



Canadian Council for Refugees Fall 2016 Consultation
Welcoming Diversity: At the heart of what we do
 November 24-26, 2016, Montreal
 Conference Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees' Fall 2016 Consultation was held November 24-26 at the Marriott Chateau Champlain in Montreal, on the traditional territory of the Mohawk, or Kanien'kehá:ka people. Almost 500 participants from across Canada attended the Consultation, with strong local attendance from Quebec, and delegates from nine out of ten provinces.

The Fall 2016 Consultation provided a space for learning, experience-sharing, networking and strategizing among people involved in refugee protection, the immigrant and refugee serving sector, and refugee resettlement across Canada. The theme for this Consultation was *Welcoming Diversity: At the heart of what we do*, a message with strong resonance for the local organizations in Montreal.

Thirty-six sessions were offered during the three days of the Consultation, consisting of one plenary session, two orientations, one training session, three two-part working group meetings, one strategy session, seventeen workshops, six caucus sessions, a project launch, and an annual general meeting. The program included three to five concurrent sessions in any given time period, apart from the times when participants met in plenary. Workshops focused on immigrant and refugee settlement and integration, refugee resettlement and overseas protection, and inland refugee protection.

The Working Group meetings held on Thursday and Friday gave participants the opportunity to become familiar with the functions and key issues of the working group, and discuss emerging issues and share information, best practices and their own initiatives with others from across Canada. The meetings also offered an opportunity to propose and discuss resolutions to be presented at the General Meeting, and to develop strategies for action to address issues emerging from the discussion.

CCR made a big effort to prioritize bilingualism at this Consultation held in Quebec. Most sessions had a mix of French and English-speaking presenters. Two session rooms were equipped with

simultaneous interpretation on Thursday and Friday, with one having this service on Saturday. Due to budgetary constraints it was impossible to offer simultaneous interpretation in all of the sessions. Sessions without simultaneous interpretation had volunteer translator/note-takers, whose job it was to summarize and translate the main points from presenters and discussions, typing them into notes that were being projected on a screen. This was intended to allow those less conversant in the language being spoken to follow along with what was being said. This is the first time this method has been used at a CCR Consultation, and feedback in participant evaluations was mixed. Overall, people appreciated the effort, but the task is a difficult one, and in some cases the note-takers were unable to keep up.

CCR member organizations and volunteers from Montreal formed a local organizing committee (LOC) to host the event and successfully ensured that logistics were looked after and that a welcoming team of volunteers was ready to respond to the needs of participants. The Consultation was made possible thanks to the time, dedication, and hard work of staff from the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes immigrantes et réfugiées (TCRI), Scalabrini Centre for Migrants and Refugees, Jesuit Refugee Service Canada, Accueil liaison pour arrivants (ALPA), Centre social d'aide aux immigrants (CSAI), Carrefour d'aide aux nouveaux arrivants (CANA), Action Réfugiés Montréal, Comité d'aide aux réfugiés, Relais communautaire de Laval and others, and the team of dynamic and helpful volunteers they recruited. The LOC organized a successful social event on the Thursday evening, when participants enjoyed a cocktail reception.

At this Consultation, the CCR benefited from the in-kind contributions of Scalabrini Centre for Migrants and Refugees, Jesuit Refugee Service Canada, Accueil liaison pour arrivants (ALPA), Centre social d'aide aux immigrants (CSAI), Carrefour d'aide aux nouveaux arrivants (CANA), Action Réfugiés Montréal, Centre d'appui aux communautés immigrantes (CACI), Catholic Diocese of Montreal, La Maisonnée, Horizon Carrière, Clef pour l'intégration au travail des immigrants (CITIM), GCS Technologie, Œuvres Marie-Anne-Lavallée (OMAL), Nabih Nasir and Yousef Tarbouch.

The CCR gratefully acknowledges financial support for the Consultation from Canadian Heritage, the Bureau d'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à Montréal (City of Montreal), Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion du Québec, the Oppenheimer Chair in Public International Law, Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association (AQAADI), David Birnbaum, MNA – D'Arcy-McGee, Groupe d'action-réflexion pour la diversité des quartiers accueillants, Marc Miller, MP for Ville-Marie - Le Sud-Ouest - Île-des-Sœurs, McGill School of Social Work and an anonymous donor.

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 refugee protection and newcomer settlement sector have been identified.

Racism

In the wake of the U.S. elections and the resulting increase in hate crimes and openly racist rhetoric that seem to have spread to Canada, it has been identified as crucial that CCR and its members take action to spread positive messages that counter xenophobia and Islamophobia. In discussions at the Consultation, participants identified the need for grassroots community-based anti-racism campaigns, as well as leadership from government on messaging and campaigning against hate.

Addressing issues of poverty

Poverty is a current priority issue, especially with the recent influx of Syrian refugees, many of whom need social assistance while they dedicate themselves to language-learning and job-seeking. Challenges such as housing, which is unaffordable in many larger cities, exacerbate the situation and make it more difficult for families to get by on RAP or social assistance. Newly arrived refugee claimants sometimes face delays in getting access to social assistance, and the lack of affordable housing adds to the pressures on the limited number of refugee shelter spaces. Resettled refugees also face the financial burden of transportation loans which makes it harder to move forward and integrate, and challenges around employment contribute to the racialization of poverty.

