



**Canadian Council for Refugees Fall 2010 Consultation  
“Fairness”  
24-26 November 2010, Calgary  
Conference Report**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Canadian Council for Refugees' 2010 Fall Consultation was held November 24-26 at the Coast Plaza hotel in Calgary, Alberta. Over 345 participants from across Canada attended the Consultation, with both francophone and anglophone participants. The extensive involvement of the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) as host organization for the Consultation led to very substantial participation by front-line settlement workers from across Alberta, and especially from Calgary. The Consultation met its objectives of providing a unique opportunity for networking, professional development and information-exchange, as well as providing a forum for the settlement sector to share experiences and identify and respond to emerging needs with respect to programming and services to support the settlement, adaptation and integration of newcomers into Canadian society. The Consultation was a success on many levels, including attendance, content, regional participation, youth participation, and outcomes.

The 2010 Fall Consultation provided an opportunity for training, learning and experience-sharing among people involved in the immigrant and refugee serving sector from across Canada, as well as policy discussions and prioritizing of issues among government and non-governmental representatives. The Consultation also served to address newcomer and community needs by providing a space for a wide range of stakeholders, including newcomers themselves, to meet and discuss priority issues and service gaps, leading to the development of strategies and concerted actions, as identified by participants themselves. With respect to settlement and integration, the Consultation also provided an important opportunity at the national level to identify and develop responses to gaps and emerging issues; and to focus attention on the diversity of newcomers and the promotion of strategies for more effective responses to those newcomers whose needs are not adequately met. The strong regional representation also allowed for experience sharing across provincial boundaries.

Thirty-two sessions were offered during the three days of the consultation, consisting of two plenary sessions, three working group meetings, 18 workshops and training sessions, 6 caucuses 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. Simultaneous translation between English and French was available in plenary sessions, and some meeting sessions and workshops, facilitating participation in both official languages. In each session time was allotted for question and answer periods or for breaking into small groups for discussion in order to allow for the inclusion and participation of all those attending. Participants were able to meet with others interested in issues not addressed through the main Consultation programme by organizing caucus sessions, where information and experience sharing could take place in an informal setting, contacts could be made, and partnerships developed.

The Consultation brought together diverse participants from different regions and many sectors, thus promoting the development of partnerships across communities. Participants at the Calgary Consultation included refugees, immigrants, staff and volunteers at organizations serving newcomers and ethnocultural organizations, youth, students, private sponsors of refugees, representatives of various levels of government and of UNHCR, lawyers,

academics, and others involved in refugee and immigrant issues. Diverse participation was enhanced by opportunities such as the grants made available by the CCR for a number of settlement workers and youth, the CCR's Amina Malko Fund for refugee participation, the registration fee waiver for refugee participants, and the low registration fees for youth and people with low incomes. The growth in youth participation that was evident at the Calgary Consultation is a remarkable achievement of the CCR's objective of engaging and involving youth in immigrant and refugee issues. The CCR Youth network participated actively in two settlement-related workshops, entitled *Reinforcing Equity: Deepening our understanding of refugee youth settlement experiences* and *Debunking Myths about Newcomer Youth*. Attendance at these workshops cut across generational divides, bringing together youth and adults from across Canada to discuss crucial issues around newcomer youth settlement.

The Consultation sessions offered a participatory format intended to be particularly inclusive of those who are new to Canada and new to the CCR. Moderators were informed and trained to promote the CCR's commitment to provide an environment that is free of racism, sexism, discrimination and bias, where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. The CCR's Anti-Oppression Policy, adopted May 2009, guided meeting conduct.

Workshop topics were chosen during the CCR's August Working Group meetings, in which participants identified topics that responded to current needs, and selected volunteers to plan the workshops. The resource persons chosen to speak at Consultation sessions represented different perspectives: service providers, refugee advocates, government, lawyers, youth, refugees, academics, etc. They were chosen by taking into consideration different factors: participation of refugees, immigrants and people from racialized communities; gender balance; regional diversity; balance between English and French speakers; representation of local resource people; a youth perspective, and experience and knowledge of the issues.

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. Gender-based and anti-racist perspectives were included in discussions about the direction of future work. CCR working group meetings at Consultations also serve as a path for people from across Canada to get involved in the CCR and help to set our agenda and activities.

Participants' oral and written evaluations were overall extremely positive. Participants appreciated the networking opportunities offered by the Consultation, the diversity of participants, the good organization and smooth running of the event, the content of the workshops, the quality of presentations, and the facilities.

The success of the Consultation was made possible thanks to the very efficient work of the local organizing committee, made up of staff from various organizations in Calgary, as well as some interested individuals. Participants were also very fortunate to be welcomed by some great volunteers, who contributed to the friendly atmosphere of the event.

