

EDMONTON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION - JULY 2016

Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre - Igloo Room

July 27, 2016 5 pm to 8:30 pm

“Continue building from the ground up” –Community Participant

On July 27, 2016 from 5 pm to 8:30 PM, the Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership (ELIP) hosted a community conversation with a variety of stakeholders from community groups and organizations in Edmonton. The purpose of this conversation was to inform the participants about the ELIP, and also obtain feedback on how to involve the wider community on the ELIP project. The conversation provided interesting insight and suggestions, and will help support of the ELIP council and working groups. This will be one of a number of community conversations that the ELIP will host for the 2016/2017 funding cycle.

After a brief presentation about the ELIP, participants were divided into groups of three or four and engaged in conversations related to the five ELIP sector working groups. The tables were facilitated by staff from the Multicultural Relations Office (City of Edmonton). After 15 to 20 minutes, participants were asked to move to a sector table they had not yet participated in. This process was repeated until all attendees had an opportunity to converse at each of the five tables. The questions at each table were:

- 1) *What topics should be the focus for this working group?*
- 2) *What are your gifts, experiences and those of your community members that may help inform, guide, or contribute to the work of the ELIP working groups?*
- 3) *How do you see your community participating in (and/or contributing to) this working group?*

WHAT WE LEARNED

Throughout the evening, four main themes emerged from the participants regarding **how the community can inform and guide the work of the ELIP working groups, as well as be involved with the ELIP.** (Note: a copy of all the notes captured from the evening will be shared with this document).

STORY TELLING

A prevalent theme throughout the evening was story telling. At almost every table discussion, the idea about how community members can share stories - both successes and challenges - as a way to contextualize the work of the ELIP was seen as a valuable contribution. By sharing these stories, participants felt that the experience of newcomers would not get lost, and would provide rich value to the work of the ELIP.

SHARING

The community members present during the conversation expressed a keen interest in sharing. Sharing of experiences, practices, as well as resources (namely time). This was seen as a two way street, where the ELIP could also share resources in the form of education, networks, as well as other opportunities to learn from each other as a way to avoid duplicating efforts and build better collaborative opportunities.

VALUE COMMUNITY INPUT AND TIME

Many participants expressed an interest in supporting the work of the ELIP working groups, however, also felt it was important for community members input and time to be respected and compensated in some capacity. While monetary compensation was one idea participants shared, other suggestions included providing a letter of reference (or certificate of participation), further networking, mentorship, or volunteer opportunities, or anything similar that can help community members build on previous skillsets.

CONTINUOUS OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE

There was significant interest to continue these forums of conversation. While the process can be adapted for future events, there was keen interest from participants to keep these forms of dialogue going, and work with community members to build relationships with the wider community. Some participants expressed an interest in conversation cafes, that provide a safe space to discuss, dialogue, and brainstorm ideas around immigration and settlement. Some participants expressed an interest in the brokering of focus groups (and focus groups in different languages) as a way to ensure community members can fully participate in any future conversations.

NEXT STEPS

The information captured during the conversation will support the work of the ELIP Working Groups, and provide opportunities to embed the voice of lived experience with the working groups. In early Fall 2016, the ELIP working groups will reconvene in order to share information about what each respective partner participates in the work of immigration and settlement in Edmonton. The findings from the community conversations will also be presented to the working groups in order to align working group projects with community identified priorities. (A list of identified priorities organized by sector is included at the end of this report).

Future community conversations will also be planned in partnership with interested community groups/organizations.

If you are interested in joining an ELIP working group, please send an email to ELIP@Edmonton.ca

THANK YOU TO OUR REGISTRANTS!

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Didier	Elpanzo	Congolese Community of Edmonton
Siham	Abdillahi	Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton
Lula	Adam	Catholic Social Services
Melanie	Möbius	Edmonton Multicultural Coalition
Kemoh	Mansaray	Edmonton Coalition/Clareview Multicultural Centre
Fatima	Mammadova	Azerbaijan Cultural Society of Edmonton
Richard	Caspa	Bali cultural and development association of Edmonton
Donna	Entz	Mennonite Church Alberta and Mennonite Central Committee
Jibril	Ibrahim	Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton
Ahmed	Abdulkadir	OSCAR
Bashir	Ahmed	SCERDO
Abdi	Mohamed	SOMALILAND CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
Fathia	Wais	Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton
Mohamud	Ugas	OSCAR
Zulfiya	Mirzoeva	Tajik Society of Alberta
Mary	Thomas	Community Member (Former ED of Wood Buffalo MC Association)
Habiba	Mohamud	Rescue The Nomadic Woman
Tesfaye	Ayalew	Africa Centre

Shambhu	Chowdhruy	Millwoods Seniors Centre
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APPENDIX

LIST OF IDENTIFIED WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES (ORGANIZED BY SECTOR)

SECTOR: Community Safety

What topics should be of focus for this working group?

