The Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton: A Community Research

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Abstract

The purpose of the community research is to answer the research question: What is the success of immigrant and refugee communities in providing support to newcomers? This research documents the experiences of ethnocultural communities in supporting newcomers to Edmonton. The findings in this community research contribute to building a body of knowledge that will inform the development of policies and programs to support the successful integration of newcomers into Canadian society and create productive intercultural collaborations. The results of the research show that ethnocultural communities are the most important source of support for newcomers. The community supports covered emotional comfort, information on services and responding to practical needs in the early stages of integration. The research highlighted the important contributions of ethnocultural communities in supporting newcomers and the role of municipalities in nurturing their integration into their new homeland.
Executive Summary

“Community Research on the Experiences of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton,” coordinated by The Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health and Wellbeing and funded by Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) and City of Edmonton Social Development Grant and the Prairie Centre for Excellence on Immigration and Integration (PCERII), is a community research project that aims to document the experiences of ethnocultural communities in supporting newcomers to Edmonton. One hundred sixty individuals (160) from 13 communities participated in the research; 153 are newcomers in their first five years in Canada and seven are community leaders.

Key Findings

According to the research participants, support most needed in the first few years centers on employment, housing, transportation, learning English education and orientation to Canadian culture. Although their priority may shift as newcomers stay longer.

According to the participants, the major source of settlement support is community-based and culturally based. Help comes to them from friends, families, community members, ethno-cultural community organizations, churches and neighbors. Community support covers emotional comfort, information about services and responding to practical needs of newcomers at their early stage of integration. The majority of participants are satisfied with support from their own community. The longer they reside in Edmonton, the more they appreciate their community’s support. To the participants, community itself is an irreplaceable relationship, where they find trust, comfort and, most importantly, a sense of being at home. The majority of the participants offer all kinds of help to other members of their community.

Employment, education and family reunification are on the top among a number of unmet settlement needs. Newcomers have issues on accessing formal support. Sometimes they are not aware of formal support. Sometimes they find formal services do not address their needs.

The results of the research revealed that nearly all the participants have received and benefited from supports provided by their community. From the participants’ experience, the success of ethnocultural communities in providing support to newcomers can be described as the following:
1. Timely and appropriate access to supports needed by newcomers through use of first language, experiential knowledge of someone from their own culture and availability of community members.

2. Holistic support

The participants spoke about the multi-dimensionality of supports they received from their communities that made a big difference in their quality of settlement experience. These supports include providing emotional comfort as they struggle to start their new lives to connecting the newcomers to other members of their cultural community, including support for spiritual well being, and helping them to navigate the formal system to access services.

3. Enduring and “unconditional” support

The quality of support from communities is what defines the success of community support provided to newcomers. In the participants’ own words: “the community is always there; it has no expiry date and there are no eligibility requirements”.

The benefits of these supports to immigrant health have been identified as enhancing the process of integration, facilitating network building that could lead to opportunities for employment and access to resources and lastly empowering individuals to gain control of their lives in a new country (Simich et al, 2005).

This research suggests that the community is a critical arena for settlement and integration efforts; that the discourse on settlement and integration acknowledges the contributions of the community to effectively support newcomers; and that the policy sector recognizes this important role, particularly the jurisdiction that is closest to those affected, which is the municipality.

The set of recommendations highlights the vital role of municipalities in creating an environment conducive to intercultural exchange and collaboration, engendering inclusive practices and, nurturing the contributions of its diverse residents in shaping the future of the municipality.

1. Recognize and incorporate the role of ethnocultural organizations, community groups and community leaders in supporting newcomers in the over-all settlement and integration framework at the local level through:
• Building leadership capacities that would strengthen ethnocultural organizations to build supportive and cohesive communities who can effectively interact with the larger society
• Creating spaces and opportunities for organizations and groups to formally participate in the settlement and integration process

2. Nurture community-oriented and culturally-based supports for newcomers in their early stages of integration by:

• Facilitating intercultural collaboration and partnerships with neighborhood centers to sustain the range of supports that communities are already providing to newcomers i.e. providing space for Cultural Survival Classes, entrepreneurial assistance, when appropriate to mutual aid initiatives, child care support for the women’s group, family reunification support etc.
• Exploring the possibility of integrating community-initiated sports activities in the local recreation programming
• Making settlement and integration activities an integral part of community building initiative in the neighborhood and communities, including increasing opportunities for intercultural interaction between ethnocultural groups and other community organizations

3. Enhance the ‘multicultural readiness’\(^1\) of the municipality in maximizing opportunities for successful integration of newcomers by:

• Building cultural competency of municipal workers (from program developers, planners and service providers) that would enable them to use a repertoire of cultural skills and processes in working with effectively with multicultural communities
• Developing urban policies that address cultural differences in areas such housing, design of public and recreational spaces, community building
• Demonstrate culturally appropriate ways of engaging multicultural communities and negotiating intercultural issues so that they can exercise their civic responsibilities in a democratic society
• Assume leadership in leveraging resources for settlement and integration of newcomers to the provincial and federal government

It is envisioned that this community research will stimulate constructive conversations and dialogue among policy makers, service providers and ethnocultural communities that will result in actions.

\(^1\) Term introduced by David Ley (1999) and cited by Sandercock, 2004.
Introduction

In 2009, the Multicultural Coalition received support from Family and Community Support Services to conduct a three-part program to support immigrants and refugee communities in Edmonton. The All Together Now Program consists of research, community animation training and leadership training. “Community Research on the Experiences of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton” is the research component of the three-part program.

The Multicultural Coalition conducted a series of discussions with Coalition members to identify needs and opportunities as a basis for developing the community research component for the City’s All Together Program. The Coalition members shared their own personal experience. As newcomers, the discussion focused on and how they have been supported by their own communities in their transition to the new homeland. From these discussions emerged the idea of documenting the support that communities provide in the settlement and integration of newcomers which the Coalition members felt have remained invisible. Thus, this community research was conceived.

The Multicultural Coalition coordinated this community research under the guidance of the Community Research Advisory Committee composed of community members, academia and the Coalition Board. The community research is anchored on principles of active engagement of research participants, grounded on ethical norms and sound research practice.

The report synthesizes the collective experience of how communities supported them to ease a long process of settlement integration. It is envisioned that from a deeper understanding of their struggles and their aspirations for a better life for themselves, their families, communities and their new home, Canada, we will be able to strengthen the role of communities in the successful integration of newcomers in our society.

Situating the Research

According to 2006 Census, two hundred ethnic origins were reported in Canada and among those, 5,068,100 were visible minorities. This consists of 16.2% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006). The proportion of visible minority population in Canada is estimated to grow to one fifth of the total population by 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Immigrants and refugees account
for most of the growth in visible minority groups\textsuperscript{3}. Edmonton is among the top Canadian cities that have a visible minority population over 1 million (Statistics Canada, 2006).

In order to achieve the goal of helping immigrants meet the social, economic and cultural needs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) financially and administratively support three settlement programs the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), the Host Program and, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). ISAP funds local service organizations to provide direct settlement services to immigrants including translation, counseling, orientation, and employment-related services. Findings\textsuperscript{4} show ISAP is successful to those who have access to ISAP programs. Yet although many local service provider organizations (SPOs) recruit volunteers from immigrant communities to deliver community-based services, survey participants still report barriers in receiving services due to lack of transportation, child care and translation. In terms of adequacy of capacity and services gaps, the survey evaluation concludes that improvement for better settlement services lies in making programs known to newcomers, making capacity of services consistent and understanding the needs of newcomers.

Responding to the economic growth at an average annual rate of 3.7\% (Human Resources and Employment, et al, 2005) prior to the current recession, Alberta was a popular destination for newcomers. Like other provinces, Alberta prepared strategies to attract and retain immigrants to maintain the momentum of the economy. Along with other provincial departments, the Human Resources and Employment of Alberta (2005, presently the Ministry of Alberta Employment and Immigration) crafted a policy document, “Supporting immigrants and immigration to Alberta,” in which it outlined guiding principles for immigration to integrate immigrants and their families into new lives in Alberta. Core principles reflect a community-based, collaborative, fair and inclusive, holistic, sustainable, and accountable approach.

The stories local community members shared about their lives in Edmonton and their appreciation to their communities raised the question on the experience of newcomers’ settlement and ethnocultural communities’ role in the process of settlement in the City.

While recognizing the role of ethnocultural communities in immigrant settlement as the “glue” (McIsaac, 2003) to retain newcomers, ethnocultural communities

\textsuperscript{3} The top four source countries for immigration to Alberta were China, the Philippines, India and Pakistan in 2004 (Human Resources and Employment, et al, 2005).

were not included in the tripartite (federal, provincial and municipal) settlement agreement. This community research is situated in the context of a need to review newcomers’ experiences and how the policies have been lived out by newcomers. This research is also situated in the context of a need of information for SPOs in order to make services consistent and met the needs of newcomers.

**Rationale for the Research**

I am from Sudan. When I first came here, everything was new and needed to learn about. I was almost hit by a car, for example, before I learned the etiquette of street crossing. Luckily someone from my community taught me the basic things in my language. Now I am in college and able to help other members of my community like I was helped. One day I was just in time to stop a lady from mistakenly filling bottles with bleach for children’s lunch. I thought it was urgent to teach newcomers of my community about grocery shopping in our own language. And grocery shopping became the top priority in my community’s Cultural Survival Classes. (Community member)

Similar stories like this one are commonly documented in our research despite the existence of settlement services organizations that have many programs to help newcomers. Communities and community members have been playing an important and special role in assisting newcomers to integrate into their new lives in Canada. Much attention, however, is on the other end of the spectrum of immigrant settlement, the policies and formal support (McIsaac, 2003; Sadiq, 2004; Human Resources and Employment, et al, 2005; Lo, et al., 2007; Foster, 2008). Community support has received relatively limited support and very little attention is paid to the lived experiences of newcomers who have to access services. There is a need therefore to bring to the forefront newcomers’ survival experiences with community support and how community support breaks down the challenges their frustration of settling in Edmonton.

Studying lived experiences provides a way to see people big (Greene 1995) and “from the point of view of the participant” (p. 10). Studying newcomers’ lived experiences gives policy makers and policy implementers an alternative (Vinz, 1997) perspective on immigrant settlement from the vantage points of newcomers, highlighting the settlement support from ethnocultural communities. As the “issue of immigrant settlement is evolving as one of the most important questions of public policy in Canada” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. 1), we hope that the participants’ experiences bring different angles of reflection for future citizens of Canada.
A Review of Literature

Settlement, Integration and Social Inclusion

Canada is among the few countries in the world that has a policy to admit permanent residents to build a strong nation (Statistics Canada, 2005). Integration, settlement and social inclusion are concepts integral to understanding the immigration and settlement experience.

Settlement

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship of Australia defines settlement as “the period of adjustment that occurs following a migrant or refugee's arrival in a new country, as they become established and independent in their new society.”

In the literature on immigration, settlement and integration the terms are “often used interchangeably” (Henderson, 2004). Settlement process is multidimensional and involves all aspects of immigrants’ and their families’ lives (Fletcher, 1999; Henderson, 2004). Integration is a reciprocal process. Settlement focuses on individual immigrant’s adjustment to the new country rather than host society adaptation (Henderson, 2004). Although settlement can be a long process, it focuses on short-term goals of “the early parts of the longer integration process” (Fletcher, 1998 as cited by Henderson, 2004).

Integration

By definition, integration means incorporation as equals into a society or an organization of individuals of different groups. According to Bosswick and Heckmann (2006), integrating immigrants into a host society should be understood as social integration and can be defined as “the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society” (p. 11).

Statistics Canada defines integration of newcomers as “adjustment of immigrants and their children to the economic, social, legal, and cultural life in Canada.” For the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), accessing health services and education, and finding housing and employment are identified as the key areas of integration. For some scholars, “[i]ntegration sets into play complex relationships that cannot be reduced to estimates of a few select indicators (e.g. employment, sector of activity, income level, place of residence, family situation, etc.)” (OECD as cited by Henderson, 2003, p. 8).
Integration is also understood as a reciprocal process that involves adaption of immigrants and the host society (Henderson, 2004). For immigrants in transition, integration is usually a matter of adapting to the new society while continuing to maintain their cultural identities (Israelite, et al. 1999)

Social Inclusion

The Canada Multiculturalism Act has established the legal basis for promoting social inclusion. Omidvar and Richmond (2003) explain the meaning of social inclusion in immigrant settlement. They identified five dimensions of social inclusion: valued recognition, human development, involvement, proximity, and material well being. The goal of social inclusion is to make sure that “all children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of society’ (p. viii).

Canada is considered to have one of the most open and welcoming immigration policies in the world (p. 12). Nonetheless, inclusion challenges exist for immigrants, refugee claimants and visible minorities particularly due to low rate of employment. Omidvar and Richmond (2003) proposed a social inclusion framework that would involve access to trades and professions, local autonomy and immigrant settlement, the immigrant dispersion policy, newcomer children and youth in the schools, public defense of refugee rights and student loans to all newcomers. They frame the meaning of true inclusion as:

... a radical reform of our policies of newcomer settlement, but also the development of economic, political, social and cultural mechanisms and practices that include immigrants and refugees as full participants. (p. 19)

Attraction and Retention

Attraction and retention are words used in relevant literature on immigration especially when the literature is written from the institutional point of view. Attracting and retaining immigrants are the focus of “Supporting immigrants and immigration to Alberta” (2005), a policy document crafted by Human Resources and Employment of Alberta and other provincial departments in order to address the issues of labor shortage.

McIsaac (2003) used metaphors, magnets and glue, to explain what attract immigrants and what convince them to stay. Magnets are the elements such as employment opportunities that attract immigrants to move to Canadian cities. Glue refers to the “social foundation that fosters health and well-being” (p.4). A
strong and “vibrant” ethno-cultural community builds up the glue of retention and presents a convincing reason for immigrants to stay.

**Settlement Services**

“Settlement services are offered to help newly arrived permanent residents—particularly refugees—settle, adapt and integrate into Canadian society” (LSIC 2003, p. 9). The Government of Manitoba defines settlement services to be “a range of programs and supports that address the challenges newcomers face as they enter, and grow into happy and productive members of, their chosen community” (Prairie Global Management, p. 5). Settlement services include initial settlement, language training, employment assistance and the development of skills to facilitate long-term integration.

Lo, et al. (2007) conducted a geographical analysis to examine the spatial relations between immigrant settlement patterns and the location of settlement services in Toronto Census Metropolitan Area with a concentration on the spatial and organizational factors that impact newcomer access to and use of social services. Newcomers from El Salvador, Iran, Jamaica, Mainland China, Pakistan, Russia, Somali and Sri Lanka were the focus of the research. Services on employment, housing and language were analyzed.

Among the many findings from this research, several are informative to the community research. For instance, the study found well-established communities have “relatively high level of institutional completeness” (p.19). As a result, newcomers from these communities are better served with, for example, more programs in the first languages. On the contrary, newcomers from emerging communities that “had developed few agencies” (p. 19) tended to be less served. Similar to the Statistics Canada’s LSIC (2005), the study found language training, housing and employment were the most needed settlement services.

It also concludes that the availability of service providers for immigrants is relatively higher in big cities. There existed an unbalanced accessibility to settlement services among newcomers. New immigrants from particular communities were “over served, under-served, or un-served” (p. 59). The study concludes that access to settlement services need to be improved.

Sadiq (2004) conducted a systematic literature review on newcomer settlement services in Canada with a focus on the relationships between settlement service supply and demand. His observations about ISAs (Immigrant settlement agencies) suggested that
ethno-specific ISAs are the preferred mode of newcomer service among many settlement professionals, because they offer three main benefits over multi-service agencies. First, ethno-specific ISAs provide culturally- and linguistically-sensitive services to ethno-racial newcomers... Second, ethno-specific ISAs act as a source of newcomer employment and volunteer experience... Third, ethno-specific ISAs are more easily accessible than large multi-service ISAs, because they tend to be located in the neighborhoods. (pp. 15-16)

**Immigrant Experience**

A review of the literature on immigrant settlement experiences reveals a lack of documentation and research on ethnocultural communities’ role in immigration settlement and their contributions to immigrant settlement as described in the Sudanese young man’s story mentioned earlier. This observation suggests that this community research on newcomers’ settlement experiences with an emphasis on community support is a study in need. Previous research on immigrant experiences may be considered “circumstantial evidence” to this community research.