## **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.

### Housing

This issue of concern was brought back into the foreground at the Calgary Consultation. Because of the shortage of low-income and social housing in Canada, it was felt that a national housing strategy needs to be developed as part of a broader anti-poverty plan. In a workshop on housing, best practices from different parts of Canada were discussed, and smaller group discussions identified specific housing issues that need to be addressed.

### Racism/Racial Profiling

Two workshops at this Consultation explored the problems of racism and racial profiling as they affect racialized newcomers. One was organized by youth and focused specifically on the “myths” that newcomer youth face as they try to settle and integrate in Canada. The issue of racial profiling by police forces was discussed, and the importance of engaging and dialoguing with police forces on this issue was emphasized. The CCR Youth Network has taken on the issue of debunking myths about newcomer youth as one of their key campaigns, and racism is often at the root of the “myths” they have identified to date.

### Children and Youth Immigration and Settlement Issues

The CCR Youth Network has become increasingly active recently, and is mobilizing around various issues. Their greatest concerns tend to be settlement-related, since they arrive in Canada as children and youth and face issues of integration head-on through the Canadian education system. The Youth Network has identified two key campaigns, which are “Debunking myths about newcomer youth” and “Children and youth rights under the Canadian Immigration System”.

### Temporary Foreign Worker Program

As people from settlement organizations all over Canada were able to share their experiences with working with Temporary Foreign Workers, it became clear that participants felt that there were important changes that needed to occur in the program, namely in terms of protection and access to services. Those from Alberta and Manitoba were able to share their experiences offering services to migrant workers, while those in the rest of the country lamented having to turn down migrant workers because of their funding constraints, which don’t allow them to provide services to these workers.

### **III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY DISCUSSION**

#### **Opening plenary**

This session served as an introduction to the consultation and provided an opportunity to reflect on the consultation theme: Fairness. Yessy Byl challenged participants to think about whether the Temporary Foreign Workers Program is fair, highlighting the unequal position faced by workers, in terms of rights, access to services and implementation of enforcement measures. Unfortunately, Teresa Woo-Paw, Parliamentary Assistant to the Alberta Minister of Employment and Immigration, cancelled her participation on the eve of the consultation, thus depriving the consultation of the point of view of government. Wanda Yamamoto gave an overview of key developments of concern to the CCR since the last consultation.

#### Remarks:

Yessy Byl, Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre  
Wanda Yamamoto, CCR President

Moderators: Fariborz Birjandian, Executive Director, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, and Rivka Augenfeld, CCR Executive

#### **Plenary session: What's new at the CCR**

The workshop provided an introduction to the CCR communication strategy: 4 Faces, 4 Values. The campaign focuses on the message that we want refugees to be treated fairly and honourably, in a process that is independent and affordable. These are Canadian values and treating refugees in this way is good for Canada and good for refugees. Participants were encouraged to get involved in the implementation of this strategy, including by lending their faces to the values.

The session also provided an introductory tour of the CCR website.

Facilitators: Monica Abdelkader, London Cross Cultural Learner Centre  
Jacqueline Rumiell, YMCA Windsor and Essex County and CCR Executive member

#### **Annual General Meeting**

The Consultation concluded with the CCR Annual General Meeting. Six resolutions were adopted. The resolutions can be found at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/resolutions-november-2010>.

## **IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS**

### **Temporary Migrant Workers: Dialogue with prairie provincial governments**

This workshop gave participants an opportunity to hear about current priority actions to respond to newcomer settlement and integration by the provincial governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Originally the intention was to have a representative of Alberta Employment and Immigration present as well, but unfortunately this person pulled out at the last moment, and the Ministry did not have a replacement.

The speakers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba both talked about their province's efforts to recruit immigrants, and the recent developments of their settlement programs in response to increasing numbers of newcomers. The two presenters also described their province's responses to temporary migrant workers, giving participants from other regions an opportunity to hear about developments in these provinces' approach to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Despite the fact that these two provinces only receive a fraction of the number of migrant workers that neighboring provinces Alberta and BC receive, they have developed unique initiatives to deal with migrant workers, and to create paths towards permanent residence for them. They discussed the opportunities for temporary migrant workers to gain permanent status through the Provincial Nominee programs, as well as the initiatives that have been implemented in order to protect temporary migrant workers. These include the Program Integrity Unit in Saskatchewan, and Manitoba's *Worker Recruitment and Protection Act*.