Promoting equity in settlement and resettlement responses to refugees

The outpouring in public support, good will and volunteerism that came in response to the Syrian refugee crisis has been exciting and invigorating. However, it is important that refugees from other countries who are in need of services and programming not be side-lined by the recent focus on Syria. CCR participants highlighted the need to cast a critical eye on any funding envelope or donations that are earmarked only for Syrian refugees, since refugees from around the world are in need of the same of active promotion of equity in the welcoming of refugees from various regions to Canada. Similarly, government, sponsors and media should to treat in a more equitable manner the numerous crises around the world, many of which appear largely forgotten (such as Burundi, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Yemen).

Information needs for private sponsors

The emergence of large numbers of new private sponsors has expanded the need for clear and accessible information, both in relation to the technical aspects of private sponsorship and with regard to settlement. Participants shared information about the many initiatives across the country to provide such information and connect private sponsors with settlement services.

Family reunification

Family reunification remains a pressing concern for CCR members. The increase in the number of resettled refugees implies an increased “echo effect”, meaning that many of those resettled hope to be reunited with members of their family in Canada. The focus of the government on speeding up processing of Family Class Spousal Sponsorship cases highlights the lack of progress on other kinds of family reunification: one-year window processing for immediate family of resettled refugees, dependents abroad of refugees accepted in Canada (DR2s) and family members of Live-in Caregivers.

Global context and Canada's evolving response

Around the world, the number of displaced persons has grown dramatically, at the same time as borders and hearts are closing in many regions of the world. The Canadian context will be particularly affected by the incoming US administration. Canada's future response to refugees is partially determined by the recently published immigration levels for 2017, which show that there will be enormous pressure on the limited number of spaces available for refugees, in relation to the numbers of applications in process, as well as the number of interested sponsors. The increasing number of refugee claims in 2016, with the prospect of additional increases in 2017, along with expected legislative changes to the refugee determination system mean that there are many questions about what to expect in the coming months.



III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARIES

Some presentations are available online for CCR members at ccrweb.ca/en/fall-2016-presentations

Opening plenary

The opening plenary featured a keynote presentation by Johannes van der Klaauw, interim representative in Canada of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He provided an overview of the world situation for refugees and highlighted Canada's role. His presentation is available online.

Resource persons:

Loly Rico, CCR President

Johannes van der Klaauw, UNHCR Representative *ad interim* to Canada

Moderators: Hicham Khanafer and Claudine Uwingabiye

Closing plenary and Annual General Meeting

The consultation closed with the Annual General Meeting, including discussion and approval of resolutions. Kathleen Weil, Quebec Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion, gave closing remarks, while Bochra Manaï, researcher, teacher, and concerned citizen, provided reflections about the importance of individual acts of humanity and resistance.

Co-chairs: Rick Goldman and Loly Rico



IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Note: many of the presentations from the workshops are available to CCR members online at ccrweb.ca/en/fall-2016-presentations.

Syrian Refugees: Lessons Learned II

This session aimed to bring together community members from different backgrounds and regions to share their perspectives on the recent Syrian refugee resettlement program, with the goal of improving current and future programs. Two of the presenters were themselves Syrian refugees. Speakers gave their perspectives, and then participants divided into groups to discuss challenges and best practices.

Some of the key challenges identified were:

- Family reunification wait times (the journey is not complete and people can't really begin to settle until they are reunited with the rest of their family)
- Redefining the definition of family to include siblings, etc.
- Sponsorship wait times, now at 2-3 years
- Syrian Kurdish refugee process taking longer
- Sponsorship breakdown
 - System does not have safety net either for sponsors or families to rely on.
 - Sponsor rights are structurally ambiguous and processes are not clear
- Paperwork mistakes: spelling and information on landing documents

Some recommendations coming out of group discussions were:

- HOST program to be reinstated
- IRCC to take in more refugees
- Processing times to be expedited to keep public support going
- Canada as a whole responded to the Syrian crisis, so it should act in the same way for other refugees, particularly those in Dadaab.

Participants from Moose Jaw noted that their resettlement experience has been a success as the whole community has come together to assist in the settlement process.

Resource persons:

Mounir Nasri, Agincourt Community Services Association, Toronto

Avo Kazandjian, Privately sponsored Syrian refugee youth, Montreal

Huda Bukhari, Arab Community Centre, Toronto

Moderators: Nayiri Tavlian and Ibrahim Absiye

Introduction to human trafficking and collaborating with human rights allies

A rights-based approach to human trafficking considers that vulnerable communities such as migrants, those without status, and women may be in situations where human rights are breached across a continuum of exploitation. Through hands-on interactive activities, the objectives of this workshop were to debunk myths about what is human trafficking, raise awareness about the continuum of exploitation, promote a survivor-centred approach to service provision, and encourage collaboration between different actors working to protect human rights.

The workshop was divided into two parts. In the first part, Walter Tom presented the spectrum of exploitation and legislative remedies available at each level of exploitation (for example: employment standards, human rights legislation, and criminal code). Joey Calugay presented the case of 15 migrant workers from Guatemala who were labour trafficked but ended up being placed in detention as undocumented workers. The Immigrant Workers Centre in Montreal mobilized quickly using legal and media advocacy to secure the workers' release from detention. In the last presentation, Shelley Gilbert reviewed the principles of trauma-informed practice and how to apply those principles when providing service to trafficked persons or people facing other types of exploitation.

Shelley Gilbert also introduced and facilitated the second part of the workshop, inviting participants into small groups to discuss scenarios of potential exploitation. Participants were asked to reflect on how they would apply the principles of trauma-informed practice in their particular scenario. They were also asked to attempt to identify where their scenario falls along the spectrum of exploitation. Melissa Hyland of the Wakata'kari:te Resiliency Rising Society was a resource person for one of the discussion groups.