The LSIC (2005) conducted by Statistics Canada revealed information on immigrants’ ability to integrate into Canadian society. The first wave of interviews asked immigrants who had been in Canada for 6 months about their experiences in the areas of housing, language, health, education, employment and settlement experience. The survey research found:

- Having a home and improving English were very important. An interesting finding is that family and friends may have an impact on where immigrants choose to live.
- Having appropriate health care service providers and the providers’ ability to speak the immigrant’s native language. Education is important or very important to most respondents. Education or training is viewed as an opportunity to enhance integration in Canada.
- Employment is seen as the key indicator of successful settlement. As for means of finding a job, asking friends and relatives is among the most often used method to identify sources of employment.
- “Close ethnic and/or cultural ties are important” (p. 84) in settling in Canada. Newcomers are also found more likely to establish friendships with individuals from the same cultural background. Majority of newcomers (83%) stated the importance of maintaining ethno-cultural values and traditions. A substantial proportion of participants (93%) expressed the willingness to learn Canadian values and traditions. Regarding the initial settlement experiences in Canada, the report
concludes that the process of settling and integration is complex and therefore, “family and friends are an important part of the integration process” (p. 88).

Apart from well funded and government sponsored research projects, for example, Statistics Canada and Prairie Metropolis Centre, minor studies (Topen, 2008; Peruvemba & Porter, 2008; Cottrell, 2008; & Israelite, et al, 1999) on specific immigrant groups presented settlement experiences in different context and from different perspectives. Topen’s (2008) study emphasized on Muslim women’s employment experiences in Halifax. The researcher found non-recognition of international work experiences including foreign educational credentials was a major challenge for these women. Israelite, et al studied Somali refugee women’s settlement experiences in Toronto with an emphasis on child welfare, housing, and the consequences from policy restrictions on access to postsecondary education, employment and family reunification.

Peruvemba and Porter (2008) explored the barriers of integration for immigrant women in Newfoundland and Labrador in the areas of employment, language, accreditation, women’s issues and health issues. Their study revealed that immigrant, especially refugee, women needed to heal from their own trauma. At the same time, they had to deal with sometimes “rebellious” children while shifting to foreign landscapes. The study found depression was the main health concern. Unemployment, isolation, poor living conditions and lack of transportation were the primary causal factors of depression.

Cottrell’s (2008) project had a focus on providing services on immigrant women. She observed the difficulties immigrant women from non-mainstream cultural backgrounds faced in accessing support when they experienced violence. For some participants, finding help was not easy either because there were no friends and family members to turn to, or they did not know how to seek organized services, or there were no support services from their own communities due to smaller numbers of immigrants. Speaking to the formal services, Cottrell’s participants expressed their hopes:

“...that social services should be accessible in the immigrant's own language, or translators should be available to help them understand available resources. ...it would be helpful if the counselors were women, and of the same country of origin as the clients.” (P. 136)

While doing the systematic literature review for his paper on settlement services in Canada, Sadiq (2004) observed that there was “little evidence to suggest that federal and provincial governments are actively funding newcomer settlement research” (p. 4). He also experienced difficulties in accessing the literature. We share his impression in many ways especially when we find limited research and documentations on settlement support from individual community members and organized community effort. We expect this community research may address some of the issues revealed in Cottrell (2008) and document the experiences of ethnocultural communities in supporting newcomers.

Social Capital

Social capital is an important concept to understand immigrants, their well-being and the significance of ethnocultural communities to them because their “lives are influenced, not merely by how much [they] know, and what [they] possess, but also by who [they] know” (Lin as cited by Kazemipur, 2004, p. 2). Kazemipur (2004) adopted the definition of social capital as “a product of social networks and the resources available through such networks, as well as the extent to which the people in such networks are willing to share their resources with one another” (p. 5). Immigrants and refugees, while leaving their social capital behind, “tend to develop stronger communal ties and to draw more heavily on their communal resources.”

Social capital can be understood as a combination of bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital is building connections with people of similar cultural backgrounds. Bridging social capital is connecting with people outside one’s community. And finally, linking social capital is connecting with those who are from different background, but have well-established social status.

Kazemipur’s (2004) national survey on immigrants and non-immigrants in Canada suggests that immigrants “have less ethnically-diverse networks, and this is true for those of all ethnic origins, except for individuals of British, French, and German backgrounds” (p. 13).

In summary, Kazemipur’s (2004) study shows that “immigrants lag behind the native-born Canadians in many important aspects of their social capital: they have a smaller social network, with a lower socioeconomic status, less ethnic diversity, more religious diversity; also, their networks are less frequently utilized, and have a smaller economic pay-off” (p. 1).
Purpose of the Community Research

The purpose of this community research is to understand the level and extent of success of immigrant and refugee communities in providing support to newcomers. This research will document the experiences of ethnocultural communities in supporting newcomers to Edmonton. The findings in this community research will contribute to building a body of knowledge that will inform the development of policies and programs to support the successful integration of newcomers into Canadian society and create productive intercultural collaborations.

Methodology

Identifying Issues and the Research Approach

The topic of success of communities providing settlement support to their newcomers in their own community emerged as the most critical issue among several other issues and concerns. These other concerns included community capacity building, youth related concerns, and health issues. The research question was thus formed to respond to the identified issue: “What is the success of communities providing settlement support to their own community members?”

A community research approach\(^6\) was adopted to guide the project by involving community animators in the research process. The Coalition defines community research as a systematic way of gathering information. It focuses on identifying the needs of the community and the goals to improve communities and respond to their issues. It is a strategic exploration situated within individuals’ experiences and linked to broader systemic and social issues. The Coalition believes that community research creates awareness of multicultural communities and helps identify the stage of integration these communities are in. It builds community capacity, and ensures sustainability, and unlike academic research, remains accountable to the community members and tries to improve the quality of their experience. Generally, the results are communicated back to community, who then reflect on recommendations and suggestions for “next steps”.

\(^6\) The community based research aims not merely to advance understanding, but also to ensure that knowledge contributes to making a concrete and constructive difference in the world” (Loka as cited by Flicker, et, al, 2009, p. 242).
The community research was guided by the following principles:

- Recognizing community as a unit of identity
- Building on strengths and resources within the community
- Facilitating collaborative, equitable involvement of all partners in all phases of the research
- Integrating knowledge and intervention for mutual benefit of all partners
- Promoting a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social needs
- Involving a cyclical and iterative process
- Addressing health from both positive and ecological perspectives
- Disseminating findings and knowledge gained among all partners
- Involving a long-term commitment comprising of all partners. (Israel et al, 1998).

**Research Planning**

Research Advisory Committee

An eleven-member Research Advisory Committee was formed including community animators, board members of the Multicultural Coalition and researchers from the University of Alberta.

Community members, community animators and research advisors participated in identifying research issues such as determination of participant profile, data collection methods, and formulation of questions for interviews and focus groups.

Participating communities

Eleven communities participated in the community research. They included the Caribbean, Chinese (Mandarin speaking), Eritrean-Ethiopian, Filipino, Franco-African, Oromo, Sierra Leone-Liberian, Somali, Spanish-speaking, Sudanese Lou Nuer, and Zimbabwean communities. They were selected based on the following criteria:

- Availability of community animator researchers
- Willingness to participate
- Ease of accessibility
• Representative of emerging immigrant/refugee community

Individual participants

Participants were adults from the participating communities who had been in Canada up to five years. Community leaders were invited to be interviewed for their longtime involvement in community support and capacity building.

Data collection

One-on-one interviews and focus groups were the chosen collection methods. One-on-one interview participants from the eleven communities were categorized into three categories by the length of their stay in Canada i.e. up to one year, up to two years, and three to five years. Six individuals from each of the participating communities were involved in the interviews with the animator researcher from their own community for 45 to 60 minutes.

The one-hour focus group session of nine groups was arranged on August 29th 2009. Two additional focus group sessions were conducted on August 13 and September 20, 2009, respectively. The focus group aimed at examining the recurrent responses from the interviews and generating a richer description or explanation as well as generating new data not captured in the interviews.

The interview guides and orientation activities

Following the suggestions of community members and the Research Advisory Committee, simple and semi-structured discussion guides were prepared to discuss community members’ experiences. The key questions asked at the one-on-one interviews were as follows:

1. What help/support was required upon initial arrival and what was most important in during the first year of stay in Edmonton?
   Examples:
   • Airport pick-up
   • finding a home
   • finding a job
   • admitting children to school/daycare
2. Was help/support received?

7 See Appendix D and C
Where was help/support received from: from within community or from an organization outside of the community
How did individuals become aware of available services and resources?
3. Individuals were asked to provide some examples or stories of the support they received from their communities.
4. Did individuals help other community members newly arriving to Edmonton?
   • Why?
   • What was done to help newly arriving community members?

The key questions asked at the focus group session:

1. How do you define success for immigrants/refugees?
   Example:
   • Family reunification: sponsor husband or wife for example
   • Financial success: car & house
   • Educational success: children in school, graduating, or attending university
   • Employment success: you have a job in your professional training
   • Feeling of belonging or inclusion: feel good because you belong and are a part of Canada

2. Describe what your community support looks like.
   Probe:
   • How does this community support help you succeed (refer to answers from question 1)?
   • What does it include?

Two training sessions, interviews and focus groups, were arranged for community animator/researchers before starting data collection in the field. A research manual with background information of the community research, ethical norms of conducting research and research activities they were responsible for was created for community researchers. They also had an opportunity of 5-hour period to practice interviewing and facilitating focus group discussions following the interview and focus group question guides.

**In the Field**

The community animators were responsible for inviting participants from their communities to take part in the research.
The first one-on-one interview was conducted on July 9th and the last one was completed on August 30th. All the interviews were in participants’ native tongue. Animator researchers took notes of the interviews and translated them into English. They were also requested to take observation notes about the process of interviewing including participants’ expressions and emotions.

The focus group session was a one-day event. Animator researchers extended the invitations to newcomers from their communities and arranged transportation for those who needed it. They facilitated the focus group discussions and translated the notes and the data into English.

Special Features of the Research

The two special features of this research are:

- **Community animators/researchers engaged in the research process:** Community animator/researchers are bilingual and bi-cultural member of the community who are trusted by their community members. They were selected to engage communities in the research. Their key role was to stimulate interest among community members and generate their participation in the research. Twelve animator researchers from 11 ethno-cultural communities had dual responsibilities in the research, as research participants as well as researchers. As research participants, they were interviewed individually. As researchers, they recruited participants, interviewed them and facilitated focus groups discussions.

- **Use of heritage languages in data collection:** Interviews were all done in participants’ choice of languages shared by community animator/researchers and participants. Including English, the other ten languages are Amharic, Filipino, French, Kriol, Nuer, Mandarin Chinese, Oromo, Shona, Somali and Spanish.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used as the primary method of data analysis in this research. Data from interviews and focus group discussions were coded in order to gather recurrent patterns of responses and synthesized into themes. The purpose of the first stage of analysis was to obtain an accurate description of collected data. Themes from the data were developed during topic coding. The second stage was to cross-analyze the notes/data obtained from the three groups of participants, newcomer participants, focus group participants and community leader participants for more focal patterns.
Data analysis was a participatory process. The community animator/researchers and the Research Advisory Committee members were involved in the data analysis process. The community animator/researchers’ observation notes helped in data analysis by providing cultural context of the data.

The preliminary findings were presented to community members of the Coalition and the public including participants, community researchers, guests from City of Edmonton and the provincial legislature, at the Annual General Meeting of the Multicultural Coalition on October 17, 2009.

The Research Participants

A total of 160 individuals participated in the research. Sixty-eight (68) participants were interviewed. Eighty-five (85) participated in the focus groups. Seven community leaders were also interviewed.

Gender Distribution

Among the 66 participants who reported gender, 25 were males and 41 were females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Reported</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age Distribution

Among the 55 participants who reported their age upon arrival in Canada, 16 participants were in the age range of 15 to 25; 34 participants were in the age range of 26 to 40; 5 were in the age range of 41 to 60.

Table B

---

8 See Appendix G
### Table C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Marital Status</th>
<th>Reported</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married living with spouse</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married but spouse living elsewhere</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated / Divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-law relationships</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Immigration Status

Among 65 participants who reported their current resident status, 46 have permanent resident status; 6 are temporary foreign workers; 4 are refugee claimants; 3 participants are government sponsored; 3 are students and 3 visitors.
Focus Group Participants

Eighty-five participants attended 11-focus group sessions. 10 focus groups consist of community member participants. One focus group consists of community animators. (Table E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Member Focus Groups</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Mandarin</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrean-Ethiopian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francophone-African</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromo</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone-Liberian/Caribbean</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia/Indian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish-speaking</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese Lou Nuer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Community Animator Focus Group | 12 |
| Total                           | 85 |

Community Leader Participants

Seven community leaders from 4 communities (Filipino, Sudanese, Uganda Haitian community) participated in the research. 6 of them have been in Canada for over 10 years.
Research Findings and Discussions

Support Newcomers Needs

The research participants were asked about what support newcomers needed to settle down in Canada, their knowledge about services and their sources of support when they first arrived in Edmonton.

1.1 Support Most Needed

All the one-on-one participants were asked the question on the most needed settlement support. The responses reflect on every aspect of basic needs to survive in Canada such as learning host languages, finding a job, acquiring a SIN card, and accessing health services. Majority of the participants identified the following issues as the most important support concerns for newcomers in their first years:

- Employment
- Accommodation
- Transportation
- Learning English
- Education/go back to school/registering kids to school
- Orientation to Canadian cultures

The research shows that newcomers most often require support with searching for employment opportunities and identifying appropriate accommodation. Transportation is also key to successful survival in Edmonton.

Access to easy and reliable transportation services such as airport pickup on arrival and for visits to grocery stores, schools, and other places to acquire necessary settlement services are some of the most urgent requirements for newcomers. Newcomers who come to Canada with their families also need help with admitting their children in schools as well as enrolling themselves in ESL classes. Most newcomers encounter difficulties shifting to new and different landscaped and struggle to acquaint themselves socially, culturally and linguistically to the new environment.

Participants who have already spent more than a year in Canada (i.e. those who have spent up to two years and up to five years) also need continued support in the basic areas of survival. Researches in the past have shown that settlement is not a short-term process and ‘continues through out the life of newcomers’ (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. 8). The experiences of participants for this
research also resonate with this theme. Further more, as time passes by newcomers identify other newer issues. For example, participants in the second year, family reunion/bringing family members to Canada is an issue they need help with. And those who have lived in Canada for longer than two years, health and mental wellness grow to be an important concern. Health issues can be caused by depression from unemployment, social isolation and poor economical conditions (Henderson, 2004; Peruvemba & Porter, 2008). Additionally, after the first year, newcomers try to acquire “more specific and more advanced” help with finding better employment opportunities, degrees and buying/owning a home. A participant, in third year of her settlement experience in Edmonton, described her priorities:

In the first year I just wanted to find my own home, then find information about how to get into an English class. In the second year [I had] to improve my English and stay up to date in school to find a better job to support my self. In third year [I had] to get training for a decent job and to live a normal life.

1.2 Knowledge of Access to Support Services

Across the three groups of participants (the first-year, second-year and third-fifth year), the major source of information on where to get services is through informal social network, such as friends, family members and community members. Internet comes second because of lack of sufficient access to technical equipments. The third source is service providers such as settlement services and services provided by the City of Edmonton and provincial governments. Participants also felt that “word of mouth” is more efficient than brochures acquired from various offices. Usually, it is from informal social network that newcomers get information about formal services such as settlement agencies. Participant described their experiences of accessing much needed information on critical services:

I knew where to get help by asking friends and community members about where to get certain services. Our friends also advised us about where to go to get help.

Friends and neighbors told me about what my community and other organizations can do for immigrants.

1.3 Sources of Settlement Support

The LSIC (2005) suggestion that “new immigrants most often depend on relative or household members and friends for help with problems in all four
areas\(^9\) of integration examined, followed by settlement organizations” (p. 95) is certainly in sync with the experiences of participants of this research.

Sadiq (2004) summarized the strengths of ethnocultural specific Immigrant Settlement Agencies (ISAs). Two of the strengths, culturally-and linguistically-sensitive services and accessibility, are reflected in our participants’ lived experiences.

Although newcomers receive support and services from formal settlement service provides, an important source of support upon arrival was their immediate cultural communities. They received help from friends, families, community members, ethno-cultural community organizations, churches and neighbors. Participants agree that community-based help is easily accessible and available, at all times. Community members understand what and how to help because their lived experiences. Additionally, there is no concern over language barriers or any hesitations when seeking help from community members.

First-year newcomer participants said:

I got help from my community who is my primary help up until now by showing me all important doors to my first year success in settling down here in Edmonton.

I did get support mainly from community members. They showed me where to go for extra help. My community showed me all support systems around the city.

Second-year newcomer participants said:

I got help from my community and close friends about information and transportation.

I got moral support from members of my community, because we spoke the same language and had common issues, so we understood what we went through as Zimbabweans in a foreign land.

Newcomer participants who had living Canada for longer than two years said:

I can call my community for any help at any time of the day when I need them. It is a very hard to find any organization services who will talk to you with the language that you understand at any time of the day and any day of year.