Resource persons:

Eric Johansen, Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration,  
Saskatchewan

Markus Chambers, Manitoba Labour and Immigration

Moderator: Dale Taylor, Executive Director, AAISA

### **Port of Entry Interviews: Are we being fair?**

This workshop presented the results of research conducted by the CCR and Sojourn House last summer on the experiences of refugees at Port of entry interviews. The objective of the research was to document strengths and weaknesses of current policies and practices, and to identify areas for improvement and advocacy needs. Forty-five claimants were interviewed for the project about their experiences at the port of entry. Just over half had arrived at Fort Erie, while others arrived at Windsor, Toronto, Lacolle, Quebec City, Montreal and Vancouver, and two made inland claims. No attempt was made to achieve a representative sample of claimants. 37 practitioners were also interviewed. The full report is available at <http://ccrweb.ca/files/poereport.pdf>

Among those interviewed, claimants commented on their physical and mental state at the port of entry interview. Some were exhausted or suffering from health problems. Many were very nervous. They described how the words and actions of the officers either heightened their fear or helped them to relax. In many cases, the interpreter played an important role – which could be either positive or negative - from the perspective of the claimant. Disclosure of sensitive information is particularly problematic: practitioners drew attention to the barriers faced by gay and lesbian claimants, and survivors of gender violence and torture. As their first experience of Canada, the port of entry interview makes a strong impression on claimants. In the opinion of some practitioners, it has important long-term consequences for the person's settlement process.

Louis Century presented the research, and Jim Bissett was able to respond to concerns and expressed considerable interest in pursuing the recommendations.

Resource persons:

Louis Century, CCR intern and Pro Bono Students Canada Fellow

James Bissett, Director, Traveller Border Programs, Canada Border Services Agency

Moderator: Glynis Williams

## **Shrinking Protection Space**

This workshop addressed the global trend relating to the increased difficulty refugees have in accessing asylum and the increased challenges facing humanitarian actors. It highlighted the impact this trend is having upon refugees and explored whether it may be reversed. The resource people explored shrinking protection space abroad by examining two main challenges: the diminishing room for humanitarian work; and the decreasing security protection of refugees.

Hy Shelow spoke at length of the history of international humanitarian commitment and UNHCR's dedication to reducing the impact of these challenges. He spoke about national processes with global impacts which have the effect of creating more territorial restriction, decreasing domestic support for humanitarian aid and a decreasing legal aid for both humanitarian actors and nation states. He went on to discuss the global decrease in asylum space which is resulting in the internal displacement of many people. There is also an implementation deficit vis-à-vis international conventions to refugees, the result of countries who have not committed to these conventions and that lack the resources and capacity to do so.

Gloria Nafziger's presentation continued with the themes introduced above, speaking first to the impact of globalization on shrinking protection spaces worldwide. She highlighted the need for management of protection, and pointed to an incompatibility between new laws being placed in developed countries and international laws established for the protection of refugees. Nafziger explained that Northern states must be challenged about policies of non-entry and exclusion, and that international institutions should be responsible and held accountable for acts of omission and commission. As allies for refugees, it is our responsibility to not only advocate for refugee issues, but also to be active in fighting against other issues of social injustice, which have significant impacts on the lives of people in the global south.

Lastly, Tewelde Yohannes went into depth about the situation in Eritrea. He explained that Eritrea is the second largest refugee producing country in the world per capita, with 1800 people leaving per month to Sudan and 900 leaving for Ethiopia. Eritreans, Yohannes explained, are leaving for political and religious reasons, with many refugees facing extortion, death at sea or in the Sahara, harsh detention in Libya and Egypt and sexual abuse as a common mechanism of torture.

Resource persons:

Hy Shelow, UNHCR

Tewelde Yohannes, Eritrean Canadian Community Association of Calgary

Gloria Nafziger, Amnesty International

Moderators: Gilbert Iyamuremye and Monica Abdelkader

## **Four Values, Four Faces: Communicating our vision of refugee rights in Canada**

This workshop addressed the question of how best the CCR can communicate its message to the public. The workshop also spoke to the questions of how individuals and local groups can empower refugees to talk about their experiences and perspectives. This workshop drew on fresh messages and communication strategies about refugees and refugee rights in Canada. Using practical exercises, participants were also encouraged to use key messages in their communications and activities locally.

The workshop was divided into three parts:

### 1. An introduction to the CCR communication strategy

“4 Faces, 4 Values” and the keywords fair, independent, honourable, affordable, are the new keywords to be used by the CCR and its allies in transmitting our message about refugee and immigrant rights. There was a particular emphasis on CCR organizations and allies a) leading by example and b) empowering and promoting refugee voices. This means CCR members and allies need to adopt these four values in their everyday work, and encourage organizations and groups in local communities to support and assist refugees in speaking out about the issues that they face. Empowering refugee voices means going beyond simply telling stories of escape and persecution to express ideas and experiences in Canada, making their way through the refugee determination and Canadian immigration systems.

### 2. Presentations from two newcomers

Luis Mata (Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto) and Sipiwe Mapfumo (journalist and communication practitioner in Calgary) presented their ideas on this communication strategy, how they interpret it and how they can envision putting it into practice in their own work.