For the benefit of the larger group, each group was prompted for feedback on their discussion – how did they approach their scenario, were they able to identify the exploitation along the spectrum? Time constraints cut the second part of the workshop short, however, overall participants agreed that it was a useful and complex problem-solving exercise and appreciated the overview of the exploitation spectrum and corresponding legal remedies. Some participants were interested in hearing more about gender-specific exploitation, and there was an overall interest in follow-up workshops.

Resource persons:

Walter Chi-Yan-Tom, Concordia Student Union Legal Clinic/Pinay, Montreal

Joey Calugay, Immigrant Workers Centre, Montreal

Shelley Gilbert, Legal Assistance of Windsor

Moderators: Jill Hanley and Varka Kalaydzhieva

Promoting refugee protection internationally

Over the next two years, States will be developing global compacts on refugees and migrants. At a time when Canada is taking on a renewed role of leadership on refugees internationally, this workshop aimed to explore opportunities for refugee advocates to be involved in international efforts to protect the rights of refugees and other vulnerable migrants.

Presenters spoke about the ways in which responsibility sharing has been discussed at the UN for the past 35 years, and how achievements have been limited. Although the global refugee crisis is not new, it is currently at a critical point, with 65 million displaced people around the world. The crisis in Europe has brought the issue to the fore as never before.

While it has flaws, the New York Declaration is considered the most important document for refugee protection after the 1951 document. However, it provides no detailed plan to tackle the international refugee problem. The main gaps in the Declaration are seen as being the North-South divide, and the lack of funding for host countries with large numbers of refugees.

It was noted that Canada's record for bringing in privately sponsored refugees is good, and that Canada is becoming a global leader in refugee protection. It was suggested that the global response must be reenergized for a more holistic and equitable approach including through mediation and

conflict resolution. It is also important to take a win-win approach, recognizing the positive outcomes for Canada in terms of economic and cultural gains as a result of accepting refugees and migrants.

Resource persons:

Jennifer Bond, University of Ottawa

Jessie Thompson, Care Canada

Heather Jeffrey, Global Affairs Canada

Moderators: Sharmarke Mohamed and Fikre Tsehai

Lives on Hold Revisited: A new look at regularization

This workshop looked at past regularization programs and explored elements that should be part of any new regularization proposals, for the many people in Canada without immigration status.

Delphine Nakache provided an overview of the numerous regularization programs that the Canadian government has instituted over the past several decades. Participants learned:

- There have been many initiatives attempting to solve intractable situations of limbo. A new approach would be an extension of a long history of such initiatives, and should also benefit from lessons learned.
- Past regularization programs were often extremely specific, either in the eligibility criteria, or the timeframes for availment of the program, or both.
- “Illegality” is too often created by the imposition of rules (closed work permits, conditional permanent residence, 4 x 4 rule) or by a too-specific regularization program (which necessarily excludes, and creates new “illegality”)

Penelope Boudreault spoke about her experience as a street nurse at the Médecins du Monde health clinic for uninsured persons. She described some significant trends, including a significantly increased demand for care from persons with no or precarious status, such as:

- Lack of prenatal care for pregnant women of children who will be Canadian citizens. This is sometimes seen among those with temporary status (students, work permit holders); sponsored spouses during the 2+ year wait for permanent resident status
- Older persons with no or precarious status who develop chronic health problems that their precarity makes very difficult to treat
- A significant number of patients have nowhere else to go.

Francisco Rico presented the FCJ Refugee Centre’s proposal for an inland regularization class, which is marked by:

- A low threshold to access, for instance by way of an online portal where clients can fairly quickly determine whether they would be eligible (no fee at this stage; set criteria to meet such as a minimum period of time in Canada; education or employment for 6+ months; evidence of community engagement). Similar to Express Entry, those eligible could then be invited to apply and pay a fee.
- Equitable access to the program, erring on the side of a broad-based program, open to the following:
 - Legacy and backlog refugee claimants, whose cases have been pending for a number of years
 - Consideration of *de facto residency* for long-term residents of Canada

- Consideration of an application in process but pending for a year or more
- Class should allow for concurrent processing of immediate family members.

This workshop served as a forum for presentation and discussion of what CCR should recommend with regards to regularization. Following the presentations participants were invited to comment and brainstorm on the way forward. Some key points were raised:

- Family reunification of spouses and children needs to be a cornerstone of whatever is proposed
- A broad and equitable program is preferred
- Protections should be provided for those brave enough to step forward (i.e. ability of a third party to make the initial inquiry)
- Courts are increasingly recognizing the importance of the *Best Interests of the Child*. Whatever the CCR proposes should consider building on those recent successes (*Kanthasamy, B.B*)
- The CCR needs to be aware of the “tsunami” or “pull factor” narrative that will no doubt meet a broad regularization program, so we should craft a proposal with that reality in mind.

Two possible action items were proposed:

1. Review the detention/removal regime and recommend that it be amended to ensure it does not act at odds from any regularization program (i.e. s. 48(2) of IRPA says that a removal order must be enforced “as soon as possible”)
2. Identify and lobby MPs, academics, and journalists who benefited from past regularization programs.

Resource persons:

Delphine Nakache, University of Ottawa

Penelope Boudreault, Médecins du Monde health clinic, Montreal

Francisco Rico-Martinez, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto

Moderators: Rita Acosta and Jennie Stone

Sharing Best Partnership Practices in Building Welcoming Communities

This workshop showcased best practices where settlement agencies, community organizations and volunteers worked together to welcome and support refugees in their new communities.

