect cause of forced displacement on every continent in the world today. Mining projects push people from their homes and leave them vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, mining dollars empower repressive regimes and in recent decades have contributed to refugee outflows in South Sudan, the DRC, and (recently) Eritrea as well as in a number of West African, Asian and Latin American countries. This workshop provided background on some of these situations, giving particular attention to the activities of Canadian mining companies. It also explored ways the CCR can work with other groups to hold Canadian companies responsible for their acts or at least check them from freely dealing with regimes that have poor human rights records and are responsible for forcing refugees to flee.

The workshop covered the impact of Canadian mining companies in Guatemala, the Americas and the Philippines, looking in particular at environmental degradation, the role of paramilitary

forces in forced displacement and executions, the primary impact on indigenous peoples and the subtle displacement of people due to loss of livelihood and opportunities. The point was made that Canadian companies are responsible for 75% of global mining, and that mining makes up 11% of Canada's GDP.

A discussion followed the presentations, and a few points that came up were: CCR youth interest in further developing educational resources for the CCR membership; the ongoing partnership with KAIROS may present more education opportunities in the future; and the issue of ethical investments.

Resource persons:

Ernie Schibli, Social Justice Committee of Montreal

Connie Sorio, Global Partnership Coordinator for Asia Pacific, KAIROS

Moderator: Gloria Nafziger

Refugee Integration: Identifying key areas for further research

This workshop aimed to create a space for dialogue between researchers and settlement practitioners on gaps in research regarding the integration of refugees in Canada. The panel presented on existing studies, and the floor was then opened for discussing. Participants were asked to identify areas where research would be useful to inform and improve settlement outcomes in Canada.

Each of the three presenters spoke about some existing research and program impacts. One presentation focused on the benchmarks and data being collected by the government, another looked at Jennifer Hyndman's literature review on resettlement refugee integration, and the third presented a new study of the housing situation of the users of immigrant settlement organizations, comparing refugee claimants and refugees resettled from outside Canada with non-refugee immigrants.

A large portion of the workshop was dedicated to small group discussions about the priority concerns for refugee integration in Canada, and areas for further research. Participants then returned to plenary and summarized the discussion. The results and recommendations will be compiled into a report by the CCR with the support of UNHCR.

Resource persons:

Catherine Simard, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Damaris Rose, INRS – Centre Urbanisation Culture et Société & Centre Métropolis du Québec, Montreal

Michael Casasola, UNHCR, Ottawa

Moderators: Debbie Douglas and Florence Bourdeau

Family Reunification Barriers for Same-Sex Partners and Families

This workshop focused on the family reunification challenges experienced by same-sex partners and their families, including the demand to provide evidence of sexual orientation, gender identity, or genuine spousal or parent-child relationships. The workshop explored aspects of gender and racial discrimination in this context, providing insight and strategies into addressing these barriers, and how these issues specifically manifest themselves within the individual communities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans populations.

The workshop covered a variety of issues including the sponsorship framework and the attention drawn recently to the LGBTQ community, and some of the psychological and practical barriers to family reunification for same-sex partners. Suggestions that came out of the workshop included training for immigration officials to counter LGBT-phobia, and awareness-raising of barriers faced by LGBTQ community members overseas.

Resource persons :

Denis Daniel Boulle, AGIR, Montreal

Carlos Idibouo, Arc-en-Ciel d’Afrique, Montreal

Patil Tutunjian, lawyer, Montreal

Moderators : Philip Ackerman and Pilar Roqueni

Immigration Status of Children in Care

This workshop looked at issues relating to immigration and citizenship status for non-Canadian children in care. What are youth protection agencies doing (and what should they be doing) to ensure children in their care have secure status? Participants explored what is already being done in this area, and discussed strategies for moving forward. After the presentation, the workshop took the form of a roundtable on these questions.

Some suggestions made during the discussion included:

- There should be a partnership on unaccompanied minors between CIC, Legal aid office, PRAIDA and Youth Protection, to ensure that the system truly protects the child.
- Youth protection authorities should be responsible for regularizing children without status.
- Since Youth Protection Agencies must work within the current law, there may need to be changes to the law. It may be appropriate to submit that lack of immigration status undermines the child’s development and security (especially in the case of deportation to an unknown country).
- Training and awareness-raising are important for school and school board staff on issues related to children’s immigration status
- There needs to be an information-sharing regarding the situation across the provinces, in order to determine how best to work together for children’s interests
- In the case of foreign adopted children, require that an application for citizenship be made.