### 3. Small group work with workshop participants

Workshop participants were asked to break into small groups to come up with a plan to respond to one of the following situations:

- a) You are planning a community event to celebrate the achievements of newcomers in your community. How will you bring everyone in the community together?
- b) A local newspaper is known to be very negative about newcomers in your community. It frequently uses stereotypes and misinformation. What do you do? How can the voices of refugees and newcomers be used, not to tell their stories, but to speak their minds and be heard?
- c) You have the opportunity to meet with your local Member of Parliament about issues affecting newcomers in your community. What will you present at the meeting, and how? Who will attend the meeting with you?
- d) A refugee ‘client’ would like to start a discussion/support group for newcomers on advocacy and/or civic engagement issues. How do you respond?
- e) A municipal election will take place soon. How would you and your group reach out to newcomers about the election? How do you reach out to elected officials about the concerns of refugees and immigrants in your community?

During the discussions participants were asked to think about the following questions:

- a) What are you already doing that is consistent with 4 values? How do these core messages match the work you do?
- b) How can you use these 4 messages more?
- c) How can we identify and support refugees in becoming spokespeople and advocates? (how they are affected by policies in Canada, for example)
- d) How do we give greater priority to newcomer voices in our work?

This activity provoked thoughtful discussions and ideas. Some participants suggested that the CCR provide training materials to assist in the organization of local activities and the adoption of many ideas presented in the workshop.

Resource Persons:

Luis Alberto Mata, Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto

Sipiwe Mapfumo, journalist and communications practitioner, Calgary

Moderator: Wanda Yamamoto, CCR President

### **Temporary Migrant Workers: Towards a national campaign**

Presentations in this workshop spoke to the three axes of the new CCR campaign to raise awareness about migrant workers in Canada: access to services, rights, and access to permanent residency. Two presenters from a large settlement agency in Calgary spoke about the services they are able to offer to temporary migrant workers because of the Alberta government's decision to fund such service provision. Alberta has a double strategy of improving policies around migrant workers as well as providing services. A presenter from BC addressed the challenges (faced in most provinces) of offering services to migrant workers when neither provincial nor federal government will fund this. In BC, MOSAIC has worked around this by using legal education as a venue for service provision and rights education for migrant workers. However, they are the only agency providing this limited support.

The final presenter discussed the issue of access to permanent residency, and the elitism of dividing migrant workers into categories of "high-skilled" and "low-skilled", and only offering a path to permanent residence for the former. Manitoba is the one exception to this trend of offering preferential treatment to "high-skilled" migrant workers.

Participants were then divided into groups to brainstorm ideas for the CCR to transmit its message about the need for access to services, permanent residence, and rights for migrant workers. The session concluded with these small group discussions returning to plenary to share their ideas.

Resource persons:

Jessica Juen and Fariborz Birjandian, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

Yessy Byl, Alberta Federation of Labour, Edmonton

Angela Contreras-Chavez, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Moderators: Loly Rico and Roberto Jovel

### **Upcoming Changes to the Refugee Claims Process (after Bill C-11) Part I**

Bill C-11, amending Canada's refugee protection system, was passed by Parliament in June 2010. This session gave an overview of the changes. Representatives from the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) provided insights into how they plan to implement the changes.

The workshop resulted in two Inland Protection resolutions that were adopted at the general meeting, and can be found at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/resolutions-november-2010>

Recommendations were also made that the IRB provide timelines for the decision-making of claims filed under the Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds category, and that information packages be provided to refugee claimants at the port of entry.



Resource persons:

Simon Coakeley, Executive Director, Immigration and Refugee Board

Teny Dikranian, Refugee Affairs Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Peter Hill, Director General, Post-Border Programs, Canada Border Services Agency

Moderator: Rick Goldman

## **Upcoming Changes to the Refugee Claims Process: Part II – Reimagining Services for Refugee Claimants**

This second part in a two-part workshop addressed the question of how CCR members can assist refugee claimants in light of the major legislative changes of Bill C-11. This session considered how to adapt our front-line services to meet the protection challenges of the new process. Discussion brought forward several ideas for local actions, as well as recommendations for the Immigration and Refugee Board and the Canada Border Services Agency.

Local actions suggested included having service providers meet locally to determine who can do what with current resources and what could be done with additional resources.

