

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

Best Practices Series

Volume II

Building and Strengthening
Community Supports

The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program is funded by:



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) provides resources and information services to meet the ongoing information and training needs of private sponsors of refugees in Canada.

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A special thank you to all the contributors. Your work and energy continues to inspire!

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FOREWORD

The overarching theme of the Best Practices Series Vol. II is **building and strengthening community supports** in the context of the Private Refugee Sponsorship program. The integration and settlement experiences of new Canadians are intricately linked to the local communities which welcome them and the support systems that are available and accessible to them. Communities which are welcoming and inclusive have a higher capacity to receive and integrate newcomers.

In this volume, Sponsorship Agreement Holders, co-sponsors, constituent groups, a Group of Five and community partners across Canada share their insights, experiences and innovative approaches in the context of preparing and engaging constituents and local communities for the settlement of privately sponsored refugees. We have compiled 15 best or promising practice articles that aim to raise awareness, educate the public, engage community members, mobilize support and foster new partnerships in this broader context.

Some of these practices are just emerging, others have been tried, tested and were found to be effective. They include **outreach tools, awareness-raising projects, and public education strategies** as well as **new partnership approaches** with other sectors. They have been identified by sponsors in response to a call for submissions and through research conducted by the RSTP team between 2011 and 2012. Examples and illustrations from the settlement field and other community-based projects have also been included to widen the perspective.

It is hoped that by sharing these narratives, samples and illustrations, they will inspire and support the work of sponsoring groups and simultaneously document the wealth of knowledge and expertise that exists within the private refugee sponsorship community.

The RSTP Team

Telling the story, increasing awareness

A Project of the East Kootenay Friends of Burma

WHO

The East Kootenay Friends of Burma (EKFOB) is a registered charitable organization that is committed to the sponsorship and resettlement of refugees in the Kootenays region of British Columbia. EKFB is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with 30 years of experience in the successful rural resettlement of refugees from Burma, Cambodia, Columbia, and Eritrea to towns and rural communities in interior British Columbia.

closer relationship between First Nations communities and newcomers.



WHAT

In the summer of 2010, six communities in the east and west of the Kootenay region of British Columbia were awaiting the arrival of a particular VW van. This van and accompanying cars were filled with a handful of EKFOB volunteers, community members and recently resettled refugees who set out to bring their stories to interior British Columbia. They had received funding for a research dissemination project from the Metropolis B.C. in order to share and combine the wisdom gathered from research findings with community experience.

In total, about 150 local community residents participated in nine community meetings and discussions about rural refugee resettlement including relevant research findings, personal experiences of sponsoring refugees as well as the experience of being sponsored as a refugee, forming supportive coalitions and the components of welcoming communities.

Apart from the group's unique approach to connecting with rural communities and public education, the EKFOB also succeeded in connecting with the local First Nations community on their tour. Initiated by band members, three meetings were held with the local Ktunaxa First Nations band to increase inter-cultural understanding and foster a

WHY

To disseminate Metropolis-funded research project results; to share personal refugee stories; to raise awareness about refugee issues and rural refugee resettlement; to strengthen community support for the resettlement of refugees in the Kootenay region; and to engage local communities in private refugee sponsorship.

HOW

The EKFOB sent invitations to a range of local residents in each town and rural community, including faith-based organizations. The group reached out to the general public through posters, community events listings in local newspapers and announcements on local radio shows. The six communities were chosen based on proximity, potential for suitable housing and employment opportunities for newcomers, previous experience with refugee resettlement or potential interest as noted in responses to the EKFOB's initial email invitation. An organization in each locale was contacted to host the meeting.

TOOLS

Central to each meeting on the tour was the presentation of a video which had been produced by the EKFOB as part of the Metropolis BC dissemination grant. The video reflects the experiences of members of the sponsoring group and refugees who have resettled in Kimberley and Cranbrook over the past twenty years. It also covers information about refugee resettlement and captures the incredible emotional experience of sponsoring and helping refugees settle in a small, inclusive and supportive community. Key to the success of the community meetings and discussion was also the presence of newcomers who had recently been resettled to Kimberley and Cranbrook from the refugee camps on the Thai/Burma border and from Columbia.



OUTCOMES

A great deal of knowledge, experience and wisdom regarding the resettlement of newcomers to each of these communities contributed to the lively and thoughtful discussions at each community meeting. The results of this project include increased community awareness, a better understanding of the benefits of rural refugee resettlement and immigration to rural communities, increased community volunteerism and therapeutic, welcoming experiences for the twelve recently resettled refugees from Burma and Columbia who participated as volunteers in this project.

Another outcome of these meetings was that participants formed coalitions or committees with the intent to continue a discussion around their potential for local refugee

sponsorship and resettlement. For example in Nelson, an interesting coalition was formed between the United Church, the Shambala Meditation Centre and other community residents. Similar coalitions were formed between various faith-based organizations and members of the general public in Creston, Kaslo, and Grand Forks.

Their activities included assessing the potential for fundraising, housing, employment, ESL instruction, volunteer commitment, cultural and social supports and services to meet any special needs of newcomers. Each of these coalitions also created their own group email list and connected with other coalitions and the EKFOB to share information, questions and concerns between all of the groups. The groups are committed to working together to support each other and are considering coordinating who they each sponsor and how to fund-raise jointly. The Metropolis B.C. dissemination grant enabled volunteers at the EKFOB to help the groups by facilitating such communications.

Given the success of the community tour, the EKFOB and a new set of volunteers repeated their tour in the summer of 2011.

EKFB VIDEOS

“Run for Your Life: Resettling Refugees in Canada” (2011) and “Rural Resettlement in Canada” (2010) can be watched at
http://riim.metropolis.net/research_policy-dissemination_output.html.



NEIGHBOURS FOR REFUGEES

How a neighbourhood in Halifax came together

When Emilie Coyle from Halifax, Nova Scotia, wanted to help one refugee family, she mobilized an entire community.

It began with a simple and yet innovative outreach idea in the spring of 2009: talk and tea. Emilie wrote to a local fair-trade coffee company which in turn donated tea bags for the cause. Every household in Emilie's neighbourhood of Abbott Heights then received a tea bag attached to an invitation to attend a community meeting in their mailbox. An RSTP pamphlet about sponsoring refugees from the Al-Hol refugee camp was also included.

contributions residents could make towards the costs of school lunches, electricity bills, bus passes, grocery bills and rent. It also included some information about the group, the refugee family and ideas on how residents could raise funds of their own.

In the fall of 2009, Neighbours for Refugees organized a block party to raise awareness and gain support from community members. The party took place on the parking lot of the Presbyterian church right beside a fire station. The block party included food, music, face-painting, a fire truck and other fun activities for

"There is so much power in community. It's just really nice to see everybody coming together. It just takes a couple of people making it happen."

The aim was to explore the possibility of sponsoring a family collectively. The discussion at the meeting, which took place at Emilie's home, focused on the needs of a visa-office referred refugee family from the Al-Hol camp and the opportunity to sponsor them. Twelve neighbours came together at that initial meeting and formed the core group of Neighbours for Refugees.

The group partnered with a local Presbyterian church and as their Constituent Group, started to raise awareness within the community and raise funds. In the absence of a charitable status, the group employed creative and multi-layered outreach strategies. They created a facebook page which promoted more discussions with community members and publicized upcoming events. A poster was distributed to mobilize the support of Halifax residents. The poster shows a breakdown of the kinds of financial

children and families. Members of the Neighbours for Refugees spoke to community members about the sponsorship project and how they could get involved at an information table. Some donations were also collected.

Other fund-raising events included a community bottle drive, a baked bean dinner at a partnering church, the sale of Christmas cards and a neighbourhood yard sale where most vendors donated their sales to the sponsorship cause. Large sums of donations were also given by members of a local Mosque where Emilie was invited to announce their project at a Friday prayer and through internal fund-raising efforts of the Presbyterian church.

The support in the community for the sponsorship and impending arrival of the family grew with each of these efforts.

It has helped deepen relationships among members of the local community and has succeeded in bringing attention to the needs of refugees abroad.





WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE

School lunches for one week
\$25

One Month's Electricity Bill
• \$50

Two Adult monthly bus passes
• \$100

Two weeks of groceries for a family of four
• \$250

½ of the monthly rent on a two-bedroom apartment
\$500

We are a group of neighbours who have come together to make a difference!

A Family of four is coming as a part of a larger group of Palestinian refugees to Halifax. The government of Canada has accepted them as refugees, but will not pay for them to come here as they say they have already met their quota for Government sponsored refugees. We, a group of neighbours from Aboit Heights, in the West-end of Halifax have committed to bringing them here. We are harnessing the inherent strength of neighbourhoods to raise the necessary funds to help this small family to live a safer, more secure life in Halifax, NS.