It was my community who helped me most when I needed. It was so easy for me to find them and at the same time it was so easy for them to find my basic needs to settle here in Edmonton. I did not need to explain much to them about

\(^9\) The four areas of integration refer to accessing health services, finding housing, accessing education and training, and finding employment.
my needs for settlement because all of them went through what I had been going through.

**Community Support for Newcomers**

Participants were also asked what kind of support they received from their community upon arrival. Participants’ suggested that newcomers tend “to draw more heavily from their community resources” (Kazemipur, 2004) for settlement support.

2.1 Type of Community Support

The major types of community support are:

- Transportation
- Employment
- Accommodation/finding a home
- Cultural orientation
- Moral support

According to the participants, their communities provided moral and emotional support, which are usually do not fall within the mandate of formal settlement services. Many reasons may explain this phenomenon. Receiving moral support from those who share the same language, culture, traditions and history makes it easier to adapt to a new culture. Not much can be found in the literature regarding the importance of moral support in the settlement process. Henderson (2004) suggested “[h]aving close friends was seen to lower potential depression and anxiety” (p. 26). Close friends can provide various types of help including giving moral and emotional support. The following stories are from the research participants’ lived experiences.

2.2. Our Stories

Individual support is available anywhere and anytime: A first-year newcomer participant’s story:

One of our friends told us that their friend was moving and did not need their furniture anymore. So we went and got the furniture. Another friend told us that we could get financial support for housing through Alberta works, and also told us about the Mennonite centre for newcomers in Edmonton.
Committed support and group effort: A second-year newcomer participant’s story:

When I came to Canada by my community sponsor, I was confused about everything from settling in Edmonton including how to get in to school. Then I was just looking for any help that I can get from anybody. My community invited us for community gathering and I spoke to several people about life in Edmonton, Canada. They just talked to each other about me and came up with a good plan for me. They contributed my six months bus pass in front of my eyes from just six community members. Then they chose one community leader to take me to schools that will give me the information and one community member to find a job that will suit my school schedule. So from all resources that I look into, my community was the first one to help me to answer almost all my questions regarding where I was looking to settle especially about my school. They gave me basic tools that I needed to settle and they gave me hope about settling here in Edmonton.

Making a home: A third-fifth year newcomer participant’s story:

There are a lot of stories to tell about help that I got from my community, however the one I will never forgot in my life is, when I first arrived in Edmonton. It was a cold winter day and I was confused, did not know how to get apartment for rent. I contacted one of community member and he gave me community leader’s phone number. I phoned him and told him that I am looking for help and less that half an hour six of them arrived and took me for a supper. When we were at the restaurant, I felt like I was back home. They asked me some questions and just that same night they found a place for me to live with another man from my community whose family was still in refugee camp like me. Next day they brought winter clothes, shoes, bed with blankets and some cash to buy bus pas and some other stuff. I was so happy to get help from people who understood my basic needs.

Participants’ Contributions to Community Support

The majority of participants across the three-group help newcomers in their own communities. As shown in Table 3, the longer they are in Canada, the more they help (57% in the first year and 92% of those who have spent between two and five years in Canada helped their communities). More importantly, some participants have only been in Canada for a few months and are already helping others. “I helped them to have some knowledge on the differences between here and back home” one first year participant said. Help therefore is informal. It is available any time and anywhere. Very often, therefore, a newcomer does not
need to go to the office at all or make an appointment with a settlement counselor.

**Table 3: Participants’ contributions to helping newcomers in their communities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1. Types of Support Participants Provide to Newcomers

Types of support participants provide to newcomers resonate with what they need and what they get from their communities, community members and friends. This research shows a pattern that the first year participants help by sharing information that they know and doing what they can (for example, babysitting). Those who have lived here for longer than two years, are able to provide more sophisticated and goal-oriented help. For example, they are involved in organized community activities, such as ESL programs, cultural survival classes, building a support organization for refugees, etc. This shows help is experience-based either on daily basis or in organized collective effort. Participants’ stories display live pictures in the following:

I helped our new community members by telling them where to go to get help for certain services... I told them about Alberta Works, that they could go there to seek financial assistance for housing.

I helped babysit the kids when their parents were busy and showed them places they can go for help, resume preparation, traveling around by buses.

Helping by involving in community activities in the words of participants who have been in Canada longer:

When I started school, I started work closely with my community leaders and I put little information for our new arrivals like how to use transportation, shopping and how to register in any school including English class.

Goal oriented and experience-based support by participants who have lived in Canada between two and five years:

I taught community members. I helped newcomers overcome difficulties living in a new country. I also helped build an organization to arrange services for refugees.
I helped my community members who were new in Edmonton by giving them advice, acting as a translator and helping them learn how to get around.

I have also offered accommodations to some of my community members that were new in Edmonton. In addition, I have offered moral support and connected new community members to other Zimbabweans in Edmonton.

3.2. Reasons Why Participants Help

The reasons for offering to help fellow community members show a strong sense of community, togetherness and collectivism. Participants felt helping was a cultural and social obligation to their communities. They wanted to see fellow community members successfully settle down in Canada. It seems they “tend to develop stronger communal ties” (Kazemipur, 2004). From the data, top reasons are:

- “Giving back”
- “To avoid bad experiences”
- “I am one of them/I understand”
- “They are my community”
- “That’s my culture”
- “I want to help”
- “Help is needed”
- “I am able to help”

Participants worded the reasons to help newcomers from their communities as following:

“Giving back to the community” in the word of a first year newcomer participant:

Following the steps of my community who opened my eyes when I first arrived and help the way my community helped me.

“Help is needed” in the word of a second year newcomer participant:

Newcomers are new to everything. They need assistance and support, such as the necessity to explain the benefit of participation, community gathering, etc.

“Similar experiences, understanding” in the word of a community members who has lived in Canada longer than two years:
I knew how difficult it was to settle here in Canada especially for women who are culturally shy to get help from men. So I want to be the first one to help especially newly arriving women in my community.

“Community connection” in the word of a focus group participant:

I am part of the community, so I want to help newcomers settle down here without problems.

**Unmet Needs**

Despite the various kinds of support newcomers receive, there still remain issues and concerns which are not addressed. Lack of sufficient resources and support available directly to communities limit the quality and extent of services available to newcomers. For example, a community member may be able to provide information on possible employment opportunity to a newcomer but may not be able to help prepare the newly arriving member for resume writing or an interview. In the community research, the participants appreciated the help they received from both the community and the settlement services providers. They also talked about issues concerning their unmet needs.

4.1 Participants’ Perspectives of Unmet Needs as Newcomers

According to the participants from across the three groups, the top three unmet needs are:

- Employment
- Education
- Family reunification

Finding suitable employment is the primary concern. This is also the most common issue which community members try to help newcomers with, however, they are often unsuccessful. One community member’s story explains:

Recalling my first few years here, I did get help. Yet to certain extent, I was not really helped. For example, I was financially supported to take courses and have physical checkup in the hope of continuing my career in Canada. Unfortunately, the help did not take me anywhere in terms of finding a professional job.

With respect to unmet needs, those who have lived for longer than two years spoke about another level of settlement. In terms of employment, participants’ hope was to have better, skill-related or professional jobs. For housing, it is to own a house rather than having a temporary shelter. For education, the hope is
to have advanced education for themselves and better education for children. Bringing family along with them is indicative of their plans of settling down here in Canada.

4.2 Participants’ Survival Stories in Addressing Needs

Surviving in a new country is not easy and sometimes can be quite a struggle. For newcomers, it is a personal effort combined with support from friends, family members, communities, sponsors, formal settlement services providers and the Government. Yet the immediate help to address a need is usually from informal and community-based sources. The few stories that follow will help understand the struggles newcomers face in trying to establish a good life in Canada.

A need for financial support: A first year newcomer’s story:

We needed help with financial assistance but the help that we got was not adequate. We had been told that we would get more financial support than what we received, but, because of the recession we got half of what we had been promised. We survived by going into our personal savings. If we didn’t have personal savings life would have been very difficult.

A need to enroll in schools: A second year newcomer’s story:

Before I came to Canada, I had a degree in economics and in the middle of nursing program. So when I first arrived, I wanted to get school information and talked to my community. The person from my community took me to a several different schools and finally I got good information from Grant McEwen College. My sponsor helped me to register for that program and I am in third year nursing program this year. Even though my community has no resources, I still got good help from them.

Finding a job with help of friends and relatives: A third-fifth year newcomer’s story:

My relatives and friends that were already in Canada helped me find a job. I did the immigration process by myself. I got some government booklets at the airport about help and support available to new immigrants, so I followed up the links that were provided. I also phoned the department of Canadian immigration and citizenship when I wasn’t certain about which steps to take to process my own papers and also when I was sponsoring my wife.

Satisfaction of Community Support
The majority of participants express a high level of satisfaction with the support they receive from their communities (Table 5). The second year and third-fifth year participants experience more support and express higher satisfaction. Second and third-fifth year participants were able to help more. Their length of stay in Canada also has an impact on the perception of satisfaction with community support. The more experiences newcomers have with communities, the more help they are able to acquire help, leading to a better settlement experience. The implication is newcomers are well served by support from community members and community organized collective effort.

Table 5: Satisfaction of Community Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Support</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Participants’ Appreciation of Community Support in their Own Words

In simple and close-to-life language, participants described their appreciation of the support they received. They appreciate their community’s willingness and capability to help, and knowledge of how to help especially when resources are limited.

I am proud to have community like my community which welcomed me on my dark day and talked to me with the language that I understand and helped me to find solution for almost every situation that I faced when I first arrived. One of the best help that I got was cultural survival class which is offered by my community. I wish they have good resources to help more people like me. The reason I am saying this is that every thing that they have been helping us with is from their member contributions and in-kind donations. – A first year newcomer

My community helped me so much with what they can. I hope my community will win lottery 649 which I play one for them each time I play one for my self. – A second year newcomer

Without my community I do not think my life would be like what I am today. They helped me with some stuff that I did not even think of like money. If my community has enough resources they are the most expert help full to new arrivals like me. – A third-fifth year newcomer
5.2 The Relationship between Community and Newcomers

Focus groups participants and community leader participants expressed their feeling and understanding of their communities. According to the participants, community does have the function of “glue” (McIsaac, 2003) that “fosters health and well-being” (p. 4) and builds up bonds for newcomers to hold on to and feel grounded in a foreign land. As LSIC’s (2005) report stated, for most immigrants “their new friends were from the same ethnic or cultural backgrounds” (p. 88). To our participants, a lasting friendship starts in community. In many ways, newcomers described what community and community support meant to them.

Community is:
- where my friends are because of shared history, culture and language.
  - My friendship with my community members lasted over 30 years.
- unity and strength.
  - It brings us together.
- connection, relation, home and a sense of belongingness
  - My community makes me feel at home.
- passion
  - Although I lived far away, community members tried to reach me.
- the primary help I can get anytime, anywhere. It is the help I can rely on.
  - Everyday someone from community is here to help.
- devotion and cultural obligation.
  - My community poured everything to help.

Community Support:
- helps the way by living alongside.
  - My community walked with me every step of my life up to now.
- teaches the way that makes sense to us.
  - My community gives culturally responsive advice.
- understands our physical and emotional needs,
  - My community took me to shop to save money.

Seeking Formal Services

Seeking formal services is part of newcomers’ settlement process. While focusing community support to newcomers, the research also asked about participants’ experiences of seeking support from service organizations and institutions. In general, most newcomers have sought services and got help from formal source as shown in Table 6.1.
6.1 Accessing to Formal Support

A large number of the first and second year participants responded that they sought help from agency-based and institution-based services. However, this number dropped for participants who have been in Canada more than two years. As newcomers, they began to develop their own networks of support within and outside their community.

For the first year and second year participants, the major reason for not accessing formal services is that they did not know about programs and services are available for newcomers. For the third-fifth year participants, however, the major reason for not seeking formal services was “already being helped” by community-based sources. Another reason is “The service did not help.” Very often, it is a negative experience, like help was not complete (limited to the initial level), or not culturally sensitive (“We needed to know about prenatal vitamins women’s’ health and how to go to a doctor. All people working there were men and for our culture we can’t talk about certain things with men.”) or service was not fast, for example, several visits needed to complete an application, that discouraged newcomers from going there for help. Therefore, this is the primary reason for first and second year participants’ not seeking formal services. The first and some second year newcomers did not seek formal services because of lack of information on where to find them. The third-fifth year immigrants avoided using such services because of negative experiences they had themselves or heard of from fellow community members.

Table 6.1: Accessing agency-based and institutions-based services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Types of Support Formal Support Provided to Newcomers

Participants of all three groups are consistent. Major services they receive from formal services are:

- ESL training/language assessment
- Financial support
- Identification/certification
- Basic needs support
These services are important for newcomers. Research participants expressed much appreciation for formal supports they received. For example, some participants benefited from the subsidized housing program and funded educational programs. From this research population, the top three formal supports (from the above list) were the services communities were not able to offer. This shows community support and formal settlement support offer different types of support to newcomers. In the support that both communities and settlement services providers offer such as basic need support, the way to help also differ. The unique way that communities provide support is well expressed in a community leader’s words:

But I found something missing. For example, usually, staff from service organizations did not visit you any more once they thought you got an apartment, got kids to school... They assumed that if newcomers had jobs, they then did OK. But actually, they were not OK. They still needed help. Shown how to shop was one thing. Knowing how to shop economically was another...

I learned how to help from real life... I then went to ask newcomers “Did you pay your bills?” “Did you check your phone bills in mailbox?” to avoid overdue fines. I told them to use phone cards to make long distance calls because I knew it happened that they called friends, families outside of Canada with local phone company and ended up hundreds of dollars of phone bills... I helped them handle their daily life.

The help may be the same such as finding a home, job and familiarizing themselves with the City. The way community and its members implement it is closer to life. Many newcomers while appreciating community support, also told the way they were helped: “My community walked with me every step of my life.” Providing services can include offering helpful directions and programs, but it may also include the services utilized by the people (newcomers) on a daily basis. In comparison, community support and formal support, it can be seen that part of community support is helping its members live out formal services. Why the differences? From the lived and told experiences of newcomers, we understand that community support is experience-based, culturally based and community member-oriented.

Participants’ Perception of Successful Settlement

[W]e cannot create criteria for success for immigrants... Success can be measured by the satisfaction of the immigrants we serve, but we will never be able to produce statistics on our success that ministers can take to cabinet meetings. (Burnaby 1992 as cited by Henderson, 2004, p. 9)
Henderson (2004) listed a number of “satisfaction” features governments and researchers identified from immigrants of various backgrounds in studies of immigrant settlement:

- Labour market participation
- Financial independence
- Proficiency in the language of the host society
- Chain migration and sponsorship
- Accommodation and home ownership
- Psychosocial factors including identity, social absorption and role acculturation

In this community research, a question about success for immigrants and refugees was also asked and discussed at focus groups. According to the participants, success in Canada meant:

- To be employed
- To be a contributor (family, community and society)
- To get an education
- To get involved in the host society socially, culturally, and politically
- To come to Canada
- To speak English

For the focus group participants, the number one indicator of success is to gain financial stability. Employment, owning a business and a house are the goal to achieve financial success. Education is another indicator of settlement success. For newcomers, education means many things. For some education is a chance to refresh “old” skills in order to connect past experiences with new opportunities. For others, education is a hope for better life for themselves and children. Education is also an access to knowledge about new life in Canada. Participants expressed strong desire to live out the policies of social inclusion to participate fully and equally “in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in their new country” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. 1).

Overcoming language barriers is a hurdle for many newcomers who come from non-English or French speaking countries. Speaking the language, English or French, meant a door open to more opportunities of engagement in the job market and other civic life of Canada. For newcomers, especially for many refugees, it is not an easy journey to come to Canada, a safe place free of war.

One settlement success not included in Henderson’s list and defined by the participants of the community research is to be contributors, to be helpful members to the family, community and the host society. It is about responsibility as an individual in relation to others. Success means bringing families to Canada,
helping children with homework, being role models in the community and productive citizens in Canada.

During a focus group discussion, some participants worded the meaning of successful settlement as the following:

- Adapting to host country
- Being able to get employment
- Getting education
- Being productive citizens
- Family reunification
- Being active in one’s own community

The relational meaning of successful settlement identified by the focus group participants in many ways resonate with the main theme of the findings of this community research; sense of community and togetherness. Newcomers join in their communities and become part of the communities. They share and care in a long-term settlement and integration.

**Immigrant Settlement Experiences in Community Leaders’ Stories**

We selected five community leaders’ stories to be part of the report for the purpose to “see big” (Greene, 1995). They are from four communities, Filipino, Haitian, Sudanese and Uganda. In many ways, their experiences resonate with newcomer participants’. In many ways, their stories overlap with one another as well. They may have different experiences and use different language to tell their stories. Yet they tell one reality that is community is the source of comfort, strength and support.

