



Canadian Council for Refugees Fall 2015 Consultation
Courage, Contributions, Resilience
November 26-28 2015, Hamilton
Conference Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Council for Refugees' Fall 2015 Consultation was held November 26 - 28 at the Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, on the territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River. Close to 400 participants from across Canada attended the Consultation, with a strong local attendance from Ontario, and delegates from every single province.

The Fall 2015 Consultation provided a space for learning, experience-sharing and networking among people involved in refugee protection, the immigrant and refugee serving sector, and refugee resettlement across Canada. The theme for this Consultation was *Courage, Contributions, Resilience*, reflecting the positive things that newcomers to Canada bring to our communities.

Thirty-five sessions were offered during the three days of the Consultation, consisting of two plenary sessions, two orientations, one training session, three two-part working group meetings, one joint strategy session, seventeen workshops, eight caucus sessions, and an annual general meeting. The program included three to five concurrent sessions in any given time period, apart from the times when participants met in plenary. Workshop streams focused on (a) immigrant and refugee settlement and integration, (b) refugee resettlement and overseas protection and (c) inland refugee protection.

The Working Group meetings held during the Consultation were divided in two parts and took place on Thursday and Friday, which gave participants the opportunity to first become familiar with the functions and key issues of the working group, and then discuss emerging issues and share information, best practices and their own initiatives with others from across Canada. The meetings also offered an opportunity to prepare resolutions to be presented at the General Meeting, and to develop strategies for action to address issues emerging from the discussion. The new resource on the principles of anti-oppression introduced at the Spring Consultation in Winnipeg was used again and will continue to be included in future conference kits. The handout

includes information on different types of privilege and an exercise on how to be aware of this, as well as tips for a more inclusive Consultation.

CCR member organizations and volunteers from Hamilton formed a local organizing committee (LOC) to host the event and successfully ensured that logistics were looked after and that a welcoming team of volunteers was ready to respond to the needs of participants. The Consultation was made possible thanks to the time, dedication, and hard work of staff from Micah House Refugee Reception, Immigrants Working Centre, North Hamilton Community Health Centre, Refuge Health Centre and others, and the team of dynamic and helpful volunteers they recruited and coordinated. The LOC organized a successful social event on the Friday evening, when participants enjoyed a delicious Indian buffet and a DJ who got everyone dancing at a local restaurant.

At this Consultation, the CCR benefited from the in-kind contributions of Micah House Refugee Reception, Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton / Niagara, Immigrants Working Centre, North Hamilton Community Health Centre, Good Shepherd Family Centre, Refuge Health Centre and the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic.

The CCR gratefully acknowledges financial support for the Consultation from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, the Emergency Support Committee for Refugees, Anglican Diocese of Niagara, BC Civil Liberties Association, Centre for Refugee Studies - York University, and Tourism Hamilton.

II. EMERGING NEEDS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Through workshops, caucus sessions, plenaries and the written feedback we received on the Consultation, a number of emerging needs and priorities in the refugee protection and newcomer settlement sector have been identified.

Engaging with the new government

After almost a decade of Conservative government, a new government has been elected that professes to have a different approach when it comes to refugees and immigration. A number of commitments have been made by the new government. Participants at the Consultation brainstormed new priorities and ideas for creating a positive relationship of cooperation and consultation with the new government, and these discussions will need to continue as we move forward.

Building public support for refugees

The energy and solidarity being shown in recent months around welcoming Syrian refugees has been encouraging and exciting. However, there has also been some backlash, including hate crimes. It is thus more important than ever to work on raising awareness and building support among the Canadian public for *all* refugees in need of protection.

Government agency use of social media

As social media takes an increasingly central role in people's lives, it has also become a tool for government agencies to research individuals. This is increasingly the case for refugee claimants and immigration detainees in Canada. Following a session discussing the use of social media by CIC, CBSA and the IRB to research applicants and their friends and relatives, several participants felt that this was an issue requiring follow-up.

Access to education and services for people with precarious status

Access to services and education were the focus of two sessions at this Consultation: a workshop on Sanctuary Cities, and a caucus session highlighting an Ontario project on access to education for youth with precarious status. As certain Sanctuary Cities confront the challenges of implementing their new policy, groups in other places advocate to have their communities make a commitment to provide services without regard to status.