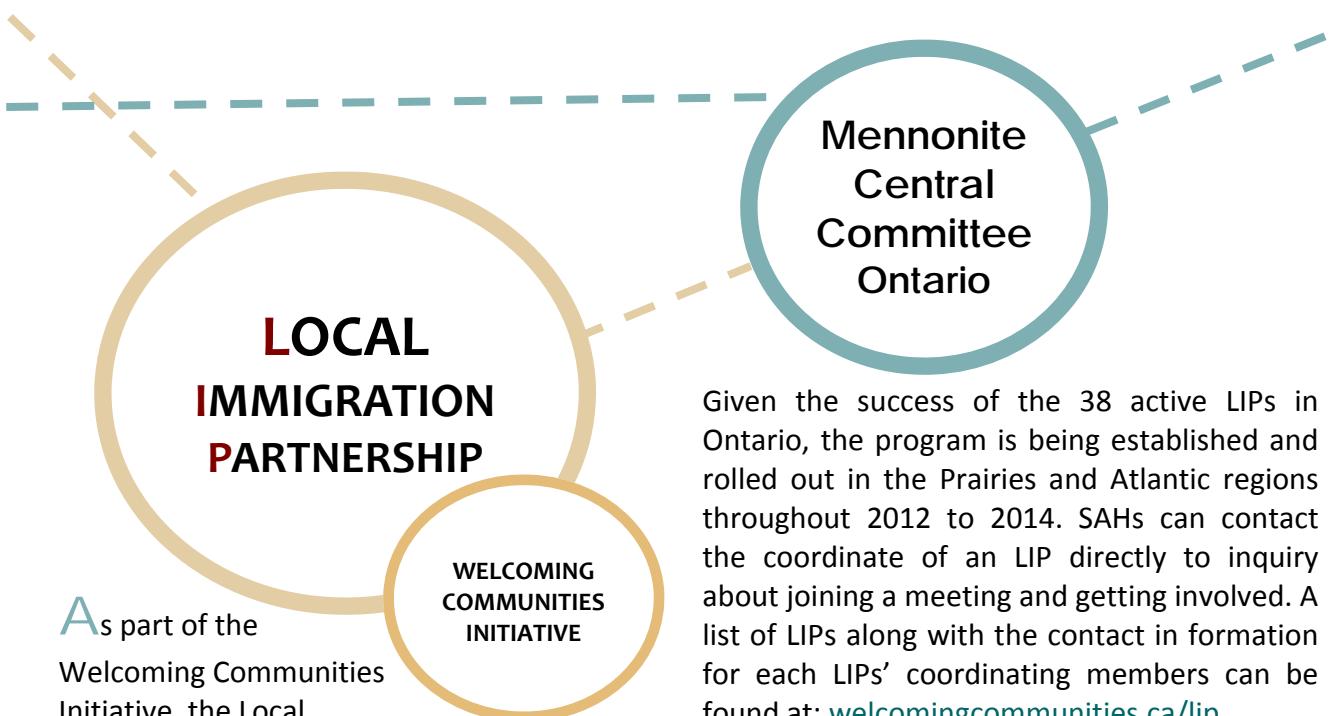
This is where you come in. We want to include you in this wonderful opportunity to help other human beings. If you and your community want to have a yard sale, a bake sale, a bottle drive, a donation drive, we would welcome your involvement.

Join us, Neighbours for Refugees in making a world a better place, one family at a time.

3216 Mayfield Ave. Halifax, NS B3L 4B2

Tel: 902.444.5850

email: nfrhalix@gmail.com



As part of the Welcoming Communities Initiative, the Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) initiative was introduced in 2009. It receives funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and consists of neighbourhood, municipal or regional coalitions. These coalitions aim to create welcoming communities and increase the capacity of local communities to improve the economic, political and social integration outcomes for newcomers.

LIPs establish their partnership councils through formal agreements. These agreements charge councils with the task of developing and implementing strategies and action plans. LIPs are quite diverse in their set-up, composition and leadership, reflecting a commitment to community-level planning. The focus on the local allows each LIP to develop responses to the needs and concerns within its community from the ground up. Collaborating stakeholders involved in LIPs include service providers, staff of municipalities, federal and provincial agencies, employers, health care providers, members of ethno-cultural and religious groups, representatives of school board and members of academic institutions.

Given the success of the 38 active LIPs in Ontario, the program is being established and rolled out in the Prairies and Atlantic regions throughout 2012 to 2014. SAHs can contact the coordinate of an LIP directly to inquire about joining a meeting and getting involved. A list of LIPs along with the contact information for each LIPs' coordinating members can be found at: welcomingcommunities.ca/lip.

T HE EXPERIENCE OF THE MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF ONTARIO

When a new LIP was rolled out in the Waterloo Region, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) of Ontario was invited to join the launch. Moses Moini, the Refugee Program Coordinator at the MCC in Ontario shares his experience and insights about the potential opportunities of participating in a LIP:

How did you get involved with the local LIP?

MCC's presence and work with refugees and immigrants over the years made the organization a likely candidate when LIP was launched in the Waterloo Region. Hence, we were invited to join. The LIP's collaborative, intentional and collective effort acknowledges the critical role that immigrants play in the community. When MCC was invited to join the Waterloo region's LIP, it was a natural fit for our work in refugee sponsorship and resettlement. Significant as sponsorship is, it is only a small piece of our program. We believe that refugees would integrate easier, make the communities a place of belonging when we are intentional.

What does your involvement in the LIP entail?

I am a member of the Belonging Action Group of the Waterloo Region LIP. LIP Waterloo has three pillars: Settle, Belong and Work; all of which represent the elements of newcomers' adjustment to the region. I joined the Belonging Action Group because of its focus on inclusion.

The Belonging Action Group is a community wide commitment to support with the integration of immigrants. It is a longer term process than settlement and involves both immigrants and the receiving community's engagement in the process of mutual learning and interrelatedness.

“As an organization, we cannot do this as a lone ranger and joining an LIP is in MCC’s and immigrants’ best interest.”

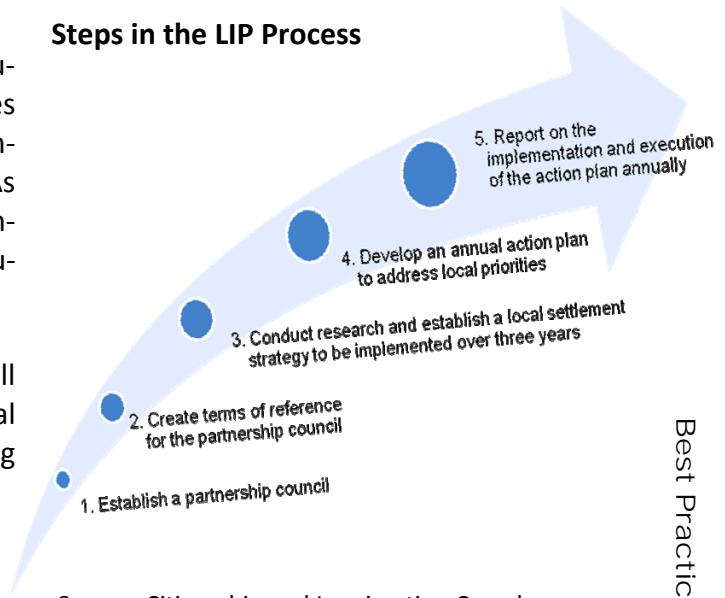
As a strategy to make the region more inclusive, the Belonging Action Group generates public awareness in addition to promoting immigrant leadership and civic participation. As members of the working group, we are engaged in reaching out to the broader community and in promoting the LIP.

In this group, we have representatives from all sectors of the community and indeed mutual learning and inter relatedness is happening among ourselves as well.

Why was it important for you to get connected with or involved in the LIP?

We believe that to impact our community the most, we must partner with other like-minded organizations. LIP's collaborative coordinates, shares information, plans and implements strategies for change. If we want to create a place where immigrants can settle, feel that they truly belong and can find meaningful employment, joining an LIP is strongly recommended.

Steps in the LIP Process



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (October 2011). Local Immigration Partnerships Handbook. Available at: <http://welcomingcommunities.ca/category/best-practices-corner/community-toolkit-resources>

To find out more about existing and developing Local Immigration Partnerships visit welcomingcommunities.ca/lip

Friends for Refugees

Mobilizing and partnering locally

Friends for Refugees is a refugee sponsorship group in Halifax, Nova Scotia, founded by Rachel Millett, Jen Powley, Liz MacBeth and Linda Santoloce in June of 2009. It started out with a small group of friends who were concerned about the horrific conditions in refugee camps and felt compelled to do something tangible for at least one refugee family. As a Group of Five, the friends sponsored a family who arrived in the spring of 2010. "This seemed like a small way to truly impact the lives of one family", explains Rachel Millet.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TIES

The small group of friends quickly grew to include more than 50 volunteers from

different ethnic backgrounds who helped at different stages and at levels of the sponsorship. The core group was mentored by the Immigration Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS) and worked closely with other groups in Halifax.

They partnered with a collegiate service organization, Circle K, a local First Baptist Church, a university-based music program, a university international students group, local businesses and environmental groups. Friends for Refugees also attempted to build ties with the local Muslim community.

One of the strongest parts of the experience for the friends was developing a coordinating committee where six local

sponsorship groups came together to discuss and brainstorm ways to address some of the challenges related to the sponsorships they were undertaking. These groups were sponsoring six related families from the same refugee camp to Halifax. With the exception of the Friends for Refugees, all sponsorships were done through local Sponsorship Agreement Holders.