8.1 “I want to be with my own people”

When I arrived in Canada, what I wanted to see were my own people. I had no relatives in Edmonton. And only once in a while I met one or two in the supermarket. I got to know some Filipinos in my workplace. I was so happy that I spent my first Christmas with people from my community.

Even though I was a trained nurse, got my nursing degree in my country and work experience in the US, I still needed to provide papers to prove my nursing degree. I needed to do 3 more courses to become a degree-holder nurse in Canada. I found they (settlement agencies) were not being able to help me such as having to take 3 courses to be a certified nurse. So, I helped myself. Although
it was hard, being with my own people was a comfort. I so wanted to make friends with Filipinos that I said hello to Asian-looking girls and introduced myself “Hello, I am ... from the Philippines? Are you from the Philippines?”

I was appreciated for what I did for my community members. That’s how I felt how my community members helped me. I felt my community members noticed my effort as I heard them say that they needed me. In 1974, over 1000 people voted for me to be President of the Filipino Association of Alberta. On Klondike day 2002, over 200 people showed up to support. They said, “You don't corrupt. You are honest.” Honesty is the quality recognized by my community members who share the same value. In our community, what we did was to let community members teach community members because people from the community know how to help own community members. To me, people from the community are in the right position to teach their own community members to the point. They are able to teach what makes sense to their members.

I believe community is a bond to its members. My friendship with my community members (most of them nurses) has lasted almost 40 years. Forty years ago, I went to find them and we have supported each other till now. I was responsible for establishing several community organizations such as The Filipino Nurses Association (1977) because I knew people needed to be with their own people and find friendship there. People have special bonds with own community, which are not replaceable. I also realized they needed support. While being with them, they knew what kind of help they needed. For example, Filipino nurses in the Philippines were not recognized as professional nurses by Canadian standards. They therefore became home caregivers. People like me from the community knew and lived, sometimes, the experiences and put effort together to help this group of people to be certified nurses in Canada. I have devoted to causes like this for 35 years. Now new needs in the community are required because of the arrival of contract workers.

I was a newcomer myself long time ago. I lived through that experience. I breathed that experience. I therefore teach my community members what I went through. I share my experiences and teach by responding to own culture. I teach real world. This is my way of helping newcomers. My community members liked my teaching. I said to them: “don’t get frustrated so fast... there is always a reason for what is happening...” I challenged the funded settlement agencies, “Do you know how they feel?” They teach through theory. I teach and help by living alongside my people. I teach real life experiences, not from books. Maybe that’s why I did not go to them for help. Of course, I also wanted to be among my own people.

Integration is a long process and so is the capacity building of my community. At that time upon my arrival in 1969, my community members did not have the capacity to help me with specific matter I was encountering. For example, my Filipino credentials did not match the Canadian standards. So I needed to help myself and worked out ways myself. Yet the comfort of being with them was the most important help I needed. Let them feel the comfort of being with own
community members, being looked after by, for example, picking up them at the airport, helping meet basic needs. Then, fears may be lifted. Newcomers expected, for example, being met at the airport like they were at home.

I learned from my lived experiences that one might not have so good experiences if they felt discriminated against. One way to avoid this negative feeling is not to let yourself be discriminated against. What I did was to confront with evidence that I did the right thing. Keep in mind you have rights. That was my advice to my community members. This way they can help themselves and feel the power they have in a new country. For example you should not put up with such yelling: “go back to where you came from if you don’t understand my orders...” I didn’t and came to confront the customer to support the employee because we all came from somewhere.

According to my experience, the community can help newcomers be part of the Canadian society through networking, mentoring/education and providing spiritual needs. Support group can be used so that newcomers and other community members come together to talk about problems. This is help by talking out, recommending solutions and working ways out. Immigrants should have a space to value where they are from. They need to be comfortable in own community and don’t feel judged.

To me, government does not know how to help communities, doesn’t know whom to approach. My suggestion is that government recognizes the right people who are really helping the communities to work with. I think, with its limitations, the Multicultural Coalition is still a place to start with. One more thing, although funding is important, it may be wasted if money is not used for the benefit of the communities.

What we see from this life story is the importance to be with the people one shares history, culture and language with. Long and lasting friendship is found in the community because of the shared connections upon which trust and understanding are built. The story teller, a community leader, must have other relationships. For newcomers, community is a special relationship, an irreplaceable bond, in a chosen country, yet in many ways different from where they came from. Newcomers need community and a connection to their cultural roots to build up “bonding social capital.” To support community is to support their lives.

8.2 “Get them proper services!”

A shelter to spend the night was the most important thing I needed. However, it’s hard to find a proper place, an affordable place in Canada, a different country. Luckily a Haitian friend welcomed me to his home and I stayed with him and his family for several months until I got welfare from the government. It was also from friends that I got to know a lawyer and through her, I knew where to
apply for the welfare. I was thankful to my friend, but I really wanted to have a home of my own. In the second year, I got a job that allowed me to rent an apartment. Yet my dream was not fulfilled. I wanted to own a band because I knew I was a musician. In the third year, I landed a better job, to be exact, a better paid job, but still the job had nothing to do with music.

Sure I got help to settle down in Canada. However, the help was mostly from churches and my friends. I made new friends in Canada. For example, at a subway station, I met a man who was raising money by playing music. Since then he became a very good friend. The new friend, a Filipino, and his church helped me a lot, giving me food, clothes and inviting me to his church. I liked multicultural churches.

I was a newcomer, but I was not aware of any NGOs. Friends told me about this NGO who helped newcomers. I went there and got a settlement service brochure. I was disappointed with their services because I did not feel welcomed and the eligibility assessing process was complicated and long. I refused to go back to continue the process after I realized I had to make several appointments with them. So, I did not get help for my initial settlement from NGOs.

I was helped and at the same time I helped other newcomers. I helped a lot because I knew how hard it was being a newcomer. For example, I provided information, transportation and translation and interpretation. Centre d’Acceuil had my name. When a Haitian newcomer went there, my name might be given because I was from Haiti. Often, I got a call: “I’m new and know nobody. Could you help...?” I just couldn’t say no to the people who needed help.

Up till now, I still need help to make my dream come true, having a career as a musician. I need health services such as bearing a child and information on nutrition. I am still looking for similar help in Edmonton I didn’t get in Montreal such as dietitian for my wife and our new-born baby. It was not easy for newcomers. It could be worse when the services took a long time to get. When this happened, I put faith in God to be hopeful and optimistic. I could ask for help from our community, but as an emerging community, it just does not have the resources.

According to my experiences, newcomers need childcare, translation service and financial aid. The community needs to provide information on health, education and how to start businesses. Get them the right and needed information and get them a job! Get them proper services! Haitian community can be a good contribution to Canada because we are hardworking and good consumers.

Our community needs more funding from the government. Emerging grant is not enough to help refugee claimants. They get limited access to immigrant services and programs. Government should create more services and programs for refugee claimants in education, health and childcare. Now, the community is offering workshops on how to open a day-home. So, facilities are important too for organizing community activities like this.
The above accounts shows how formal services may not meet all the needs of a newcomer. Yet for newcomers, they often need timely services because what they need is to survive in a new and different environment. And it may make things worse if the services were not the right services. We also see how community can provide “proper services” in the emerging community. Community members work together to serve themselves.

8.3 “We need services that are culturally relevant to our needs.”

When we arrived in Edmonton, people picked me up at the airport. At the reception house only the information there went to men not to women. It made it really hard because women with kids have no time. Sometimes CSS would open joint bank account for us but don’t share the way the account works with the women or the PIN number. Kids had no program either, no school tours, no teaching about their behavior. They just sat there for 2 weeks. CSS took us shopping to expensive store to buy things e.g. furniture & supplies for new homes. We needed help on health information especially for women. For example we didn’t know what to do with tampons, or even how to use soap here. We needed to know about prenatal vitamins, women’s health and how to do to a doctor. All people working there were men and for our culture we can’t talk about certain things with men. We needed someone to trust from our culture or community for us to be open.

My community helped with housing. They tried to find us a place in good areas, supplied pots and pans, helped find family doctor, helped us with shopping, where to find your ethnic food, goodwill and other places to save money. They helped prepare us for the weather. In reception house they didn’t prepare us for snow or what we need to go out, they just said “It’s cold in Canada” no support or guidance.

My community is my major help. They hear you are here by word of mouth and come find you at reception house. I went to my community for help because formal service agencies could not give all support. Two staff there attend to 5 people. So they don’t have time to see people.

We see my community every day whereas service providers we would see once a month. Everyday someone is there from community especially from your tribe. Sometimes in the night, you need help—ambulance, family violence – you need someone to calm you down, explain the law of this country. One time my husband went downtown to lucky 97 and it was so cold and he didn’t know his way back or how to take the bus, nobody from reception house taught him or warned him. It was so cold he was scared and didn’t know how he would survive the cold and find his way back to reception house. He bought a bottle of whiskey and drank it to keep warm to come back. That was the only way he could think to survive.
I help newcomers who are struggling in a new country and language. Some people who come from rural areas are needing more support. Food, how does fridge work, shampoo, how to take care of kids, be clean, how to supervise kids, use stove, shop for groceries. People from cities back home don’t have as many challenges. But rural families are used to taking water in pots so kids scoop water from toilet in a pot. Some Moms think they are buying shampoo but it’s something else. They buy meat or other food and leave it out because they don’t know what a fridge is and then it goes bad. Back home the kids were everyone’s responsibility and there is no concept of one or two parents supervising kids. When snow came in September we went out without jacket or shoes to see the snow and we all got frostbite. They would say ‘do your laundry’ and how can we do it, we do not know how to use those machines. Back home kids would run around, all community members responsible to look after them and there were no programs for kids or watching movies or anything and so when parents are told to supervise kids they don’t understand. There needs to be a program to help understand the role here for parents in the school and how to discipline kids, how to supervise them, need to learn how to do homework and how to handle it. How parents can work with schools so teachers understand the realities of kids. Teachers stress parents out with high expectations. We come here and want best for kids but don't know how to support them.

As a collective effort, we are now doing a women’s group where we have different facilitators, people come talk about education, health, and the Canadian systems e.g., how to adjust to new culture, what is the value of education, how to get a job, how to reach goals, invite Children’s Services to educate us about their programs, leadership in community, family violence, get together to share concerns and challenges and find solutions together about stress, problems, family or other. We also pool our money together each month and then each month we give the money to one woman who can then pay off her transportation loan or buy a car or take driving lessons, etc. This is how I got the mortgage to buy my house!

I cook the food for our community youth programs soccer and basketball on Saturdays and Sundays for over 40 youth. I drive around and pick up the kids and then take them home afterwards also. My husband coaches them with some others in the community. I bought all of the kids T-shirts for their teams and activities. I also help get food bank donations.

There are other sources of support. City of Edmonton, for example, gave us fee reduction cards to get into city programs (zoo and pools), Catholic Social Services and its Reception house gave us a little space for our women’s group. EMCN (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers) helped with the school program. They hired brokers who would help families solve problems at school and build trust of school to understand parents’ background. Candora Spocicity provided English classes, immunization program, African women’s group, Children’s program, birth control programs, collective kitchen, picnics, hot lunch
and day care. I did not get help from other organizations because of lack of information. You don’t know who to ask, don’t know the language. Sometimes you are sent to other agencies that don’t have programs either. As a result, you go to all different places with no solutions.

Personally I do not need help, but the community does. The community needs information and supplies for new families and housing.

My community did a great job to help me when I was new in Edmonton. The Sudanese Canadian community in Edmonton was open to me. The people come forward if I need anything. They come to me also. If they have a fight they come to my house not shelter.

Like I said earlier, newcomers need to have culturally meaningful help and in the language they understand.

Based on my experiences, in order to help newcomers be part of Canadian society, community needs to explain about Canada, the laws, the weather and the life.

The Government needs to fund communities. Communities need more money, more transportation, more training (on how to work with people). They need communication skill, information and knowledge of how to get resources. Formal settlement services agencies need to hire more settlement workers from different community in different languages. Hire Women also even if they don’t have a degree, match them with someone who does. Open a place for crisis, family violence that is just for community so they decide what they want to do, get information and make up their own minds whereas shelters give no option they just start the separation process and paperwork.

The story is informative for policy makers and program developers about how to frame culturally responsive services to newcomers of diverse backgrounds. If a service is not culturally relevant, the service may fail to serve newcomers from that culture. The story also describes how community members can help what formal services providers cannot. “We see my community every day whereas service providers we would see once a month”. This is an important feature of community support.

8.4 “Help should go beyond the initial stage of settlement”

Adjusting to a new life in Canada is a slow process. Immigrants need to be educated and be self-educated as well. They need encouragement and to be told: “Take your time; you’ll achieve the goal” so as to keep their dream, their expectation of a better life in Canada alive.
Upon arrival, I needed a home. The government funded “welcome house” was my first home. In a foreign place, I needed to network with friends because I wanted to be with my own people who went through similar experiences. In the people who lived similar experiences I could find confidence and trust. I also wanted to be friends with Canadians, those who lived here longer and had knowledge about this city, the new place because they were able to teach me about the local culture. Job was very important too. Fortunately, I got one in two months in an auto-parts warehouse.

I learned how to help from real life, what formal service agencies missed. I then went to ask newcomers “Did you pay your bills?” “Did you check your phone bills in mailbox?” to avoid overdue fines. I told them to use phone cards to make long distance calls because I knew it happened that they called friends, families outside of Canada with local phone company and ended up hundreds of dollars of phone bills. I asked “Did you do your shopping?” So, I took them to cheaper stores. I explained to them the veggies might look different in Canadian supermarkets, but they were similar to the veggies in Sudan. I helped them handle their daily lives.

And I also think another big mistake was that service providers did not inform you of other agencies programs and services. For example, I learn about the Multicultural Health Brokers that provides different services, by myself. I’d have liked service providers them to tell me like: These are the things we do. And these are the services you may get somewhere else. However, they did not give me a larger picture of the services to newcomers about living in the city of Edmonton. It’s us, community members, who gave the information to our community members the services they needed and could be provided in other places.

I survived OK. I was lucky because I knew the language. Then, how about the newcomers who could not speak English? They could not help themselves so easily.

Yes, I still needed help in my fifth year in Canada. Firstly, I still needed help to get over traumatic experiences. Secondly, although I achieved initial stage settlement and survived as a newcomer, I needed help at the next level of settlement, how to be totally independent, for example, having my own business and owning the place I’m living in. Thirdly, I think immigrant settlement needs on-going support. Taking supporting my family as an example, I as a parent needs to help my children with homework, take them to meet other people, take them to recreational activities, make sure they enjoy themselves like what I used to do at their age in my village in Sudan. But it’s hard for our kids to have we had back home in Sudan. Here, because for most of the sports activities you had to pay. So the two barriers that prevented our kids from socializing with other kids like in sports activities: A) not free; B) no time because parents spent a lot of time on jobs so not much for children.
I don’t think our community support is quite enough because it is getting bigger. So service needs respond to the needs of members of diverse background.

In terms of adjusting to Canada, community needs to provide cultural orientations about things in Canada because we have different cultures. In Canada, I felt like being in the middle to choose, abandoning my culture to fit in or sticking to my culture. Within, there was a fight on how to adapt to Canadian cultures. For me, I wanted to fit in. The worry was if I did, I might abandon some aspects of my culture. For example, if I say “I’m Canadian,” it seems I lost my ethno-identity. If not, it seems I am not adapted.

To accept is a way to help community members to be part of Canada. In my community, we hold community meetings, at which we discuss tough topics like this like what we need to adapt to and what is personal choice/up to community members. For example, as to what Canadian culture to adapt to, our community meeting suggests that it is acceptable that children look at adults’ eyes in the conversation. This needs to be accepted because our children are educated in Canadian schools and that is the way to fit in. Parents need to understand having eye contact in Canadian culture does not mean disrespect, not the other way around in our culture. An example of personal choice is that I do not regard men helping wives in the kitchen is insulting to wives and disgraceful to husbands.

The government should support those agencies that outreach communities such as the Multicultural Health Brokers to make communities stronger. Or, government can partner communities with settlement agencies that provide direct services to them.

We learn much from the rich experiences of the participants. The settlement process goes beyond the initial stage of providing basics to start a new life in the new country. From this experience we see that the settlement process is multidimensional and involves all aspects of immigrants’ and their families’ lives” (Fletcher, 1999; Henderson, 2004). Settlement is holistic. It is life. Thus, communities and the support they provide to newcomers complete the settlement process. Communities also facilitate the integration process as it provides the initial arena for inclusion and builds the confidence of newcomers to interact with the larger host community.