It was suggested that the CCR advocate for:

- Settlement program funding to prepare refugee claimants for their first interview
- extend First Contact nationally through 1-800 number
- Justice department to offer duty counsel interview in order to ensure equal access and support across Canada
- Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds decisions prior to removal
- Best interests of child regarding statelessness

### **Other recommendations included:**

#### At the port of entry

- standardized referral procedure to settlement organizations
- Standardized interview procedures
- Encourage advocates/agencies to act as observers
- Provide questions or guidelines to prepare for IRB interview
- Provide info regarding the need for support docs like medical reports, police reports, affidavits

#### For the IRB interview

- local agencies need to prepare claimants for first interview at IRB
- Recommend federal funding to agencies to provide services to claimants found eligible at Port of entry
- Federal funding (department of justice) for duty counsel at first Support roaming IRB via teleconferencing
- Support multilingual IRB
- Enhance role of settlement agencies to assist at IRB hearing

## Other

- CIC should provide funding for temporary shelter
- Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds: request clarification of Hardship
- Increase funding to community groups to assist with H&C preparation

Moderators: Gloria Nafziger and Rivka Auginfeld

## **Reinforcing Equity: Deepening our understanding of refugee youth settlement experiences**

Using experiential theatre techniques, participants explored refugee youth perspectives and experiences of settlement in Canada. While enhancing their own understanding, participants were also able to develop, learn and practise new skills and methods to spread awareness of refugee youth realities to others.

The workshop gave an introduction to anti-oppressive facilitation methods and activities as they relate to refugee youth, while exploring terms such as: anti-oppression, discrimination, prejudice, xenophobia, oppression, homophobia (heterosexism), ally, and power, all through theatre of the oppressed techniques.

This question was posed at the beginning of the workshop to all participants: “What do you think that would be good to understand more fully about refugee youth experiences/issues?”

This is the short list of responses:

- Isolation
- Culture (caught in between 2 cultures)
- Marginalization
- Roles switch between parents and youth
- Job security
- Language barriers
- Education System

Some of these responses were used as a part of the workshop “tableau” activities to conclude the workshop. The theatre of the oppressed methods were used and explored further in the Debunking the Myths for Refugee youth workshop on Friday morning in the form of live people's theatre. Many participants and facilitators agreed that this is an effective technique for bringing forward the issues and gaining better understanding of them. Issues were discussed openly and all participants had opportunities to express their thoughts and comment on the activities, as well as to be an active part of the presentations.

Participants at this workshop have requested a list-serve as well as a document giving guidance for exploring resources and for the CCR website. Plans to do these things are being formulated - first links and resources will be shared through the website, then a more comprehensive document will follow with steps and activities and facilitator guidance notes.

Facilitators:

Taro Hashimoto, Selene Sanchez and James Tehusalawany, Centre for Race and Culture, Edmonton

## **En français s'il vous plaît? Access to settlement services for francophones**

This workshop had two primary intentions: a) the exchange of information and experiences of French-language immigrant serving agencies in regions outside of Quebec; b) awareness-raising for English-language service providers on the support they can offer to francophone newcomers, even if they don't provide services in French.

Speakers from francophone settlement agencies in Calgary, Toronto and Halifax presented on the services they offered and the needs of francophone newcomers in their areas. The challenges faced by francophone agencies outside Quebec were also discussed, including the fact that many anglophone agencies don't refer French-speaking newcomers to francophones services, due to a lack of awareness and networking.

This workshop resulted in a resolution that was passed at the general meeting to ensure that the CCR offer its member organizations tools and opportunities to be sensitized to and understand the specific challenges facing francophone immigrants outside of Québec, and that the CCR also engage with the federal and provincial governments as appropriate to ensure:

- a. Fair, culturally adapted recruitment practices in francophone countries outside of Europe;
- b. An increase in yearly target levels for francophone immigration so the demographic goals of Canada's strategy for francophone immigration are met;
- c. That the implementation of Canada's strategic framework for francophone immigration outside of Québec seeks concrete results of fair and equitable integration of francophone newcomers.

It was also proposed that the CCR should:

- hold at least one workshop per year on the issue of francophone settlement services
- make the issue of francophone immigration outside Quebec a part of the agenda for dialogue with government
- produce a tool to raise awareness on this issue among CCR members

Resource persons:

Louise Diop, Immigration francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Halifax

Roberto Jovel, La Passerelle - Intégration et Développement Économiques, Toronto

Luketa M'Pindou, L'Alliance jeunesse et famille de l'Alberta Society, Calgary

Moderator: Georges Bahaya

## **Race and Policing**

Despite Canada's multiculturalism, racial profiling is still something that deeply impacts the quality of lives of immigrants and refugees all over the country. Whether it occurs because of police, international security agencies or in daily activities, we are negatively impacted by racial profiling. Recognizing that racial profiling exists and knowing how to act on it are important steps towards challenging racism in Canada. This workshop explored some of the dynamics of racial profiling in Canada, with a specific focus on the challenges faced in Alberta when trying to tackle this issue.