"This was our attempt to avoid inequalities between what the [families] were getting", says Jen Powley. "Or what sponsor expectations were". This committee continues to meet today and fosters new ties, forms groups, and completes undertakings.

Achievements

The group raised the required \$26,000 for sponsorship over eighteen months solely through their community-based fundraising efforts. They see their ability to sponsor the family as an achievement in and of itself. Moreover, Friends for Refugees helped strengthen the ties between those passionate about refugee issues in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Friends for Refugees garnered a lot of support from the public as many wanted to contribute to the cause. The group was also featured in The Coast, a popular local weekly paper. "We hope we were able to raise awareness of refugee issues," writes Rachel. "There was also the idea that we were growing our community by welcoming this new family so community development was a focus of FFR as well. [...] Seeing the family be able to prosper and grow has been a huge achievement as well. The family are now self sufficient and proved to be extremely resourceful and resilient throughout the whole sponsorship. They have since had another child and more of their family has been able to join them in Halifax. Seeing them happy and together in a safer environment with more opportunities is an achievement."





Mapping Memories: Digital Media, Place-Based Stories and Refugee Youth

By Liz Miller and Michele Luchs

AN INTRODUCTION

We initiated the Mapping Memories project - a collaborative media project which uses oral history, documentary, digital storytelling and a range of new media methods (mapping, sound walks, photography and video) - a few years ago to better understand the experiences of youth with refugee experience in Montreal.

Developing partnerships was essential to ensure the success of this project. We felt that by collaborating with a range of people we would be able to build understanding around the diversity of refugee experiences. In addition to our own partnership as media educators at Concordia University and the Ministry of Education, we invited the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Montreal City Mission, the YWCA, Express, and the Cotes-des-Neiges Youth Center to help us shape and develop the project.

Our shared objective was to create opportunities for youth with refugee experiences to learn new media skills, foster peer networks and to develop leadership skills. We also hoped to create videos that

would help the larger public better understand the refugee experience. Personal stories are an immediate way of moving past statistics or stereotypes and create meaningful opportunities to establish identification and empathy with youth with refugee experiences.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

In the production phase of the project, we were invested in finding sensitive and creative methods for the youth to share their stories in safe and collaborative contexts. What was also important to us was to develop final products that would have an impact on education and policy, as well as on the lives of the youth involved. This meant investing time and energy in placing the stories and developing outreach initiatives to reach diverse audiences.

For example, we organized a bus tour led by youth refugee tour guides who played their recorded stories and pointed out city landmarks that had been critical to their adjustment to Montreal, such as the YMCA. The tour permitted passengers to hear these stories in an intimate setting, meet the youth

involved, and see Montreal from a new perspective. We have led walking tours, held art exhibitions and film screenings, and our most ambitious outreach initiative is the school tour.

The objective of the school tour is to engage 13 to 17 year-olds around the subject of refugee rights, genocide, and what makes a classroom safe for all students, including newcomers. Three young individuals with refugee experience share their stories and initiate discussion to put a human face to a difficult issue, and to encourage students to embrace cultural differences. The reception to the school visits has been overwhelmingly positive.

I had no idea being a refugee was so difficult. I could never imagine not being able to see my family for 10 years, or not being able to meet my first nephew. This was definitely opened my eyes and I hope to get the chance to meet a refugee and welcome them as much as possible—and talk to them about their story. (13 year-old school tour participant)

We begin the presentations by asking students raise their hands if they, their parents or their grandparents were born outside of Canada. We find that almost every hand in the auditorium is raised and we use this to emphasize how immigration and refugee issues touch all of us in some way.

We have been told that the tour is a unique way of making history come alive and of building identification with immigrant and refugee experiences. We have also heard that the stories help students connect to issues beyond their lived experiences.

This is about my life in the past. I am from Afghanistan. I was young, 9 or 10 years, old when we left our country and moved to Pakistan. We stayed there for many years, then, fortunately, we found a chance to come to Canada. I don't remember much about my past, but I have heard from my parents that they had a very difficult life. (school tour student participant)

We also reach individuals who identify with the refugee experience and hope the stories will inspire students to discover their own family and community histories.

¹⁰ Our presentations last 70 minutes. We know

that the longer lasting work will be carried out by teachers who can take this project forward. A resounding message that runs through the Mapping Memories project is that stories matter; knowing where we come from matters; and that migration is part of the fabric of Canadian history. As we discover new partners in our outreach efforts, we continue to discover the power of using first person stories to build awareness.

MAPPING MEMORIES AS A RESOURCE

A core goal has been to learn from and with teachers and community organizers who are invested in using stories and creative activities to address complex issues around

the refugee experience. With this in mind, we have recently completed a 160-page book/DVD/website in both French and English. The book includes twenty digital stories and films that address migration, belonging, tolerance, cultural identity, and personal resilience from a first-person, youth perspective. The stories are organized thematically on the DVD and are also available at www.mappingmemories.ca.

The stories are being used by educators in high schools and universities addressing

contemporary world issues and by refugee lawyers building sensitivity around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) issues. Social work instructors are making use of these stories in their classes and training

programs, while church groups working on settlement issues are showing the films to their constituencies. The films are also being programmed in human rights and LGBTQ film festivals and shown in refugee residences.

For example, **The First Door**, a 23-minute documentary, offers three intimate portraits of young men, who despite having had to flee their countries, have succeeded in creating a new life in Montreal. They fled for different reasons – one because of his sexual preference, and the other two because of political instability. Thierry is in training as a professional athlete, Alberto has found work

the story of Deeqa who at the age of six, left home for a musical tour that she expected would last a few days. While she was on tour, a civil war broke out in her home country of Somalia. She, her teacher and fellow companions were forced to flee the country, and have never returned home. The one thing Deeqa did not leave behind was a gift from her mother, the ability to sing. These portraits of gifted artists are especially popular in community centers and classrooms.

The Mapping Memories book also offers practical insights on using digital storytelling,



as a cook, and Alfredo runs a radio program, Radio Refuge. The film offers an inside perspective on what it means to start a new life and has been screened in refugee residences around Canada to initiate dialogue on what kind of support newcomers need when they first arrive.

Other stories such as **The Flight of the Butterflies**, **A Distant voice from the North** and **A Tree of Wounded Roots** bring forth the unique experience of LGBTQ refugees. These stories are being used to raise sensitivity around refugee and LGBTQ issues in a range of venues.

Several videos portray refugee artists who have used music as a way to keep their culture alive and to communicate the refugee experience. For example, **Deeqa Ibrahim**, is

mapping, video, photography, soundscapes, and oral history to initiate media projects in classroom and community settings. We share hands-on activities we used in our workshops. For example, after groups have listened to **Roots to Rap With**, a music video and documentary created about a teen rap group, we suggest that they create their own playlist of songs connected to turning points in their own lives. Or, groups could compare the lyrics of the rap song, Article 14, written by Robints Paul from Haiti, to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the law it was based on. We will continue to learn how the stories and resources of Mapping Memories are being used to build awareness in classrooms and communities and we welcome feedback.

To view the online resources or order the book, visit Mappingmemories.ca.

Community Forum

The Victoria Interfaith Refugee Assistance Committee

WHO

The Victoria Interfaith Refugee Assistance Committee (VIRAC) is a group of passionate community members from various faith communities (United, Anglican, Unitarian, Quaker) in Victoria, BC. Its 14 core group members came together formally in October of 2011 in response to the plight of refugees in Syria's Al-Hol refugee camp. A series of local events organized by NGOs and other refugee sponsoring groups who were already sponsoring families from the Al-Hol camp inspired the group to look for ways to connect more deeply with the issues facing the refugees and do more to help them. "One of our Unitarian friends challenged us because they were ready with \$8,000 to sponsor a refugee family from Palestine", says VIRAC member Susan Draper. "When we heard about the need for refugee sponsors from the camp, it just made sense to see where this could go."

WHAT

One of the things VIRAC found necessary was raising awareness in the local community about the plight of refugees in the Al-Hol camp and the experiences of Palestinian refugees in particular. Together with partners from local NGOs, VIRAC organized a community forum on January 29th, 2012 at the Cadboro Bay United Church in Victoria. The forum consisted of a feature presentation by a guest speaker and was followed by a Q&A period with the audience. An information table with pictures and literature about refugees in the Al-Hol refugee camp and a basket for donations towards the funds for VIRAC's sponsorship undertaking were also visibly located in the venue.

WHY

The group hoped to raise awareness about the plight of refugees, build more connections and networks within the local community, strengthen supports for refugee families in the community and raise some funds. Reflecting back on the event, Susan explains,

"We felt that this event would help all of us appreciate the challenging politics of the region which would in turn help us assist the refugee family with their adjustments to life in Canada. We were also hoping to attract other members of the greater community who could potentially be of some assistance to us in welcoming this family to Victoria. Finding creative, non-threatening ways to bring a diverse group of people together to talk about this issue is challenging. The politics of the Middle East can be very divisive because of the differing opinions that exist even within the Christian community about the Holy Land. But, if we can't find a way to discuss tough issues like these ones in Canada, where can we?"

