



Canadian Council for Refugees Spring 2017 Consultation
Nurturing Diversity and Inclusion: Reflecting on the past to inspire the future
 June 1-3, 2017, Edmonton
 Conference Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees' Spring 2017 Consultation was held June 1-3 MacEwan University in Edmonton, on Treaty Six territory. Approximately 380 participants from across Canada attended the Consultation, with strong local attendance from Alberta, and delegates from eight out of ten provinces.

The Spring 2017 Consultation provided a space for learning, experience-sharing, networking and strategizing among people involved in the immigrant and refugee serving sector, refugee protection and refugee resettlement across Canada. The theme for this Consultation was *Nurturing Diversity and Inclusion: Reflecting on the past to inspire the future*, a message with strong resonance for the local organizations in Edmonton, especially in the context of the 150th anniversary of confederation.

Thirty-four 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, five caucus sessions, 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 the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees, resettlement and overseas protection of refugees, 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 to discuss emerging issues, share information, and work on developing policy positions for the membership to vote on at the general meeting. 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 member organizations and allies from Edmonton, along with municipal and provincial government workers 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 Catholic Social Services, Centre d'accueil et d'établissement du nord de l'Alberta, Action Coalition on Human Trafficking, Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA), Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton, and the SAH Council, as well as some individual allies, and the team of dynamic and helpful volunteers they recruited. The LOC organized a successful social event on the Friday evening, when participants enjoyed a reception with live entertainment at a local art space.

At this Consultation, the CCR benefited from the in-kind contributions of Catholic Social Services, Centre d'accueil et d'établissement du nord de l'Alberta, Action Coalition on Human Trafficking, Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA), Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Government of Alberta, City of Edmonton, and the SAH Council.

The CCR gratefully acknowledges financial support for the Consultation from Alberta Labour, the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Community Foundation, Mennonite Central Committee, Catholic Social services, the University of Alberta, Bredin Centre for Learning, and CUPE local 3911.

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.

Services for refugee claimants

The workshop on service delivery to refugee claimants highlighted the discrepancies in the availability of services from province to province. Local participants from Alberta were very interested to learn about models in Ontario, Quebec and BC, since there are currently very few services available to claimants in Alberta. It was proposed that CCR organize a webinar on working with refugee claimants so that those in provinces with less experience could learn from those with more experience. The issue of cuts to legal aid also represents an emerging need: participants heard about threats to legal aid representation in BC and Ontario that could leave many claimants without access to representation through the refugee process.

Root causes of displacement

There were calls at this Consultation for CCR to help “connect the dots” between displacement and the causes at the root of displacement. Two angles that were explored were issues related to Canadian government and business interests abroad that fuel conflict and displacement, and issues related to climate change and environmental degradation. Other points made included the need to link some forms of circular labour migration (via the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, for example) with forced migration, as many of the drivers that produce refugees are similar to those that economically displace workers who end up in Canada, often separated from family and with precarious status.

There were calls to put pressure on Canadian companies to be more socially responsible and to pressure the Canadian government to implement policies imposing due diligence and traceability in the mineral supply chain, as well as to sign on to the international arms treaty and make changes to legislation to prohibit export of military equipment to countries with questionable human rights records. There was also a call for CCR to expand its mandate to incorporate a broader understanding of underlying causes of forced migration and to support sustainable development goals linked to peace and security.

International linkages

CCR’s strategic plan for the last several years has included a commitment to increase our presence at the international level, and to develop ties and strengthen relationships internationally. CCR is currently the Technical Secretariat for the Red Regional de Organizaciones Civiles para las Migraciones (RROCM - Regional Network of Civil Society Organizations for Migration), and at this Consultation we were able to explore this role and some of the collaborations that can take place in the Americas, with speakers from outside of Canada. We also benefited from a speaker from the Refugee Council USA to give the US perspective on global resettlement. Finally, participants discussed the early plans for CCR’s international conference which will take place in June 2018.

Building on support for refugees

This consultation included sessions on engaging private sponsors, engaging local communities to support refugees, building on positive energy for refugees, and a caucus session on the upcoming CCR refugee campaign. All of these discussions reinforced the idea that after a year of intense activity and support for refugees, we must find ways to sustain and build on the energy and support of the government and the Canadian public.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARIES

Some presentations are available online for CCR members at ccrweb.ca/en/spring-2017-presentations

Opening plenary

Elder Gilman offered a prayer in Cree for all people, including a message to welcome newcomers. Minister Gray welcomed participants to Alberta. Loly Rico provided updates on CCR activities since the last consultation. The keynote speaker, Lewis Cardinal, reflected on the consultation theme, “Nurturing Diversity and Inclusion: Reflecting on the past to inspire the future” tying it to the experience and insight of the Indigenous Peoples. He noted that the territory on which we were meeting was a cosmopolitan place where people gathered long before Europeans arrived. We need to recognize the spirit of place: the spirit of ancestors who walked here before, and consider seven generations into the future when we make decisions. An Indigenous approach highlights respect for the connections between people, and between people and the land. Treaties are a primary way to make those connections, to prevent conflict and to restore relationships. Through treaties Indigenous Peoples create relationships with newcomers, adopting them as family members.

