

**A BRIEF REPORT ON NEED ASSEMENT
OF
NEWCOMER YOUTH & FAMILIES**



April 21, 2018



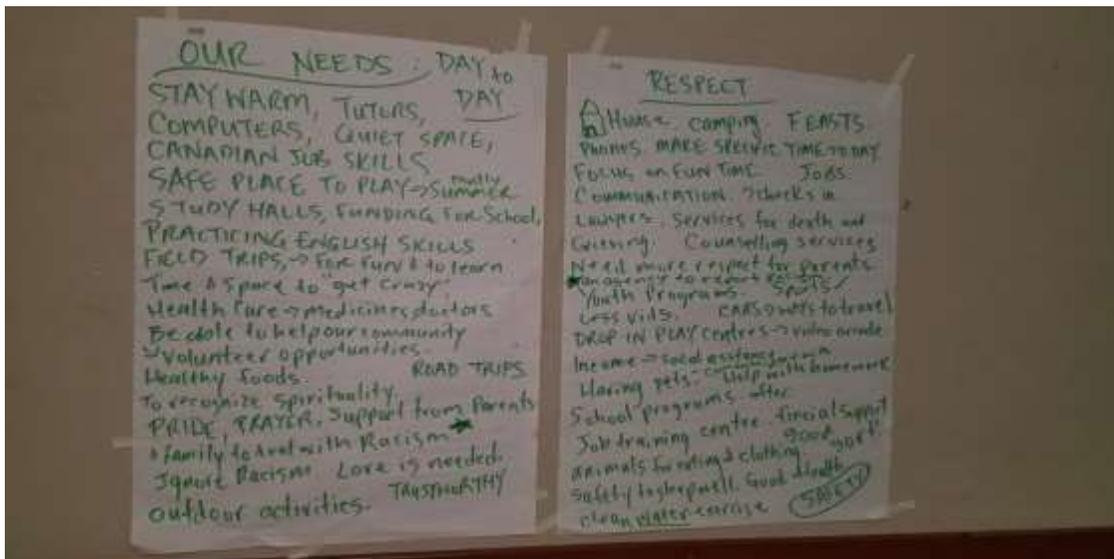
**Facilitated by Neighborhood Empowerment
and Resource Centre (NEARC Inc.)**

In Collaboration With:

- **African Communities of Manitoba Inc (ACOMI)**
- **Midwest Somali Canadian Centre**
- **Somali Cultural Centre of Manitoba Inc.**
- **The Sierra Leonean Community in Manitoba**
- **Unity Somali Centre Inc.**

The ACOMI was represented by Ms. Maggie Yeboah, Executive Director; Midwest Somali Canadian Centre was represented by its Managing Director Mr. Ibrahim Bihi; Somali Cultural Centre of Manitoba Inc. was represented by President, Mr. Abdirahman Isse; The Sierra Leonean Community in Manitoba was represented by its Former President Mr. Alex Bockarie, and the Unity Somali Centre Inc. was represented by its Treasurer, Mr. Abdalah Sheikhali, and the NEARC Inc. was represented by its Acting-President Ms. Kalpana Adhikari.

Consultation Process: To assess the ground reality the Newcomer Youth and Families face in Manitoba, NEARC Inc. in active collaboration with the six Winnipeg-based organizations such as: African Communities of Manitoba Inc (ACOMI), Midwest Somali Canadian Centre, Somali Cultural Centre of Manitoba Inc., The Sierra Leonean Community in Manitoba, and Unity Somali Centre on April 21, Saturday, 2018 hosted a Need Assessment Meeting for the Newcomer Youths (11 years to 24 years) and newcomer families. The main purpose of the Need Assessment was to seek valuable inputs for the proposal every organization is working to apply under the Manitoba Education and Training’s Request for Proposals (RFP) which has a deadline of April 24, 2018.



Various needs being shared by youths while working in a group with facilitators Vanessa Cook & Zainab Odeh

The beauty of this consortium is that it strongly follows some of the Directives from the MET-RFP Guidelines such as; not to duplicate activities and remaining aware of what other organizations are doing and if needed seek their help. We believe this is very good example where organizations collaborate, share their ideas and bring together their stakeholders and do the fresh need assessment. We do strongly believe in cooperation and sharing. One of the main purpose of this Need Assessment is to learn and pull together inputs from their experience, leadership, volunteerism, and community empowerment philosophy with a view to better shape. We could draw upon ideas from extensive sectoral expertise and generational knowledge.

During the meeting with one of the Collaborative Partners, the Unity Somali Centre brought the genuine issue stated in the one of the Newcomer Youths' possible outcome as listed in the Page 17/35 of the Manitoba Education and Training's Request for Proposals, ***“Increased social networks; opportunities and ability to connect to, or participate in, the community in ways supportive of clients' interests or needs.”*** Everyone agreed that Neighborhood Empowerment and Resource Centre should work on this outcome and by the end of five months, NEARC Inc, with direct collaboration with Youth Agencies Alliance and other youth serving agencies would suggest a common platform for newcomer youths, at least for youth of these six Collaborating Partners.



Newcomers families working together sharing their needs during the Need Assessment

With this positive scenario of welcoming newcomers and immigrants, there are inherent challenges in the process of undertaking the whole-of-society approach to immigrant integration for maximizing the impact of immigration on economic and labour force growth. It is equally important to build absorptive capacity of the province/municipalities/societies locally to enhance the societal and institutional capability to accept, welcome and deal with immigrants of diverse origins, and support their settlement and integration in cities and communities. With these two-prong objectives of need assessment of newcomers and the scoping of absorptive capacity of local institutions, we talked with newcomers of *Somali ethnicity*. We asked the youths and families bundles of following qualitative questions and we synthesised the responses below.