Jidiri Ndagije of the Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society in Edmonton made a presentation about the work of his organization with the Edmonton Police Service. He defined racial profiling as the use of race/ethnicity as a key factor to engage in policing by law enforcement. He spoke of building partnerships and dialogue with police services, in order to build greater trust and decrease

misunderstandings between racialized people and police services. He highlighted several programs in the Edmonton and Alberta regions which allow for this dialogue and methods that other agencies can use to build these safe spaces.

Vilma Dawson of the Calgary Centre for Culture, Equity and Diversity and Jill Croteau, an investigative journalist with Global TV Calgary gave a joint presentation on a project examining racial profiling in the entertainment industry, namely bars and nightclubs. They showed clips from their special investigative series on racial profiling in Calgary which demonstrated the impacts of racial profiling on young racialized youth. They then used these examples to build a discussion with participants around racial profiling of immigrant and refugee youth and the impact this profiling has on their lives.

It became evident from feedback from participants after the workshop that there was a need to continue to explore this issue because it deeply impacts the work of many front line settlement workers and their clients. They expressed a need to be able to continue to learn so that they can amass techniques used in other communities and learn from others' lessons.

Resource persons:

Jidiri Ndagije, Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l' Alberta Society, Edmonton  
Vilma Dawson, Calgary Centre for Culture, Equity and Diversity

Moderators: Rita Acosta and Monica Abdelkader

### **Migrant Workers: Barriers to Settlement and Integration**

In this workshop, two researchers looking at different aspects of migrant workers' realities in Canada presented their work. The workshop looked at Canadian and provincial approaches to protecting migrant workers, barriers to integration in Canadian society, and the economic effects of the expansion of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program.

Paula Kinoshita presented the paper she co-authored with Delphine Nakache on the Canadian Temporary Foreign Workers Program. Her paper examines Canada's growing focus on short-term labour migration, and the situation of migrant workers in terms of employment, family unity and access to permanent residence in Canada. The paper contrasts the federal and Albertan approaches to the program. Her presentation addressed some of the policy gaps due to jurisdictional issues – for example the fact that selection of workers is done at the federal level, whereas the province is responsible for civil rights; this leaves it unclear which level should be responsible for ensuring human rights and employment standards.

Geraldina Polanco, presented on her doctoral research. She is conducting a study that examines the effects of the expansion - in both scale and scope - of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, particularly within the service sector. Her research focuses on the fast food industry, with Tim Horton's recruitment and employment of temporary foreign workers in BC and Alberta as a case study. The demand for workers at Tim Horton's is not a temporary demand, so temporary workers are being used to address a permanent demand. She presented her findings to date on the consequences for labour markets and bottom of the rung employment niches that are brought on by Canada's recent policy shift favouring temporary over permanent migration.

Resource Persons:

Paula Kinoshita, M.A. University of Alberta, Edmonton  
Geraldina Polanco, PhD candidate, University of British Columbia

Moderator: Debbie Douglas

## **Our Vision for Canada's Overseas Refugee Protection System**

The workshop began with a skit written and performed by Jan Drews and Elaine Harder. Its purpose was to introduce the idea of a model and the need to have ready responses when talking with the public (or media). Following the skit, participants divided into groups to discuss the elements of an overseas protection system relevant to the four messages (fairness, independence, honour and affordability) of the CCR.

A wide range of messages were reported back from the small groups. Some will be very helpful in identifying the “vision”, others speak to ongoing concerns with the current program.

Moderators: Jennifer Mpungu and Mary Purkey

## **Creating Safe and Positive Spaces for QLGBT Newcomers**

This was a highly interactive workshop comprised of presentations and activities from grassroots and community-based initiatives from across Canada that are centred on equity and inclusion of QLGBT refugees and immigrants. Resource persons from Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal shared their experience, expertise and resources from community - from zines, posters and public service announcements to research to trainings for frontline workers in the immigrant and refugee-serving sector.

Facilitators from Rainbow Refugee Coalition in Vancouver did a series of interactive exercises with the audience to start people thinking about the impact of oppression and self-oppression/censorship on LGBTQ people, namely through gender pronouns, hetero-normativity and gender binarism. Presenters showed that it is important to understand that such things play differently across languages and cultures and that how newcomers experience this is their settlement experience.

Two resource persons from OCASI spoke of the Ontario settlement umbrella's initiative to raise awareness, develop resources and build capacity among immigrant and refugee serving organizations. They showed the resources they had developed, which included brochures, videos and posters. A resource person from Montreal spoke about the work being done in Montreal by Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique (Rainbow of Africa) and AGIR (Action for LGBTQ refugees and newcomer immigrants), and awareness-raising videos were shown. There was discussion on the practices that can be employed by service providers to foster a sense of safety for LGBTQ clients.