Resource persons:

Minister Christina Gray, Minister of Labour and Democratic Renewal, Alberta

Loly Rico, CCR President

Lewis Cardinal, Indigenous community advocate

Moderators: Georges Bahaya and Ese Ejebe

Closing plenary and General Meeting

The consultation closed with the General Meeting, including discussion and approval of resolutions, and presentation of highlights from the Youth Network and the Working Groups. Youth representatives spoke about the Edmonton Newcomer Youth Civic Engagement project “Newcomers are Lit”. Lynn, a former migrant worker and activist with Migrante Alberta, made a presentation about situations of abuse and denial of rights faced by migrant workers in Canada, based on her personal experiences. She described how, with the support of Migrante Alberta, she was able to overcome fear and learn how to advocate for her rights and those of her Canadian-born baby.

Co-chairs: Sharmarke Dubow 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/spring-2017-presentations.

The North and Central American civil society view on migration, networking and advocacy

With speakers from Central America, USA and Canada, this workshop was intended to provide a regional context to our thinking on migration issues. The workshop also provided information on CCR's current role as the Technical Secretariat for the Red Regional de Organizaciones Civiles para las Migraciones (RROCM - the Regional Network of Civil Society Organizations for Migration). Francisco Rico-Martinez presented on behalf of Karen Valladares, the Executive Director, Foro Nacional para las Migraciones en Honduras (FONAMIH) and Honduras RROCM Focal Point (she was unfortunately unable to travel).

Francisco provided an overview of RROCM, which has been in existence since 1996 and is comprised of member organizations from 11 countries in Central America, North America and the Caribbean. The goal of the RROCM is to promote and enhance the human rights of migrants in the region, through information sharing, advocacy, policy reform, and communication with government. The CCR has formed a Canadian steering committee to oversee the Technical Secretariat.

Karen Valladares' presentation focused on the current situation of migrants in Latin and Central America. In terms of demographics, there are both migrants from the region as well as "extra-regionales", i.e. individuals who are not from the continent, mainly people coming from African nations. The main entry points for "extra-regionales" are Brazil and Argentina. From there, individuals will often make their way north. Another group of individuals coming from Brazil are Haitians. Forty to fifty thousand Haitians were hired in Brazil to work on the World Cup and Olympic projects. As these projects finished, jobs were no longer available and large groups of Haitians began to travel north. Some Haitians travelling would identify themselves as Congolese, as "extra-regionales" can more easily obtain transit visas that will allow them to pass through countries and regions.

Of significance, the Nicaraguan government closed their border to migrants, and migrants are no longer allowed to cross into the country for the purpose of transiting through. This has caused considerable issues, particularly in Costa Rica, which borders the area. Migrants, including many Cubans, are left stranded at the border and forced to pay a smuggler to assist them in crossing. Francisco noted that the estimated price to cross the country is \$1000 per person, and there are tens of thousands crossing, which represents a huge sum of money going to smugglers.

Elena Olea-Rodriguez presented on changes and developments in the United States. She began by saying that there are currently many unknowns, as the new administration has yet to act on some issues and no clear strategy or policy has been presented. Elena discussed the current climate of xenophobia, racism, and the rejection of refugees as a response to the political changes in the country. She also noted some similar cultural changes there. There is already a noted decrease of individuals entering the United States, and instead choosing to stay in Mexico (sometimes making asylum claims there instead).

Elena discussed how much could change with a new administration, and provided a brief overview of powers of the Executive Branch and Department of Justice in the United States, including the Executive Office of Immigration Review and Department of Homeland Security.

Of concern here in Canada are changes to programs such as the Temporary Protective Status (TPS) program. Under the TPS, individuals in the United States without permanent status could receive TPS visas that would allow them to stay in the country, generally for a period of 18 months with frequent extensions issued. Haitians are one group that has particularly benefited from this program. Other programs that will or have changed include the In-Country Refugee/Parole Processing for Minors in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala (Central American Minors – CAM).

There was hope that the Mexican government would use a current agreement with Safety and Border Enforcement that provided funds to the Mexican government to receive deportees as leverage against the new US administration. However, it seems that the Mexican government is content to keep the program running as is, despite higher numbers of removals.

At the workshop, a participant suggested having a webinar about changes to immigration programs in the United States that may help us be better prepared.

Resource persons:

Elena Olea, Policy Advisor, Alianza Americas and USA RROCM focal point
Francisco Rico-Martinez, CCR Technical Secretariat of RROCM

Moderators: Julia Huys and Eunice Valenzuela

Innovative Settlement Service Delivery

In an effort to acknowledge and meet the changing needs of the newcomer demographic and diverse populations, this workshop focused on new and innovative ways of delivering settlement services using best practice models, technology, and other methods, from the perspective of both government and the settlement sector. The panel addressed various approaches and organizational practices that are necessary to reach participants and communities outside of the established boundaries and norms. Best practices with regards to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations were shared, as well as innovative ways of bridging gaps in the sector. The question of developing more innovative reporting methods was also raised. In seeking the best possible outcomes for newcomers, the choice facing settlement agencies is not whether to change but how.

Resource persons:

John Biles, Assistant Director Integration Programs - Prairies and Northwest Territories, IRCC
Marc Colbourne, Ministry of Labour, Government of Alberta
Fei Tang, Culturelink, Toronto
Frank Bessai, Catholic Social Services, Edmonton

Moderators: Sizwe-Alexandre Inkingi and Michelyn Dion

Alternatives to Detention

The Canadian government is planning to implement alternatives to detention across Canada. The CCR's proposed community-based model was presented and discussed in this workshop, with the objective of getting feedback and refining the proposal.