Mental Health

Mental health has come back to the foreground as a key priority for follow up, after workshops on access to mental health, and on mental health for LGBT refugees. There was also an extensive discussion around mental health services under the Interim Federal Health Program at the Immigration & Settlement Working Group meeting. These discussions will continue via virtual meeting in 2016.

III. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARIES

Some presentations are available online for CCR members at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/fall-2015-presentations>

Opening plenary

Yvonne Maracle offered a welcome to participants and reflected on the parallel challenges with poverty faced by many Indigenous persons and refugees. Loly Rico reviewed the last six months of the CCR's activities. Giving the keynote speech, Ines Rios used her personal experiences and long years serving newcomers to reflect on the theme of *Courage, Contributions, Resilience*.

Resource persons:

Yvonne Maracle, Aboriginal Health Centre, Hamilton

Ines Rios, Executive Director, Immigrants Working Centre, Hamilton

Loly Rico, CCR President

Moderators: Bonaventure Otshudi and Scott Jones

Closing plenary and Annual General Meeting

The consultation closed with the Annual General Meeting, including election of Executive Committee members and approval of resolutions. Dada Gasirabo gave a concluding reflection emphasizing how refugees often contribute from the time they arrive, and indeed draw strength from being given the opportunity to contribute.

Speaker: Dada Gasirabo, Executive director, Oasis Centre des Femmes

Co-chairs: Jennie Stone and Rita Acosta

IV. SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOPS

Note: a number of presentations from the workshops are available to CCR members online at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/spring2015-presentations>.

Struggling with Access to Mental Health Care

Newcomer service providers across Canada negotiate access to mental health services for clients according to immigration status and availability of care, which seems to vary significantly by region. This workshop examined the complexities in navigating access to mental health, seeking input from participants on approaches and barriers/challenges in access to mental health care for refugees in Canada.

Presenters provided an overview of survey findings on access to mental health services across the country. Caroline Dailly highlighted the success of regional networking meetings with settlement service agencies, health/mental health agencies and government, in a multi-agency partnership model that meets monthly. She also raised the issue of IFH requiring a PhD level for counselling to cover the service when counsellors could be available, and may be more like to have appropriate language skills.

Amy Soberano gave a youth perspective and discussed the negative impacts that the settlement experience can have on youth mental health. She discussed in particular the legal process and implications of being without status, legacy cases and appeals in limbo, and living in poverty with no family supports. Also highlighted was the issue of access to education and how there were systemic barriers at all levels leaving youth feeling marginalized and not feeling recognized by mainstream society.

Workshop discussion led to several ideas for follow-up, including the following:

- Challenge IFH on the requirement of PhD level psychiatric counselling vs trauma counselling by trained practitioners (this would also address the issue of long wait times to access counselling services by psychiatrists, as long as 2 years)
- Advocate with Federal and provincial settlement programs to support funding for trauma counselling/training of staff. Noted CAMH program in Ontario that is an online program to train settlement workers in trauma counselling.
- Anti-oppression training should be a prerequisite to trauma counselling in particular for those working with LGBTQ refugees
- CCR could host a clearing house for mental health resources across the country
- Noted the need for additional financial resources for clinical services for the large number of Syrians arriving. Noted the stabilization of housing intersects with the success of settlement.
- Noted that Doctors for Refugee Care have mobilized across the country and are prepared to provide initial medical services for newly arrived Syrian refugees.

Resource persons:

Caroline Dailly, ISS of BC, Vancouver

Amy Soberano, CCVT, Toronto

Moderators: Debbie Hill-Corrigan and François Régis

Social Innovation Projects

Social innovation offers novel solutions to social problems, new ideas which meet both social needs and create new social relationships and collaborations. Such innovative approaches are seen as building the capacity of the immigration and settlement sector to address social needs of newcomers beyond traditional policy and funding opportunities. This workshop explored strategic and field-based perspectives on social innovation in services and supports for newcomers in Canada.

The resource persons were able to provide three different perspectives to this issue: 1) the concept of social innovation; 2) the application of this concept in the newcomer settlement sector, and 3) the example of a specific social innovation project with Tibetan newcomers in British Columbia.