8.5 “Newcomers need proper orientation”

I wanted to continue my career when I arrived in Canada in 1982. I was a mining engineer and also had several years of experiences as a commercial pilot. However, I soon found I could not continue doing the same type of job I had

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been doing for years with the educational and professional credentials earned outside Canada. “Sorry, you are over qualified” was how I was turned down. Realizing that there was very limited chance to get into my profession like flying a commercial aircraft, I decided to study to meet Canadian standards. In the second year, both self-motivated and recommended by settlement agencies, I went to NAIT to refresh engineering courses. In the third year, I got a job, but not at all a professional one.

It is a long time ago when I immigrated. Major settlement agencies like CSS and MCN were just taking shape. But I got some help from the Human Resource Department (at that time, called “Man power”) and Immigration Services. By the referral of the Immigration Services, I went to the Flying Club to do physical check and the NAIT to retake courses. Financially I was helped by government organizations like Immigrant Services, for example, taking physical examination and doing courses; yet, it turned out unsuccessful because I still could not find a job that would match my professional experiences, training and education. I was only made to feel good by being told that I was over qualified.

As for community support, I would have asked for help from my community, but there had been none then. Therefore four years later, I became the founder of “Uganda Association of Alberta in 1986. Since then I have been involved with community services. As a community leader, I helped members prepare papers to get credentials, permanent residence status and become citizens. Understanding the importance to have my own community gives me the chance to understand the needs of other communities. So, not only did I help set up my own community organizations, I also helped form other African communities. For example, in 2006, I helped found African Center. I got many awards for these efforts, such as “Centennial Award.”

Formal settlement agencies helped in certain ways such as, orientation of the city, providing information like getting adapted to the city. These kinds of services were important especially for newcomers who came from war zones, small villages because they needed to know the streets, transportation system, etc. The counsellors helped by finding shelters. NGOs helped in their ways too. But according to my experiences, more service programs need to be established because there are more and more immigrants now and the city has changed so much since the time I landed 27 years ago. Current services provided are just not enough. Proper and right services for newcomers will increase the chance for them to become better citizens. Although services provided by the government and government funded NGOs help newcomers, it is important to note that they can not replace what ethno-communities are able to do to their own members.

My community provided plenty of help to its members. Since the Uganda Association was founded, everything has been brought together. Everything has become easier. As a leader, I think the community can provide the services to what community members need such as orientation, social gathering, education, training, etc. To belong to a community is like a psychological strength. You don’t feel lost. Being a landed immigrant or citizen is good, yet you still need
connected to a community. Community as an organization is important to immigrants and Canada.

I think proper orientation to today’s Edmonton is the help newcomers need from the community in order to adjust to Canada. There are more crimes than 27 years ago in this city. Kids and parents need to be informed of the danger of the society and educated about how to handle it. It’s good to be in Canada. Yet newcomers need to be informed and educated to do right things to be on right tracks and make good choices. On top of the traditional services, the existing service programs for basic needs to settle down, newcomers need to be informed of social reality, the complexities of a new country. They need more detailed survival skills, for example, not just provided the information of where to rent or apply for a subsidized home, they also need to be taught about the rights as tenants.

Orientation is an important way to provide information for them to get proper services. I think government can help the most is to fund the communities and support them by giving them more power to do their job.

The stories revealed the role of ethnocultural communities in helping newcomers overcome the challenges upon arrival and easing their transition in the new homeland. They also demonstrate the complementary roles of formal services and community support in the newcomers journey towards settlement and integration. Beyond an ethnic enclave, the community serves as an identity anchor and mitigates the sense of loss that many newcomers experience as they begin their lives in the new country.

Conclusion: What is the success of community support to newcomers?

The results of the research revealed that nearly all the participants have received and benefited from supports provided by their community. From the participants’ experience, the success of ethnocultural communities in providing support to newcomers can be described as the following:

1. Timely and appropriate access to supports needed by newcomers

   The participants identified these as having supports in their first language, their cultural context and physical presence in the most critical and vulnerable moments in their newcomer experience. They said that having someone helping them who speak their language is one of the greatest benefits that they have received from their communities. Communicating in one’s own language when you are in a foreign country is one of the
most comforting times for many newcomers. Being able to express
themselves freely in their own words to someone who can understand
them eases the stress of being a newcomer.

The participants also mentioned the value of having someone who
understands their cultural context—to think, feel and act without fear of
being misunderstood or misinterpreted; to learn from someone who has
experiential knowledge of being a newcomer in the past; and most of all
to have someone they can trust in an unfamiliar environment.

The participants also noted the importance of physical presence of their
community members in their settlement experience. Physical presence
could mean availability when they needed someone to help them navigate
the new city or living in the same neighborhood where a home visit is just
a few doors away.

2. Holistic support

The participants spoke about the multi-dimensionality of supports that
they have received from their communities. Nearly all of them experienced
being helped by community members in a variety of ways. From providing
emotional comfort as they struggle to start their new lives to connecting
the newcomers to other members of their cultural community, including
support for spiritual well being, and helping them to navigate the formal
system to access services. The practical supports that include
transportation, child care, mutual aid are examples of little things that
made a big difference in the newcomers’ quality of settlement experience.

3. Enduring and “unconditional” support

The quality of support from communities is what defines the success of
community support provided to newcomers. In the participants’ own
words: “the community is always there; it has no expiry date and there
are not eligibility requirement”. Newcomers feel reassured that their
communities will be around in the long-term compared to formal services
that are limited because of systemic barriers such as lack of resources,
eligibility restrictions and narrow service mandates (Simich et al, 2005). It
is this form of affirmational support embedded in the fabric of community
life that is so essential in the initial stage of their settlement experience
and alleviates the stress of adjustment and adaptation. Participants would
refer to this support as one that comes from the heart.
Community supports to newcomers are examples of social support that play a significant role in easing the settlement process and are likely to have a positive impact on their over-all health. The benefits of these supports to immigrant health have been identified as enhancing the process of integration, facilitating network building that could lead to opportunities for employment and access to resources and lastly empowering individuals to gain control of their lives in a new country (Simich et al, 2005).

The success of community supports for newcomers is consistent with studies on social support that emphasizes the importance of social relationships and networks (cultural communities as an example) as major source of support for newcomers. Thus, the community complements the gap in the delivery of services and supports, and most often absorbs the task of supporting newcomers, a result of declining resources and limited services in the formal system.

This research suggests that the community is a critical arena for settlement and integration efforts; that the discourse on settlement and integration acknowledges the contributions of the community to effectively support newcomers; and that the policy sector recognizes this important role, particularly the jurisdiction that is closest to those affected, which is the municipality. As such, it enjoins higher orders of government to invest in and support municipalities in nurturing communities to become effective supports in the settlement and integration of newcomers.
Recommendations

It is clear from this research that an important arena for successful settlement and integration of newcomers reside in communities, neighborhoods and cities. These are the spaces and places where newcomers experience acceptance or rejection, belonging or exclusion and security or fear in their everyday lives. The set of recommendations highlights the vital role of municipalities in creating an environment conducive to intercultural exchange and collaboration, engender inclusive practices and nurture the contributions of its diverse residents in shaping the future of the municipality.

1. Recognize and incorporate the role of ethnocultural organizations, community groups and community leaders in supporting newcomers in the over-all settlement and integration framework at the local level

The research has shown that ethnocultural organizations, community groups and community leaders have the commitment and inherent capacities to provide supports to newcomers yet their potentials have yet to be fully mobilized in enabling integration of newcomers. Some action steps that could be taken to harness these potentials are the following:

- Build leadership capacities that would strengthen ethnocultural organizations to build supportive and cohesive communities who can effectively interact with the larger society
- Create spaces and opportunities for organizations and groups to formally participate in the settlement and integration process

2. Nurture community-oriented and culturally-based supports for newcomers in their early stages of integration

The participants revealed a repertoire of innovative supports that they have received from their communities. Many of these come from spontaneous response to an immediate need and evolved into organized activities which once again have potency to create significant impact if fully supported by resources. The following actions are suggested to sustain these supports in the community:

- Facilitate intercultural collaboration and partnerships with neighborhood centres to sustain the range of supports that communities are already providing to newcomers i.e., providing space for Cultural Survival Classes, entrepreneurial assistance, when appropriate to mutual aid initiatives, child care support for the women’s group, family reunification support etc.
• Explore the possibility of integrating community-initiated sports activities in the local recreation programming
• Make settlement and integration activities an integral part of community building initiative in the neighborhood and communities, including increasing opportunities for intercultural interaction between ethnocultural groups and other community organizations

3. Enhance the ‘multicultural readiness’\(^{11}\) of the municipality in maximizing opportunities for successful integration of newcomers

With increasing immigration, municipalities become the most significant arena for engendering diversity and inclusion. Sandercock (2005) articulates key areas where municipalities play an important role in building inclusive cities by enhancing their multicultural readiness to address the challenges of integration. Relevant to findings in this research, Sandercock (2006) identified the following key areas by which municipalities could use these as opportunities for sustaining multicultural cities:

• Building cultural competency of municipal workers (from program developers, planners and service providers) that would enable them to use a repertoire of cultural skills and processes in working effectively with multicultural communities
• Developing urban policies that address cultural differences in areas such housing, design of public and recreational spaces, community building
• Demonstrate culturally appropriate ways of engaging multicultural communities and negotiating intercultural issues so that they can exercise their civic responsibilities in a democratic society
• Assume leadership in leveraging resources for settlement and integration of newcomers to the provincial and federal government

A Vision for the Future

According to the participants, newcomers who feel welcome in their community are more confident to integrate in the larger community. The findings in the research showed us the inspiring work of ethnocultural communities, their leaders and members in providing support to newcomers. The participants in their own words shared their stories of struggles, survival and hope of recreating their life in the new homeland. It also revealed the synergy of strong

\(^{11}\) Term introduced by David Ley (1999) and cited by Sandercock, 2004.
community support and access to agency-based and institution-based services in easing the transition of newcomers towards successful settlement and transition. More importantly, it underscores the role of municipalities where ethnocultural communities are nested in enabling newcomers to fulfill their aspirations in their new homeland.

We hope that this community research will stimulate constructive conversations and dialogue among policy makers, service providers and ethno-cultural communities that will result in actions.

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A Community Leader

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References


*the Toronto CMA: A GIS-assisted analysis of supply and demand. CERIS Working Paper No. 59.*


Appendix A

Members of the Community Research Advisory Committee

The 11-member Research Advisory Committee includes members from ethnocultural communities, Board members of the Multicultural Coalition and university professors:

Dr. George Ishikwene, Liberia-Tagbaema Community, Chair
   Telly Balanag, Filipino Community
   Estefania Cortes-Vargas, Spanish-speaking Community
Dr. Tracey Derwing, Prairie Metropolis Centre & University of Alberta
   Anna Jaricha, Zimbabwe Community
   Edmund Jaricha, Zimbabwe Community
   Dr. Anna Kirova, University of Alberta
Dr. Lucenia Ortiz, (Board member, Multicultural Coalition)
   Janina Strudwick, (Coordination, Multicultural Coalition)
   Jany Yach, Sudanese Lou Nuer
   Dr. Guming Zhao, (Researcher, Multicultural Coalition)
Appendix B

Definition of Terms

Community: In this report, community refers to any ethno-cultural community in general and any ethno-cultural community that is involved in this community research.

Community animator: A committed member of his/her ethno-cultural community, whose major role is to act as a cultural and linguistic bridge within the community, among different communities and with the organizations and institutions that are impacting community life.

Community researchers: The animators who participate in the community research in the process of data collection as interviewers and focus group facilitators.

Community support: In this report, community support refers to support from friends, family members, community members and community associations. The community support help build up social capital for newcomers that may help bond, bridge and link inside and outside the community.

Formal support: Formal support refers to the support or services offered by formal settlement services providers and organizations.

Newcomers: In the community research, newcomers refer to those who are new or have been here in Canada up to five years.
Appendix C

Research Data in Six Themes
**Theme 1  Support for Newcomers**

1A. **Support Most Needed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td>- Accommodations (hosing, furniture, clothing)</td>
<td>- Accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accommodations (housing, furniture)</td>
<td>- Employment (training to get a job)</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- English/ESL</td>
<td>- Education (education system/programs, upgrading, registering children to school)</td>
<td>- Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education (back to school, register children to school)</td>
<td>- English/ESL</td>
<td>- English/ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transportation (airport pickup, bus system)</td>
<td>- Cultural knowledge (adapting to new cultures, integration)</td>
<td>- Cultural knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information (services, program, ESL, Immigration, getting around)</td>
<td>- Transportation (airport pickup)</td>
<td>- Immigration (work permit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Canadian culture (integration)</td>
<td>- Immigration (work permit)</td>
<td>- Daycare (getting subsidy for child care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Financial support (dealing with expenses)</td>
<td>- Information (the city to get around)</td>
<td>- Information (the city to get around)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Moving to Edmonton</td>
<td><strong>For the first year:</strong></td>
<td><strong>For the second year:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Translation</td>
<td>- Accommodation</td>
<td>- more specific, more advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Giving birth</td>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td>- know more about finding professional career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- SIN card</td>
<td>- Education</td>
<td>- sponsoring my wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Drivers license</td>
<td>- English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Start a business</td>
<td>- Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Immigration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ethnocultural community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>For the second year:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For the first year:**
- Accommodation
- Employment
- English
- Immigration
- Education
- Ethnocultural community

**For the second year**
- Employment
- Education
- English
- Accommodation
For the third-fifth year:
- Education
- Employment
- English
- Accommodation
- Support for wellbeing of children
- Immigration
- Financial support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1B. Sources of Settlement Support</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community-based sources:</td>
<td>Community organizations, community members, friends, families, churches (mentioned 27 times)</td>
<td>Community organizations, community members, friends, families, churches, neighbors (mentioned 28 times)</td>
<td>Community organizations, community members, friends, families, churches, neighbors (mentioned 23 times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal sources:</td>
<td>Government, non-government organizations, settlement services providers (mentioned 11 times)</td>
<td>Government agencies, organizations, sponsoring agents (mentioned 16 times)</td>
<td>Government, the City, settlement services providers, multicultural centre/organization (mentioned 11 times)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1C. Knowledge of Access to Settlement Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Friends</td>
<td>• Friends</td>
<td>• Community/community members, friends, experienced immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community/community members</td>
<td>• Internet</td>
<td>• Website/Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internet</td>
<td>• Community and outside of my community</td>
<td>• Myself/my own research (in library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Network</td>
<td>• Families</td>
<td>• Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community website</td>
<td>• Co-workers</td>
<td>• Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Church</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Both my community and outside of my community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Word of mouth</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Settlement services providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participating youth programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theme 2 Community Support for Newcomers

#### 2A. Type of Community Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
<th>Focus groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transportation (airport pick-up, getting around, transit system)</td>
<td>• Employment (resume, finding a job)</td>
<td>• Employment</td>
<td>• Immediate help (offering temporary housing, free ride, school registration,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accommodations</td>
<td>• Transportation (shopping, getting</td>
<td>• Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation/finding a home</td>
<td>• Finding a school for children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Participants’ Contributions to Newcomers in their Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants in Canada for the first year</td>
<td>Participants in Canada for the second year</td>
<td>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12/57%</td>
<td>17/85%</td>
<td>24/92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in Canada for the first year</td>
<td>Participants in Canada for the second year</td>
<td>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping by telling what they know such as</td>
<td>• Transportation (shopping, getting around, to the church, to community meetings...)</td>
<td>“Tell them what I know/do what I can”</td>
<td>• One-on-one/individual/personal help/Sharing what they know/have (accommodations, transportation, information, employment, babysitting, finding doctors/schools...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Telling them all I know”</td>
<td>• Find jobs</td>
<td>• Transportation (take them to places they need to go, help get around</td>
<td>• Assisting organized events (language training programs, community newsletters, native language radio show, Heritage Festival, translating documents...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Telling differences between here and home</td>
<td>• Sharing information (health care system, school, settlement services providers ...)</td>
<td>• Accommodations</td>
<td>• Involvement in community activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Telling them where to search/where to go to get help</td>
<td>• Networking them with the community</td>
<td>• Financial support (donation)</td>
<td>• Teaching community members/ESL course/how to cook Canadian food /where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving names of community members who might help them</td>
<td>• Moral support (welcome them)</td>
<td>• Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping by doing what they can such as</td>
<td>• First language (translation)</td>
<td>• Finding family doctors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Showing places they can get help</td>
<td>• Giving advice</td>
<td>• Babysitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Baby sitting</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Groceries shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giving a ride</td>
<td></td>
<td>• First language support (translation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School registration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Giving advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Practicing English

| to get services | Build an organization to help refugees | Participating in Actions for Healthy Communities |
| Emotional support/moral support | Helping them make friends | Helping them feel comfortable |
| | Talking to them | Telling them that everything will be fine |