Ms. Tang talked about the protocols within the Immigration Division of the IRB with regards to alternatives to detention. The Immigration Division (ID) has the exclusive mandate to determine if a

claimant will be detained once a person is referred for a 48 hour review. If a community based alternative to detention is available and presented, the ID Member will assess it and consider if the alternative would appropriately mitigate the risk of release. The person detained and counsel should liaise with CBSA to work out the details to present prior to a detention review.

The ID has no authority to order treatment for a detainee, and monitoring individuals is not within its mandate. Requests to modify a release order should be brought to the attention of the ID in the form of an application. She mentioned one difficulty with the CCR model: services and supports vary currently from region to region, so it might be difficult to get the alternative to detention application completed prior to the 48 hour review.

John Helsdon and Leah Campbell presented for CBSA. 85% of detainees are people being held before removal; only a small number are people with active refugee claims. Claimants are only held for a short period of time, for example until their identity is established. CBSA would like to have a new detention framework for all detainees by January 2018. They want options for release that are available nationally and that maintain program integrity, and would like to use the same risk assessment tools across the country. Once an assessment is completed officers would consider the various alternatives to detention and would have to document why detention is required. Some of the alternatives to detention now available include reporting, bonds, electronic monitoring, voice verification, and community case management.

Mr. Helsdon and Ms Campbell pointed out that the CCR framework is based on the point of arrest; however a CBSA model needs to work throughout the process. He described the CBSA response to the CCR proposal as follows:

- CBSA feels that their new framework aligns with CCR model. CBSA will share the document they have been working on in the next few months
- Their new CBSA model should allow release within 48 hours
- CBSA will be monitoring and providing statistics
- CBSA agrees that the new restrictions on claimants should not be greater than what exists now. However, in some regions restrictions may increase because there haven't been many options until now.
- Conditions should be commensurate with risk
- CBSA will use a case management model, and will need a partner that will be involved with monitoring.
- CBSA will have a wider range of alternative to detention options in the new framework
- It is a CBSA priority to develop a framework to deal with vulnerable people, minors and families, who will be prioritized for release.
- CBSA hopes to work with CCR member organizations, possibly through another partner.
- There will be a significant training for CBSA officers this fall revisiting the grounds of detention, risk assessments and alternatives to be used depending on the assessment.
- CBSA has taken into account both the CCR and UNHCR proposals when developing on their new framework

The presentations were followed by a question and answer period, during which the CBSA and IRB representatives gave the following information, among other points:

- Collaborative meetings between CBSA, UNHCR and IRB are still being held

- In the future there will be a more rigorous assessment of risk. Sometimes not all the information is available to officers to make the appropriate risk assessment and plan. Under the new framework there will be a “release liaison officer” who will be the point of contact and expert on community supports and referrals. Hopefully interventions will happen more quickly.

CCR made the point that NGO involvement in reporting as suggested in the CBSA model hurts trust established between NGO and claimant, and asked for CBSA to review this.

Resource persons:

Jenny Jeanes, CCR Inland Protection co-chair and Action Réfugiés Montréal

John Helsdon and Leah Campbell, CBSA (presenting remotely)

Alice Tang, Deputy Chair, Immigration Division, IRB

Moderators: Eusebio Garcia and Fran Gallo

(En)Countering Hate in Canada

As voices of fear, anger and hate are more openly expressed across Canada, they give rise to biases, prejudices and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. In this workshop, panelists presented from three different perspectives, bringing a deep understanding of racial justice and a set of diverse lived experiences into a conversation about anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. They discussed similarities between these diverse groups and spoke to the impacts on the settlement and integration of refugees. A parallel was made between the cycle of anti-Indigenous racism that persists within the child welfare system, and systemic discrimination against immigrant and refugee women. This workshop looked at the unique and common roots of dynamics of othering and exclusion, and aimed to identify opportunities and strategies to build and nurture communities that appreciate and embrace their diversity.

Participants discussed the need to make hate crimes visible and public, and to ensure that victims groups are involved in the development of anti-hate campaigns.

Resource persons:

Irfan Chaudhry, MacEwan University, Edmonton

Oliver Kamau, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association

Jean LaFrance, University of Calgary

Moderators: Ibrahim Absiye and Amy Crofts

Sanctuary Cities and Regularization

This session explored what an ‘Access Without Fear’ policy can mean in Canadian municipalities. Participants heard community and municipal government perspectives on building access to services for people without immigration status, as well as reflections on the regularization of status.

Jennifer Fowler spoke of the research being carried out by the City of Edmonton to explore the possibility of making Edmonton a sanctuary city. Erick Ambtman gave his perspectives on the interplay being sanctuary city designation and municipal responsibility for issues stemming from

racism, such as police profiling. He felt that talking about access to services for people without status obfuscates the conversation about what people are out of status in the first place.

David Moffette and Harsha Walia talked about their grassroots work to bring about sanctuary city policies in their respective cities of Ottawa and Vancouver. In Ottawa the campaign for a sanctuary city has gained momentum recently, and received visibility when a city councillor presented a motion in favour of sanctuary city. Much of the mobilizing in Ottawa has been around access to women's shelters and access to food banks. Although the motion at City Council didn't pass, this is not seen as a failure, as it has helped galvanize the moments and raise awareness. City Council has said they will do a consultation on the issue in the fall.

Both Mr. Moffette and Ms. Walia agreed that municipal police forces are one of the primary ways people are turned over to CBSA. Mr. Moffette pointed out that the Edmonton police contacted CBSA over 1000 times with regards to people without status in the past year.