Mary-Rose Brown discussed the concept of social innovation, which encapsulates innovative projects with a social impact that are developed in the context of competition for financial resources, and that focus on clear objectives, with outcome measurement tools and robust evaluation. The role of the McConnell Foundation in the *Innoweave* project is to provide tools for community organizations so that they will have the capacity to develop and implement social innovation projects such as social enterprises, in various sectors.

Robin Wisener presented on what IRCC is doing with regards to social innovation, noting that it is sometimes preferable for bureaucrats not to get involved directly in community projects. She discussed the alignment between community projects and the priorities of the new federal government in terms of social infrastructure development, which implies the maximization of settlement stakeholders, including employers. In 2014-15, CIC (now IRCC) financed 36 pilot projects, of which 32 had budgets under \$5000, including the MOSAIC project presented at this workshop. In 2015-16, professional pathways will be among the priorities, so IRCC will be looking for projects that facilitate newcomer labour market integration, including with an increased role for the employer.

Darae Lee presented the Tibetan Resettlement Project as an example of social innovation. In this project, a large group of refugees privately sponsored between 2013 and 2016 were housed collectively on arrival in a transition house, with frequent contact with MOSAIC. This process gave them access to a variety of settlement support, especially given that privately sponsored refugees generally have little access to settlement organizations, who are focused more on government-assisted refugees. Coordination between several actors was highlighted as one of the keys to the project's success, along with respect for the newcomers' culture.

Resource persons:

Robin Wisener, Policy Innovation Division - Integration/FCRO, IRCC

Mary-Rose Brown, McConnell Foundation, Montreal

Darae Lee, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Moderators: Adèle Garnier and Florim Tafilaj

CBSA Accountability Mechanism

This workshop focused on developing recommendations for an independent, external accountability mechanism for the Canada Border Services Agency. Participants were asked to consider the CCR's proposed model and hear from the BC Civil Liberties Association about strengths and weaknesses of existing complaints mechanisms for other enforcement agencies.

Laura Track discussed previous work done by BCCLA on accountability mechanisms, including two options for review. Andrew Brouwer reviewed the CCR's proposed mechanism and also provided a brief history of CCR involvement.

Participants asked several questions around scope, cost, mitigation of officer discretion, and examples of accountability mechanisms in other countries.

The proposed model will be finalized and made public soon.

Resource persons:

Andrew Brouwer, Refugee Law Office (RLO), Toronto

Josh Paterson, BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Vancouver

Laura Track, BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Vancouver

Moderator: Claire Roque

Refugee "crises": Global, European and Canadian Response

This workshop explored shifts in the protection paradigm, focussing on the Middle East, Europe and Canada's role. The workshop provided an important opportunity to hear from the resource persons and for participants to contribute their perspectives, in the context of the recent upsurge in popular support for refugees and the government commitment to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees.

Some key themes emerging from the workshop discussion included the following:

- Capitalize on public interest to increase capacity and awareness now.
- Acknowledge very special PSR program that exists in Canada. Family-linked responses need to be part of protection. Affirm the efforts for Syrian refugees, but not to the exclusion of other refugee populations in need of resettlement.
- Develop permanent mechanisms to link family-based admissions with PSR groups.
- How to guard against the negative rhetoric in the future?
- Advocate for Canada to continue to meet its financial obligations to the UNHCR, but also for efforts that address poverty and resolve conflict, so there will be fewer refugees in our world.

Resource persons:

Jennifer Bond, Assistant Professor, University of Ottawa, Criminal Law and the UORAP

Refugee Access to Justice Research Seminar

Furio de Angelis, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' representative in Ottawa

Deborah Tunis, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's special coordinator for Syrian and Iraqi refugees

Moderators: Jennie Stone and Rob Shropshire

Role of Diasporas in Canada

This session explored the role that diasporas play in contributing socioeconomically to communities in Canada and assisting with the integration of resettled refugees in particular.

The resource persons were former refugees or children of refugees of different backgrounds (Afghan, Somali, Honduran, and Syrian) who presented their personal stories of courage, resilience and contributions to the social and economic growth of Canada.

Resource persons:

Hassan Abdi, former refugee from Somalia

Irfan Tahiri, person of refugee descent from Afghanistan

Keren Mendez, youth former refugee from Honduras

Ghuna Bdiwi, Syrian Human Rights lawyer and doctoral candidate

Moderator: Jennifer Ardon

Citizenship and permanent residence: training for front-line workers

This workshop offered front-line workers practical information about recent changes to citizenship rules in order for them to better help their clients. The resource persons also addressed issues relating to permanent residence.