3B. Reasons Why Participants Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
<th>Focus groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Giving back</td>
<td>• Giving back</td>
<td>• Giving back</td>
<td>• Giving back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid bad experiences</td>
<td>• &quot;I understand&quot;</td>
<td>• &quot;I understand&quot;</td>
<td>• Similar experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helping is a learning process.</td>
<td>• Avoid bad experiences</td>
<td>• Help is needed.</td>
<td>make understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help is needed.</td>
<td>• &quot;I am one of them.&quot;/&quot;They are my community&quot;</td>
<td>Connecting to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• &quot;They are my community&quot;</td>
<td>• Capable of helping</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• &quot;I want to help.&quot;</td>
<td>• When they are</td>
<td>Want to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Our culture taught us so.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
helped, they can help themselves later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4 Unmet Needs</th>
<th>Participants’ Perspectives of Unmet Needs as Newcomers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants in Canada for the first year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding a job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial support (not enough government funding, effective service for applying for financial support...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education (going to school, information of educational programs...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protecting rights (info on social &amp; legal systems; “Nobody gave me any idea about my right”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 5 Satisfaction of Community Support

5A. Satisfaction of Community Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good support</td>
<td>12/57%</td>
<td>13/65%</td>
<td>16/62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough</td>
<td>6/29%</td>
<td>3/15%</td>
<td>4/15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5B. Community Support Needed in the Future

Focus Groups

- Community capacity/capacity building-- Human Resources
  - Information and knowledge to empower community members
  - Leadership training
  - Community creativity/discussion
  - Commitment of community members (to “inspire confidence—training workshops, education, information, reimbursement, honoraria;” “giving honoraria in advance;”
  - Volunteers and volunteer training
  - Social engagement(full participation, more community members;”)

Community capacity/capacity building-- Financial Support

- Funding: funding to support community, funds, financial resources from government and community, fund raising, financial support from government, money +, loans, financial support (“for paying for tuition and also to conduct language classes in the community;”)
- Facilities (space, equipment, community centre)
• Employment (job training, job opportunities, recognition of foreign credentials)
Communication between government and communities and among communities
• Voicing their needs to the government
• Needs heard and paid attention to by all levels of government
• Sharing ideas from inside and outside community
• Effective networking
• Organizing/uniting communities/creating future groups
Help from host community in form of information, services and financial support
Education
• Quality education and more education
• Child Education (preparing the children to be a role model)
People Support
• Child/youth support/school support: achieving their goals, tutorship, life opportunities, student advisors, mentoring for academics and career plan, extra curricula activities
• Parent support
• Senior support (entertainment for seniors)
• Family Support (Reunite with immediate families, parent visit)
• Health support (Crisis line)
• Emotional/Moral/Spiritual support
Cultural support (cultural events, heritage language)
Integration (how to integrate to a Canadian way of life; Transition to Canadian cultures, treated like Canadians)

Other:
Change of attitude
Settlement planning
Time
Housing
### Theme 6  Seeking Formal Settlement Services

#### 6A. Accessing to Formal Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>13/62</td>
<td>16/80%</td>
<td>14/54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>8/39%</td>
<td>3/15%</td>
<td>12/46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why not</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not know about them</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not know how to contact</td>
<td>Already helped (by community, community members, friends...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not have the needed help</td>
<td></td>
<td>Never ask</td>
<td>Not helping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never ask</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already helped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 6B. Formal Support Provided to Newcomers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the first year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the second year</th>
<th>Participants in Canada for the third-fifth year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL training &amp; language assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>ESL training &amp; language assessment</td>
<td>ESL related assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support (housing)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Financial support (subsidy in housing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic needs support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Translation &amp; interpretation</td>
<td>Certification/identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td></td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer opportunities &amp; references</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding school for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic needs support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Animator Researchers’ Orientation (1)

(including List of Community Researches, Agenda, Consent Form, Receipt Form of Honourarium, Research Manual, One-on-one Interview Guiding Questions & Invitation to Preliminary Results Presentation on Oct. 17)

The research orientation is prepared for the community researchers:

Telly Balanag, Filipino Community
Abdul Daash, Somalia Community
Badri Dolal, Oromo Community
Estefania Cortes-Vargas, Spanish-speaking Community
Chu Chu, Eritrea-Ethiopian
George Ishikwene, Liberia-Tagbaema
Anna Jaricha, Zimbabwe Community
Edmund Jaricha, Zimbabwe Community
Victor MokeNgala, Franco-African Community
Amandla Ngwenya, Zimbabwe Community
Edge Samuel, Caribbean Community
Jany Yach, Sudanese Lou Nuer
Jing Marissa Yang, Chinese (Mandarin) Community
Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton

Community Researchers’ Guide

Multicultural Coalition
All Together Now Program
Funded by FCSS and City of Edmonton Social Development Grant
July 2009
Training on Community Research  
July 2nd 2009 5pm – 8:30pm

Objectives
At the end of the session, the community researchers will be able to:
- Describe what the Coalition’s Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers” to participants and community members.
- Understand the community research process and its importance in building communities.
- Understand their roles & responsibilities in the research.
- Learn & apply research interview skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Topic/Activities</th>
<th>Facilitator and Hand-outs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5:00 – 5:30 | Supper  
Welcome and Introductions                              | Supper & package                       |
| 5:30 – 6:30 | Overview of the Community Research  
- Purpose  
- Methods  
- Ethical norms  
- Roles & Responsibilities of Community Researchers  
- Roles & Rights of Participants | Lucenia                                 |
| 6:30      | Coffee break                                       |                                        |
| 6:45 – 7:45 | Practice Interview                                   | Guming and Janina                      |
| 7:45 – 8:15 | Debriefing on Practice Interview  
- Culturally-sensitive interviewing  
- Interview Process  
- Guiding questions | Guming and Janina                      |
| 8:15 – 8:30 | Wrap-up & contracts                              |                                        |
Introduction

Welcome to your guide in conducting the Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton! This guide will help you in carrying out an important task of sharing the experience of your community members to others. This community research is also about bringing community members together and creating a collective voice to express their hopes and aspirations in the new homeland.

What is the Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers: a brief overview

Through the active participation of community members, the Multicultural Coalition is undertaking this research to answer the question: What are the successes of immigrant communities in supporting their community members upon and settlement in Edmonton?

We will interview individuals who have been here for one year, 2-3 years and five years who come from different countries and settled here in Edmonton’s ten ethnocultural communities. We will also conduct focus group discussions in each of the ten communities to ensure that we have covered all the information we needed.

More importantly, we will nurture our existing relationships and seek out new relationships within our community and with other communities. This is also our opportunity to learn about emerging issues in our communities and ways of effectively supporting them.

What is community research?

The members of the Multicultural Coalition define Community Based Research:

- as a systematic way of gathering information
- as planned and intentional
- as a strategic exploration
- as focusing on identifying the needs of the community
- the research is grounded in individuals’ experiences and linked to broader systemic and social issues
- the goals of our community based research are:
  - to improve community and
  - to respond to communities’ issues

Community research creates awareness of the multicultural communities and where they are at in the stages of integration in their new homeland. It builds community capacity as it is done to ensure sustainability. It is ethical; the community is comfortable with research. Lastly, the results need to be communicated back to community, reflecting suggestions and “next steps”.
Key Principles of Community Based Research

Our community research is guided by the following principles:

1. Recognizes community as a unit of identity
2. Builds on strengths and resources within the community
3. Facilitates collaborative and equitable involvement of all partners in all phases of the research
4. The knowledge generated from the research will benefit those who are partners and participants in the research
5. Promotes a mutual learning and empowering process that attends to social realities and circumstances of the research participants
6. The research process is flexible and can be adapted to new learnings and changing conditions
7. Addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives
8. Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners
9. Involves a long-term commitment by all partners

The Community Research Process

The community process follows a cycle of planning, action and reflection with the active participation of the community members in the process.
Planning involves identifying what are key issues or research question that the community is most interested in; what principles should guide the research process and how the research should be undertaken. Action involves the research process itself which includes gathering data, organizing the data and making sense of the information. Action also involves sharing the research results with the community and with those who will be affected by the research findings and doing something about the knowledge from the research. Once the research report is completed, the work of the Coalition and our communities will be to use the research as an advocacy tool to seek policy change and support to improve the communities.

Reflect means being able to speak about your experience in the research and what you have learned from this experience. Reflection could also be an opportunity to identify issues that needed to be responded or potential research questions.

**How will the community research be conducted**

1. Collecting data

One-on-One Interviews (now until August 10)
You will conduct one-on-one interviews with 6 community members, document their comments during the interview and shortly afterwards in a report to Guming.

**Interview Participants**
2 people in their first year  
2 people in their second year  
2 people in their 3rd-5th years here

One Focus Group (late August)
You will invite 10-12 community members in their 1st to 5th year to this event where all communities will come on the same day. You can also invite community leaders and other members who are interested to participate. You will document their comments and stories on the flipchart and email a report of the information to Guming.

2. Data Analysis & Results

Guming will compile all the information and will call on you, as community researchers and participants yourselves, to offer your reflections, insights and observations on what you heard and saw through the research process. Guming will compile all into a report with recommendations.

The community researchers’ ideas and discussion at a debriefing meeting held after the research collection will help Guming synthesize the information & build stronger recommendations!
Roles & Responsibilities of Community Researchers

As a community researcher, you have an important role in making sure that the research is conducted within the principles we have adopted. As someone who comes from your community, you are looked upon as a trusted communicator for your community’s issues and aspirations. Specifically, you are expected to:

1. Participate in the research from planning, data gathering (as participant and an interviewer) and analysis of data
2. Maintaining/strengthen relationship within the communities and with the Coalition
3. Respecting participants, their views and stories
4. Be interested listener (who does not bias or judge the interviewees’ responses)
5. Protecting confidentiality of participants/interviewees
6. Share knowledge learned from the research in your communities and other opportunities to make the communities’ voices be heard.

Your tasks as community researchers are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>What needs to be submitted</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Coalition &amp; Project meetings to</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Attendance at meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design research concept &amp; principles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Orientation</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>July 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with people in their first, second and</td>
<td>Waivers, receipt forms &amp;</td>
<td>By email to Guming:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(^{rd}) to fifth years in Canada</td>
<td>Interview notes in English</td>
<td>Monday August 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation on Focus Groups &amp; Debrief Interview</td>
<td>Talk &amp; share your ideas</td>
<td>Thursday August 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite 10-12 from your community to focus group</td>
<td>Invite 10-12 people</td>
<td>Saturday Aug 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event. Facilitate discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group notes</td>
<td>Waivers &amp; Focus group notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in English</td>
<td>By email to Guming:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>September 4(^{th})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>Talk &amp; Share your ideas</td>
<td>Saturday Sept 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing with the Community Our Report: Invite ____</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Coalition AGM Sat Oct 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people from the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be sure to encourage community members to join our October 17 event to launch the results of the research!
Roles, Rights & Responsibilities of Participants

Community members who participate in the research are knowledgeable informants and owners of their own stories. They have the right to:

1. refuse to answer questions that are uncomfortable
2. withdraw from participation any time
3. have access to report recommendations
4. voice concerns about the conduct of the research.

All community members are invited to join our reflective process by any of the following:

- Joining the Coalition
- Joining our discussions on the process
- Offering feedback, ideas and suggestions
- Participating in Focus Group event
- Participating in designing next steps, plan to share the research results with policymakers and other stakeholders

Ethical Norms

In any research, we are expected to act according to certain ethical principles or norms. These ethical principles are:

1. **Informed consent**
   Participation in the research is voluntary. Informed consent means that we should make sure that the participant agrees to be interviewed. The participant signs a consent form before an interview or a focus group can begin. Consent forms for this research are found in Appendix 1.

2. **Confidentiality**
   The research will ensure that the identity of the participant is protected; responses to the questions in the research will not be attributed to a person or group.

3. **Benefits & risks**
   The research should be clear about the benefits for the participating individuals and communities. If there are risks involved, those risks should be explained to the participants and it should be explained that adequate actions will be taken should any harm result from participating in the research.

Make sure all your participants know why this research is important, and that they can ask for their words to be taken out of the research any time before September 30th.

Guide to conducting interviews
Culturally Sensitive Interviewing

People from diverse cultures behave differently in interview situations. Some may feel comfortable with it while for others this experience maybe very culturally unfamiliar. Cultural insensitivity can cause misunderstanding and does not create trusting relationships. Here are some tips on culturally sensitive interviewing:

1. Identify the cultural community your participant is from.
2. Do some research and educate yourself about that community (custom, history...).
3. Yet remember each person is different (not group people even if they are from the same community).
4. Find a place and time that works for the community member.
5. Make sure all childcare, transportation and hunger needs are accommodated.
6. The place should not have other community members present who may overhear your participant telling her stories.
7. Be respectful of communication styles in different cultures, particularly body language.
8. Be alert and sensitive when a participant is not feeling comfortable. You may have to pause for awhile.
9. It is possible that this interview could bring up a sad or painful experience, be sure to ask participants if they need a break before continuing.
10. If you think that the participant may need help or support, find someone who can help or support him/her.

Before the Interview

Once you have scheduled a time, date and location to conduct your interview, make sure you are prepared:

1. Dress respectably but not over-formally.
2. Review the interview questions and bring the question sheet with you.
3. Be on time.
4. Tell the interviewee the length of interview (1-1.5 hours).
5. Briefly describe purpose of the interview (the general question is: What are the successes of community providing settlement support to own community members?)
6. Say you are taking notes and that you may need to ask them to slow down.
7. Tell the interviewee she/he can withdraw from participating anytime.

Checklist:
- Bring $20 (honorarium) for the participant & receipt form.
- Bring the right interview questions.
- Bring the consent form and the information sheet on the project.
- Ask them to sign the waiver before you begin the interview (Keep it).
- Let them keep the information sheet with your phone number on it.

You know your community best, if you have concerns that your interviewee may not be comfortable, adapt the situation to meet the need.
8. Tell the interviewee she/he can refuse to answer any questions they find uncomfortable

**During the Interview**

**Asking questions**

1. start the interview slowly, from general issues (weather, family...)
2. make eye contact whenever possible during the whole interview
3. note interviewee’s reactions expression/reactions when responding such as nods, smiles, confusion, concerns...
4. listen carefully to your interviewee’s telling
5. don’t push the interviewee if he/she doesn’t have an answer to a question. You may reform the question, ask a different one or in a different way. It is fine that your interviewee skips a question.
6. silences/pauses are OK - wait for your interviewee to decide what to tell you. (Remember sometimes what comes after a silence is important.)
7. Try to avoid looking at the prepared question sheet

**Probing**

Probing means you are asking more question on a related topic to give you a richer and detailed information. Here’s how to probe:

1. ask direct questions about specific topic
2. ask more elaborate, open-ended questions
3. repeat the last sentence of the interviewee or summarize the answer to show you/interviewer are listening
4. show an encouraging nonverbal expression
5. when asking probing questions you’ve prepared or any questions during the interview, try to use the interviewee’s language
6. encourage people to describe their own experiences rather than talking in general about everyone’s experience.
7. gently remind the interviewee of the focus of the interview if he/she drifts off track
8. thank your interviewee for his/her time and his/her sharing.

**After the Interview**

1. tell the interviewee what will happen to his/her telling, which only people on research team can access to the data from the interview
2. tell the interviewee that data will be kept in locked cabinets
3. explain to interviewees that individual names will be omitted in reports, presentations or papers
4. tell the interviewee that he/she can contact you

If you feel nervous before your first interview, call Guming or Janina to review the process and the questions. It will make you feel better and the interview will be more successful!

Type out your interview notes in English and email to Guming 

guming_coalition@yahoo.ca by August 10 2009
afterwards if they have any questions
5. leave your contact information

Make sure you note any information in the ‘Thumbnail Sketch’ of any of your insights, interpretations, comments on interview or observations e.g. “Interview was stressful as the participant did not understand the questions”
What is this project all about?
The Multicultural Coalition is doing research to learn the success of communities providing support to their own community members.

Why should I join this research?
The research will help show all the work that is being done in your community and in other communities to help newcomers. This work is usually done by volunteers helping each other without pay or formal recognition. Our goals are 1) to list all the work being done in the community and 2) share that within and outside the community to policy-makers and other stakeholders.

What will I need to do?
You may be asked to sit with a community researcher and have an interview for 1 to 1.5 hours. You may be asked to join a group of community members for a conversation (focus group). You will be asked questions about your experiences as a newcomer.

Is there anything I should be worried about?
Nobody in your community or outside your community will know you were part of the interviews. It is confidential. Your name will not be connected to anything you say. Only the research team will know your name, it will not be publicly written in the report or anywhere else.

Talking about the past may remind you of difficult times when you arrived in Canada. If you think you don't want to continue, you can end the interview anytime. If you have any questions, please call the Coalition at 780-423-1973.

Consent Form

I understand I am participating in a research study. I read this page: I know the benefits & risks of being part of this research.
I had a chance to ask questions.
I know I can refuse to join this research and that later on, if I want, I can ask my words to be removed.
I understand the confidentiality and who will see the research data.
I know notes will be written about what I say in the interview.