Questions asked to respondents in a group setting were:

- a. Tell us about some challenges that you face in your day to day life irrespective of age (dimensions: social, economic/job, educational, psychological, cultural, etc.).
- b. What programs can benefit different age groups?
- c. What are your opinions on how these issues can be addressed?
- d. Do you think that you could use your full potential? If not what plans/programmes would help you out in using your skills/potentials?
- e. Did you receive support from any other agencies/non-profits? If so, what types of supports did you receive? What more supports you think pertinent to use your potentials?
- f. What more we can do for integration between youths and families?

Summary of Findings: The respondents informed us that many newcomers initially feel like strangers in a strange land when they are in the initial settlement process in Canada. All the respondents agreed that more supports are needed at this initial and critical stage of settlements than at later stage of their settlement efforts. Generally, the newcomers felt that there are language barriers, housing and employment issues, inexperience about different customs and laws, perceived and real discrimination, uncertainty about the law and justice system, and unfamiliarity with geographic regions and climate.

There are sometimes relatives and friends ready to lend a hand, and there are community groups, non-profits and government agencies dedicated to making the transition from immigration to

permanent residence struggles little easier. It is also true that many of these immigrants come from societies with strong patriarchal values and there is a critical need that newcomers/immigrants/refugees get oriented on cultural values and matters so that they can avoid self-isolation and integrate more fully into Canada's liberal-democratic and philanthropic culture. There are issues among older family members that sometimes push newcomers confining themselves into ethnocultural pockets.

As it comes to the issues faced by the groups on a recurring basis, they highlighted the importance of support for warm clothes programs, and the importance of safe places for playing outdoors rather than indulging in tech-based games. Newcomers want (not in order of priority) better access to additional resources for skill development prior to competing in the job market, participation in more cross-cultural field trips, more medical supports to remain healthy, recognition of the values of ethno-specific spirituality, getting involved to spreading the message of love and respect to address perceived and real racism in the community. They reflected on the need to access better nutritious healthy foods, free legal services, financial support to start small-scale businesses, more job-focused volunteering opportunities, access to getting driving lessons program at subsidized rates, helps with homework's, and more cross-cultural activities to develop bondages and better trustworthiness. They also expressed the critical needs for ensuring rituals in post-death grieving situations.

Some barriers to workforce integration relate to credential recognition and strong demand for sophisticated language and literacy competency in the country/province/cities that impede access to skilled employment and social mobility among some newcomers. Language is an important barrier on the way to societal integration, and roles of non-profits have been identified to be very important in the integration process. The youth groups mentioned that they work hard to attain skills for entering the job market. A group of young students mentioned that they need additional supports for after-school computer literacy and job-focused tools and softwares for addressing the challenges of the job market. They also mentioned that they need enhanced peer counselling and coop supports to obtain more skills for job-readiness and workplace culture. A fair proportion of the newcomers and immigrant families, given their higher number of kids and family members, find it difficult to find houses that would ensure basic-necessities for extended/large families.

The participants in the workshop voiced that recent immigrants are much more likely to experience higher rates of unemployment in their first few years in Canada. The realities and practical oddness that newcomers and immigrants face in entering suitable professional job market poses a considerable concern about the ability of immigrants to transform to relatively high human capital and a willingness to work into strong employment earnings and socioeconomic mobility. Some adults opined that there are systemic barriers in the workforce and an inability among many recent highly skilled newcomers to find employment that is commensurate with their education and experience. They also raised the concern that today's apparent mismatch between the skill and education levels of economic class migrants and labor market performance is an important issue that highlights both integration challenges in a post-industrial economy and a cleavage between immigration policy intent and outcomes.

Respondents recognized that ethnoculturally, Canada is one of only a handful of nations where social and cultural changes are influenced by immigration, rendering a slow but steady change socially and demographically. Newcomers and immigrants present in the workshop voiced that they are aware of the potential for enormous contribution that they would make to the nation's ethnocultural composition and, perhaps more importantly, to the nation's labor force in the decades to come. The fact that migrants tend to be highly educated, in part reflecting the fact that today the majority of immigrants who come to Canada do so through the independent or economic class streams. At the other end of the spectrum, a fair majority of the recent immigrants held university degree compared to the Canadian-born counterparts. There is a gender vacuum here. Most likely due to a more limited education and workplace opportunities, women who are part of the most recent group of immigrants are slightly less likely than men to work exclusively in either English or French.

Looking ahead, as we find from the workshop, in the years to come, newcomers and immigrants will play an ever more important role in the demographic, economic, and social fabric of Manitoba as well as Canada. A large inflow of immigrants each year relative to the size of the population is likely to remain a fixture of Canadian immigration scenario and demography for the foreseeable future. So too is the emphasis on developing human capital and socio-cultural characteristics of newcomers.

As to the quality of economic and social integration in ethnoculturally heterogeneous cities like Winnipeg, we need to think for additional programs and resources for multiple hubs of a knowledge-based economy. Cities are key sites where social inclusion and hence more supports are needed for transforming an abstract goal of integration into an everyday reality. Lucidly, the need for undertaking more collaborative programs suited to the needs of newcomers and immigrants with specific focus on youth was a felt need in Winnipeg.

THANK YOU!

(On Behalf of our Five Collaborative Partners)

Neighborhood Empowerment and Resource Centre (NEARC Inc.) is a Winnipeg-based not-for-profit organization. It has demonstrated its innate skills to work and engage newcomer youths through projects of varying scales in very short period of its inception. It is working towards integration and assimilation of newcomer youths and families through innovative and very practical approaches such as Youth Unites! and Students Unite! working with various organizational partners, two designated High Schools of the Winnipeg School Division and some generous individuals.



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