- Media: messaging re: Islam; global perception
- Education/Building Awareness - change the perspectives of fear; Charter of Human Rights; Criminal Justice System; police and community
- Parenting Norms differ from home country
- Domestic Violence - Role Reversal
- Technology - various devices; unknown exploitation
- Conflicted Identity - coping mechanisms to balance; intergenerational conflict
- What safety means and how it differs from the newcomer experience
- Conflict resolution/mediation
- Difference between police officer and a peace officer
- Being safe and feeling safe in “target zones” (i.e. transit stations; walking around alone at night)
- Intersectionality of our lived experiences within our diverse communities
- Youth radicalization; gangs
- Sense of community - meeting neighbours; building trust
- Restorative Justice practices

SECTOR: Research

What topics should be of focus for this working group?

- How quickly are newcomers able to settle and feel included in Edmonton?
- What challenges do newcomers face? How do they circumvent this?
- How much help and support is out there?
- How do we evaluate the protocol and processes of settlement for their effectiveness?
- Positive stories should be told and aspired to; negative stories should be told to learn from
- Credential recognition - what is the process, what are the flaws
- Language tests - lots of inefficiencies in the system, e.g. language testing for those from English-speaking and English-educated people having to take multiple tests
- Perception of newcomers by mainstream
- Clarify terminology: immigrant vs. newcomer; when does one stop being an 'immigrant'
- Causes of poverty
- Rental/housing costs for newcomers
- Youth and their experience and how they navigate identity across two cultures
- Seniors and exclusion and isolation
- Models from other countries, what has worked in settlement in different contexts
- Research should inform advocacy, and needs to be based in subjects that can spur advocacy work and change
- Qualitative and quantitative
- Research must be rigorous, with reliable data collection
- Consultation with newcomers themselves - ethnocultural, participatory, diverse research
- Should be aggregated with age, gender
- Research must be solution-oriented and policy driven with recommendations
- Research must be disseminated to the community
- Must include settlement frontline workers

- Must use accessible terms, language, grassroots-oriented and understandable
- Look at diversity within groups (not just ethnocultural group as THE single aspect of diversity); also look at similar challenges across many different ethnocultural groups
- Socioeconomic demographics and analysis not enough, must use other indicators/clusters/characteristics to tell us more about the issues and challenges
- Issues need to be researched based on what best engages the community, what affects them the most, what their needs are - cannot be based on what is 'successful'
- Research must empower the community, involve them in creating research and solutions
- Must be asset-based
- Allow for online methods, decrease barriers, fit their schedule
- Could find co-operatives in the community and engage them

SECTOR: Health and Community Wellness

What topics should be of focus for this working group?

- Educate newcomers on how to navigate system.
- Emergency / Family Doctor: When to use each.
- Not healthy for system if not used appropriately.
- Mental health / Emotional well being caused by isolation, trauma:
 - Slower in other cultures.
 - Even for us hard to speak out about.
 - People with mental health issues treated very poorly.
- Mental Health / Emotional well being caused by isolation, trauma.
- Food:
 - Diet has changed.
 - Calories aren't being burned off.
- Norm is to talk.
- Few/no mechanisms to come together.
- Create space to come together for conversation cafe's.
- Health/Community wellness.
- Appropriate ways of helping.
- Emotional well-being.
- Work long hours. Can't use recreation.