HOW

Once the group decided on the date, time and venue for this public event, they advertised it through their existing networks and contacts at local NGOs. A poster with various images was circulated within the community. Their close relationship with the Cadboro Bay United Church enabled the group to secure the church as the venue for the event. Refreshments such as bakhlava, cookies, cake, fruit and vegetable snacks were provided by volunteers in the group.



WHAT HAPPENED?

A total of 90 people attended the community forum. As Susan puts it, “[they] were treated to food for their hearts, minds and bodies.” The sensitively moderated Q&A session and discussion following the feature presentation was lively and yet respectful and a great learning experience for all involved. “We all worked hard at listening to each other,” says Susan. “Even when it was uncomfortable to do so.” An hour after the Q&A had officially ended, many audience members stayed back to continue the conversation and network more.

Overall, the group feels that the community forum raised awareness about the issues, highlighted the importance of collaborating and sharing experiences, brought attention to the sensitivity of the subject matter, allowed all voices to be heard, enabled new connections to be formed, and raised funds through donations. “This event helped us forge working relationships as committee members as well as helped more community members own this work of welcoming refugees to Canada. Some friendships were renewed or made through this event which is always good news”, says Susan. “Funds were raised too by donations, although this was not the main purpose of this event. Definitely more about community building than fund-raising but at this stage in VIRAC’s life, that’s probably more important.”

THE NEWSLETTER

Before the age of social media, hard copy newsletters allowed subscribers to receive up-to-date information on a regular basis and enabled organizations to maintain contact with their subscribers. Despite the many advantages such as immediacy of information which websites and social media tools now offer, newsletters remain relevant today and have come to be expected by most people. Typically, they allow for longer articles and information to be included than emails, facebook posts and twitter tweets. Their content is chronologically relevant, updating the reader about recent events that have passed and those that will be coming up.

Newsletters can be easily integrated into organization's websites to give visitors the option of opting in to receive them. Hyperlinks in newsletters which are distributed electronically are an excellent way of directing the subscriber to a particular webpage, an online survey or email address. They are an effective way of reducing printing costs and targeting a specific audience. Effective newsletters are planned, written, and designed well.

The following sample newsletters are regularly distributed by the Office for Refugees at the Archdiocese of Toronto, the Mennonite Central Committee of Saskatchewan and the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc. respectively. They raise awareness by covering current matters related to the sponsorship of refugees and issues affecting refugees; update the subscriber about upcoming training sessions and events; report back to constituents about arrivals of sponsored families; refer subscribers to relevant resources and websites; share personal refugee stories; call for action; express appreciation to volunteers and partners; and provide contact information.

Refugee Sponsorship UPDATE

Newsletter of ORAT - Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto

February 2012

In this issue...

Bulletin Board

Seminars, information sessions, and the National Catholic Conference in November.

Parishioner's Voice

St. Timothy Parish welcomes the Saka family

Pope Prays for Migrants and Refugees

World Day for Migrants and Refugees 2012

In our Community

St. Isaac Jogues Parish's fundraising efforts

Refugees Who Need You

A list of refugees waiting for sponsorship

Useful Websites

Online resources

FAQ

Refugee health problems?

We value our volunteers

Our work depends on our many dedicated volunteers. We are always looking for volunteers in various areas including: administrative work and reception, event coordination, interpretation and translation, and case management. Our volunteers learn about the refugee sponsorship process and develop useful skills while contributing in a meaningful way. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Robert at 416-645-0827 or oratreception@archtoronto.org.

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

As an elected representative of the sponsors in Canada, Martin Mark (ORAT), recently attended a three-day Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) Council meeting in Winnipeg. In attendance were seven other elected members from different SAHs from all over Canada. Among the topics discussed was the annual quota created by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and how it is affecting the SAH's sponsorships. They also discussed how the new immigration forms are difficult to fill up, and how to bring this to the attention of CIC.

Another upcoming event for the sponsors' association is the next council meeting in Ottawa from March 5 to 9, to discuss issues with visa officers and government representatives. A meeting with CIC is scheduled to discuss the significant changes made to the refugee sponsorship process and the new refugee protection plan for SAHs. Also on the agenda is the upcoming National SAH Conference scheduled for May 2012 in Fredericton. The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) is organizing this event and all active SAH associations are allowed to delegate one representative to participate.

Even though the number of new refugees coming to Canada increased this year to 5,500 (from the usual 3,000 of the previous years), CIC is placing a limitation on the number of new sponsorships to reduce the waiting time. We are asking you, the sponsors, what your plans are for the coming year in sponsoring refugees. Without planning, it is not possible to create and maintain shorter processing times. So, please let us know if you are interested in initiating a sponsorship this year.

Michael Puruganan
ORAT Outreach Worker

Amir Braz
Student Intern

As an Iraqi Christian, I could feel what our overseas refugees are going through. Luckily, I came to Canada at the age of 10. In 1996, My experience here at ORAT is been wonderful. ORAT challenges you to be the best you can be, motivated to help others, to learn new skills and to be part of an amazing team. I come to ORAT feeling that my help is valued. Thank you ORAT for this experience!

Amir Braz
Student Intern

Pope Prays for Migrants and Refugees

There are over 41 million refugees in the world. With this in mind, Pope Benedict recently prayed for all refugees and migrants at the celebration of World Day for Migrants and Refugees on January 15, 2012.

"They are men man and women, young and old, who are looking for a place they can live in peace", the Pope said.

Heeding the call for the Pope's praying for refugees, the whole Christian community came together and prayed as one.

Life as a refugee is full of hardships; they are living in dire situations. Refugees living in troubled spots in the world are suffering. Fleeing from their country because of persecution, war, and other circumstances, dangerous places makes them desperate. Let us also forget those living in refugee camps who, on a daily basis ask themselves, "Will I survive today?"

Read more about Pope Benedict's prayer for migrants and refugees seeking a better life: <http://bit.ly/wdmigrantsrefugees>

Wanted: Your Stories & Photos

We are looking for stories and pictures to post on our next newsletter! From sponsorship experiences and refugee stories, to fundraising tips and settlement practices, and photos from your fundraisers details about your next events. We value your contribution. Email: refugeeoutreach@archtoronto.org

In our Community...

Celebrating success stories in our community

The St. Isaac Jogues Parish Refugee Committee (SDPRC) has been working together for almost a year. We have seven committee members and have raised over \$30,000 for the needs of a family in Syria, awaiting permission to come to Canada.

On November 19, 2011, we held a gala that raised over \$7,000 for this initiative. More than 250 people attended, including Archbishop Thomas Collins who was our keynote speaker.



SDPR Refugee Committee with Fr. Paul Dolson

ORAT Newsletter – February 2012 – Page 3

Bulletin Board

Seminars & Information Sessions

February 2012

Friday, February 10, 2:00 pm
Monthly Constituent Group Seminar: Learn about settlement resources and practices, and information sharing among sponsoring groups
ORAT Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto
371 Old Kingston Rd. Unit A, Toronto ON M1C 1B7

March 2012

Thursday, March 8
Orientation Session: Introduction to ORAT and issues related to sponsoring refugees

Friday, March 9, 2:00 pm
Monthly Constituent Group Seminar: Learn about settlement resources and practices, and information sharing among sponsoring groups
ORAT Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto
371 Old Kingston Rd. Unit A, Toronto ON M1C 1B7

Friday, March 16, 6:00 pm
Information Session #2: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC): Processing Time
ORAT Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto
371 Old Kingston Rd. Unit A, Toronto ON M1C 1B7

Saturday, March 24, 9:00 am
Settlement Workshop
Holy Rosary Parish
354 St. Clair Ave. West, Toronto, ON M5P 1N4

November 2012

Second National Catholic Conference
We are seeking for volunteers who would be part of the organizing team for the conference. Please email Luciano at refugeeassistant@archtoronto.org

For more details and to pre-register on the events listed, please call 416-645-0827 x 100 or email oratreception@archtoronto.org. Please mention how many are going with you to the events.

Parishioners' Voice

This month, St. Timothy Parish welcomes the Saka family

St. Timothy Parish formed a refugee sponsoring committee in August 2010. We had been patiently waiting for over a year for our selected family to arrive, but God had other plans. In September 2011, ORAT made an emergency plea regarding four urgent cases and our parish committee decided to take a great leap of faith and offered to sponsor a second family.

On December 13, 2011, only three months after our decision, we received a call from Luciano Moro, ORAT's Outreach Worker, telling us that our second family was due to arrive in Toronto on December 29, 2011!

In the same spirit as the Church's spiritual preparation for the nativity of our Lord in Advent, our committee (quickly) prepared in anticipation of the Saka Family's arrival within the short two-week notice given.

Our committee members embraced the challenge. Finding a house and furniture, arranging transportation needs, shopping for clothes, food and other staples all fell into place for our expected refugee family.

Just as Mother Mary and St. Joseph travelled to Bethlehem, the Saka family journeyed to an unfamiliar land, to a little town of Orangeville in Ontario.

Our parish committee members humbly welcomed our refugee family with warm hearts, open arms, and with three alternating kisses on the cheeks – that according to Halim Saka, is an Iraqi custom.