This study was explained to me by:____________________ (name) on _______________ (date)

By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this project.
____________________________(Research Participant, printed name) ________________________ (Signature)

To the best of my knowledge, I confirm that this individual understand what is involved in the described research and is participating voluntarily in the study.

____________________________(Researcher, printed name) ________________________ (Signature)

Multicultural Coalition

I have received a $20 honourarium to help cover costs to participate as an interviewee for the Coalition research project.
Dear Community Member,

The Multicultural Coalition would like to thank you for your participation in the research and share with you the results from across the different communities.

you are invited...

**Saturday October 17 from 11am – 2pm**

City Hall: main entrance foyer
Presentation of Community Based Research & Recommendations
Lunch will be served

A Community Research on
the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers
Interview Guide for one-on-one interview (1st yr immigrants/refugees):

Interviewer (Community animator) ____________________________ Date ____________________________

A Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers

WARM-UP Question:

■ How long have you been here in Canada?
■ Can you tell me how you came to Canada?

Part I – Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers/Notes Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>Male Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What was your age upon arrival in Canada/Edmonton?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tell me about your present marital status. Are you?</td>
<td>single (never married) married (living with spouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>married (spouse lives elsewhere) common-law relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>separated, divorced or widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What was your marital status upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>single (never married) married (living with spouse)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multicultural Coalition

Interview for participants in their first year
married (spouse lives elsewhere)
common-law relationship.
Separated, divorced or widowed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. In which country where you born?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In which country did you live before coming to Canada?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How well did you SPEAK English upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Not at all Poorly Fairly well Well Very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How well did you READ the English language upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Not at all Poorly Fairly well Well Very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. How well did you WRITE the English</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>question</th>
<th>answers/notes column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| language upon arrival in Canada?                                        | Poorly  
Fairly well  
Well  
Very well                                                                 |
| 12. How well do you speak English (now)?                                | Not at all  
Poorly  
Fairly well  
Well  
Very well                                                                 |
| 13. How well do you read the English language now?                      | Not at all  
Poorly  
Fairly well  
Well  
Very well                                                                 |
| 14. How well do you write the English language now?                     | Not at all  
Poorly  
Fairly well  
Well  
Very well                                                                 |

**Part 2 – Experience on Arrival and Settlement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers/Notes Column</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. What help/support did you need that was most important in your first year here?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Airport pick-up</td>
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<tr>
<td>• finding a home</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• finding a job</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• getting kids into a school/daycare</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Did you get help/support?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Where did you get help/support from: your own community or from an organization outside of your community
• How did you know where to go to get these services?

3. Can you tell me some examples or stories of getting support from your community?

4. Did you also help your own community members who are new to Edmonton?
   • Why?
   • What did you do to help your newly arrived community members?

5. In Edmonton, there are many services and organizations that provide services to people. These organizations could be government or non-government or private. What help/support did you get from a non-government organization or government organization (formal system)?
   
   Examples:
   Bredin Institute, ASSIST, City of Edmonton, Catholic Social Services, Government of Alberta, Edmonton Immigrant Services Assn, Edmonton Mennonite Centre, Millwoods Welcome Centre, Centre d’Accueil
   
   • If you did not get any help from these organizations, why not?

6. What help did you need that you did not get in the first year?
   • How did you survive?
   • What else is needed?

7. Over-all, did you feel that your community had given enough
help/support that you needed in your first year here?

Thank You!

Thumbnail Sketch

Write your impressions, observations and other comments about the interview.

A Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers
Interview Guide for one-on-one interview (2nd yr immigrants/refugees):

Interviewer (Community animator) __________________________ Date __________________________

A Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers

WARM- UP Question:

- How long have you been here in Canada?
- Can you tell me how you came to Canada?

Part I – Demographic Information

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<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>Male           Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What was your age upon arrival in Canada/Edmonton?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tell me about your present marital status. Are you ?</td>
<td>single (never married) married (living with spouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>married (spouse lives elsewhere) common-law relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated, divorced or widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What was your marital status upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>single (never married) married (living with spouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In which country were you born?</td>
<td>Married (spouse lives elsewhere), common-law relationship, Separated, divorced or widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In which country did you live before coming to Canada?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What was your immigration status upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Visitor, Work permit, Landed immigrant/permanent resident, Refugee, Refugee claimant, Government sponsored, International student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What is your immigration status now?</td>
<td>Visitor, Work permit, Landed immigrant/permanent resident, Refugee, Refugee claimant, Government sponsored, International student, New Canadian Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How well did you SPEAK English upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Not at all, Poorly, Fairly well, Well, Very well</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
11. How well did you WRITE the English language upon arrival in Canada? | Not at all  
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| Fairly well  
| Well  
| Very well  

12. How well do you speak English (now)? | Not at all  
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| Fairly well  
| Well  
| Very well  

13. How well do you read the English language now? | Not at all  
| Poorly  
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| Well  
| Very well  

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**Part 2 – Experience on Arrival and Settlement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers/Notes Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What help/support did you need that was most important in your **first** year here?  
Examples:  
- Airport pick-up  
- finding a home  
- finding a job  
- getting kids into a school/daycare |  |
| 2. Did you get help/support? |  |
3. Where did you get help/ support from: your own community or from an organization outside of your community
   - How did you know where to go to get these services?
   - what kind of help/ support do you need now in second year?
   - Who do you ask for support?
   - Why?

4. Can you tell me some examples or stories of getting support from your community?

5. Did you also help your own community members who are new to Edmonton?
   - Why?
   - What did you do to help your newly arrived community members

5. In Edmonton, there are many services and organizations that provide services to people. These organizations could be government or non-government or private. What help/support did you get from a non-government organization or government organization (formal system)?
   - Examples:
     Bredin Institute, ASSIST, City of Edmonton, Catholic Social Services, Government of Alberta, Edmonton Immigrant Services Assn, Edmonton Mennonite Centre, Millwoods Welcome Centre, Centre d’Acceuil
   - If you did not get any help from these organizations, why not?
6. What help did you need that you did not get in the second year?
   i. How did you survive?
   ii. What else is needed?

7. Over-all, did you feel that your community had given enough help/support that you needed in your second year here?

Thanks You!

**Thumbnail Sketch**

Write your impressions, observations and other comments about the interview.
Interview Guide for one-on-one interview (3rd to fifth yr immigrants/refugees):

Interviewer (Community animator) ___________________________ Date ____________________________

A Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers

WARM-UP Question:

- How long have you been here in Canada?
- Can you tell me how you came to Canada?

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<td></td>
<td>married (living with spouse)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In which country were you born?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. In which country did you live before coming to Canada?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. How well did you speak English upon arrival in Canada?</td>
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<tr>
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### Part 2 – Experience on Arrival and Settlement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What help/support did you need that was most important in your first year, second and third year here? Examples:  
  • Airport pick-up  
  • finding a home  
  • finding a job  
  • getting kids into a school/daycare |  

| 11. How well did you WRITE the English language upon arrival in Canada? | Not at all  
  Poorly  
  Fairly well  
  Well  
  Very well |  
| 12. How well do you speak English (now)? | Not at all  
  Poorly  
  Fairly well  
  Well  
  Very well |  
| 13. How well do you read the English language now? | Not at all  
  Poorly  
  Fairly well  
  Well  
  Very well |  
| 14. How well do you write the English language now? | Not at all  
  Poorly  
  Fairly well  
  Well  
  Very well |  

4. Did you get help/support?  
   - Where did you get help/ support from: your own community or from an organization outside of your community  
   - How did you know where to go to get these services?  
   - What kind of help/ support do you need now?  
   - Who do you ask for support?  
   - Why?

5. Can you tell me some examples or stories of getting support from your community?

6. Did you also help your own community members who are new to Edmonton?  
   - Why?  
   - What did you do to help your newly arrived community members?

7. In Edmonton, there are many services and organizations that provide services to people. These organizations could be government or non-government or private. What help/support did you get from a non-government organization or government organization (formal system)?  
   Examples: Bredin Institute, ASSIST, City of Edmonton, Catholic Social Services, Government of Alberta, Edmonton Immigrant Services Assn, Edmonton Mennonite Centre, Millwoods Welcome Centre, Centre d’Accueil  
   - If you did not get any help from these organizations, why not?
8. Do you still need help/support in your third-to-fifth year here?

9. What help did you need that you did not get in the first year?
   i. How did you survive?
   ii. What else is needed?

10. Over-all, did you feel that your community had given enough help/support that you needed in your time here?

Thank You!

**Thumbnail Sketch**

Write your impressions, observations and other comments about the interview.
Appendix E

Animator Researchers’ Orientation (2)
(including Agenda, Consent Form, Focus group Invitation Poster, Invitation for participation, & Focus Groups’ Guiding Questions)

Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton
Community Researchers’ Guide

(Part 2)

Focus Group

Multicultural Coalition
All Together Now Program
Funded by FCSS and
City of Edmonton Social Development Grant
August 2009
## Objectives

At the end of the session, the community researchers will be able to:

- Describe the differences between one-on-one interviews and focus groups
- Understand their roles & responsibilities in facilitating focus group discussions
- Learn & apply facilitating skills.

## Agenda

### Training on Community Research (Part Two) – Orientation for Focus Groups

**August 13, 2009 5pm – 8:00pm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Topic/Activities</th>
<th>Facilitator and Hand-outs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00 – 5:30</td>
<td>Supper</td>
<td>Handouts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome and Introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30 – 6:00</td>
<td>Debrief individual interview practices</td>
<td>Guming and Janina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Themes &amp; Patterns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Learned &amp; Liked</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Challenges &amp; Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Questions to follow at focus group</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Coffee break</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:15 – 7:15</td>
<td>Practice Focus Group Discussion</td>
<td>Janina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15 – 7:30</td>
<td>Debriefing on Practice Focus Group</td>
<td>Janina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The process</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Guiding questions &amp; Revisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 – 7:50</td>
<td>What is focus group?</td>
<td>Guming</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Roles &amp; Responsibilities of focus group facilitators</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Time, location, facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:50 – 8:00</td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preparing Focus Groups

1. What are focus groups?
Focus groups are 8-12 people of certain similar background, who engage in a discussion led by a facilitator. Focus group interviewing is a qualitative research method. The goal is to collect information on peoples’ attitudes and feelings about a particular topic. The intent of focus groups is to encourage the participants to interact with each other so the quality of the discussion is enhanced.

2. Roles of focus group facilitators
   --The key to the success of a focus group
   --Start the discussion
   --Maintain the flow of discussion
   --Keep the discussion on the topic (the main question/the current question on discussion)
   --Make sure everyone has a chance to speak
   --Manage dominant participants
   --Document discussion on flipchart
   --A facilitator is neutral.

3. Before the focus group
   • Call at least 20 people to attend (likely 10-12 will be available)
   • Confirm with the participants one week before focus group
   • Call the night before (“See you tomorrow!”)
   • Make sure you tell them to eat breakfast since lunch is served at noon.
   • Confirm whether they need childcare.
     If they need, let Guming know the #
   • Ask if someone from your community who have vans to pick up everyone up --introduce yourself to the group (a facilitator rather than an expert; friendly and professional)
   --brief the purpose of the study/research (how it may help communities do better jobs to help members settling well in Edmonton... And at this point you can say where the bathroom is, when food will be served...) so the participants know what they will be doing
   --hand out consent forms (two copies for each)
   --review the form with participants
   --emphasize the part of confidentiality

   Where:
   First Christian Reformed Church,
   10956-96 St

   When:
   10:00 a.m., August 29 (Saturday)

   Emphasize: “If you would like your words removed, please call (focus group facilitator's number) by September 30, 2009,”
(names, data access, keeping what is said in this hall..., rights (not to have to answer all the questions, can leave anytime they want...) and benefits of participation
--make sure participants sign the forms (one for themselves, the other to be collected)
--make sure collect the signed forms, put them in a big envelop and sealed & dated
--suggest/outline the rules of group discussion: speak one at a time; speak loud for everyone to hear; turn off cell phones; confidentiality of what being said at the table stays here
--say that flipchart is used during the session

5. Start the focus group discussion

6. What NOT to do as a facilitator?
--Do not shake your legs during discussion (it is distracting).
--Do not frequently look at your watch (it may show that you are not interested. Yet a facilitator needs to be aware of the time. So a solution can be to put your watch on the table beside your folder.)
--Do not state any personal opinion on the topic that being discussed.
--Do not fold your arms on your chest/lean back on your chair (may indicate disagreement/boredom).

7. Keep the discussion focused
--focus your efforts by listening rather than talking
--be familiar with the prepared list of questions
--make eye contact with each participant when he/she is talking
--make sure only one person speaks at a time

8. If there is an argument
--be conscious of the difference between heightened emotions expressed by raised voices and an argument
--when an argument occurs, the facilitator should step in to immediately reassert his/her authority and stop the argument by saying that it is not the objective of the group discussion. If the argument is occurring between two individuals, the facilitator should direct the discussion to other participants.

9. If there is a dominant participant
--First, regard him/her as a passionate participant
--Then, gently remind the person that everyone needs a chance to voice opinions by saying something like, “Don, you are very passionate about the topic. I see Eve have something to say as well. Eve, please...”

10. Conclude a focus group discussion

If you can, invite someone to help with flipcharting while you facilitating the discussion!

While asking questions and probing, focus group facilitators may consult the “Guide to Conduct Interviews.”
May say: “Unfortunately time is running short and the discussion must be concluded.” Thank each participant individually and invite them to come to the Saturday October 17 from 11am – 2pm by handing out the invitation poster (Oct 17 Event).

11. After the focus group
   --Quickly jot down your observations/comment of the focus group discussion (The sooner you record your observations, the more information you will remember.)
   --Offer yourself to be available after the focus group discussion for the participants who want to talk with you.

Notes:
Janina and Guming will bring
- Focus group guiding questions
- Consent forms and the information sheets
- Invitation posters of Oct 17 event
- Big envelops
- Name tags
- Flipchats & Markers

Please:
- Call your contacts the night before
- Be at the First Christian Reformed Church, 109-96 ST, at least 20 minutes before the focus group (9:40am)
- Ask them to sign the consent form before you begin the discussion (Keep it)
- Let them keep the information sheet with your phone number on it

Before the focus groups start:
- Lucenia welcomes All; debriefs the procedure including a note on confidentiality, signing consent forms, rights & benefits, duration, lunch (a note on Ramadan)...
- Janina & Guming introduce themselves, help animators distribute consent forms and answer questions

Email focus group notes (English) to Guming by September 4
The Multicultural Coalition Would Like to Ask:

What is your experience receiving support from your ethnocultural community?

Please join us on Saturday August 29\textsuperscript{th} from 10am to 1pm for a focus group discussion
10956, 96 Street in the First Christian Reformed Church

Discussion 10.00am – noon & Lunch noon – 1pm

Please call 423-1973 (ask for Guming or Janina) to register or for more information.
A Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers

Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health & Wellbeing

Funded by FCSS & City of Edmonton Social Development Grant
Thursday, August 13, 2009

Dear Community Leaders,

We are pleased to inform you that as part of the All Together Now Program (funded by FCSS and City of Edmonton Social Development Grant), the Multicultural Coalition is undertaking a community research entitled “Community Research on the Experiences of Ethno-cultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers in Edmonton.” Its purpose is, through the active participation of community members, to answer the question: What are the successes of community providing settlement support to own community members?

With the findings of the research, the community research hopes to:

- Document the realities of community support
- Share the research findings with policymakers, funders and other stakeholders

To meet these objectives, a Research Advisory Committee is formed including community animators and researchers from academic institutions and the Multicultural Coalition. Community researchers from emerging ethnic communities participated in a three-hour research training workshop. Currently, they are interviewing participants from their communities on their newcomer experiences, especially their experiences and how their community supported them. In addition, this research also seeks information that allows us to report community capacity.

As a respected leader who is knowledgeable about the community, your participation in this research is important. We invite you to join us for a focus group discussion on Saturday August 29 from 10am-1pm at First Christian Reformed Church (10956-96 ST). After this focus group, the initial results from the research will be shared with community members on Saturday October 17 at the main entrance foyer, City Hall. We would be honoured if you could attend.

Thank you for all your hard work in the community, your participation and support. We look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Tessie Oliva, President
Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health & Wellbeing

For more information, please contact

Thursday, August 13, 2009
Janina Strudwick, Coordinator:                        Dr. Guming Zhao, Researcher:
Phone: 780-423-1973                                    Phone: 780-432-7080
Email: multiculturalcoalition@yahoo.ca                  Email: guming_coalition@yahoo.ca
What is this project all about?
The Multicultural Coalition is doing research to learn the success of communities providing support to their own community members.