Harsha Walia spoke about the struggle for a sanctuary city in Vancouver as a step towards a regularization program and status for all. She made the point that while getting the municipality on board can be a useful tool and as leverage, it shouldn't be viewed as an end goal.

In Vancouver the fight for access without fear has had success by addressing the governing board of each of the institutions that control access to some service (such as specific hospitals), or that have been known to collude with immigration enforcement (such as the transit commission). She pointed out that in Toronto as well, there was a pan-sectoral campaign which approached shelters, food banks, and schools.

In Vancouver, when they did their 'transportation not deportation' campaign for the transit authority not to collaborate with CBSA, they found out there was a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between CBSA and transit authorities. They have since discovered that each police force has its own MOA with CBSA. They are interested in knowing how these MOAs have proliferated, and want to organize around non-collaboration with CBSA and scrapping of the MOAs, and the recognition that transit, hospitals, education, shelters are not border guards, and there is nothing in the law saying that any agency other than CBSA has a role in border enforcement. The campaign with the transit authority was successful, and now the authority has agreed that not to report persons stopped who have no status. Reporting rates dropped from 1 report per day to 5 or less per year. In working to make primary schools accessible to children without status, they learned that the BC school act says you have to be a resident, and don't need immigration status; this is true for most provinces. When they cold-called over 40 schools and pretended to be without status; they had many racist and ignorant responses, so they partnered with CUPE (the union representing frontline staff in the school district) to educate school administration staff. Ms. Walia emphasized the need to understand the actors within each sector and work with the appropriate people.

Resource persons:

David Moffette, Ottawa Sanctuary City Network

Jennifer Fowler, City of Edmonton

Erick Ambtman, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

Harsha Walia, No-one Is Illegal, Coast Salish Territories

Moderators: Sharmarke Dubow and Sizwe-Alexandre Inkingi

US-Canada Safe Third Country

This workshop looked at the current situation of refugees in the US, what advice can be given to those who might want to make a claim in Canada, and how we in Canada can best respond to increased numbers of refugee claimants.

Claire Roque shared challenges being faced by community organizations in different regions with the increase in arrivals from the U.S., as well as an overview on how the Safe Third Country exceptions function and an update on litigation.

Heather Neufeld shared information on what front-line workers and lawyers can and can't say when faced with questions from persons in the U.S. who would like to make an asylum claim at the border, and gave an explanation of CCR's pending request to the government to suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement. She provided a review of what happened with the first legal challenge to the STCA and the evolution of the jurisprudence since then and discussion of the possibility of initiating a new legal challenge.

Resource persons:

Heather Neufeld, Community Legal Services of Ottawa and CCR Legal Affairs Committee
Claire Roque, Diocese of London Ministry to Refugee Claimants, Windsor

Moderators: Saleem Spindari and Rick Goldman

Newcomer Youth Civic Engagement

This workshop involved discussion with youth leaders in their communities around different youth-led and art-based initiatives that they have worked on locally. Participants were encouraged to reflect on why these initiatives are crucial for the newcomer youth and the communities involved.

The workshop started with an icebreaker to be inclusive of all participants. Several of the CCR Youth Network Newcomer Youth Civic Engagement (NYCE) projects then presented their work: Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Montreal and Joliette.

For the second part of the workshop, attendees were divided into four groups and had to answer a question. Questions included: "what makes you feel you are in a community" and "what does youth leadership mean to you". Each group presented their answers to the larger group, followed by a group discussion. The youth present got to interact a lot with non-youth discussing what it meant to give space to youth and how to do so.

Participants asked for more visibility when the project is renewed, and for more dissemination of the resources that will come out of it (e.g. NYCE report which was sent to the CCRLIST serv and Youth Network (YN) CCRLIST serv as well as posted on YN Facebook page). They also asked for promotional material of the YN to be available online (e.g. posters or YN pamphlet). This has not yet been done, but will be done this by the CCR Office.

Resource persons:

Youth members of the Edmonton NYCE project "Newcomers are Lit" (Ameer Ali, Akinboro Abidat-Sua'ad, Nasmia Abdi, Byron Aquiles Carmona, Selassie Drah and Naol Tassisa)

Moderators: Vivian Namayanja, Juliana Cortes Lugo and Daniela Navia

Root Causes of Displacement: Canadian implication

The root causes of forced displacement are varied and complex. Full analysis of them involves examination of both internal and external, immediate and long-term factors. This workshop focused on a number of situations in which Canada and/or Canadian business interests have contributed directly or indirectly to forced displacement. It also explored ways in which Canada could contribute positively to the resolution of these situations.

There were three presentations, each connecting Canada (either private sector or government) to the causes of displacement related to the sale of armaments (arms trade with Saudi Arabia) or resource extraction (Latin America and Democratic Republic of Congo). Each presentation made direct links to human displacement and/or violation of human rights caused either by arms being sold by Canadian companies or the Canadian government, or by resources being extracted by Canadian mining companies. The arms sale to Saudi Arabia is seen as a violation by Canada of the Arms Trade Treaty which Canada is about to accede to. Evidence was provided that established the likelihood that Canadian light armoured vehicles are being used in attacks on civilians in Saudi Arabia and possibly in Yemen. In the DRC, links between Canadian companies and mining are more indirect but nonetheless imply a serious lack of oversight and a failure to apply due diligence by the Canadian government. While the mining of resources by Canadian companies in Central America is considered legal, the gross human rights violations by paramilitaries linked to mining companies are of concern. People are being put off their land, compelled to work in dangerous mining conditions and killed if they oppose. Canada has a lot of investment in both Latin America and DRC. Complicity takes a variety of forms in these situations, but the impacts are devastating and they, along with the responsibility for them, go largely unacknowledged by the Canadian government because of the vested interests.