Some points that were brought up during the discussion included:

- challenges in combating prejudice within communities – a big task!
- Need to continue training in LGBTQ issues for IRB members
- Use discourse of human rights to tackle prejudice
- Need to keep doing this work because the need is still there
- Sharing of best practices, methods and approaches is important
- There should be organizational standards and training for all staff in all provinces
- There is a need to engage with faith community leaders as they hold important influence over communities

Resource persons:

Sharalyn Jordan and Ori Garcia, Rainbow Refugee Coalition, Vancouver  
Josephine Tcheng and Leslie Ramsay-Taylor, OCASI, Toronto  
Alexis Musanganya, AGIR, Montreal

Moderator: Roberto Jovel

## **Empowering Women Survivors of Violence in Immigration and Refugee Processes**

This workshop was designed to provide tools and analysis useful to individuals supporting newcomer women who have experienced violence and who are going through the refugee or immigration process.

The three presenters covered a variety of issues. Background to the issue of violence against women was given, and the specificities of violence against newcomer women were addressed. It was pointed out that violence against women is a systemic issue, and presenters described the differences between physical and sexual abuse. Perpetrators of violence were identified as men, spouses, intimate partners, police, crime groups, and essentially anybody who has power.

The barriers and challenges that women face in accessing services during the immigration process were discussed, and insight was offered regarding how to manage and support the complex needs of immigrant and refugee women who have experienced abuse. Some of the needs mentioned were:

- Ensure counselling help
- Ensure appropriate support from a medical doctor
- Ensure a good lawyer who can prepare a well developed history of abuse from childhood
- Public education and training to service providers in the sector

Important points for service providers included:

- Familiarize yourself with resources
- Listen to the needs and concerns
- Make appropriate referrals
- Validate what the abused women says
- Be patient with their conditions: victims need time to adapt to changes that follow migration and gather basic information about their situation
- Respect confidentiality
- Know how to navigate the legal system and how to work with different players when preparing the case for a client
- Prepare a well developed history of abuse – starting from childhood, so that at the hearing you do not look at the credibility of the case but smaller issues
- Arrange for a medical and a psychological assessment for the clients which could be used as evidence at the court for testimony
- Seek procedural accommodation under IRB Guideline 8 and apply for this accommodation
- Request a female interpreter
- Request a female tribunal officer
- Request that the lawyer of the client question the female client first under informal setting
- Submit as much information as possible to limit what the woman will have to testify herself
- Request that few questions be asked of the woman

This workshop - as well as providing important information and guidance for service providers with clients that are newcomer women who are survivors of violence - resulted in various recommendations. This included the proposal that the CCR carry out a gender analysis of Bill C-11. There was considerable support for the CCR's proposed violence against newcomer women initiative, which involves the development of an online space for people across the country to share resources and obtain information on service and legal issues for those serving newcomer women in or getting over situations of violence.

Resource persons:

Rosa Arteaga, Battered Women's Support Services, Vancouver

Rita Acosta, Mouvement contre le viol et l'inceste, Montreal  
Lobat Sadrehashemi, Lawyer, Vancouver

Moderator: Yasmine Dossal

### **Convention on the Rights of the Child: Canada's compliance**

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child will soon examine Canada's compliance with the Convention. This training workshop offered an introduction to the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, highlighting the rights most relevant to the refugee and immigration system, and exploring what the UN process will look like for Canada. The purpose of this session was to share information, educate and stimulate discussion and debate of issues relevant to refugees, particularly refugee children.

The workshop began with an overview of the relevant portions of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, including the sections relevant for refugees, followed by a discussion of where Canada is in terms of implementing the terms of the *Convention* and where we have failed. Then, the international context was examined, with a focus on child refugees, child soldiers and trafficking of children for sexual purposes or cheap labour. Proposed amendments to Canadian law pertaining to refugees and how the detention of children would run contrary to the spirit and letter of the *Convention* was also a topic for examination.

The presenters from the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre and the University of Calgary were able to make contacts with advocates and service providers who work with and on behalf of Canada's refugee and immigrant communities, thus facilitating further information exchange and networking.

Resource persons:

Linda McKay-Panos, Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre  
Maureen Duffy, Law School, University of Calgary

Moderator: Brian Seaman, Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre

### **Prioritizing Affordable, Accessible and Appropriate Housing**

Many organizations across the country have been working hard to address the housing gap that the Federal and Provincial governments left behind in the 1990s, to ensure refugee and immigrant newcomers have safe and affordable shelter. The objective of this session was two-fold: to bring CCR members together in a conversation that will shape a national grassroots housing agenda, and to discuss a few best practices in housing that members can re-interpret to meet local needs and supply issues.

Presenters from Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto described the housing issues in their cities and provinces. Various gaps and needs were identified, and it was emphasized that many housing issues faced by newcomers are also faced by other marginalized communities such as First Nations, low income people and the homeless. A national housing strategy must be part of a broader anti-poverty strategy.