Resource person:
Anita Martinez, Legal Aid Office, Immigration, Montreal

Moderator: Marian Shermarke, PRAIDA

Improving the Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers: Perspectives from Quebec

Many of the migrant workers coming to Canada under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program have a precarious legal status. They are vulnerable and sometimes fall victim to unscrupulous employers. How can this situation be changed? Which obstacles should be tackled at the federal level and which at the provincial level? Do international conventions have a role to play? This workshop introduced the strategies and actions of some Quebec organizations to support migrant workers and speak out in defence of their rights.

The presenters discussed the situation of migrant workers in Québec, which is similar to that in other provinces of Canada in many ways, but which also has its own particularities. They spoke of the experiences of the organizations and coalitions they have worked with. The Immigrant Workers Centre in Montreal has a campaign on temporary workers with a strong critique of the increasing precarity of work, and the way that migrant labour fits into that. The Front de défense des non-syndiqués has a campaign for the improvement of the working and living conditions of migrant workers in Quebec. Their principal demands include:

- That all migrant workers hired on a temporary work permit in Quebec be informed of their rights in a timely fashion by the relevant government departments
- That an integration program for migrant workers be developed and put in place by the Quebec Immigration Ministry (MICC)
- That this integration program include funding for community organizations to give services on arrival including information on rights in the workers' language, offer French classes to migrant workers, and offer support in the case of workplace accidents or violation of their rights

The Association des aides familiales du Québec (AAFQ) has been working to support caregivers since 1975. The organization actively supports proper working conditions for home caregivers, as well as fighting for their rights. The organization also provides home caregivers with the opportunity to break out of their isolation and create ties of solidarity with fellow workers within the Association. The presenter spoke about the Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, adopted by the ILO this summer, the elaboration of which the AAFQ participated in.

Resource persons:
Mélanie Gauvin, Front de défense des non-syndiqués, Montreal
Jill Hanley, Centre des travailleurs et travailleuses immigrants, Montreal
Margo Legault, Association des aides familiales du Québec, Montreal

Moderators: Amy Casipullai and Amy Darwish

Excluding People from Refugee Protection in Canada

This workshop reviewed the exclusion clauses in the Refugee Convention which deny refugee protection to people involved in war crimes, crimes against peace or crimes against humanity (Article 1F). It looked at Canadian law and practice, how this deviates from international law and how it compares to practices in other countries.

Some cases from the Congolese community were presented of refugees excluded from protection because of the jobs they held in DRC. The resulting trauma, stress, anxiety and insecurity of these people were described, as well as the impact on their emotional well-being. The problematic nature of being deemed inadmissible while not being charged with any crime and with no arrest warrant against them was also addressed.

The next presentation covered the rationale for exclusion, legal standards relating to exclusion, and the UNHCR guidelines on the matter. The final presentation examined how exclusion was being interpreted and applied in Canada. It was noted that in Canada there is a deviation from the UNHCR guidelines, including the troubling practice of denying refugee claimants access to the refugee protection system by finding them inadmissible to Canada.

Suggestions coming out of this workshop included:

- Encouraging the IRB to have specialized units for dealing with exclusion
- Putting a spotlight on the process of application for ministerial relief
- Training for Immigration Division members regarding admissibility
- Looking at remedies for people in Canada who are excluded and therefore unable to sponsor family members living in precarious situations

Resource persons:

Furio de Angelis, UNHCR representative in Canada

Sharry Aiken, law professor, Queen's University

Patrick Nitu, standing in for Jean-Claude Bula-Bula, Juristes sans frontières Québec

Moderator : Laïla Demirdache

Speak up!: Newcomer youth shed light on stereotyping and children's rights violations

Speak Up! is a small grants fund by and for newcomer youth in Canada. From March to November 2011, the CCR Youth Network supported 8 projects to debunk myths about newcomer youth and denounce children's rights violations. The CCR Youth Network acknowledges that refugee and immigrant youth frequently face significant personal and systemic barriers. However, given the opportunity to put their imaginations, creativity and potential to work, refugee and immigrant youth can become active agents in breaking down these personal and systemic barriers.