There were calls for CCR to help ‘connect the dots’ between displacement and the drivers that are causing it (possibly through development of an infographic). Greater investigation of the issues by CCR was recommended including visiting DRC. There were calls to put pressure on Canadian companies to be more socially responsible and to pressure the Canadian government to a) implement policies imposing due diligence and traceability in the mineral supply chain and b) to accede to the international arms treaty, and to follow this act with changes to legislation to prohibit export of military hardware to countries with questionable human rights records. There was also a call for CCR to expand its mandate to incorporate a broader understanding of underlying causes of forced migration and to support (or promote) sustainable development goals linked to peace and security. The issues will be taken up by the Overseas Protection and Sponsorship working group.

Resource persons:

Karen Valladares, Foro Nacional para las Migraciones en Honduras (Francisco Rico-Martinez presented on her behalf)

Sonal Marwal, Program Officer, Project Ploughshares

Billy Ilunga, public policy graduate student, York University

Moderators: Susan McGrath and Mary Purkey

Dialogue with Government Representatives

This session featured a dialogue with two senior representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Both representatives covered new and innovative practices and tools with regard to resettlement. Following the presentations, two questions were asked on behalf of each CCR working group, prepared in advance. On the issue of the upcoming change in the maximum age of dependent children and the situation of people with applications that are already in process, Fraser Valentine responded that some options were currently being discussed at IRCC. The CCR office will follow up with the presenters on that point and other commitments made.

Resource persons:

Fraser Valentine, Director General, Refugee Affairs, IRCC

Corinne Prince St-Amand, Director General, Settlement and Integration Policy Branch, IRCC

Moderators: Sherman Chan and Rick Goldman

Climate Change and Forced Displacement: What can we do?

The workshop took stock of the work carried out globally relating to climate change and migration. Participants were then invited to ask: What can we do here in Canada? How does this topic intersect with CCR's work?

Nina Lothian has worked as an engineer in the oil and gas sector, volunteered with Engineers without Borders in Peru and Zambia, and joined the Pembina Institute a few years ago. She works on building stable climate and prosperous communities with evidence-based research and solutions. Dr. Michaela Hynie is a faculty member at York, particularly interested in social integration and inclusion in context of forced migration. She is currently leading a 5-year study of support needs and long term health for privately sponsored refugees. Crystal Lameman, Cree environmental activist, was sick on the day of the workshops and unfortunately could not be present.

Nina Lowthian talked about the climate change, and the policy options and legal frameworks that are still available to us to limit the impact, and the steps that Canada must take, including accelerating the phasing out of coal, and heavy taxing on carbon. She praised the Alberta NDP government plan for transitioning to renewable energy investment and reduction of the oil and gas sector by 2025. She pointed out that those who have contributed the least to greenhouse gases will be impacted the most.

Michaela Hynie told participants that the escalation of climate change will make the world less safe, and that it is important to also make links with other man-made sources of environmental degradation, such as dams and deforestation. According to IDMC tracking, 26 million people are displaced annually as a result of environmental disasters, and slower-moving environmental changes are also a major driver of global mobility. She talked about different initiatives and efforts to encompass and define forced migration related to environmental factors in order to find policy solutions, and the challenges of teasing out environmental change as a root cause from poverty that might be a result of climate and environmental change. The distinction between voluntary and forced migration is also not clear-cut, but rather a continuum. Dr. Hynie also talked about planned relocation of communities due to environmental degradation and changing conditions, and how this tends to create more vulnerabilities. There are no examples where the well-being of the community has been documented, usually because there has been insufficient consultation with communities being moved and the host communities. Planned relocation is often done to protect the environment

(wetlands, forests) but not for the well-being of people. Dr. Hynie pointed to the lack of complex long-term planning, and the dearth of positive examples of how this has been done well.

She also spoke to the different framings of environmental mobility: the scientific climate change approach, which is quite negatively oriented; the migration approach, which looks at human resilience and adaptation when faced with environmental factors that affect their migration patterns, and seeks to find policies to protect the rights of people in those circumstances; the securitization discourse, which looks at migration from a criminalization approach, with negative attitudes about migrants and asylum seekers.

A variety of legislative and operational instruments were discussed as tools to mitigate environmental displacement, including the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families, which Canada has not signed on to, and Operational Bulletin #83, whereby, Canada issued policy directives after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti as a temporary way of facilitating Haitian migration to Canada. The Global Compact on Migration was discussed as a forum that focuses on protecting people's rights rather than thinking about root causes of displacement, and indication that migration and environment policy sectors need to collaborate and coordinate more effectively.

Resource persons:

Nina Lothian, Senior Analyst, Pembina Institute

Michaela Hynie, York University, Faculty of Health, Department of Psychology, Institute for Research and Innovation in Sustainability

Moderators: Mitchell Goldberg and Sabine Lehr

Violence against Women: Identifying Solutions and Partnerships

This workshop examined violence against women from both a refugee perspective and an Indigenous perspective. By examining the similarities and differences between the two groups, speakers and participants aimed to identify solutions to violence against women and build an understanding of what it means to have Indigenous inclusion in the settlement and integration sector. Participants heard from three experts on the subject, and took time to build strategies as a group that can be shared throughout the non-profit and policy sectors.