Resource persons:

Nir Gepner, Willowdale Community Legal Services

Cornelia Mazgarean, Community and Legal Aid Services

Moderators: Jill Keliher and François Régis

When CBSA, CSIS approaches your organization

This workshop addressed the rights and responsibilities of NGOs with respect to clients' privacy and personal information when approached by security and law enforcement agencies such as CSIS or CBSA. Presenters sought to inform agencies as to best practices in various scenarios where they may be approached by a security or law enforcement agency about a client.

The presenters from BCCLA talked about the education and advocacy for law reform their organization has been involved in on this issue, and outlined basic rights and obligations for individuals when dealing with CBSA, CSIS and police, and how this may apply in professional situations. They described changes in roles and powers that these agencies have (for example, CSIS was previously limited to information gathering, but they have new powers that may allow them to detain individuals), as well as the rights that individuals have when approached, for example nondisclosure.

John Dube presented the practical tool that CCR has been developing on these issues, which will become available in 2016.

Resource persons:

John Dube, MOSAIC, Vancouver

Josh Paterson, BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Vancouver

Laura Track, BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Vancouver

Moderator: Claire Roque

LGBT refugee mental health roundtable

This workshop was designed as an opportunity for learning, exchange and resource-sharing on aspects of and approaches to the mental health and well-being of LGBT refugees, through facilitated round table discussions. Workshop participants divided into groups based on their experience and familiarity with LGBT refugee mental health, and were encouraged to bring along their organizations' outreach materials as well as information on relevant resources in their local areas and on the internet.

Several issues were discussed, among them:

- Terms to identify sex/gender identity
- Systemic issues affecting LGBT migrants
- Trauma and a person-focused approach to care and support
- Creating conditions for safety when serving LGBT migrants
- Addressing specific needs of LGBT migrants without ghettoizing them
- How to embody anti-oppressive practices, speech, and attitudes
- Youth and families

Participants reflected on how as the person doing support, one must break out one's own biases, and inform themselves, not expecting clients to do all the work of informing them regarding issues. Participants informed each other where to find further resources to adapt their services better to LGBT. It was felt that CCR must have sessions that aren't just for those "in the know" about LGBT issues, but more like plenary for all members.

Resource persons:

Poe Liberado, activist on LGBTQ+ issues, Hamilton

Deborah Headley, Network for Therapeutic Alliances, Toronto

Moderators: Christina Olivieri and Alein Ortegon

Caucus: Interdiction

Participants were encouraged to attend this caucus in order to share information about how refugee claimants are prevented from reaching Canada, and to brainstorm ideas to improve refugees' access to asylum.

Issues related to interdiction that were discussed include:

- How to respond to calls from people overseas wanting to know how to get to Canada
- Electronic travel authorizations – March 2016
- Development of a tool kit of practical information to be given to persons in the US looking for info on claiming asylum at the Canadian border
- Need for info on recourses for exclusion from the family in Canada exemption to Safe Third Country when documentation is not available
- The fate of people who are interdicted
- Research on European interdiction measures
- Lack of public awareness of interdiction
- Roma racial profiling interdiction

Several participants expressed an interest in being part of a CCR subcommittee to document various forms of interdiction to then approach the Minister of Public Safety to discuss.

Caucus leaders: Jenn McIntyre and Rick Goldman

Session with Mario Dion, IRB chairperson

In this workshop, participants heard from and had an opportunity to ask questions of Mario Dion, Chairperson of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, and other senior IRB officials. Among the issues considered were issues for refugee claimants at the first instance or at appeal, "legacy" cases, cessation issues, detention reviews and long delays in appeals of Family Class sponsorships. The resource persons also gave updates and statistics regarding the Refugee Protection Division and the Refugee Appeals Division (RAD). It was noted that the Chairperson had an upcoming meeting with the new Minister of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship.