Audrey Mailloux spoke about her organization’s information sessions for refugee claimants, which aim to provide information and resources to an otherwise underserved population in Montreal. Mirna El Sabbagh spoke of COSTI’s twinning program between Torontonians and Syrian families living in the same neighbourhood, and the partnerships that have helped carry out this program. Abdikheir Ahmed talked about Winnipeg’s Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and its work to come up with its own definition of a welcoming community, as well as the public education tools they have developed.

Testimony from Josué Loubondo on his experience as a refugee claimant in Montreal raised some points for follow-up:

- Delays in obtaining work permit when the application is not made online
- Exorbitant housing costs in many larger cities

Resource persons:

Josué Loubondo, recently arrived refugee from Congo-Brazzaville
Abdikheir Ahmed, Social Planning Council, Winnipeg
Audrey Mailloux, Carrefour d'aide aux nouveaux arrivants, Montreal
Mirna El Sabbagh, COSTI Immigrant Services, Toronto

Moderators: Florence Bourdeau and Ese Ejebe

Accessing Services for Precarious Migrant Youth

In theory, society is constituted by its individuals. What happens when the practise shows its access is denied to those with a precarious status? For precarious migrant youth, getting access to the job market, health care, education, and other social, economic or legal services directly intersects with their immigration status. This workshop explored that intersection through two newcomer youths' experiences. Non-youth were encouraged to attend this workshop but they were asked to give priority to participation from youth participants.

Lynda Haddoud presented in French and talk about her arrival to Quebec and the system of “classes d'accueil” (classes where newcomer students learn the language and prepare to be integrated into mainstream schooling) as experienced by her brother. She addressed the issue of systemic racism in Quebec and the need for a commission to examine the problem, explaining the importance of political institutions as a channel to have your voice heard. She posited that Quebec society values youth involvement in that arena and that it for her it has been the way to feel she could effect change and have an advocacy platform. She finished by encouraging the youth present to take action through political opportunities because, unfortunately, newcomer youth is not well represented in the provincial and municipal political arena.

Sizwe-Alexander Inkingi talked about the importance of creating and advocating for positive and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ newcomer youth. He contextualized the kinds of situation from which many LGBTQ+ newcomer youth have come, and the discrimination they still encounter here, due to stigmas and prejudice. Through OCASI's Positive Space initiative, Sizwe advocates and offers trainings to support member organizations and service providers in serving their clients with dignity and respect while celebrating the rich gender and sexual diversity that exists within their communities.

There was considerable interest in OCASI'S positive spaces initiative, with participants wanting to know how to implement it in practical terms, and suggesting a webinar or other advocacy tools for those who are not OCASI members.

Resource persons:

Lynda Haddoud, Association des Musulmans et des Arabes pour la Laïcité au Québec, Montreal
Sizwe Alexandre Inkingi, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Toronto

Moderators: Maria Alejandra Ramirez Bolaño and François Régis Dushimiyimana
Forgotten Refugee Crises

This workshop provided an overview of the old and new global crises that are less covered in the media, and an opportunity for panelists and participants to engage in discussion about the possible contributions Canada or other actors could make towards solutions to these crises.

Presenters discussed causes and possible solutions to refugee crises in Sub-Saharan Africa and other regions hosting longstanding refugee populations from an academic point of view. Root causes of displacement were discussed: the need to address these root causes was emphasized. The issue of inequity in funding certain refugee populations was also looked at from the human rights point of view.

For the future, participants suggested that the theme of forgotten refugee crises be kept on the program for the next two Consultations. It was also suggested that CCR look into issues relating to the illicit arms trade and press for an end to funding of governments that are at the root of the refugee crisis.

Resource persons:

Johannes Van Der Klaauw, UNHCR Representative in Canada

Kyle Matthews, Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights

Dr. Emile Ouedrago, UQAM

Moderators: Michelle Millard and Gilbert Iyamuremye

Ethical Guidelines for research on refugees

This workshop offered participants the opportunity to comment on and further develop draft guidelines for ethical research with people in situations of forced migration. This project is a partnership between CCR, York University, UNHCR and the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies.

Participants brought their experience on the ground, as persons who have been displaced or as individuals working with displaced people. Small groups discussed different sections of the proposed guidelines and suggestions for word changes and additions were proposed.

There was a call for coordinated action on non-academic research (for example, research undertaken within settlement organizations for evaluation purposes), and a suggestion to create a plain-language summary of rights and basic ethical guidelines for research respondents.

Moderators: John Dubé and Christina Clark-Kazak

Refugees Welcome Here: Welcoming Communities

This workshop was designed to exchange lessons learned and effective methods to promote positive attitudes, collaboration and intercultural understanding in efforts to make Canada more just and welcoming host society for refugees. After inviting speakers to reflect on their work and the resources they employ to achieve similar goals, workshop participants were invited to discuss strategies and potential collaboration to promote and achieve positive policy changes in anticipation of Refugee Rights Day (April 4th) 2017. This included the discussion and employment of materials developed over the last year from the CCR/Amnistie Canada Francophone/Amnesty Canada's Refugees Welcome Here! Campaign.

During the breakout sessions, participants divided into geographical areas, with the intention that participants would connect with one another and find opportunities to collaborate towards Refugee Rights Day 2017.

Participants had access to an annotated bibliography prepared by John Carlaw: this was well received.

Resource persons:

Daisy Boustany, Espace Nodal – Culture, Montreal

Colette Lelièvre, Amnistie Canada Francophone, Montreal

Mitch Goldberg, Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, Montreal

Moderators: Aditya Rao and Marie-Claire Rufagari

LGBT Refugees

This workshop focused on refugee decisions related to persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It highlighted refugee, community and IRB perspectives on the IRB Chairperson's forthcoming Guideline 9 on proceedings involving sexual and gender minority individuals.