Speakers discussed the barriers for refugees facing domestic violence in terms of social services as well as mental health. Many face social isolation, however it is important for them to have a support network, and strong female role models. They also highlighted the importance of connecting with Indigenous communities through settlement work.

Resource persons:

Anila Lee Yuen, Centre for Newcomers, Calgary

Cindy Provost, Calgary Police Service

Joanne Pompana, Red Road Healing Society, Edmonton

Henna Kwaja, Islamic Family Social services Association, Edmonton

Moderators: Michelyn Dion and Rita Acosta

Global Resettlement in Uncertain Times

This workshop set out to explore current global protection needs and the shifting realities in resettlement – Canada’s response, emerging resettlement programs in other countries, and the impact of the US decision to reduce its 2017 commitment to resettlement.

Hans Van de Weerd spoke about the impacts of the Trump administration’s policies including religious targeting (of Muslims), negative rhetoric, vulnerability of refugees, and unconstitutionality. Jean-Nicolas Beuze spoke to overall protection needs and Canada’s immigration levels plan, and Sabine Lehr spoke to the additionality principle in the context of the private sponsorship of refugees. The importance of working together to counter negative rhetoric on social media was discussed, as well as messaging to raise the public perception of refugees as assets to the country’s economy and social fabric. Participants supported the use of the CCR refugee campaign to combat anti-refugees sentiments in US and Canada.

Resource persons:

Jean-Nicolas Beuze, UNHCR Representative in Canada.

Hans Van de Weerd, Chair of the Refugee Council USA and Vice President for U.S. Programs, International Rescue Committee (participated remotely)

Sabine Lehr, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, member of the Sponsorship Agreement Holders Council and CCR Executive

Moderators: Cathy Nguyen and Gilbert Iyamuremye

Inspiring Practices: New paths working with refugee claimants

This workshop featured speakers from community organizations in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, who shared their organizations’ experiences working with refugee claimants, including innovative practices, funding opportunities or constraints, and responses to the current challenges. Service gaps were identified, and the local context in Alberta was relevant in this sense, as there is a lack of services for claimants.

A number of best practices were identified:

- Coalition of service providers for refugee claimants
- Multi-agency partnership (MAP)
- Private sponsors offer (temporary) housing to claimants prior to arrival of privately sponsored refugee(s)
- City of Vancouver, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancity, private donations all contribute to claimant support
- Ready Tour across Canada
- Ready Tours for detainees (BC)
- Online (rather than paper) work permit applications
- Enlist banks/credit unions to open accounts and issue bank cards

Participants discussed ways to better respond to the needs of refugee claimants, and it was proposed that CCR host webinars on providing basic accompaniment to refugee claimants, for those without this experience, as a way of sharing knowledge between provinces. Participants also felt that CCR should continue to advocate for a standardized longer work permit (6 month is not enough).

Resource persons:

Hamsa Assi, Carrefour d'aide aux nouveaux arrivants, Montréal

Saleem Spindari, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Francisco Rico-Martinez on behalf of Matthew House, Toronto

Moderators: Ese Ejebe and Khim Tan

Training: Vicarious trauma and self-care

In this workshop, Mbalu Lumor provided frontline staff and management with knowledge about vicarious trauma, strategies on how to recognize the risks and address vicarious trauma. The training discussed terms and definitions, signs and symptoms, impact of vicarious trauma, burnout, compassion fatigue, risk and protective factors, and assessing self-care. Fifty participants attended the training, and engaged in case study discussions and self-reflection exercises. Prevention, intervention and tool kit resources were distributed and web-links were provided.

A resolution and an action item were brought from this workshop to the Immigration and Settlement Working Group. The resolution was to ask IRCC to increase funding for professional development and training in vicarious trauma and self-care, and the action request to CCR member agencies was to develop policies on staff wellness and self-care, and support staff in dealing with vicarious trauma and other work-related mental health issues.

Resource person:

Mbalu Lumor, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, Toronto

Moderator: Sherman Chan

Effective Strategies for Engaging Local Communities

This workshop explored concrete solutions and approaches to resolve challenges faced by refugees, with a focus on multi-sectoral, community-centred projects in both smaller communities and larger urban centres. Speakers also looked at how public perceptions are involved in resolving these challenges. After hearing about local experiences and lessons learned from three presenters, participants discussed and compiled a list of promising practices and tips to launch similar efforts at home.

Paulina Wyrzykowski explained the approach of the Toronto Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs). This initiative (which also exists in some other cities) has unique features in Toronto, since in addition to the municipally-led LIP, there are 4 sub-city “quadrant” LIPs led by community settlement organizations. The community LIPs take a different role from the municipal LIP, and this allows for different dynamics, exchange of ideas and interesting collaborations. She talked about how the municipal LIP is in some ways limited since it needs to appear neutral, but that it has political access not possible for the local LIPs and is thus able to mobilize public resources and get key actors to the table. Meanwhile the local “quadrant” LIPs have more direct access to newcomers, are less bound by city politics, and are able to coordinate among themselves, leveraging each of their strengths, and trying to mitigate potential competition between service providers. She gave an example of how the different LIPs had organized a variety responses to the influx of Syrian refugees that were aimed both at sponsors and the wider community, in English and in Arabic.

