



Fall 2018 Consultation report

Montreal, 26 - 28 November 2018

A. Introduction

The Fall 2018 Consultation of the Canadian Council for Refugees was held 26 - 28 November 2018 in Montreal. The CCR acknowledges that the meeting took place on unceded Indigenous lands, where the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation (Mohawk) are recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters.

There were over 325 participants, coming from nine provinces. We welcomed an international guest, Franklin Alexander Morales, from Asociación Lambda in Guatemala. There was a mix of participants representing NGOs, government officials, academics, people with refugee experience, youth and representatives of the UNHCR and IOM.

B. Consultation Highlights

The consultation celebrated the CCR's 40th anniversary, under the theme "40 Years of Compassion, Courage and Resilience". The anniversary was highlighted in the Opening Plenary, where keynote speaker the Honourable Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, former judge on the Court of Quebec, gave a historical perspective. The CCR's achievements over forty years were saluted at a reception and in the closing plenary.

The Annual General Meeting was also a time to thank outgoing Executive members and Working Group chairs, and welcome those newly elected to leadership positions. Members celebrated the election to Victoria City Council of Sharmarke Dubow, outgoing co-chair of the Immigration and Settlement Working Group. His success was covered by international media, because, having spent years as a refugee, this was the first election in which Sharmarke was entitled to vote.



C. Acknowledgements

The Canadian Council for Refugees gratefully acknowledges financial support from:

- Bureau d'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à Montréal (BINAM)
- McConnell Foundation
- CAPIC - Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants
- AQAADI - Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration

We underline the significant contribution to this Consultation through in-kind donations and services of:

- Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes immigrantes et réfugiées (TCRI)
- Accueil liaison pour arrivants (ALPA)
- Centre social d'aide aux immigrants (CSAI)
- Accueil des immigrants de l'Est de l'île (AIEM)
- Association multiethnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (AMEIPH)
- Jesuit Province of Canada
- Action réfugiés Montréal
- Montréal Ordinateur
- Singtronique
- Carrefour d'aide aux Nouveaux Arrivants (CANA)

We wish to thank the Local Organizing Committee members, local volunteers, workshop organizers, panelists and moderators, on whom the consultation's success depends.



D. Workshops and other sessions

Workshops

- Services for claimants
- Detention
- Refugee sponsorship
- Gender Equity
- Regionalization
- Artificial Intelligence
- Sexual orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)
- Better conversations
- Unaccompanied minors
- Media representation
- Root causes
- Predatory job practices
- Family reunification
- Economic contributions of refugees
- Access to Justice for Trafficked Persons

- Claimants: Dialogue with government
- Youth-led settlement programming
- Challenges in host countries

Caucus sessions

- Transportation loans
- Removals
- Poverty
- Trafficking
- Youth
- Mental health

Working Group Meetings

- Immigration & Settlement
- Inland Protection
- Overseas Protection and Resettlement
- Strategy session: advocacy plans

Other sessions

- Opening plenary
- Closing Plenary & Annual General Meeting



E. Key Issues

The following were some key themes that emerged in the discussions.

Complexity of barriers for refugee claimants

Many sessions addressed the various challenges faced by refugee claimants. Participants noted that many challenges are caused or exacerbated by claimants' lack of access to services (a problem shared by others with temporary status in Canada).

Unaccompanied minors

There is a need for better responses to unaccompanied minor refugee claimants, across all regions of Canada. This would entail coordination and collaboration between various federal government agencies and between federal and provincial governments. Participants also asked whether we should be providing resettlement options for unaccompanied minor refugees.

Public discourse

The rise of anti-refugee and anti-immigrant discourse in Canada was a strong concern. Participants explored how to most effectively counter this and win public support for refugees and other newcomers, particularly in the context of the upcoming federal elections.

Root causes of forced displacement

Participants were pleased at the increased focus on root causes, and a resolution was passed on this issue. Exploring Canada's complicity in some of the issues forcing people to flee offers a way to reframe refugee resettlement as not simply a humanitarian cause, but also a social responsibility. It can also shed light on Canada's role in creating the conditions that lead to people coming to Canada as participants in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Issues of Central America

The caravan of migrants was much in the news and in people's consciousness at the time of the Consultation. Participants highlighted the need to inform ourselves about the issues in Central America that push people to leave, and to develop Canadian responses.

Poverty

The Consultation provided an opportunity to reflect on the structural issues related to poverty that impact all areas of CCR members' work, and CCR membership passed two resolutions on this issue. There was also interest in sharing approaches to addressing the challenges.