Why should I join this research?
The research will help show all the work that is being done in your community and in other communities to help newcomers. This work is usually done by volunteers helping each other without pay or formal recognition. Our goals are 1) to list all the work being done in the community and 2) share that within and outside the community to policy-makers and other stakeholders.

What will I need to do?
You are asked to join a group of community members for a 1-1.5 hour conversation (focus group). You will be asked to share your experiences as a newcomer while settling down in Canada. You do not have to answer any question that upsets or bothers you. You can leave the discussion at any time. Just tell the researcher/facilitator from your community.

Is there anything I should be worried about?
What you say is confidential. Your name, the names of other participants and your other personal information will not be associated in the report with your comments. Only the research team will know your name. It will not be publicly written in the report or anywhere else. Talking about the past may remind you of difficult times when you arrived in Canada. If you don't want to continue, you can leave the focus group meeting anytime. If you have any questions, please call the Coalition at 780-423-1973.

Consent Form

I understand I am participating in a research study. I read this page: I know the benefits & risks of being part of this research.

_________________________ (interviewer’s name & phone number). Thank you!
I had a chance to ask questions.
I know I can refuse to join this research and that later on, if I want, I can ask my words to be removed.
I understand the confidentiality and who will see the research data.
I know notes will be written about what I say in the focus group.

This study was explained to me by:________________ (name) on ______________ (date)

By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this project.

______________________ (Research Participant, printed name) _____________________ (Signature)

To the best of my knowledge, I confirm that this individual understand what is involved in the described research and is participating voluntarily in the study.

______________________ (Researcher, printed name) _____________________ (Signature)
Focus Group Guiding Questions

Facilitator’s Name ___________ Date ___________ Participating

WARM-UP: please tell me your names, where you are from and how long you have been here (go around the table to each person)

Guiding questions for focus group (participants including all the above three categories and the number of participants 8 to 12):

WARM-UP: please tell me your names, where you are from (go around the table to each person)

1) How do you define success for immigrants/refugees?
   
   Example:
   - Family Reunification: sponsor husband or wife for example
   - Financial success: nice car & house
   - Educational success: children in school, graduating, or attending university
   - Employment success: you have a job in your professional training
   - Feeling of Belonging or Inclusion: feel good because you belong and are a part of Canada

2) Describe what your community support looks like.
   
   Probe:
   - How does this community support help you succeed (refer to answers from question 1)?
   - What does it include?

3) Did you provide any support to community members?
   
   Probe:
   - Do you help people in your community? Why? How?
   - How did you learn to do this?
   - What other support do you think is still needed?

4) Now & in future, what does the community need to help the needs of members?
   
   Probe:
   * Money
   * More volunteers
   * Community Centre/office space
   * Training
Appendix F

Interview Guiding Questions - Community Leader Participants
Interview Guide for one-on-one interview (community leader participants)

Interviewers: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

A Community Research on the Experience of Ethnocultural Communities in Supporting Newcomers

WARM-UP Question:

- How long have you been here in Canada? Since 1969 (T), since 1981 (M)
- Can you tell me how you came to Canada?

Part I – Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers/Notes Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>Male, Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. What was your age upon arrival in Canada/Edmonton?</td>
<td>18-25, 26-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Tell me about your present marital status. Are you?</td>
<td>single (never married)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>married (living with spouse)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>married (spouse lives elsewhere)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>common-law relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated, divorced or widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. What was your marital status upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>single (never married)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>married (living with spouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>married (spouse lives elsewhere)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>common-law relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separated, divorced or widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. In which country were you born?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. In which country did you live before coming to Canada?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. What was your immigration status upon arrival in Canada</td>
<td>Visitor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work permit.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landed immigrant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugee.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugee claimant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government sponsored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. What is your immigration status now?</td>
<td>Visitor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landed immigrant/permanent resident</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refugee claimant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government sponsored.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(New) Canadian Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. How well did you SPEAK English</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
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</table>

41-60
61+
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Poorly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. How well did you READ the English language upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poorly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
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<td>Well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. How well did you WRITE the English language upon arrival in Canada?</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poorly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
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<td>Well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. How well do you speak English (now)?</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poorly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
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<td>Well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. How well do you read the English language now?</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poorly</td>
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<td>Fairly well</td>
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<td>Well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. How well do you write the English language now?</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poorly</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fairly well</td>
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<td>Well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very well</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Part 2 – Experience on Arrival and Settlement**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers &amp; Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What help/support did you need that was most important in your first year, second and third year here?  
   Examples:  
   - Airport pick-up  
   - finding a home  
   - finding a job  
   - getting kids into a school/daycare                                   |                     |
| 2. Did you get help/support?  
   - Where did you get help/support from: your own community or from an organization outside of your community  
   - How did you know where to go to get these services?  
   - what kind of help/support do you need now?  
   - Who do you ask for support?  
   - Why?                                                                    |                     |
| 4. Can you tell me some examples or stories of getting support from your community?                                    |                     |
| 5. Did you also help your own community members who are new to Edmonton?  
   - Why?  
   - What did you do to help your newly arrived community members?         |                     |
| 6. In Edmonton, there are many services and organizations that provide services to people. These organizations could be government or non-government or private. What help/support did you get from a non-government organization or government organization (formal system)?  
   Examples:                                                                |                     |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you did not get any help from these organizations, why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you still need help/support in your third-to-fifth year here?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. What help did you need that you did not get in the first year?</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. How did you survive?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ii. What else is needed?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Over-all, did you feel that your community had given enough help/support that you needed in your time here?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. What kind of newcomer support community members need to adjust to Canada?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. How well the community help newcomers be apart of Canadian society?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. What should government do to support the work of communities?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Scripts for Popular Theater Performance (Oct 17, 2009)

The idea to present newcomers’ settlement experiences in the form of the popular theater was the result of a discussion among the community members and participants of the research. The scripts of the five-scene popular theater performance were based on real experiences of four community members. They are titled respectively

- “Bleach in the Juice Box”
- “Team Nursing”
- “In the Shelter”
- “Six Months Pregnant” and “600 Hours To Go”

The popular theater was performed after the Annual General Meeting of the Multicultural Coalition to community members of the Coalition, the public and the guests from the City of Edmonton and the provincial legislature.

Actors from Metro Cinema and community members worked collaboratively off and on the stage.

Bleach in the Juice Box/Team Nursing

NARRATOR (MICHELLE)
When I first came here from Sudan I had no idea about how things worked in Canada. I nearly got hit by a car before I learned the etiquette of street crossing. I was lucky to find someone to help me learn things like bus routes and how to apply for funding. Now I go to school, and I am able to help other members of my community when they come to Canada. Like this one lady who got confused when she went shopping.

BRIAN
Hello, how are you doing today?

ANDREA
Oh I’m in a rush. I just have to get their lunches packed and then the children will be ready to go to school.
BRIAN
Well I am ready to leave whenever they are.

ANDREA
Thank you so much for helping me like this.

BRIAN
I’m happy to help. I think it’s wonderful that you got a job.

ANDREA
Mimes filling up a juice box, general lunch-packing activities
Yes, and when the money starts coming in I’ll be able to pay someone to make sure my children get to school. Maybe I can pay you for your time?

BRIAN
I won’t accept your money so just forget about it. This will be good practice for your English skills as well.

ANDREA
Yes I’m nervous about that.

BRIAN
Don’t worry, you’ll be fine.

ANDREA
Okay I think we’re ready to go.

BRIAN
Hold on a second, why are you putting bleach into those juice boxes?

ANDREA
This? This is juice.

BRIAN
No it’s not. It’s bleach. This is a cleaning liquid.

ANDREA
But it was in the juice section at the grocery store.

BRIAN
Maybe it was near the juice, but this is poison. Please, take it out of your children’s lunch.

ANDREA
Are you serious?

BRIAN
If your children were to drink this it would be very bad.

ANDREA
I can’t believe what I almost did.

NARRATOR
Luckily I was there to correct her mistake. It is difficult to do even the most simple tasks, like grocery shopping, when you’re English isn’t very good.

*Scene shift, ANDREA takes over narration duties.*

NARRATOR (ANDREA)
When I first came to Canada as a Nurse I was not used to the idea of team nursing.

BRIAN
Tessie I think Mr. Smith is calling for someone. Would you mind checking in on him?

TESSIE
Okay.

NARRATOR
I worked very hard, and didn’t ask too many questions at first. I wanted to make a good impression.

BRIAN
Tessie would you mind looking in on Mrs. Jones. I’m about to go on my break.

TESSIE
Sure.

NARRATOR
But after a while, I began to notice that, whenever someone called for a nurse, it was me who was expected to answer. Whenever a particularly difficult person came to the hospital, I was immediately assigned to them. So I started taking notes.

BRIAN
Mr. Smith has upset his bedpan again Tessie. Please go clean it up.
TESSIE nods, and after BRIAN leaves she takes out a notebook and carefully makes a note.

NARRATOR
Finally, after three months, I was ready to say something.

BRIAN
Tessie the sheets need changing in room 212.

TESSIE
Yes Brian. I know they do. Because I’ve changed them the last fourteen times.

BRIAN
What?

TESSIE
See? I have it all written down here. You could change them last week because you were busy doing paperwork, and the week before that because . . . well I don’t really know where you were that week. Where were you Brian?

BRIAN
I was, uh, I was helping out in the nursery.

TESSIE
That’s funny. Because I was in the nursery almost all the time that week, as you’ll see here. When I wasn’t changing the sheets, cleaning up bedpans, or generally cleaning up after one of Mr Smith’s tantrums.

BRIAN
I, um . . .

TESSIE
You were about to go change the beds in room 212?

BRIAN
Yes.

NARRATOR
I’m not afraid to confront someone when I’m being treated unfairly, but not all young nurses from the Philippines are like me. Do you know some people still ask me why I don’t go back to my own country? I ask them, “if you want me to stay in my country, then why was your hospital recruiting nurses in mine?”
NARRATOR (BRIAN)
You may think that, when a person comes to Canada, they lose much of their culture. This is not the case. Some people move to Canada and become so determined to hold on to their culture that they end up being even more conservative than the place they left. The country changes and moves forward; they do not. And while some traditions are good to retain, others are not.

MICHELLE
No you don't understand, you can't put her on a taxi.

ANDREA
But that's the shelter's policy.

MICHELLE
I know it's your policy, but do you have any idea how many members of this woman's community are taxi drivers?

ANDREA
I do know. Many of them were doctors or engineers back in India. Edmonton has some of the best educated taxi drivers in the world.

MICHELLE
Yes but that's not my point. Do you have any idea how much courage it took for this woman to leave her abusive husband? If we don't help her this time then we may not get a chance to again.

ANDREA
But we are helping her. We're helping her go to Toronto for a while to stay with family.

MICHELLE
Yes but she's not even sure she wants to do that yet.

ANDREA
Unfortunately we don't have time for her to be sure. It is the best thing for her.

MICHELLE
Yes but what I'm saying is, if a taxi comes and it's a member from her community, someone who knows her, who knows her husband, then he's going to call her husband and tell him she went to the airport. He'll know where she
went – she doesn’t have many relatives in this country. He’ll start calling her and harassing her.

ANDREA
I know the system isn’t perfect, but it’s all we have. I’ll tell the taxi company not to send an Indian driver.

MICHELLE
They can’t control that!

ANDREA
It’s the best we can do!

NARRATOR (MICHELLE)
It takes a tremendous amount of courage for a woman to leave an abusive situation and go to a shelter, especially if she only came to this country because of an arranged marriage. When this happens, we often have only one chance to get it right – if we can’t get these women the help they need then they often end up going back to their husbands and the abuse gets worse. The women decide the system does not work, and they never try to leave again.

BRIAN sits in a chair and becomes taxi DRIVER. ANDREA puts on a scarf and a pair of sunglasses, becoming the woman referred to in the preceding scene, and gets in the taxi.

ANDREA
Take me to the airport please.

DRIVER nods, begins driving.

DRIVER
Going on vacation?

ANDREA
Excuse me?

DRIVER
Are you going for a vacation?

ANDREA
Yes.

DRIVER
All by yourself?
ANDREA
I’m going to Vancouver.

DRIVER
Ah yes Vancouver. It’s very nice there. What will you do when you’re there?

ANDREA
I don’t know.

DRIVER
You don’t know?

ANDREA
I will relax.

DRIVER
I see. You know, you look familiar to me.

ANDREA
Do I?

DRIVER
Yes. It’s hard to tell with those sunglasses on though.

ANDREA
Maybe I remind you of her.

DRIVER
It’s not a sunny day.

ANDREA
No. I hope it will be sunny in Vancouver.

DRIVER
Yes. Here we are. That will be 48.60 please.

ANDREA pays DRIVER, exits cab. DRIVER pulls out his cell phone and dials, watching ANDREA in his rear view mirror.

DRIVER
Hello how are you doing my friend? Everything alright at home? Yes? Is your wife there? No I don’t imagine she is. Because I just drove her to the airport. Why is she going on a vacation to Vancouver without you? I see. I see.
NARRATOR enters.

NARRATOR (MICHELLE)
I do not understand why, when a woman leaves her abusive situation, it is such a rush for her to decide what to do next. What she needs is time – time to think, time to make the right decision. Why is it that, when it comes to some things, the government moves so slowly, and yet at other times they are in such a rush?

Six Months Pregnant and 600 Hours To Go

NARRATOR
When I first came to Canada I was four months pregnant. I spent my first month in Toronto until one day a friend called, telling me that I could qualify for EI maternity benefits as long as I worked 600 hours in Alberta rather than 900 hours in Ontario before the baby was born. So even though it was the middle of winter and I had already made a long journey from Ethiopia to Canada, I decided to move again.

BOSS
Alright Chuchu have a seat. How long have you been in Canada for?

CHUCHU
Almost two months.

BOSS
It says on your resume here that you already have a job working at KFC?

CHUCHU
Yes. I work there during the days, but I would be available to work here at Wendy’s in the evenings.

BOSS
That’s a lot of work.

CHUCHU
I need to work as many hours as I can before my baby is born.

BOSS
You’re pregnant?

CHUCHU
Yes.

BOSS
How far along are you?

CHUCHU
I will have my baby in three months.

BOSS
So you’ll be working for me for three months, then leaving?

CHUCHU
Yes, for maternity leave.

BOSS
And then I’ll have to train someone else.

CHUCHU
I am a hard worker.

BOSS
Yes I know. I talked to your boss at the KFC.

BOSS pauses, considering.

BOSS
I’m concerned that this is a lot of work for a pregnant lady to be doing.

CHUCHU
I can do it.

BOSS
I don’t think this is going to work out.

CHUCHU
Why not?

BOSS
Because I need people who will work for me for longer than three months.

CHUCHU
But I need to work as many hours as I can!

BOSS
And I have a restaurant to run. I’m sorry, but there’s nothing I can do.

NARRATOR
After that I went home and I felt like crying. I didn’t want to work so much, but I had to. Luckily my friend was working at that Wendy’s. She explained my situation to the manager and he finally agreed to hire me. I don’t think he wanted to, but he was desperate for employees. For three months I worked seven and a half hours at KFC during the day, then five hours at the Wendy’s in the evening. I did this six days a week. I managed to work all 600 hours, and went on maternity leave.

A few months later I had to go back to the hospital for some minor surgery. I couldn’t afford to have someone take care of my baby, so I had to bring her to the hospital with me. I was overwhelmed; just learning to breast feed and worried about my operation, I wasn’t getting much sleep.

CHUCHU
Excuse me nurse?

NURSE
Yes?

CHUCHU
Can you take my baby to the nursery for the evening?

NURSE
Why should I do that?

CHUCHU
I’m having difficulties. I’m very tired and ... I’m still learning how to breast feed her and I’m nervous about my operation tomorrow. I haven’t been sleeping very well and I’d like have a good night’s rest.

NURSE
You know, you’re in North America now.

CHUCHU
Yes I know. What do you mean?

NURSE
I don’t know how things were in Ethiopia – maybe they take care of your young children for you there when you’re in hospital, but here in North America we take care of our babies even when we’re in the hospital.

CHUCHU
In Ethiopia I would have my friends and family to help me in a time like this.

NURSE
Well I suppose that’s one of the things you lose when you decide to immigrate to a new country.

CHUCHU
No, I still have many friends here in Canada. They tried to come to visit me yesterday. You told them they were not allowed.

NURSE
We have strict visiting hours, and a limit to how many people can visit you at once. It’s for your own good.

CHUCHU
How is it for my own good when you won’t allow members of my community to visit me and help me? Do you know it’s considered very rude in my country to deny visitors to a person in the hospital?

NURSE
Well like I said, you’re in North America now. It’s time to start getting used to that.

NARRATOR
Things are different here in Canada – much different than in Ethiopia. I am not afraid to learn to do things in new ways. I understand and respect that hospitals have rules but I wish they’d let my friends help me, especially when they could not help me themselves.