During the discussion period some other points were raised by participants, including:

- Challenges related to detention
- Training gaps for board members around trauma and other issues
- The need for the RAD to be accessible to all refugee claimants

Resource persons:

Mario Dion, IRB Chairperson

Ken Sandhu, Deputy Chairperson, Refugee Appeal Division

Sylvia Cox-Duquette, Deputy Chairperson, Refugee Protection Division

Moderators: Loly Rico and Aviva Basman

Eritrea: Country conditions and Seeking Refuge

This workshop gave an overview of the humanitarian crisis in Eritrea. It highlighted the relationship between Canada and the refugee population of Eritrea by looking at both the involvement of Canadian mining companies and the barriers faced by Sponsorship Agreement Holders in Canada to bring Eritreans over.

Michael Casasola provided the latest data regarding numbers and country conditions, as well as eligibility criteria for what. Sara Ghebremusse discussed the history of conflict in Eritrea and the human rights conditions that lead to the outflow of refugees. Azaria Wolday explained the methods of resettlement in Canada and the obstacles and the restriction of the regulations imposed by CIC in 2012.

During the discussion some issues were raised as barriers to Eritreans finding refuge in Canada. As a solution, it was recommended that

- the cap system that is restricting sponsorship of Eritreans should be eliminated
- requirements of refugee status determination for Group of 5 sponsorships should be eliminated
- CCR should encourage the UNHCR to issue a special appeal for a large scale resettlement of Eritrean refugees

It was also noted that many single Eritreans would be available for sponsorship through BVOR.

Resource persons:

Azaria Wolday, Northwood Neighborhood Services, Toronto

Michael Casasola, UNHCR

Sara Ghebremusse, York University PhD Student, Toronto

Moderators: Haben Tesfai and Ellen Woolaver

Issues for Newcomer Youth

This workshop explored how immigration policies have narrowed possibilities for stability and regularization for precarious migrant youth populations. Specifically, the workshop looked at how immigration status intersects with many aspects of our lives, causing many to feel unwelcome, unsafe, or undervalued. Engaging participants in a dialogue about the participation of precarious status migrant youth in Canada, the group looked at some of the existing youth-led responses, and discussed tangible possibilities to improve safe spaces.

Moderators: Xavier Urbina and Najla Kanaan

Cultural Safety

The concept of “cultural safety” evolved from the notion of “cultural competence” and has contributed greatly to approaches for supports and services to newcomers. This workshop explored these ideas and their relevance, and offered some best practices in implementing cultural sensitivity in supports and services for newcomers to Canada

Resource persons discussed how the concept of cultural safety can be applied in nursing and social services contexts, offering best practices in both. The overarching theme was the need for sensitivity in support services for newcomers, and the importance of learning about the culture of source countries was highlighted as important.

Resource persons:

Sue Grafe, Refuge: Hamilton Centre for Newcomer Health

Carolina Gajardo, private consultant, Toronto

Michele Manocchi, Seeds for Change, London

Moderators: Ibrahim Absiye

Court Challenges in Immigration and Citizenship Law

Canada’s immigration and citizenship laws have seen dramatic amendments over the past several years. Currently many legal challenges to these changes are making their way through the courts. Participants were invited to learn about the key decisions of the Federal Court and the Supreme Court of Canada, and what these may mean for pending cases.

The speakers covered challenges including

- DCO-RAD appeal challenge
- IFHP challenge
- Habeas Corpus case
- PRRA bar challenge
- Kanthasamy (H&C)

- Huruglica (Scope of review for the RAD)
- Singh (limits to new evidence for the RAD and the Supreme Court decisions on “human smuggling”)

Resource persons:

Maureen Silcoff, lawyer, Toronto

Barbara Jackman, lawyer, Toronto

Anthony Navaneelan, Refugee Law Office, Toronto

Moderators: Mitch Goldberg and Andrew Brouwer

Sanctuary Cities: Moving Forward

Participants heard from a variety of different stakeholders involved at different levels in advocating for or implementing Sanctuary Cities in Hamilton, Toronto and Vancouver. They addressed what the services and gaps for people without immigration status are, and what must be done to move forward, including in other municipalities.

In their presentations, resource persons discussed where their cities are at in terms of sanctuary city policies, what the gaps are, and what can be done moving forward, especially for civil society and CCR members and allies.

There are many services that undocumented people are entitled to get without being asked their immigration status, however, many city staff were asking residents for their immigration status in order to receive services. In 2013 Access T.O. was adopted in Toronto, and the city became a Sanctuary City. However, while municipal staff was informed, they were not trained, and funding was not provided to put the new policy in place. FCJ Refugee Centre received a grant to carry out trainings and conduct an audit with service providers to see if they were actually implementing the policy. While progress has been made, there are still many gaps to fill. The auditors provided recommendations, and it is hoped that this work will improve services.