During the workshop, four groups that received a grant gave a description and explanation of the premise of their project, incorporating videos, pictures and outcomes in their presentations.

Projects included an art and poetry battle/t-shirt competition, a video on the importance of welcoming newcomer youth, a short documentary on racism and homophobia faced by black youth in Montreal, and a video on the impacts of long delays in family reunification at the Nairobi visa office.

Resource persons:

Taro Hashimoto, Speak Up! Administration Team and Global Effects, Edmonton

Laurent Maurice Lafontant, Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique, Montreal

Madeleine Whalen, Hassan Yussuf and Miguel Angel Cifuentés Ruiz, Multicultural Association of Fredericton

Carlie David, Migrante BC, Vancouver

Justin Pabu, Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society, Calgary

Moderators : Georges Bahaya and Ashika Iqbal

Private Sponsorship: Change, Challenge and Commitment

Using a practical and visual planning model, this interactive workshop looked at the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, the current changes and challenges, and what commitments are needed by the sponsoring community and the government for the future.

This workshop provided a brief historical background on the number of landed refugees from 1979 to 2012 and the nature of the partnership that exists between Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and CIC. Through an interactive planning model, the workshop engaged participants to visualize the sort of sponsorship system they would like to have, and to think outside the box, beyond the current targets and funding constraints. Various challenges being faced by the SAH community were discussed and participants looked into realistic possibilities and solutions to overcome these challenges, and how to build on the strengths that the SAH community already possesses.

No resolutions or action requests came out of the workshop, however participants shared a number of useful ideas on how to make the sponsorship process better. These ideas will be compiled and shared with the CCR.

Workshop leaders: Hai Tonthat, Azaria Wolday, Jan Drews, Rose Dekker, Moses Moini and Elaine Harder

Family Reunification: Impacts of separation

This workshop addressed different issues regarding family reunification, with a focus on the impacts of separation. The workshop also aimed to understand the challenges and identify potential strategies to serve and increase access to settlement services for newcomers who are experiencing family separation (including live-in caregivers and other migrant workers).

All the presenters spoke about the impact and experience of family separation and reunification from different perspectives, from the perspective of a service provider, an academic researcher, a

psychologist and from personal experience. The workshop covered some programs offered by agencies to support families who are reuniting, talked about why those services were useful and important. Presenters also talked about their recommendations, both for services and policy reform, based on their work and research.

This workshop resulted in the drafting of a resolution that was later passed, to eliminate the live-in requirement from the Live-in Caregiver Program in order to facilitate family reunification. In general, participants noted that this is a huge issue that needs to have more focus both by the CCR and by service providers in terms of developing more services to address the issue. In particular, public education is needed about the positive role that families play in supporting individuals' integration, and the negative impact that family separation has on integration and settlement. There was a sense that the public does not recognize or understand the issue adequately.

Resource persons:

Lorna Rivera, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, Toronto

Beth Martin, Ryerson University, Toronto

Sylvie Laurion, RIVO, Montreal

Marc Larrivée, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Moderator: Erika Gates-Gasse

Impacts of Detention on Refugee Claimants

This workshop included a presentation on current research into the impacts of detention on the mental health of refugee claimants, and also considered the particular case of claimants detained after arrival on the Sun Sea.

Presenters at this workshop gave a summary of the consequences on refugee claimants of the anti-smuggling legislation bill C-4, and highlighted the bill's illegality according to Canadian and international law. Two of the lawyers on the panel provided their perspective as refugee lawyers on the impacts of detention on their clients, including the difficulties of preparing their clients' refugee claims while in detention and the effects of being interviewed by CBSA without counsel. Finally, information about the current context of detention and findings from recent research on the impacts of detention on the mental health of refugee claimants was presented.