Refugee Committee
St. Timothy Parish, Orangeville



The Saka family is gathered with the committee members welcoming them. It shows the family's youngest child Yusif waiting ever so patiently to blow out the five lit candles on his cake as we sing happy birthday to him.

ORAT Newsletter – February 2012 – Page 2

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SDPR Refugee Committee with Fr. Paul Dolson

ORAT Newsletter – February 2012 – Page 3

Refugees Who Need You

ORAT has a database of pre-screened eligible refugees who are in desperate need of sponsorship. Sponsor a refugee is a wonderful way to make a difference in the world. With your help and support, they are able to rebuild their lives in Canada, free from persecution.

Armon (45), wife (39), and four children (ages 6-18) are presently in Syria. They fled Iraq in 2005 to escape religious persecution. The church that they have been attending has been attacked and Armon has been threatened by terrorist groups. In Syria, he is unable to obtain a work permit to support his family, and his children unable to continue their education.

Harold (28) fled Iraq and sought refuge in Syria to escape religious persecution and threat of kidnapping. He is living in Syria under challenging times but hopes to, one day, begin a new life in Canada. Harold is a mechanic, can drive a truck, and speaks English.

In 2005, Lawson (42) was forced to escape to Sudan by himself and leave his wife (33) and two children (17 and 15) behind. Because he was being suspected as a spy, he was persecuted, constantly beaten and tortured. Lawson is now living in the Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana. His only durable solution is to come to Canada.

Emmet (32) is a Sudanese who is now in the Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana. He has been living in the camp since 2004. In Sudan, his family was attacked and beaten, and his father was taken away. Emmet's uncle took care of him but was killed by soldiers who accused them of supporting the rebels in Darfur. Emmet was the next target so he left Sudan.

If you are interested in learning more about how you could help any of these refugees, or if you would like to make financial donations to help support refugee camps, please contact Luciano at refugeeassistant@archtoronto.org or 416-645-0827.

FAQ

Q: What if the refugee has health problems?

As upon arrival to Toronto, the refugees will be eligible to be covered by OHIP without the three month waiting time. Additionally, our refugees are eligible for full coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program. It is imperative that you assist the refugee to apply for both OHIP and IFHP immediately upon arrival.

Visit bit.ly/refugee-health for more information.

Please send us any questions that you have in mind for next month's FAQ.

Join us on Facebook!

Become a member of the ORAT Volunteers Group on Facebook, to get the latest news and updates on sponsorship issues. Email Robert at oratreception@archtoronto.org

ORAT Newsletter – February 2012 – Page 4

Volume 1, Issue 2
January 27, 2012

Refugee Focus

Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan

Waiting for Miracles

In 2012 I will be looking for miracles. I am a believer in miracles, small things that make a big difference in lives. I have my own experiences with miracles – where in very difficult situations there was an unexpected turn around or some pretty awful turn into a miraculous experience or self-discovery. Miracles come most often in unanticipated ways, but sometimes in ways, when desperation and hopelessness seem to be the order of the day; where logic, medicine, or common sense does not seem to be working the way it does in us and through us to make miracles happen. And that to me is a miracle in itself.

In 2012 I will be looking for miracles in many different places: for compassionate policies among our world leaders so that uprooted people can return home, or find a durable solution and safety for displaced families. I will pray for a miracle that all wars will cease and respect, honor and dignity for all human beings will be foremost in the hearts of our politicians and world leaders.

And here at home, I will search for miracles to turn apathy to action, or acts of compassion to replace apathetic attitudes, for xenophobic attitudes to be replaced with mutual respect, and for “...the good news of great joy...” to be born again in all people.

2012, we help to create miracles for the world’s homeless? Can we work together to provide that sponsorship for refugees that will help create a miracle for one family at a time? This is my hope and prayer for 2012.

Special Dates of Interest:

- March 21—International Day for the Elimination of Racism
- April 4—Refugee Rights Day
- June 30—World Refugee Day
- September 21—International Day of Peace
- September 28—Culture Day
- September 30—Prairie Prism

Inside this issue:

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Life's Journey 2

Soccer Camp 2

Times Are A' Changin' 3

Websites of Interest

You Can Help?

MCC is in need of sponsors for Visa Office Referral and Joint Assisted cases. With growing unrest and violence in the world, refugees are in need of our support. Please prayerfully consider sponsoring a refugee family in 2012.

Watch for details for PRAIRIE PRISM – a community celebration event to honor newcomers to Saskatoon will be held September 30, 2012 at Holy Family Cathedral Hall in Saskatoon.

Volume 1, Issue 2

SOCER CAMP - Kaytee Edwards

This past summer MCCS partnered with Room For Improvement Inc. in bringing a four day long youth boys soccer camp to the neighborhood of Meadowgreen in Saskatoon. The neighborhood has a high population of refugees and immigrants and this camp was focused on bringing all of the nations together in a fun and safe way to bridge cultural and linguistic barriers. On average 22 players came out and each boy received full equipment and all meals all for free! This camp is an example of team work, at its best. Many hours of organization were involved in order to make it a success. Now the organizers will work with the boys throughout the year as a way to continue the lessons learned throughout the week. They also want to develop sponsorship and mentorship programs for the youth in connection with U of S soccer players.

PROPOSED CAMPS FOR August 23-26, 2012

Meadowgreen Boys Soccer Camp and Meadowgreen Girls Sports Camp

Watch for more details.

Times Are A' Changin'

The world of Private Sponsorship is changing. Please note the following:

- The Minister of Immigration, Jason Kenney has committed to landing more privately sponsored refugees in 2012. In 2010, 4,833 were landed. For 2012 he has committed to landing 5,500.
- He is also committed to reducing the backlog and waiting times in visa posts around the world.
- MCC, along with other Sponsorship Agencies (SAHs) have agreed a new Agreement. The Agreement is very similar to the old one, with the only changes being that a firm term commitment and mention of an provision that caps may be imposed by the Minister.
- For 2012, a number of Visa Posts have had caps placed

2012, MCC Saskatchewan will be unable to accommodate family linked or sponsor referred sponsorships. This means that families who are linked to their constituent groups, or directly to MCC requesting sponsorships for their family members or friends will not be able to be subsidized in 2012 and onward.

The Source Country category has been removed as of the end of November 2011. For many years, SAHs were able to sponsor internally displaced persons from their countries of origin if the country had been designated as a source country. One example of this was Colombia. Many of our Saskatchewan churches have supported families from Colombia through this program. Unfortunately, it will no longer be possible to sponsor refugees directly from their country of origin. MCC continues to be in discussion with our partners in Colombia regarding internally displaced persons available to us.

The allocations do not however, prevent us from responding to the world's

Please stay in touch with us about

Page 2

Safe At Last—Marian Hooge Jones

Ta Pee and Hsa Wah, together with their 5 children arrived with the Canadian Government, and arrived in spring of 2008. The next two Karen families have been sponsored with the churches and community expected to contribute at least 12 months of full support for both families. Ta Pee and Hsa Wah, with their family have already settled in Rosthern and have begun English tutoring, while the fourth family is expected to arrive in mid September.

Later that week, a welcome reception was held for the Rev. M. Diegel, chair of the RMA at St. Odilions Catholic church, with approximately 60 persons in attendance. Picnic with the family are more RMC members, the far right, together with some friends and family.

The interchurch refugee committee in Rosthern was established in the fall of 2007, under the umbrella of the Rosthern Ministerial Association (RMA) who have been working to bring four families to Rosthern. Two large Karen families originally from Burma were welcomed jointly with the Canadian Government, and arrived in spring of 2008. The next two Karen families have been sponsored with the churches and community expected to contribute at least 12 months of full support for both families. Ta Pee and Hsa Wah, with their family have already settled in Rosthern and have begun English tutoring, while the fourth family is expected to arrive in mid September.

Rosthern and area, is not new to sponsoring refugees, and welcoming immigrants. What is new, is that instead of only the Mennonite and Catholic churches working together on refugee assistance in Rosthern, now the Alliance, SDA, Anglican, Lutheran and Evangelical have all joined in with

It is humbling to experience so much positive energy to assist these families to settle into their new life.

Life's Journey - Eh Paw

Alone, I made the toughest decisions everyday. When the shooting started. When strange men entered the town. Houses and proclaimed any "Operation as no Living Thing". When in the middle of the night I decided it was time to flee and started the long hazardous journey to an unknown country. In the thick of the jungle, I was hungry. I arrived at a refugee camp in a border town. I feel safe here and I was registered by the Protection Bureau. And given food by the United Nations. In the camp, I wonder how daily life goes. In some cases, the camp is a temporary shelter until others leaves without authorization. Living in the refugee camp for many years is not easy. The life in the camp is miserable and monotonous. Like an unable bird living in the long, boring cage. Finally, Canada is pleased to open the door to us. From the refugee camp to the new challenging world. My family and I are grateful to Canada. Adjusting to life in Canada is challenging. I have got full opportunities as a citizen. But I don't have many close friends and touching neighbours. I'm willing to lead the conflict again. To find peace, freedom and self-determination and another vision. To have equal rights and more education.

Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan

Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ.