In Hamilton a group of volunteer activists formed in 2013 to seize on momentum from the motion for sanctuary was passed in Toronto. The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic produced a report on the issue and presented it to City Council, where it was voted on and passed.

In Vancouver, a group of organizers came together in 2012 in the wake of the cuts to the IFHP and began the Sanctuary Health movement. The group hosted a series of community consultations with affected people and service providers to identify barriers. They work on issues beyond health, and one victory they have had in Vancouver is that transit police can no longer connect with CBSA, following the inquiry into the death of Lucia Vega Jimenez, who committed suicide under CBSA detention after transit police checked her immigration status and called CBSA. The group collaborates with labour and healthcare workers and they have a group for peer support with the families who guide the group’s advocacy work.

Some highlights of the discussion around priorities and moving forward included:

- The need to push for regularization at the federal level
- The need to work together to build safety networks for undocumented people
- Fight for police and CBSA accountability
- Importance of the principle of non-collaboration where not required

Resource persons:

Fenicia Lewis-Dowlin, City of Toronto
Alejandra Lopez Bravo, Sanctuary Health, Vancouver
Caitlin Craven, Sanctuary Hamilton

Moderators: Sharmarke Mohamed and Cynthia Beaudry

Assessing potential cases of trafficking in persons

This workshop focused on how to assess potential trafficking cases by using the CCR's National Human Trafficking Assessment Tool. Guidance was given on how to use the tool and what to do if a client may have been trafficked. The workshop was directed towards service providers with little or no knowledge about trafficking in persons.

A brief introduction on trafficking was provided, after which participants received guidance on using the CCR's Trafficking Assessment Tool, including an overview of Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) for trafficked persons, services available for those with a TRP and obstacles to accessing TRPs and other avenues for regularizing a trafficked person's status.

Following the presentations there was a question and answer period where a variety of questions were addressed, informing the audience of the following:

- Refugee claimants may apply for a TRP, decision is at the discretion of the immigration officer
- Advocates may not file a case against a recruiter on behalf of a caregiver who is "released on arrival": there must be someone to testify
- Collaboration of agencies in the community is very important – police, nuns, school teachers, case workers; it's about planning.
- In some regions, people are discouraged from applying for TRPs and urged instead to request open work permits.

There are plans to develop a webinar to accompany the Assessment tool.

Resource persons:

Saleem Spindari, MOSAIC, Vancouver
Maureen Thrasher, Legal Assistance of Windsor
Tanya Aberman, FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto

Moderator: Rita Acosta

How will we work together to build public support for increased refugee resettlement?

Refugee sponsors have witnessed a dramatic increase in support for resettlement recently. This workshop looked at how we can take advantage of this interest to increase and sustain public support for refugee resettlement, and how we can use this public momentum to bolster government commitments to resettle refugees to Canada. After brief presentations on the efforts of diverse refugee resettlement groups, this strategic session dug into key questions to create a common roadmap for advocates and communities to increase and sustain public support for refugee resettlement in Canada.

Workshop participants strategized on how to stay “on message”, to keep the interest in refugee issues from flagging, with strategies including hosting public events, maintaining use of social media, and managing expectation of volunteers. Ways to myth-bust and correct ignorant views of refugees were also discussed, including the finer points of what language should be used. It was proposed that a press package would be created, and that individuals and organizations reach out to educate their MPs, especially new ones. Participants further discussed how to get out positive stories of resettlement refugees, and some suggestions included:

- Buying advertising to put out messages;
- Using of social media
- Partnering with government
- Sharing stories of Canadian families doing positive work – stories of host society
- Talking about groups of refugees apart from Syrians
- Linking with other refugee moments in our history
- Local events: panel discussions, poetry readings,
- Noting that attention and spotlight in the early stages may not be welcome
- Engaging academics to generate stories, connect to those that are already doing good things; researchers

Developing partnerships was discussed, including the challenges of doing this in rural communities, and other potential allies, such as universities and places of education, student clubs, housing companies, legal services, landlords, and media.