A suggestion that came out of the workshop was to offer to give a similar presentation to CBSA. Some issues and suggestions that emerged from the discussion included the following:

- CARL should form an oversight committee for CBSA/detention
- CCR has a youtube video available on the detention of children
- Importance of using research study results for advocacy
- Focus on Convention on Rights of the Child
- Problems with detention in provincial prisons (lack of CBSA oversight, no official agreements with most provinces)
- Importance of ongoing advocacy efforts to combat C-4

Resource persons:

Janet Cleveland, McGill University

Ethan Friedman, lawyer, Montreal

Laura Brittain, Refugee Law Office, Toronto

Mitch Goldberg, Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL)

Moderator: Jenney Jeanes

Ending Poverty: Making connections and informing the national discussion

While the rising level of poverty in Canada is alarming, what is more troubling is the over-representation of First Nations and racialized people among the poor. Refugees and immigrants are also among those who are disproportionately affected by poverty. This workshop explored ways to connect and work with existing anti-poverty initiatives to encourage the federal government to make poverty-reduction a priority.

The Colour of Poverty Campaign was presented, including its analysis of the racialization of poverty, pointing out that poverty in communities of colour predates the current economic crisis and has been getting worse, regardless of market ups and downs. Immigrants have higher rates of unemployment, and lower wages than the Canadian-born, and this disparity is most notable for African immigrants. Avvy Go described some of the activities of the campaign to raise awareness in the public and to promote policy change at the provincial level in Ontario.

The representative from the Immigrant Worker's Centre in Montreal explained the origins of the organization, which focuses on migrant workers rights, and is rooted in the mobilization of the Filipino worker community in Côte-des-Neiges. He described some of the current campaigns of the organization, such as the struggle of racialized and mostly immigrant workers laid off from the textile industry without severance pay or other benefits, and compared this to the forestry industry's great compensation for mostly white, Canadian-born workers. The organization is also focusing on temp agencies, and the increase in flexibility and disposable labour. The link was made between poverty along racialized lines and immigration, namely the trend towards temporary migration and precarious status.

The CPJ speaker focused on putting pressure on the government to follow through with the many resolutions and plans that have been made to reduce poverty. He describe the Dignity for All campaign which has three elements: 1) development of a poverty reduction plan, 2) legislation requiring accountability to the plan, and 3) sufficient federal investment in the programs outlined by the plan. Some challenges mentioned included the tradition of passing the buck for poverty reduction between jurisdictions and the fact that the federal government is clearly responsible for First Nations programs, yet the housing conditions of many communities are abominable. This campaign encourages public awareness and engagement, lobbying, and petitions to bring about change.

The speaker from Canada without Poverty spoke about poverty as a human rights issue, and emphasized holding the government accountable for remedying the problem. She discussed the

challenges of working towards having a parliamentary strategy to eliminate poverty, and pointed out the need for collaboration between businesses, NGOs and government.

Several suggestions came out of this workshop, including:

- Educational initiatives in economic literacy for newcomer and first nations communities
- Continue to advocate for better working conditions
- Support bill C-33 – private bill to eliminate poverty

Resource persons:

Avvy Go, Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change, Toronto

Mostafa Henaway, Immigrant Workers Centre, Montreal

Simon Lewchuck, Citizens for Public Justice, Ottawa

Harriet McLachlan, Canada Without Poverty, Montreal

Moderators: Sherman Chan and Jill Hanley

Changing the narrative: Strategies to counter the criminalization of migrants

Canada's political leaders and media are using certain recent incidents to negatively stereotype, profile and criminalize immigrants and refugees. For some this discourse has served to define who and what is Canadian, often to the exclusion of racialized immigrants. This workshop looked at strategies to change the national narrative that criminalizes migrants (including immigrants and refugees) with a focus on public policy and media.

The presenters spoke about the importance of using diverse strategies to counter the negative discourse around migrants. A detailed presentation was given on the communications strategy developed for the Canadian Labour Congress. One presenter discussed his experiences as part of the Chinese Headtax and Exclusion Act Redress Campaign, and ways that racism and exclusion can be combated through language and framing of the issue. There was also a focus on making strong links with community media institutions such as community radio and print media from ethnic communities.

Resource persons:

Stefan Christoff, community organization and independent journalist, Montreal

Karl Flecker, Canadian Labour Congress, Ottawa

Walter Tom, Lawyer and Chinese Headtax and Exclusion Act Redress Campaign, Montreal

Moderators: Debbie Douglas and Stephan Reichhold

Mapping Memories: Telling refugee stories through photos

The best way to challenge public opinion about refugees in Canada is by telling human stories and showing human faces. But how do we do this effectively? Montreal-based Mapping Memories uses personal stories and a range of media tools to share the experiences of refugees.