Greg Kipling opened the session by presenting the draft of the IRB's new guidelines on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), as well as the feedback from various stakeholders that the IRB is currently considering. He explained that the goal of the guidelines is to help decision-makers make better decisions within various sections of the IRB. They have been developed based on various information sources: past training materials, jurisprudence, other countries' practices, results of surveys with stakeholders inside and outside the IRB. Among the issues addressed are how to address sexual and gender minority claimants, protecting their information, avoiding stereotypes, the risks that they may face and the intersectionality of these risks. The feedback that the IRB is considering from the consultation process includes modifications to language, a stronger intersectional analysis, further analysis of risks based on the transgression of gender norms rather than identity, better taking into account the impacts of trauma on the ability to testify, and better taking into account difficulties that claimants may face in gathering documentary evidence and the guidelines' lack of focus on detention reviews. He also affirmed the IRB's commitment to providing adequate training on the guidelines while mentioning that the institution will be looking to stakeholders for support in developing these trainings. Finally, he stated that the IRB will be conducting an assessment of the application of the guidelines.

Sofiane Chouiter spoke on behalf of AGIR and as an LGBTQ refugee. He explained that AGIR is a volunteer-run community organization that supports approximately 40 sexual and gender minority migrants from different countries every year, the majority of whom are refugee claimants. He described the support work of the organization which consists mainly of individual follow ups focused on active listening, providing information on the immigration system, making referrals and accompaniments to various services, writing letters of support for immigration processes and organizing group support focused on mutual aid, all with an anti-oppressive approach. He explained the challenges faced by LGBTQ claimants, who often don't have the means to obtain a travel visa due to various forms of exclusion and having to resort to irregular means of travel in order to reach Canadian shores. He has supported claimants who were detained for several months in immigration detention for identity reasons, which he sees as a deterrence method by Canada against migrants. He stated that AGIR is pleased with the publication of the guidelines, but that they would like to see some improvements, including a stronger focus on detention, which is a hostile prison environment for sexual and gender minorities.

Sharalyn Jordan spoke on behalf of Rainbow Refugee Committee and as a professor in counseling psychology at Simon Fraser University. She explained that violence against sexual and gender minorities often starts within the family, and that while the organization is pleased with the guidelines' recognition of this reality, they advocate for a stronger trauma-informed approach within the guidelines, as well as a stronger understanding of how internalized shame may impact one's ability to gather evidence. The organization would also like to see a stronger emphasis on the difficulties claimants may face in testifying through an interpreter on the topic of sexual orientation and gender identity, and on the necessity of providing adequate training to interpreters. She explained that while they are pleased that the guidelines recognize the importance of avoiding stereotypes, they continue to perpetuate the western stage-model of identity development or "coming out process" through the questions that they suggest to decision-makers. The guidelines must be accompanied with adequate training in order to truly avoid stereotypes. The organization would also like to see examples of how to incorporate an intersectional analysis. Finally, the guidelines must take into consideration that claimants also face multiple oppressions in Canada, and that these lead to several psychosocial barriers which impact their ability to prepare for their hearing.

During discussion, additional points were raised:

- Importance of training not only IRB members but also lawyers and settlement workers (who often encourage claimants to perpetuate stereotypes), and of incorporating sexual and gender minority claimants' voice in this process;
- Difficulty in identifying "when did you realize that you were gay?" and how Board Members should stop asking that question;
- The heterosexism of the IRB's forms, and how upcoming changes to the BOC (i.e. having to describe travels during a longer period of time) may impact sexual and gender minorities who may have been on the run since adolescence;
- Current timelines further impact LGBTQ claimants' ability to prepare for their hearing;
- The impact of detention on claimants' confidence and trust in judges during the hearing, and the necessity to push for the adoption of guidelines by the CBSA;
- PRRA officers should also be trained;
- UNHCR refugees are often living in unsafe conditions abroad and a request that the IRB advocate on their behalf.

One resolution stemming from this workshop was passed at the AGM. CCR awaits the final guideline and looks forward to supporting the IRB with the trainings.

Resource persons:

Sharalyn Jordan, Rainbow Refugee, Vancouver, BC

Sofiane Chouiter, AGIR member, Montreal

Greg Kipling, Director General, Immigration and Refugee

Moderators: Cynthia Beudry and Eunice Valenzuela

Addressing Newcomer Mental Health in Settlement

This workshop explored promising practices in promoting the mental well-being of newcomers in non-clinical settings such as settlement and community organizations. Participants heard from presenters discussing specific programs they are involved in, and had a chance to share their experiences and perspectives. Additional resources and training opportunities were also shared.

Michelle Strain gave an overview of services, programs and provincial initiatives in Manitoba to support the mental health of newcomer families with a focus on community connections as part of mental well-being. John Docherty focused on the psycho-social support provided by his organization – RIVO – with an emphasis on rebuilding clients’ lives by bringing back their sense of belonging and autonomy by attending to their needs. Gilam Abdelaal talked about the COSTI Family Mental Health Support Services, focusing on support to individual clients via crisis interventions, case management, workshops and a collaborative approach between services.

All the presenters stressed the need for self-care and psycho-support for settlement workers along with the traumatized population they serve.

Several issues and challenges were brought up by participants during the discussion period, including:

- Challenges on how to access support for clients, especially for children;
- How to assess clients if one is not a psychologist;
- Challenges in using proper terminology re: refugee mental health stage and recognizing and addressing vicarious trauma in workers;
- What training is available for staff who deal with these clients?