We're on the Web
www.sk.mccc.org/refugeeassistance

Websites of Interest

www.mccc.ca – The Refugee Sponsorship Training website provides updates on a variety of topics related to sponsoring refugees.

www.globeattherunningplace.com – The Global Gathering Place website provides you with an outline of their services to newcomers, and volunteer opportunities in Saskatchewan.

www.unhcr.org – The United Nations High Commission for refugees gives a complete synopsis of the world's refugee movements.

Ride for Refuge—Thank You!

Thank you to Captains, Erin Holt of Nu-West Construction Products, Rhonda Schindel—Team Spirit, and Kaytee Edwards—Pedal for Peace and their team members for supporting us in the 2011 Ride for Refuge which took place October 1, 2011. Their ride raised \$2,011 for the MCC Refugee Fund.

It was exciting to see the energy and enthusiasm of the riders on a beautiful fall day as they rode for the charity of their choice. We are extremely grateful for the support of our three teams who took to their bikes and rode for refugees.

This year's ride raised \$2011 for the MCC Refugee Fund.

We look forward to growing our support in next year's Ride for Refuge. Watch for more details.

Manitoba Refugee Sponsors Information Bulletin

We may have them Refugees may not.

Vol. 13 - No. 2
May 2011

MANITOBA

DISCRIMINATION

Manitoba African-Canadians face Discrimination by Federal Government

The Private Sponsorship Program in Winnipeg is, by far, the most successful in Canada. This program allows refugee newcomers who have established in Winnipeg, through their churches and ethno cultural organizations, to reunite with family members left behind in dangerous situations. The process allows agencies who have contracts with the government of Canada (Sponsorship Agreement Holders) to submit applications from Constituent Groups (churches/ethno cultural organizations) on behalf of Winnipeggers who want to rescue relatives who are in dangerous situations overseas. The relatives overseas are interviewed by Immigration Officers at the Overseas Embassies and, if they meet Canada's requirements for refugee determination and clear medical and security checks, they are allowed to come to Canada to be reunited with their families here. The families, constituent groups and Sponsorship agreement holders take full responsibility for support of the new arrivals for their first year in Canada and most become self sufficient

A publication of the

Hai Tonthat
Sponsorship Services
Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc.
Welcome Place, 121 Bamjiway Ave,
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3A 0E4
Phone: (204) 977-1000
Fax: (204) 977-1008
e-mail: hai@mic.ca
Internet: www.mic.ca

For comments/suggestions



Manitoba African-Canadians Face Discrimination by Federal Government (continued)

quickly and do not continue to be in need of support from family, sponsoring organizations or public assistance. Thousand of newcomers have been welcomed to Manitoba through this process. Lives are saved, families are reunited and new workers, consumers and taxpayers are added to the Manitoba economy. But there is a spanner in the works. The Canadian Embassy in Nairobi, which is responsible for refugee screening for 18 countries in the horn of Africa (Somalia, the Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Burundi, etc.) has had, for a number of years, only two immigration officers and a large backlog has developed. It now takes over 4 YEARS to process an application and people die or rot in the huge refugee camps while waiting. The two largest Sponsorship Agreement Holders in Canada, the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (Welcome Place) and the Anglican Archdiocese of Rupertland (Hospitality House) were both, in 2010, ordered by the Federal Department of Immigration to reduce their submissions to Nairobi by 85% with a promise to increase staffing at the Nairobi Embassy. This increase in staffing however will not increase the numbers processed in Nairobi but apparently will only reduce the workload on the current officers and not speed up clearing the backlog. On April 14 of this year senior officials of the Department of Immigration notified Welcome Place that NO new submissions will be accepted until further notice and of the 350 cases already submitted from 2010 applications only 150 will be processed in 2011, with 100 to be processed in 2012 and the final 100 in 2013. This directive is outrageous and immoral. It only affects Manitoba. It only affects the African Canadian community here who want to reunite with their relatives left behind in dangerous situations. It puts the lives of refugees with close family, Canadian citizens, resident in Manitoba, at great risk. The local African Canadian community in Manitoba has protested to the Federal Minister and held press conferences to inform the public, but there has been no response, action or even expression of concern. The backlog must be cleared. Canada must take its responsibilities to protect refugees, particularly those with close relatives in Canada and the government must live up to its commitments to reunify families. The Manitoba families here send remittances, communicate through telephone and other electronic media and worry about their relatives left behind whose lives and well being are at risk. They ask, "Why Africa?", "Why us?" The answer is elusive. The problem can be easily solved with more resources and the political will to live up to Canada's commitments to its own citizens and to the international covenants we have signed. This is not a matter of numbers; it is a matter of the lives and well being of the families of Canadians. It requires action. It requires now!

Marty Dolin
Executive Director -MIC 204-977-1000
Rev. Peter Flynn
Chair -MIC 204-475-2941

**The Board of Directors, Management and Staff of
Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc. (Welcome Place)
invite you to a dinner celebrating Marty Dolin's retirement.**

Marty joined MIC on April 5, 1990, and over the last 21 years he has promoted the growth of MIC to become a centre of excellence in refugee services and advocacy. Marty has campaigned for refugee rights and is a leader in advocating change in government policies.

You are invited to join us in celebrating Marty's retirement and long standing commitment to refugee issues following the MIC Annual General Meeting which will take place at 5:00 pm, prior to the dinner.

Marty has requested that, in lieu of gifts, donations be made to MIC.

Wednesday, June 15, 2011
Cash Bar opens 5:30 pm. Doors open for Dinner at 6:00 pm.
Dinner entertainment and speeches start at 6:30 pm.
Viscount Gort Hotel, 1670 Portage Ave, Winnipeg

Tickets \$50
or mailing wanday@mric.ca
Please purchase your tickets before June 1, 2011
by calling Heather Friesen 869-3806
Wanda Yamamoto 977-1000
www.mic.ca
Please advise if you have special dietary requirements when purchasing tickets.

TALKING TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

While sponsors often present to constituents and fellow committee members, speaking to a high school class can be quite another experience. And yet, speaking to high school students can be pleasantly surprising and a powerful way to engage youth in strengthening community support for the resettlement of refugees.

When the opportunity to present to a grade 12 World Issues class came up, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) accepted the teacher's invitation. The parent of one of the students at this independent Christian school was a member of a local church and referred the CRWRC to the school. Each year, the school covers a particular topic in depth for one week. The emphasis in 2010 was on refugees, why people become refugees, and how students and their families can offer support and show compassion.

The CRWRC was asked to speak to students about their refugee sponsorship work. In preparation, the CRWRC spoke with the teacher to learn about the students that would be participating in the presentation and their experience with refugees and awareness of refugee issues. The information gained helped to tailor the agenda and the items to be included in the presentation.

The aim of the presentation was to debunk myths about refugees and to show students ways in which they can get involved. For example, being an independent Christian school, many if not all of the students' families were members of a church. Students were therefore encouraged to join their churches' sponsorship committees where they existed

and to inquire whether the church could get involved in refugee sponsorship and form a sponsorship committee, where they did not exist.

With some input from fellow SAHs and the RSTP, CRWRC staff prepared an outline for the presentation which included:

- a power point presentation about great refugees (see next page)
- a presentation and discussion about the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program
- select scenes from the film 'God Grew Tired of Us' for discussion
- a case study asking students to plan for the settlement of an arriving refugee family
- a music video for the rap song 'Refugees Appeal' performed by Oleur, a Ghanaian artist with Liberian and Sri Lankan refugees, along with a hard copy of the lyrics. This video came out of a project that was initiated and produced by ORAT.

The video and lyrics can be seen at:
http://youtu.be/P3vg83f_tsk.



Some handouts with more information about refugee sponsorship and organizations such as the United Nations Refugee Agency and the Canadian Council for Refugees were also provided to students..

Reflecting back on the experience, the CRWRC learned that it is important to plan for activities that are interactive for youth and sufficient time for questions and discussion. They suggest the following tips for a successful high school presentation:

Tips:

- Know your audience: What is their existing level of understanding? What is the socio-economic and cultural background? How old are the students?
- Speak with the teacher well in advance to set expectations and to gain some background information
- Use a variety of media to convey the message: do not rely solely on power point. Youth are used to interactive social media
- Keep things moving – otherwise they WILL get bored
- K.I.S.S. (keep it short and simple!) especially when talking about the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program
- Include a lot of opportunities for student participation
- Make it interactive
- Start your presentation with something that will get students' attention

George Seremba

Birthplace: Uganda
Country: Canada

1

WHY HE WAS A REFUGEE:

Abducted, tortured and sentenced to death in 1980 by dictatorship in Uganda; driven to a "killing field" and shot numerous times before being left for dead. He fled to Kenya as a refugee then migrated to Canada in 1984.

2



3

WHAT HE'S ACCOMPLISHED SINCE:

Canadian screen and stage actor, playwright, author, lecturer on drama and African literature

Adeena Niazi

Birthplace: Afghanistan
Country: Canada

4



6

WHY SHE WAS A REFUGEE:

While studying on scholarship in India, her homeland of Afghanistan was seized by the Soviet Union. Unable to return home, she fled to Canada in 1988.