Suggestions for moving forward included:

- Create a number of factsheets for different audiences, with different levels of language and detail to be understood by the recipients: media, MPs, general public (neighbours, friends, colleagues);
- Showcase not just stories of refugees, but also those of Canadians who have become involved in resettlement;
- Embed the Syrian narrative in a larger refugee narrative that spans different places, from the past into the present and future;
- Create multimedia video clips on successful refugee stories – short YouTube videos and/or documentary;
- Investigate what government is/will be doing with regard to messaging to avoid duplication of effort;
- Challenge CCR members to organize events such as Spoken Word/Poetry contest; Arts Exhibits, or “RefTalk” modeled on TedTalk, in their communities.

Resource persons:

Caroline Dailly, ISS of BC, Vancouver

Brian Dyck, Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) Association, Winnipeg

Alexandra Kotyk, Lifeline Syria, Toronto

Gilbert Iyamuremye, Diocese of London, Windsor

Moderators: Georges Bahaya and Sabine Lehr

Use of client social media by CBSA, CIC

This participatory workshop looked at the ways in which people's social media (e.g. Facebook) may be used for or against them in their immigration proceedings. Greg Kipling shared information about the IRB's policy on use of client social media. Participants contributed from their own experiences with the various ways in which client social media was used in immigration processes and advice they gave clients. A strong message was that government officials and decision-makers need to have a more sophisticated understanding of how social media works, in order to avoid drawing unfounded conclusions.

Resource persons:

Greg Kipling, Director General of Policy Planning and Research, IRB

Jenny Jeanes, Action Réfugiés Montréal

Sharon Schmidt, Welcome Home Refugee Housing Community, Kitchener

Moderator: Eunice Valenzuela

International Students

The workshop covered issues international students face when studying in Canada, including gaps in access to services and innovative responses by community organisations. It offered an opportunity for participants to share their experiences of challenges and solutions when serving this population, and to discuss possible actions.

Three resource people spoke to the issue: one youth with lived experience as an international student, a manager at COSTI's "International Student Connect" Program, and a manager of the International Student Connect Program at CÉSOC (working with University of Ottawa). These resource persons spoke briefly on the challenges faced by international students, after which there was a group discussion.

Facilitators: Sherman Chan and Tanya Aberman

V. PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS

Hamilton Consultation participants who filled out evaluation forms reported particular appreciation for the opportunity to network, to exchange ideas, learn best practices, and receive up-to-date information on issues affecting their daily work. Other important qualities highlighted with regards to the Consultation included the variety and expertise of resource people and the diversity of participants in terms of sector and region. Participants reported enjoying the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere of the Consultation, and meeting others working on similar issues and feeling like a part of a larger community. Finally, the excellent and accessible location and venue were praised, as well as the overall organization and content of the consultation.

Every single respondent expressed having benefited from their experience at the consultation, whether from knowledge and information accrued, practical tools they would be taking back to their organizations, or contacts established. Some respondents reported that the Consultation made them feel “re-energized” and “refreshed”, or that it helped them gain perspective on the larger picture their work is situated in. One person mentioned appreciating being removed from the “silos” they usually work in to connect with and learn from others, and another felt that the greatest benefit was the opportunity to network with people from across the country.

While the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, evaluation respondents also had suggestions to improve future Consultations. With regards to Consultation content, these included having more sessions with small group discussion, having more dedicated networking opportunities, and avoiding all-white panels. Some people felt that 1.5 hours is too short for interactive workshops, and that there should be some longer workshop slots. Participants also would have appreciated having the social event nearer to conference venue (it was a half hour away), and having meals provided for, even if the costs are included in the registration fees.

Respondents appreciated the efforts to foster participation and inclusion at the Consultation. Many respondents cited appreciation for the small group discussions during some workshops, the anti-oppression content and reminders, French-language documents and interpretation, and the fact that youth participation was ensured across different sessions and in plenaries. Some suggestions to improve participation included a request for more small group discussions and different room set-ups that allow for a more informal setting (e.g. round tables). Suggestions to promote inclusion included the point that there should be more racialized women in the CCR leadership, and that we should have more First Nations voices throughout the Consultation.

Several people noted difficulty attending CCR Consultations regularly due to financial constraints, especially since professional development budgets are shrinking, but that proximity to their home location enables them to attend. Overall, respondents felt that the conference was a success. Many people cited feeling motivated by being among so many others from across the country who work for refugee and migrant justice.