One suggestion that came up was to have virtual meetings for support between agencies and especially for smaller centres without specialized psycho-social support in their area.

Resource persons:

Michelle Strain, Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations

John Docherty, Réseau d'intervention auprès des personnes ayant subi la violence organisée (RIVO),
Montreal

Gilam Abdelaal, COSTI Immigrant Services, Toronto

Moderators: Marta Kalita and Hicham Khanafer

Equity in Resettlement: A Discussion

The workshop explored the notion of “equity” in the context of resettlement. Among the issues covered were the impacts of xenophobia in Quebec, including implications for migrant workers; various factors that undermine equitable treatment of refugees in places such as Cairo; and criteria used by the UNHCR to decide who will be referred for resettlement.

Resource persons:

Michael Casasola, UNHCR

Mutatayi Fuamba, CCR Youth Network

Sharmarke Mohamed, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

Moderators: Mary Purkey and Sylvain Thibault

Private Sponsorship: Quebec and Canada

The workshop covered differences and similarities between the refugee sponsorship programs available in Quebec and in the rest of Canada, including the program options and how sponsoring groups are organizing and exchanging information.

In Quebec, the role of the Quebec government was discussed with regards to the evaluation of sponsors and initial processing of applications. Challenges faced in the program were discussed, including a large increase in applications submitted between 2011 and 2016. Quebec sponsoring organizations have recently organized into an association to improve dialogue with the government and other stakeholders.

In the rest of Canada, the RSTP discussed the support they offer to sponsoring groups and challenges of different program options. The evolution of the SAH association was discussed, including their structure, their advocacy work on behalf of SAHs, and some regional organizing that is happening among sponsoring groups.

Participants broke into smaller groups for discussion, and some key points were brought forward:

- IRCC and MIDI should coordinate announcements so it is clear when new projects or regulations are announced, how they will or will not affect Quebec.
- Encourage MIDI to offer funding to RSTP so that they are able to offer content-specific information, or for MIDI to create an equivalent training body.
- Encourage groups sponsoring through the G5 or G2-5 options to better connect with settlement resources and more established groups.

Resource persons:

Tihana Majcen, Quebec Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion (MIDI)

Sylvain Thibault, Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, Montreal

Brian Dyck, Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

Melissa Scott, Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

Moderators: Jim Mair and Dina Yaziji

Identifying and Confronting Systemic Racism in Newcomer Settlement

This workshop was aimed at frontline workers who want to know what they can do about racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of oppression within the newcomer settlement process. It was facilitated by two members of the Hoodstock Collective, who presented on the mechanisms of systemic racism in order to offer food for thought and some solutions for front-line settlement workers. The presenters addressed the ways that systemic racism manifests during the settlement process of newcomers to Quebec, offering examples of systemic oppression in Montreal. Amel Zaazaa introduced a variety of anti-oppression terms to participants, and Will Prosper shared his experiences mobilizing against anti-black racism in Montreal North.

Resource persons:

Amelia Zaazaa and Will Prosper, Hoodstock, Montreal

Moderators: Sizwe Alexandre Inkingi and Juliana Cortes Lugo

Current Issues in Immigration Detention

Major developments are occurring in the area of immigration detention in Canada. This workshop offered analysis of current problems as well as proposed reforms being considered by Canada Border Services Agency.

Hanna Gros gave an overview of the International Human Rights Program's recent report, "No Life for a Child: A Roadmap to End Immigration Detention of Children and Family Separation".

Allison Rhoades reported on the BB case, involving a Canadian citizen child who spent 13 months in immigration detention in Toronto accompanying her mother. The case concerned the legal question of whether the detrimental effects of detention on the child could be considered as a factor in decisions to detain or release her mother. The litigation resulted in a settlement being reached and an order was granted by Justice Hughes in August 2016. The order confirms that the

Immigration Division can consider the interests of a child who is a "guest" at an immigration holding centre.

Carl Desmarais reviewed the work that CBSA is doing in relation to immigration policy. There are commitments to improve the detention infrastructure and they are looking to rely less on correctional facilities. There are plans for a Vancouver facility by December 2018. CBSA is also developing alternatives to detention, which should be in place across the country by 2018. Other areas of focus are children (they want to detain fewer children, and if they are detained, house them in family centres), and providing better mental health support for detainees.

In discussion, participants emphasized the need for training for officers and guards. Regarding alternatives to detention, Carl clarified that CBSA is hoping to have community-based solutions, involving organizations with different specializations (e.g. housing). They don't necessarily want to contract with lots of organizations, but recognize that there won't be a single solution for the whole country. The safety and rights of LBGTIQ individuals were highlighted. Participants were encouraged to provide case examples which CBSA can use to test the adequacy of their policies. The IRB noted that they are working on revising their detention guideline.

Resource persons:

Hanna Gros, International Human Rights Program, University of Toronto
Allison Rhoades, Refugee Law Office, Toronto
Carl Desmarais, Canada Border Services Agency

Moderators: Guillaume Cliche-Rivard and Debbie Hill-Corrigan

Dialogue with Government

This session was an opportunity to hear from and ask questions of two government representatives representing senior levels of the Immigration and Refugee Board and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (refugee resettlement division).

Ross Pattee presented on behalf of the IRB Chairperson, Mario Dion, who had to withdraw shortly before the consultation. The two government representatives made presentations and then took questions.