5

WHAT SHE'S ACCOMPLISHED SINCE:

Founder, Afghan Women's Organization; Recipient of the New Pioneers Award for Community Service (2003); one of MacLean Magazine's Top 10 Canadians (2002)

Benjamin Osei

Birthplace: Ghana
Country: Canada

7

WHY HE WAS A REFUGEE:

Tortured, widowed and witness to his children's murder while living in Sierra Leone in 1992, he later remarried, had children and applied to Canada as a refugee. Osei was deported back to Ghana in January 2004. Advocacy by the church and community helped Osei return to Canada as a religious worker in 2005.

8



9

WHAT HE'S ACCOMPLISHED SINCE:

Coordinates and runs successful programs for troubled youth (*partly sponsored by Friendship CRC Community Church, Toronto*) in one of Canada's most violent and socially disturbed neighbourhoods

Michaelle Jean

Birthplace: Haiti**Country:** Canada

10

WHY SHE WAS A REFUGEE:

Fled Haiti with her family from dictator Francois Duvalier's regime in 1968. Her father was tortured under Duvalier and separated from the family for 30 years.

WHAT SHE'S ACCOMPLISHED SINCE:

Award-winning reporter, filmmaker and broadcaster; fluent in five languages; appointed Governor General of Canada in 2005

**Great things happen
when good people
help a refugee.**

13

14

**“So reach out and welcome
one another to God's glory.
Jesus did it; now you do it!”
–Romans 15:7, *The Message***

**Sponsor a refugee and make
good things happen**

15

Websites: Best practice principles and examples

An increasing number of non-profit and charitable organizations now have their own websites and use these in truly powerful and effective ways. Many sponsoring groups' websites are dedicated to providing information about their work, raising awareness about refugees, advocating for refugees' needs, announcing upcoming events, fundraising and attracting volunteers.

Some of the benefits associated with having such a presence on the World Wide Web include the ability to reach out and connect with people beyond the immediate local community, centralize electronic communication, reduce printing costs (through electronic publishing and dissemination), promote the cause or the organization continually, decrease the volume of calls for basic information, increase accessibility to up-to-date information and to solicit volunteers and subscriptions from anywhere anytime.

Good websites are user-friendly and can be easily navigated. Successful non-profit websites also feature the following key components¹:

1. **Clear and apparent purpose:** An effective website enables visitors to get an idea about the purpose and work of the organization as soon as they arrive on the website. Some websites have a sentence or two in a prominent position on the homepage to convey this message.

Sample: The Office for Refugees at the Archdiocese of Toronto website



Office for Refugees (ORAT)

ORAT, the Office for Refugees' staff members and volunteers have numerous years of experience helping refugees. The Office's main focus is the Civic (Private) Refugee Sponsorship Program of the Archdiocese of Toronto, which has been in operation for over 30 years. Just in the last year ORAT submitted applications to bring over 250 refugees to Canada, thanks to the help of parishes and institutions within the Archdiocese participating in the program.

ORAT works to bring refugees from overseas to Canada all the while fostering a sense of community within the Archdiocese, as parishes and religious orders are asked to work together to help newcomers integrate into Canadian society.

¹Based on information compiled from [The Key to Non-Profit Web Design: An Attempt for A Cause; 10 Keys to Effective Non-Profit Organization Websites; Beyond the Code: 25 Best Nonprofit Websites; How to Design a Non-Profit Website that Engages Donors and Volunteers; 10 Secrets Behind Successful Non-Profit Websites.](#)

2. **Concise and complete information:** Organizations that are able to connect with visitors on a deeper level provide further detail about their history including when, why and by whom the organization was founded on a separate page on their website. Important milestones, achievements and evidence of impact help visitors make a connection with you.

Sample: The Anglican Diocese of New Westminster website

The screenshot shows the official website of the Diocese of New Westminster, Anglican Church of Canada. The header features a blue circular logo with a yellow cross and two birds. Below the logo, the text "Diocese of New Westminster" and "ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA" is displayed. A navigation menu includes links for Home, About Anglicans, Our Ministry, Life & Legacy, Resources, Youth, and News. A breadcrumb navigation bar shows "Our Ministry > Reaching Out > Refugee Unit". The main content area is titled "REFUGEE UNIT". It contains text about the unit's mandate to inform the Anglican community about refugee sponsorship and a photograph of several people, likely refugees, standing together. Below this, there are two smaller photographs: one of a family at a beach and another of a group of people indoors. The text accompanying the first photo discusses the PWRDF's 50th anniversary sponsorship program, mentioning Karen families arrived in July 2008 and settled with Anglican volunteers. The text accompanying the second photo discusses a family from Colombia sponsored through a sponsorship agreement with the government of Canada.

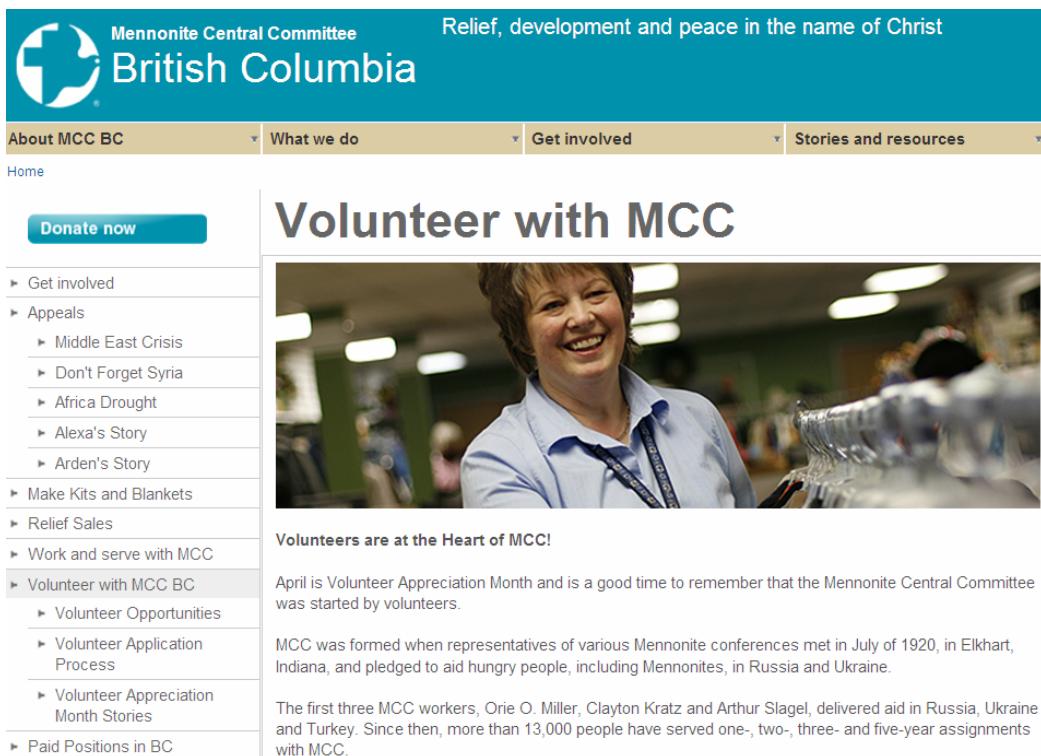
3. **Knowing the audience:** Non-profit organizations with effective websites understand that their websites will be seen by people with varying needs. Some website visitors will already be familiar with the organization and may want to look up specific information or find updates, while others are first-time visitors and may just be introduced to the organization. Whether the organization is accepting online donations or not, good websites also provide relevant information for **potential donors** such as how they can give, what specific programs or purposes they can give to, what the fund-raising goals are, what the fund-raising progress is to date as well as information about tax deductions.

Sample: The Hospitality House Refugee Ministry website

The screenshot shows the website for the Hospitality House Refugee Ministry. The header features a green background with the ministry's name in red and white. Below the header is a large photograph of a city skyline with trees in the foreground. A caption below the photo reads "Winnipeg, Manitoba". A navigation menu at the top includes links for Home, Who are we?, Make a donation, Sponsoring and FAQ, News & press, and Contact us. The main content area is divided into sections: "Make a Donation" on the left and "Donations" on the right. The "Make a Donation" section contains text about the importance of financial contributions and provides details for mailing donations to Micah House, 1039 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3W 2R2. The "Donations" section lists various organizations that have supported the ministry over the years, including L'Institut de Notre Dame des Missions, Holy Rosary RC Parish, Saint Anthony of Padua RC Parish, Our Lady of Perpetual Help RC Parish, The Winnipeg Foundation, The Joshua Fund, and The Sir Thomas Croke Foundation.

An effective website is also **volunteer-friendly**. It provides information about how potential volunteers can get involved and how they can make an impact, and it provides an opportunity for the visitor to express their interest in volunteering.