Mohammed Idriss spoke about his organization's work with immigrants, refugees and migrant workers in Brooks, a small but diverse community of 14,000, 25% of whom are visible minorities. 75% of all newcomers in Brooks are refugees, which is well above the Canadian average, and has a significant influence on the city. He framed his presentation within the context of a letter to the editor in local media two years ago that complained about the presence and influence of newcomers to Brooks. This letter was of serious concern to the agency, and they didn't want this perspective to be generalized. He outlined some of the lessons they have learned in their work:

- *Community is their client*, not only the migrants who need their settlement services. It is necessary for the community to be helped to be a supportive and welcoming place. For this to happen, the community needs to understand the benefits of migration, in order to reduce fear and prejudice. To help make this happen, they implemented a variety of strategies:
 - Lunch and learn for community members on immigration and other issues of mutual concern
 - Encouragement of staff and members to sit on local boards that aren't directly related to immigration: ex. farmers' market and Good Food boxes for the entire community.
 - Reciprocity: the community responded to job loss at the meat-packing plant when many migrants lost their job and his agency responded to another situation where there was a lot of job-loss for non-migrants.
 - Empathy: try to understand the difficulty of experiencing change for members of the local community and vice versa.
- *Proportional Intervention* –try to distinguish situations of hardened racism versus ignorance. Be strategic about when they can sway people's opinion with engagement vs. when success is unlikely because individuals are aggressive and hardened in their racism.
 - Clarify for the community the resources and opportunities that come to Brooks with the arrival of migrants (e.g. job creation for the reception of refugees)
- *Engage all* – kids, elders, workers – everyone is affected by migration
- *Ambassadors matter* – Find allies in the broader community and cultivate relationships with them, share information and data with them, they will help bring issues forward
- *Time to celebrate* – Recognize small and big wins.
 - They approached the local business association to join their Gala and gave them a Diversity in Business award, to highlight good HR practices – makes it “cool” to have good HR practices related to diversity.

Participants wanted to know what happened with the letter to the editor, and he told them that there were a full page of response letters rejecting the negative message and emphasizing that newcomers are their neighbours and friends. The writer's employer apologized.

Doug Holmes talked about his rural region in BC, where 80,000 people are spread throughout 14 communities. They have an aging population and are looking for young families to come and farm, and the region received eleven Syrian families (8 BVOR, 3 GAR – 55 people). The sponsorship group (Summerland Refugee Sponsorship Group) is secular and a registered non-profit made up of community members. There was only one Arabic speaker in their network, so the families learned English very quickly. He highlighted that the sponsorship initiative had the support of local politicians (MPs and MLAs who are able to rally resources and open doors), the media (positive coverage, but good relationships with reporters helped them understand need for privacy as well), faith-based groups (Christian churches and the one Hindu temple between Vancouver and Calgary), student

support (fundraisers, academic connections, babysitters), local parents (new students in the region helps keep schools open), business (raised money and employed Syrian refugees who had experience in agriculture), Arts community (activities and cultural events). He said that while there are racists and bigots in Summerland, they have been marginalized by the broad-based public support.

Participants broke out into small groups to discuss questions on perceptions of refugees (including the role of the media), local collaborations, and future work. They built on the presentations by sharing their experiences and challenges in their own communities.

Resource persons:

Mohammed Idriss, Brooks Local Immigration Partnership

Doug Holmes, South Okanagan Similkameen Local Immigration Partnership

Paulina Wyrzykowski, Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership Project

Moderators: Jean McRae and Jill Hanley

Changes in the Refugee Determination System

This workshop focused on discussions on making refugee hearings at the IRB as efficient as possible, in the context of rising refugee claim numbers.

The new IRB deputy chairperson introduced herself and talked about her background in criminal justice and small business, and then presented the initiatives for increased efficiency at the IRB, such as the legacy task force, and a new scheduling process. Mitch Goldberg talked about the effect of US president Trump on stalling legislative change, and presented the CARL recommendations to the IRB that wouldn't require legislative change, such as front end security clearance postponements. Francisco Rico-Martinez talked challenges faced such as the issues that will come with the likely increase in unrepresented claimants that will result from legal aid cuts, and technological issues with the IRB.

The presentations were followed by participant discussions which touched on legacy cases and other problematic backlogs, member productivity and training, CBSA interventions, and accountability of board members to guidelines. The new deputy chairperson expressed her openness to productive dialogue with civil society and encouraged the CCR and its members to engage regularly and reach out to her.

Resource persons:

Shereen Benzvy Miller, Deputy Chairperson of the RPD, IRB

Karin Michnick, Assistant Deputy Person, RPD Western Region

Mitch Goldberg, President, Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers

Francisco Rico-Martinez, Co-director, FCJ Refugee Centre

Moderators: Jenn McIntyre and Jenny Jeanes

Building on Positive Canadian Energy for Refugees

This participatory workshop aimed to provide an opportunity to share stories of success and best practices from across Canada emerging from the recent growth in private sponsorship of refugees. The

three resource people discussed their best practices and learning in regards to building on positive energy for refugee sponsorship. In groups, ideas of how to follow-up with completed sponsorships constituent groups, how to encourage learning, etc. was discussed.

Suggestions coming out of the workshop included:

- Encourage SAHs to follow up with new constituent groups involved in 2015-17 to thank them, pair them with new groups, and share knowledge.
- RSTP/IRCC help to reach out to former Group of 5 and community sponsors
- Share upcoming relevant research by Rick Enns (U of Calgary)

Resource person:

Rick Enns, University of Calgary

Kaylee Perez, Mennonite Central Committee

Paulette Johnson, Catholic Social Service

Moderators: Michelle Ball and Sharon Yeo

Difference Faces of Exploitation: Promising practices for service provision and policy change

This workshop set out to provide an overview of the spectrum of exploitation (when does exploitation become trafficking and why it matters), and to share promising practices as well as gaps in service provision from grassroots and service agency perspectives. It also aimed to make the case for policy change to protect the rights of exploited persons.