Some problems of housing for refugees associated with the government's Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) were identified:

- People need to be kept in transitional housing longer than the prescribed timeframe as required, and there should be funding to allow for this
- GARs should be shifted to other housing when their RAP time-period is finished

Recommendations resulting from the small group discussions in this session included:

- Canada should look at housing models from other countries to develop a strategy based on best practices
- The CCR should advocate for monthly amounts that GARs receive from the RAP be adequate to meet needs
- The CCR should develop partnerships with other advocacy organizations working on this, to emphasize common issues and have a unified voice in shaping a national grassroots housing agenda
- Housing issues should be presented to both the federal and provincial governments
- Highlight the social costs of lack of housing, e.g. mental health issues, youth criminality, etc.
- A national housing strategy should advocate for rent supplements that include the best interests of children

Resource Persons:

Hani Al-Ubeady, Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council  
Rob Bray, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary  
Michelle Haney-Kileeg, Housing Connections, Toronto

Moderators: Ibrahim Absiye and Wanda Yamamoto

## **Colombia**

This workshop looked at the needs that are specific to Colombian refugees, and showed how groups in Canada can prepare to ease their adaptation and integration when they first arrive in Canada. Drawing on the findings of a recent joint Refugee Council USA/CCR fact-finding mission to Ecuador, Panama and Colombia, the workshop gave an overview of the current security situation in Colombia, as well as profiles of refugees who have been forced into exile and who are in need of resettlement.

Ian McGrath described the situation of Colombian refugees in Northern Ecuador (Sucumbios). Specifically, he explained the enhanced registration process and the impacts of this process on health, security, employment, etc. He identified three challenges related to the process. This presentation was followed by Francisco Rico-Martinez who was on the fact-finding mission, and described the situation of Colombians in Panama which is especially precarious because Panama lacks a functioning asylum system and is perceived as a democratic and safe country even though it is not. Francisco also described the situation in Ecuador, and focused on the need for the Canadian government to extend protection for women who are particularly at risk in these two countries. Statistics on referrals, quotas, and acceptance rates out of Bogotá were also provided. Shauna Labman of UBC was also on the fact-finding mission, and she summarized results of interviews with various Canadian government officials and civil society actors during the mission in Colombia.

Some recommendations that came out of this workshop were:

- The CCR should explore ways it can give input into the Human Rights review that will be taking place under the Canada/Colombia Free Trade Agreement
- The CCR should advocate to encourage the IRB to improve its mechanisms for acquiring information on the current situation in Colombia
- The CCR and its members need to facilitate dissemination of reports to communities sponsoring Colombians in Quebec and around Canada
- Canada should expand protection space for refugees in Ecuador and Panama, including a resettlement program especially for women at risk



Resource persons:

Francisco Rico-Martinez, FCJ Refugee Centre, CCR delegate on fact-finding mission  
Shauna Labman, PhD candidate, Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia, CCR  
delegate on fact-finding mission

Ian McGrath, visiting Fulbright scholar, Institute for the Study of International Migration,  
Georgetown University, Washington DC

Moderator: Moses Moini

## **Debunking myths about Newcomer Youth**

Misconceptions and myths stand in the way of many Canadians understanding what it is like to be a newcomer youth. The CCR Youth Network is working to debunk some of those myths through national strategies and campaigns and in collaboration with member agencies, youth and youth allies across the country.

A number of myths about newcomer youth were determined previous to this workshop via survey conducted by the youth network. These myths included:

- Refugee youth take government money/ get everything for free
- Refugee youth are drug dealers or gang members
- Refugee youth are stupid/uneducated/illiterate
- Refugee youth cannot speak English/French (language barriers)
- Refugee youth can't or don't want to fit in
- Refugee youth came from the jungle
- Jails are filled with "illegal immigrants"
- Immigrants take the jobs
- Refugees are dangerous
- Newcomers are not LGBTQ

This interactive workshop used Forum Theatre to address these myths and to explore possible ways to address them. Workshop participants were divided into small groups and each assigned one Youth Network member and one myth. Together the small groups were tasked to come up with a short skit that illustrated the myth. The groups each took turns presenting their skits to the entire group. Then, the groups presented the same skit again and the audience was invited to shout out "freeze", and at that point to replace any actor other than the aggressor on the stage to demonstrate how they would change the situation, or to tap an actor on the shoulder and ask them "how does being in this situation make you feel?"

The format and methods of the workshop worked very well to produce in-depth discussion about the issues and to illustrate many of the challenges newcomer youth must surmount when faced with these myths.

Facilitators:

Monica Abdelkader, London Cross-Cultural Learner Centre

Steven Rempel, Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, Kitchener