Artificial intelligence

For many participants, the workshop on the use of artificial intelligence in legal decision-making was an important first exposure to a technology that is likely to be increasingly used. Participants were keen to ensure that its use does not negatively affect people's human rights.

Precarious Work

Participants discussed the ways that employers and recruiters for unsafe and precarious jobs target migrants with precarious status, such as refugee claimants, people without status and temporary foreign workers.

F. Outcomes



a. Resolutions

At the AGM, the CCR members adopted five resolutions on the following issues:

- Root causes of forced displacement
- Artificial Intelligence
- Disaggregated Data
- Poverty Reduction
- Eliminating barriers to Canadian citizenship

The full text of the resolutions can be found at ccrweb.ca/en/resolutions-nov-2018

b. Action requests from Working Groups

- Promote open work permits for Temporary Foreign Workers.
- Urge that high language requirements for migrant caregivers be reduced.
- Support initiatives to respond to the migrant caravan
- Participate in the national campaign to promote positive public opinion and policies for refugees.

c. Resources shared and recommended

Many presentations delivered at workshops are available to CCR members and consultation participants at: ccrweb.ca/en/fall-2018-presentations.

The Practical Guide on Refugee Family Reunification which formed the basis of the family reunification training session has been finalized and is available at ccrweb.ca/en/refugee-family-reunification-practical-guide.

Participants were directed towards important existing CCR resources:

Migrant Worker Report Cards: 2018 update, ccrweb.ca/en/migrant-workers/report-cards

Human Trafficking and the Law, ccrweb.ca/en/human-trafficking-and-the-law

Other resources recommended

FCJ Youth Network from Youth to You Toolkit www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/2015/11/from-youth-to-you/

UFCW tools and information guides on migrant work.

Suggestions for resources to be developed

- A media guide for community workers on how to interact with media.
- A media guide for refugee claimants – on their role and rights (including that they don't need to answer all questions).
- A centralized list of information with information and resources for SOGIE individuals in the refugee claim and settlement process.

d. Issues for Advocacy

- Refugees being detained based on identity.
- Women victims of domestic violence who are detained when they have no status, possible victims of trafficking.
- Lack of beds or transitional programs to refer clients coming out of detention
- Gender equity: create Feminist Score Card
- Need for informed consent considering the “safety” of profiled individuals
- Sensitizing municipal leaders in regions to need for resources for refugee claimants if they are going to be able to settle there.
- Strict financial requirements and changing guidelines imposed on private sponsors.
- \$550 processing fees for minors applying for permanent residence as principal applicants.
- More inclusion and diversity training for CBSA, settlement agencies in collaboration with already existing LGBTQIA+ services.
- All refugee claimants under 18 years should have a Designated Representative to protect and promote their interests in all immigration matters.
- Fraudulent immigration practices from recruitment agencies and temporary placement agencies



e. Suggestions for webinars or virtual meetings

- Follow up webinar on artificial intelligence (when more information becomes available).
- Virtual meeting on Alternatives to Detention to discuss implementation of the program.
- Knowledge translation and exchange of best practices on gender equity.
- Webinar on complex family reunification cases
- Red flags for predatory employment
- Youth engagement and youth led programming

G. Evaluations

Overall, the quality of workshops, the variety of workshop topics, and the opportunity to network and connect with colleagues across the country are the main points that participants appreciated the most about the Consultation. Among areas of improvement, some participants suggested a better time management and recommended the sessions start at scheduled time and that the length of workshops could be increased to allow for more discussions and exchange.



Participants were invited to fill out an evaluation form on site or via our website. Here are the evaluation results:

- 94% of participants agreed that the overall program was strong, including the scheduling, and the mix of workshops, plenaries and caucuses.
- 75% of participants agreed that the consultation helped them to acquire knowledge, understanding and contacts that will be useful to me in my work.
- 91% of participants agreed that overall, the consultation was successful and would recommend others to participate in the future.
- 91% of participants agreed that the consultation provided good opportunities to participate and contribute to the dialogue.
- 94% of participants agreed that there was a good diversity of participants.
- 81% of participants agreed that there were significant efforts to promote bilingualism (English-French).

“The consultation was very organized and respectful, it was evident efforts were made to make people feel safe, heard and understood. I felt like I was surrounded by people who were so knowledgeable, experienced and wise in this area!”

– Consultation participant –