The workshop began with Jill Hanley's overview of the continuum of exploitation and why it is relevant in front-line work. She noted that exploitation can occur at the workplace in many ways, for example when an employer profits from sub-standard working conditions. Exploitation can involve labour, human rights or even criminal violations but an employee has a choice to leave the exploitative situation. In the case of coercion, there is a third party controlling your work. This may occur in an active or passive way, directly by the employer or through policy. There is also the presence of violence – physical, emotional or other.

Human Trafficking, as defined in the Criminal Code and IRPA, requires the presence of coercion and exploitation (consent is irrelevant). However, this is often very difficult to prove to the authorities. People whose situation falls along the continuum of exploitation often do not have access to effective recourses due to existing federal policies and inadequate labour standards employment policies. Jill stated the need for ongoing macro level policy change.

A three-person panel composed of Esel Panlaqui, Amy Wilson and Jessica Juen then provided an overview of best practices in their organizations:

- Alternative models of service provision focusing on meeting people where they're at, e.g. telephone service delivery, service delivery on evenings and weekends. These practices move beyond traditional operating hours (Thorncliffe as good example of this)
- Use collaborative approach in order to leverage different strengths (for example, the ACT collaboration teams that discuss enforcement and regulation)
- Response Map to Service Delivery (ACT Alberta example), a way to formalize systems, create buy-in from stakeholders at the table

- Service delivery rooted in understanding of what creates vulnerabilities (lack of social capital), need to use collaborative approaches, engage various actors to be able to address multiple needs (CCIS)

The presentation portion of the workshop concluded with Natalie Drolet who spoke about the need for policy change. She stressed that existing protections (Temporary Residence Permits) are not sufficient and there are many barriers to access both temporary and permanent protection.

Policy changes recommended:

- CCR proposal for permanent protection of trafficked persons
- Sweeping changes need to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to remove the vulnerabilities inherent within the program
- Open Work Permits for Temporary Foreign Workers at risk in British Columbia is a promising model of federal-provincial collaboration; could be a model for other provinces for the rest of Canada

Participants were asked to share their best practices and suggestions for service delivery or policy change. These were written on post-it notes that were collected at the end of the workshop.

Take-aways from the workshop:

- Importance of offering alternative hours for services and a telephone mode of delivery
- Collaboration loans are valuable and utilize limited resources more efficiently
- Individual understandings of human trafficking present a barrier to assisting Victims of Trafficking in Persons (VTIPs)
- In Saskatchewan, settlement services are available to newcomers regardless of status
- Learning about local service providers is valuable

Best practices to implement:

- Enhance understanding of trafficking and exploitation
- Response map for community law enforcement and service providers
- Use the idea of a “continuum” especially in training materials or other organizations, frontline workers, law enforcement – makes it easier to explain
- Outreach and collaboration between different associations for increasing the awareness among temporary foreign workers
- Greater collaboration on workshops to workers and employers on rights and responsibilities

Recommendations for action:

- Precarious workers need access to advocacy organizations
- Open or industry-specific work permits instead of employer-specific ones
- Update CCR legislative amendment calling for permanent protection of trafficked persons
- IRCC to speed up processing times for live-in caregivers; sometimes takes years to process
- Extend the B.C. Open Work Permit pilot project (for abused temporary foreign workers) across Canada
- Changes to employment standards enforcement: need more teeth so that employers who have violated standards are not able to keep hiring temporary foreign workers

Resource persons:

Jill Hanley, Immigrant Workers Centre (Montreal)

Esel Panlaqui, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office (Toronto)

Amy Wilson, ACT Alberta (Edmonton)

Jessica Juen, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

Natalie Drolet, West Coast Domestic Workers Association (Vancouver)

Moderators: Loly Rico and Saleem Spindari

V. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

We received 28 evaluations from consultation participants. Feedback was overall quite positive, but there was also constructive criticism and suggestions of how to improve things.

As always, participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet and 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 passion and knowledge of CCR participants, and the democratic processes that CCR uses. Several respondents also mentioned appreciating the quality of the university venue.

Respondents gave valuable input to improve the quality of workshops. Some of the suggestions echo the materials provided to workshop organizers, and others were new and innovative, and will be incorporated in the future. Suggestions included:

- Incorporating small group discussion into each workshop to promote participation
- Active moderating to keep speakers within the timeframe allotted
- Organizers to give panelists more lead time and clearer framing of their task
- Finding ways to prevent “laundry list horn tooting” approach to sharing best practices
- Have a more collaborative approach to panels – not just sector/government
- Explain the connection between workshops and resolutions – this would help first-timers
- Have more people moderating sessions, rather than the same people several times

There were also useful suggestions to frame the Consultation in the context of CCR actions:

- Present 45 minutes at the beginning of the event on the objectives of CCR Consultations: e.g. sharing experiences, identifying issues, developing positions for CCR policy and strategizing action
- Explain motions, resolutions, action items and action requests to members more clearly
- Explain in advance the purpose of the working groups

CCR efforts towards anti-oppression were validated as people said they were pleased with the acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples, and the continued mention of the power wheel and tips for an inclusive consultation. One respondent offered insightful feedback with several detailed suggestions on how to make CCR Consultations more LGBTQ-friendly.

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.