- Income qualifying but working hours don't allow access.
- Research: People working minimum wage jobs still need access to subsidies.
- Men's Health.
- Health Insurance / Family Doctor / Dental: For the whole spectrum of newcomers.
- 1st Step - Council needs to know what has been done first (gaps).
- Wellness: Building awareness of Rec Centres and other health options.
- Health: Not just body.
- Mental Health:
 - Awareness of trauma. What needs to be in place for supports?
 - Gaps in Schools.
- Sexual Health:
 - HIV prevention.
 - Culturally appropriate -> access without judgement.
- Food:
 - Dietary.
 - Used to be organic, not abundant, limitations.
 - Here - high sugar, more salt, not aware of health consequences.
 - Diabetes, heart.
 - Eat, sit.
 - People used to be active.
 - Here hours and hours of TV
 - Need access to transportation. Feeling welcome. Understanding the system.
 - Youth and kids need orientation.
 - Facilities need to accommodate newcomers.
 - Working groups need to look at gaps.
- Lifestyle.
- Health & Safety.
- Workshops / Awareness.
- How to be aware of food (pork) nutrition.
- Not enough money to buy.
- Need more opportunities to access affordable food.
- First year food vouchers because \$600/month for settlement. Need subsidy.
- Need separate facilities by culture.

- Problem: Cut the root and watering the shoot.
- *We <- no "I" in we'll. Premis seen in continuum.
- Mental Health.
- Appreciating different levels of stress (ORS).
- People can resist some stressors:
 - Not succeeding in schools.
 - Profile coming.
- Health is not the absence of illness. How you feel.
- *Interconnectedness:
 - Food.
 - Lifestyle change -> resulting problems.
 - Spiritually.
 - Mentally.
- Training.
- Educating from within.
- Multi-faceted approach realistic.
- Bring indigenous knowledge base. Social - determinants of health.
- Challenging the model of supporting health of newcomers.
- Supporting health of newcomers.

SECTOR: Settlement and Inclusion

- Not duplicating program - explore identify settlements/gaps.
- Seek collaboration.
- Ensure ELIP is not duplicating.
- Identify ways of inclusion - at individual level, neighborhood and community level.
- Identify gaps to inclusion and work with partners to respond to it.
- Make sure settlement and inclusion gets together.
- One window operation.
- No duplication of service - collaboration.
- Whole immigration structure needs to be re-evaluated.
- Housing, health, transportation.
- Racism and discrimination.
- System orientation.
- Housing, health, literacy, link up gradation, transportation.
- Orientation to the system.
- Credential recognitions, employment.
- Opportunities for networking.

- Cultural awareness and response to racism and discrimination.
- Crime prevention, social justice.
- Youth issues, mental health.
- Orientation to the system.
- System orientation - how things work in the early stages of resettlement.
- Job related orientation and understanding the rules.
- Child subsidies.
- Consider policies related to jobs.
- Salary - linear access to be based on minimum wage and not the total salary.
- Teachers and school participation.
- Issues of parents participation.
- Teachers need cultural orientation - as well as child service.
- Learn from the Syrian Settlement experience.
- Consider an integration process that would work.
- Lack volunteers to help navigate through the system, membership.
- Community can be invaluable in consultation.

SECTOR: Skills Training, Education, and Employment

- Language (could be first step).
- “De-Valued, De-Recognized Skills.”
 - Accreditation.
- Programs to work on existing skills.
 - Mentoring on: resume, keeping jobs in their established area of work.
- Bringing people here to “McDonald-ize” us.
- Had to re-educate when I came here, even though I had a Ph.D.
- Bridge program opened up for other professions and other countries (especially English trained professionals).
- Close the gap between employers/employees.
- Placement of kids by age in school.
- Youth skills link.
- Better transitioning of credentials upon arrival.
 - Creative solutions in how to use skill set.
- Pre-existing acceptance of diplomas, degrees.
- Different employment/educational programs for: youth, seniors, professionals.

- Teach the new immigrants the importance of volunteerism.
- Basic vocational training ... career focused training.
- Networking for first generation youth (those that have received full education here). (i.e., expanding ERIEC program to those youth).
- Follow generations to determine how well integration is happening.
- Look at people's full set of gifts.
- Subsidy so don't have to work 12 hours at minimum wage.
 - Lack of family time and time to contribute to community.
- What is expected from someone when applying for a job.
- Establishing networks in a person's skill set ... sharing networks of relevance.
- Teaching employers to have newcomers in mind for their hiring strategies ... from the beginning.
- Advocate for a greater value being given to experience.
- Share the value of newcomers with the general public.