In the discussion on inland claims, the focus was on legacy cases (claims made prior to 2012 and not yet heard by the IRB) and the issue of regularization. Possible solutions for these cases are currently under discussion by the government. Fast-tracking is still in place for Syrians and Iraqis, while designation of Eritreans is underway. The IRB strives to render quality, fair decisions in a timely manner, while fostering an adaptive and flexible organization. There is an acknowledgement that the high number of legacy cases and backlog at the Refugee Appeals Division are unacceptable. Participants mentioned several challenges around interpreters, last-minute cancellations, scheduling hearings for people in detention, long delays for legacy cases, and a high level of interventions by the Minister in the West.

Focus in the discussion on resettlement was on lessons learned and insights from the large Syrian movement in 2015/2016. There is a relatively high number of PSR landings targeted for 2017 due to the record number of PSR applications submitted in 2015/2016. However the principle of additionality is compromised due to the high PSR inventory. The objective is program efficiency and good outcomes. The BVOR program has been a mixed experience and the resulting need for replacement cases slowed the system. There is a demand from other nations to learn from Canada and set up their own program.

Priority areas guiding IRCC's work:

- Build leadership - tell story, help influence other countries. UNHCR/Canada/Open Society Foundations initiative.
- Continue work with UNHCR – refresh multi-year commitments.
- Inventory management of PSR program – math problem: more intake than output.
- Look at Resettlement Assistance Program and take learning and evaluation findings into account.

Participants mentioned several challenges around refugees in inaccessible areas (e.g., Syrians in Kurdistan): still long processing times, family reunification, relationship of settlement funding to landing levels, refoulement and expulsion of refugees from country of first asylum to another asylum country, future of Dadaab and the role of Canadian Resettlement Program.

Two key suggestions were recorded from participants during the discussion period:

- Advocate for re-instating availability of statistics on legacy cases separate from new cases.
- Re-consider old system that allowed for expedited process through a one-hour interview with an officer.

Resource persons:

Ross Pattee, Executive Director, Immigration and Refugee Board
Jean-Marc Gionet, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Moderators: Loly Rico and Sabine Lehr

Introduction to Trauma-informed Care for Settlement

Trauma informed care is an approach individuals and organizations can use when working with people who have experienced trauma, in a way that is safe and supportive of healing. It is a strengths-based perspective that facilitates resilience without involving trauma treatment, and can thus be used by any service provider. This workshop explored the concept of Trauma Informed Care as it pertains to newcomers to Canada, and provided resources to guide personal and organizational change.

Dr. Black covered PTSD symptomology, which resonated with participants, as well as specific recommendations (choice – voice-control) for practice that is trauma-informed. Several participants discussed personal experiences with Dr. Black after the presentation, highlighting the potential value of a future session on vicarious trauma and self-care.

Resource person:
Timothy Black, University of Victoria

Moderators: Sue Grafe and Sizwe Alexandre Inkingi

Challenges in Accessing Education for Precarious Status Children and Youth: Sharing Strategies and Building Response

This workshop explored access to and equitable participation in primary and secondary schools for precarious and non-status youth in Ontario and Quebec. Four groups participated in the workshop – three from Quebec and one from Ontario, and facilitated a dialogue around challenges and responses that were emerging for students within this context.

The FCJ Refugee Centre from Toronto presented on a participatory research project that members of their youth network had undertaken last year to share the negative experiences that non-status and precarious status youth were facing in Ontario high schools. This presentation not only highlighted some ongoing issues, but also how the report has been successful in igniting some degree of positive change. The speaker from the Protecteur du Citoyen mentioned a 2014 report “Make public education available to all children with precarious immigration status”. This presentation drew some parallels and contrasts between the Ontario and Quebec contexts, and specifically how any approach needs to take into account the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Solidarity Across Borders, also from Quebec, spoke about the particular challenges the community faces navigating school systems without immigration status. Finally, the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes spoke about their approach to building relationships with actors within the system. The conclusion of the workshop was that all newcomer children and youth should be in school regardless of immigration status. Advocacy efforts were highlighted to facilitate collective strategizing for increased access.

Resource persons:
Philip Ackerman and Julia Salmon, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto
Steve Baird, Education collective of Solidarity Across Borders, Montreal
Marie-Claude Ladouceur, Protecteur du Citoyen, Montreal
Sylvie Guyon, Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes immigrantes et réfugiées, Montreal

Moderators: Abdou Mahamat and Juliana Cortes

V. CAUCUS SESSIONS

Migrant Workers

This session offered an opportunity for those working on migrant worker issues to come together to exchange experiences and strategies, as well as discussing priorities for the CCR campaign for migrant worker rights.

Attendance included members of the CCR subcommittee on migrant workers as well as other interested people, some of whom are getting involved because they are seeing increasing numbers of migrant workers in their front-line work.

A variety of issues was discussed, including recruitment fees, health and safety, undocumented workers and housing issues. Some of the priority issues for action included:

- Supporting calls for regularizations
- Holding forums on migrant worker issues in Edmonton (May 2017) and/or Niagara (November 2017)
- Ending recruitment fees being charged to workers
- Engaging embassies of country of origin
- Ensuring migrant workers are part of the conversation

In order to increase the engagement between the subcommittee and the Immigration and Settlement Working Group, it was proposed that updates on subcommittee activities should always be given during working group meetings and during the CCR general meetings.