In this hands-on workshop, participants learned basic photography, writing techniques and promotion ideas to use in their own communities.

After giving a brief history of the Mapping Memories project and its connection to the CURA Life Stories project and the CCR, workshop leaders showed some of the products of participatory media projects that have been conducted with refugee youth, refugee claimants and other vulnerable groups in Montreal. It was explained that the goals of the workshop were to equip participants to take on similar photo-based story projects in their own communities to share the realities of refugees, refugee claimants and other newcomers with a broader audience.

To reach this goal participants engaged in an interactive activity in which they brainstormed written ideas, learned basic photography techniques and composed their own four-frame story on the theme: *What is one thing that you want people to know about refugees in Canada?*

After brainstorming ideas and viewing a brief powerpoint presentation on basic photo-taking techniques, participants used a 4-frame storyboard to organize ideas and to set out the elements of their story. Themes presented by groups included fear of authorities (in Canada) resulting from traumatic experiences abroad, the importance of social support and networks of friends in surviving torture, the pain of prolonged family separation, barriers to finding employment in Canada when a person lacks Canadian experience, and the ‘brain waste’ of educated newcomers who have to resort to low-skilled jobs like driving taxicabs.

After demonstrating that pictures without words can be powerful communication tools, important issues in photo storytelling were discussed: building trust and providing emotional support, challenges in negotiating consent for photo use, and sharing creative ideas to extend the project (producing photo and video exhibits, bus/walking tours and more).

Finally, participants heard from *Mapping Memories* project participants about how participating in the project has made a difference to them. Presenters demonstrated how to navigate the Mapping Memories website to find videos, as well as copies of powerpoint presentations, workshop curricula and other materials to support similar local projects.

At the end of the workshop, each participant was given a copy of *Mapping Memories: Participatory media, place-based stories and refugee youth* with the request to keep in touch with the Mapping Memories project to let them know how the handbook and resources are being used locally to telling refugee stories.

Resource persons:

Ayanda Dube and Léontine Umubyeyi, Mapping Memories participants

Workshop leaders:

Kevin Stanley, AGIR and Concordia University, Montreal

Michele Luchs, Mapping Memories and Quebec Ministry of Education

Issues for Refugees in Political Change (Arab Spring)

This workshop looked at the impacts of political change on refugees in a country in transition (for example, refugees in Egypt who are harassed by new authorities who are unfamiliar with UNHCR documents, African refugees in Libya mistaken for mercenaries working for Kadhafi, or refugees in Syria affected by the withdrawal of UNHCR staff). The workshop also looked at the consequences of the opening of border (for example, Tunisians fleeing to Europe after the fall of the previous regime, which prevented boat departures).

The workshop covered different aspects of the Arab Spring: the response of European countries to the arrival of Tunisian nationals after the fall of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, the consequences of displacement in the region of upheaval, and the experience of people fleeing Libya.

Resource persons:

Denise Otis, UNHCR

Idil Atak, postdoctoral fellow, McGill Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism

Sami Aoun, La Chaire Raouil-Dandurand en études stratégiques et diplomatiques, UQAM

Moderators : Freddy Wangabo and Jordan Pachciarz Cohen

V. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Participant evaluations of the Consultation were overall very positive. We did however receive some suggestions on how to make future Consultations better. The aspects that were most often cited as what people liked best about the Consultation were the workshop content and presentations, and the networking opportunity offered by the event, accompanied by the camaraderie of the atmosphere. Several people mentioned feeling motivated by connecting with their colleagues from across the country, and inspired by the feeling of being surrounded by others with shared values of refugee and newcomer rights and protection. Several respondents mentioned how clear and well-organized the event was, as well as the diversity of participation and the efforts for inclusion and anti-oppression. Several people said they felt that attending the Consultation would be helpful for them in their work. While most of the feedback was good, there were also some useful suggestions for improvements. Several people would have liked to have more opportunities for networking and socializing, and a few people would have liked to see longer question periods during workshops, more French workshops, and more simultaneous translation for the workshops.

Respondents were very positive about the participation at the event, although one person suggested that more graduate students be encouraged to come in order to encourage collaborations between advocates and academics. People really liked the facilities offered at the hotel, first time attendees reported feeling welcome and appreciated the orientation for new participants.