Facilitators: Esel Panlaqui and Jill Hanley

Immigration levels for resettled refugees

This caucus session offered the opportunity to look at resettlement numbers (both GARs and PSRs), including considering the impact of increased Quebec private sponsorship applications

Participants shared their reactions and concerns to the immigration levels announcements for refugees in 2017:

GARs

- The decrease in the level does not reflect the global refugee situation, where numbers are increasing, not decreasing – the crisis is not over.
- It is inconsistent with Canada's international promotion of responsiveness to refugees, at a time when it is especially important that Canada serve as a model.
- Responsibility for resettlement is shifted to private sponsors and thus contravenes the principle of additionality.
- Concern about the historical allocation of spots from different regions, with low numbers for sub-Saharan Africa, perpetuating a systemic racial bias in the resettlement program.
- Belies the impression that we are in a new day for Canada's response to refugees.

BVOR:

- BVOR sponsors are left frustrated, waiting to be matched with BVOR cases, at a time when there is still significant interest in BVOR sponsorship.

PSRs:

- Barrier to family reunification in light of the echo effect.
- Does not help eliminate the increasing inventories at visa offices overseas, increasing (relative) wait times.

The discussion resulted in a variety of priorities for advocacy with the government:

- Continue to recommend 20,000 GARs annually.
- Request details of levels plan by visa post for the different categories (GARs, BVORs and PSRs):
 - Per-mission breakdowns of “inventories” (backlogs) over time.
 - Details for Quebec, as well as for federal.
- Special programs for refugee family reunification – it was done post-Haiti earthquake and in other situations.
- Consider other special measures that can be taken (e.g. Ministerial Permits in the days of the El Salvador migration).
- Announce levels and attribute the necessary resources and strategies overseas that will reduce the impact of backlogs in particular missions.
- Canada should respond to other situations where people need protection (e.g. Central American triangle).
- A strategy for inventory (backlog) reduction that won't involve a decreased response to refugee resettlement.
- Clarify what the Yazidi program will be and where it will fit in the levels numbers.

Action requests for the CCR membership and allies:

- Participate in #refugeeswelcomehere campaign
- Meet with MPs to raise our concerns
- Focus on Refugee Rights Day

Facilitators: Rob Shropshire and Paul Clarke

Security inadmissibility

Some people are inadmissible to Canada, and ineligible to make a refugee claim, simply because they members of a certain organization. This session looked into the problem, reviewed a number of case examples and explored avenues to address this problem, through advocacy or litigation. Many participants agreed that the law needs to be changed, as the definition of security inadmissibility is much too broad and the officers who make these complex decisions lack the necessary level of expertise. There was discussion about public interest in this issue, and whether it is possible to mount a successful campaign. It was noted that once people hear about the realities, particularly how they affect individuals, they are shocked and are likely to support change.

The CCR is developing materials to explain the problem and support advocacy work. Anyone with case examples that they can provide is asked to send an email to security@ccrweb.ca.

Facilitators: Claire Roque and Rick Goldman

VI. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

We received 34 evaluations from consultation participants. Feedback was overall quite positive, but there was also constructive criticism and plenty of suggestions of how to improve things.

As always, participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to network with others from across the country who are working on similar issues. Participants highlighted a variety of aspects of the Consultation content as particularly positive, such as the timely workshop topics, up-to-date information and wide variety of panels and information. Other standout characteristics included the broad pan-Canadian approach, the diversity of participants, the open and inclusive atmosphere, and the opportunities to dialogue with government.

Here are some quotes from participants on what they likes best about the Consultation:

“Opportunities for networking and the chance to take a break from the busyness of front-line work to learn about and reflect on systemic issues and policy/advocacy.”

« Très belle organisation. Absolument tout aimé : les ateliers, les échanges, le processus, les présentations, les échanges et les propositions. »

« Participating in the workshops, and the diversity of subjects. I learned so incredibly much! And realizing that I’m part of a network and community of people advocating refugee rights.”

“Meeting so many stellar, passionate people.”

« Profondeur des présentations, questions et échanges lors des sessions... toujours un Plaisir de discuter avec des participants de différents secteurs et horizons » (représentante du gouvernement fédéral)

Although people as usual expressed that it was difficult choosing workshops because they were interested in more than one at the same time, almost all respondents felt that the scheduling was very well done. Consistent with past feedback, people reported appreciating as much smaller group discussion as possible; however we received a valuable (and oft-repeated) piece of feedback to include in future notes for moderators, which is that during group discussions, too much time is wasted on introductions at the beginning. It was suggested instead that individuals should simply identify themselves when they are going to speak, in order to save time. It was also suggested by more than one person that moderators should be explicit about creating space for newer participants to contribute, and another commented that it was positive when people were explicitly asked to participate. Several respondents also said they appreciated the habitual recognition of the indigenous territory and use of the anti-oppression wheel.

At this Consultation CCR made particular efforts to ensure inclusiveness with regards to bilingualism in the official languages. At sessions where there was no simultaneous interpretation (due to budget constraints), there was a bilingual note-taker whose job it was to summarize what was being said by presenters or during discussion periods and type this summary *in the other language*, that was then projected on a screen in real time. Many respondents said they appreciated the efforts, although feedback differed in terms of how effective the translator-note-takers were. It seems that results were inconsistent in large part due to each individual’s varying ability to perform this complex task, along with different degrees of understanding of the topic. Several respondents recognized the considerable number of speakers who presented in French and were appreciative, given the Quebec setting of the Consultation.

Respondents offered some insightful suggestions on a variety of different ways to improve future Consultations. One made the point that it is problematic to hold the event at a multinational corporate non-union hotel, and that we should aim to be more coherent in the future.

Overall the participant evaluations were positive, with respondents reporting having made important new contacts, meeting inspiring people, accessing useful tools and resources, and learning about what is happening in other parts of Canada. CCR will take into account all the suggestions for improvement.



Members of the
CCR Youth
Network