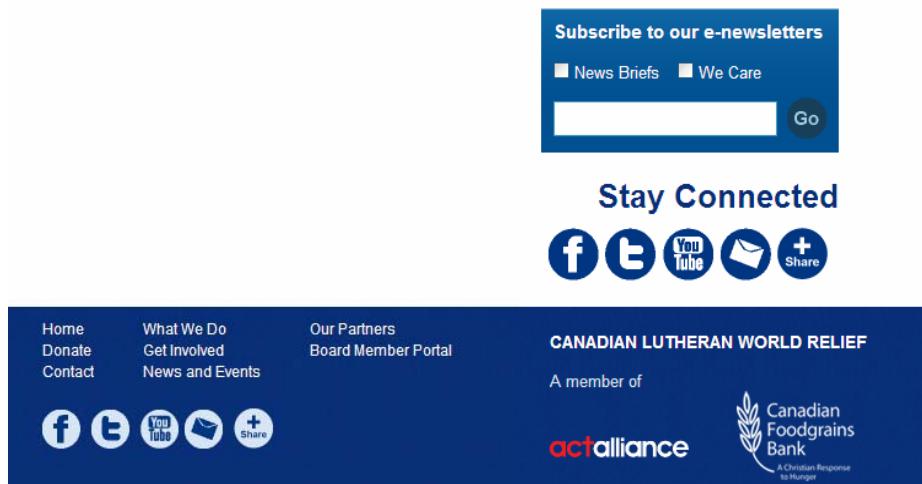
Sample: The Mennonite Central Committee British Columbia website



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Mennonite Central Committee British Columbia website. At the top, there is a blue header bar with the text "Mennonite Central Committee" and "British Columbia" next to a logo. Below the header, there is a navigation menu with tabs: "About MCC BC", "What we do", "Get involved", and "Stories and resources". Under the "Get involved" tab, there is a sub-menu with several items, including "Volunteer with MCC BC". A large image of a smiling woman, identified as a volunteer, is prominently displayed. Below the image, the text "Volunteers are at the Heart of MCC!" is written. There is also some descriptive text about the history of MCC and its workers.

4. **Staying in contact:** Organizations whose work relies on its constituents, volunteers and donors provide website visitors the option of subscribing to receive updates from the organization via an **email list or newsletter**. An RSS feed allows interested visitors to receive automatic updates to their email whenever the website is updated.

Sample: The Canadian Lutheran World Relief website



The screenshot shows the footer section of the Canadian Lutheran World Relief website. It features a "Subscribe to our e-newsletters" form with options for "News Briefs" and "We Care", and a "Go" button. Below the form, there is a "Stay Connected" section with icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Email. At the bottom, there is a navigation menu with links to "Home", "Donate", "Contact", "What We Do", "Get Involved", "News and Events", "Our Partners", and "Board Member Portal". Logos for "actalliance" and "Canadian Foodgrains Bank" are also present.

5. **Using photos or graphics:** Images can help communicate purpose or mission. In addition to photos, some organizations include stories or testimonials on their website about the cause and/or impact that is being made through their work. Providing information beyond the statistics is a great way to encourage people to get involved.

Sample: The Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services website

The screenshot shows a news article titled "Donation to Refugee Sponsorship from Park West High Students!" The article includes a photograph of a group of students standing in front of a truck filled with supplies. Below the photo is a text block detailing a fundraising event held by Park West High School students to support the Horn of Africa fundraiser.

ISIS | Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services

About ISIS Settlement English Employment Business Volunteer & Community Training

Home > News > Donation to Refugee Sponsorship from Park West High Students!

Donation to Refugee Sponsorship from Park West High Students!

During our Horn of Africa fundraising event in the fall, Soulafa Al-Abbas, ISIS employee and event coordinator, was interviewed by CBC radio. Jess Attwater, a teacher at Park West High School, heard the interview and thought it was a great cause to get her Leadership group to support. The group held a Bottle Drive and raised \$400 in 2 hours! The cheque was presented to ISIS for the Refugee Sponsorship program.

A big thank you to the students for their work and donation!

The screenshot shows the "Sponsor a Refugee Student" page of the WUSC EUMC website. The page features a large image of a smiling refugee student and information about the Student Refugee Program (SRP). It includes sections for "GET INVOLVED" with "CAMPAIGNS" and "VOLUNTEER IN CANADA" options, and "RESULTS" with a list of benefits for Canadian students.

WUSC EUMC
Education Changes the World

ENGLISH FRANÇAIS CONTACT LOGIN

ABOUT US GET INVOLVED OUR WORK PROGRAMS REGIONS DONATE

HOME / PROGRAMS / SPONSOR A REFUGEE STUDENT

Sponsor a Refugee Student

Student Refugee Program

GET INVOLVED WITH WUSC

CAMPAIGNS

VOLUNTEER IN CANADA

VOLUNTEER ABROAD

RELATED PEOPLE

Michelle Manks
Senior Program Officer, Student Refugee Program

RESULTS

Benefits of the SRP:

For Canadian Students:

- hands-on experience in fundraising, organizing, budgeting, cross-cultural communications
- Increased understanding of refugee, development and peace and conflict issues
- opportunities for advocacy and enhanced civic participation

Start a Sponsoring Committee

WUSC Local Committees on campus play a vital role in the Student Refugee Program (SRP). By committing to sponsor a student refugee, they are responsible for providing financial and social support for the first 12 months from the time the sponsored student arrives in Canada.

Some roles and responsibilities of sponsoring Local committees include:

- Negotiating with their college or university administration to reduce or waive the sponsored student's tuition fees
- lead campaigns to introduce or increase levies on tuition fees to support the SRP
- solicit other donations and in-kind contributions
- welcome the sponsored students when they arrive and help them adjust to life in Canada
- assist the student in residence for courses and orientation, campus, health, and other services

6. **Attractive and consistent design:** The design of a website is the determining factor in whether it deters or attracts attention. Successful non-profit websites feature a design that is consistent with the group or organization's message and culture. The design revolves around the content and mission of the organization or group.

Sample: The Presbyterian World Service & Development website

7. **News & Events:** A dynamic and visible website is one that is maintained and updated regularly with new content and information. Including an event calendar and a news section or a blog makes the website more useful to the visitor. It encourages people to visit the website often to see what is coming up and get involved in the future. A website with regularly updated content also increases its search engine visibility and makes it easier for those who are actively looking for specific information to find the website.

Sample: The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Regina website

- 8. Visible contact information:** A link to the contact information of the organization should be visibly placed on the homepage. Apart from a contact phone number and mailing address, also provide an email address, a contact form and link to any social media tools.

Sample: The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver website

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Afghan Women's Organization (AWO). At the top, there is a logo featuring a globe and the text "AWO Afghan Women's Organization From Isolation to Full Participation". A "Change Language" dropdown menu and a search bar are also at the top right. Below the header, a navigation menu includes "HOME", "ABOUT US", "GET INVOLVED", "NEWS/EVENTS", and "CONTACT & LOCATION".

Locations

North York (Head Office)
789 Don Mills Rd., # 700
Toronto, ON M3C 1T5
 (416) 588-3585
(416) 588-4552 fax

Monday, Tuesday 9am to 5pm
Wednesday 9am to 7pm
Thursday, Friday 9am to 5pm
Saturdays: 9am-5pm

North York
747 Don Mills Rd., Unit# 212 (Basement)
Toronto, ON M3C 1T2
 (416) 422-2225
(416) 429-9111 fax

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
Saturday 9:30am to 5pm
Evenings and weekends by appointment

Please view the LINC hours

Mississauga
3050 Confederation Parkway, Unit #202

A map shows the location of the North York office on Don Mills Rd. Another map shows the Mississauga office location on Confederation Parkway. To the right, there is a "PROGRAMS/SERVICES" sidebar with links to "PROJECTS", "PARTNERS", "FUNDERS", "LINKS", "YOUTH OUT OF SCHOOL", and "AFGHAN YOUTH AMBASSA". Below the sidebar is a "GALLERY" section featuring a photo of a group of women.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver. At the top, there is a logo of a bishop's mitre and the text "Archdiocese of Vancouver". A large banner features a group of smiling people. A navigation menu below the banner includes "Parishes", "Education & Training", "Outreach & Services", "The Catholic Faith", "Diocesan Offices", "About Us", and "News & Events".

Contact Us

Submit your general questions and comments through this form. Contact an Office directly for any specific enquiries.

Contact Departments

- [Archbishop Michael Miller](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [The B.C. Catholic Newspaper](#)
- [Catholic Family Services](#)
- [Chancery](#)
- [Communications](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Evangelization](#)
- [First Nations](#)
- [Marriage Tribunal](#)
- [Project Advance](#)
- [Religious Education](#)
- [Respect Life](#)
- [Service & Justice](#)
- [Vocations](#)
- [Youth Ministry](#)

Contact the Webmaster

Full Name
Email
Message

Submit **Clear**

Employment

The following positions are open:
[Coordinator - Office of the Director - Catholic Families](#)
[General Labourer - Religious Labourer - Religious](#)

Sign up for the FRIDAY REPORT

Where can I go to SERVE?

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver
150 Robson Street
Vancouver BC V6B 2A7
Phone: 604 683 0281
Fax: 604 683 4288

Using social media

Social media refers commonly to web-based technologies and applications that are designed for social interaction and communication. Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn), blogs (e.g. WordPress, Blogger, Twitter), wikis and podcasts have dramatically changed the way people, communities, and organizations network, collaborate and communicate with each other. Some advantages of using social media are that it is relatively accessible, immediate, interactive and inexpensive compared to more traditional media. Having one central social media platform helps many organizations gain a presence in the so-called online community, which has the potential of reaching people who may be unaware about the issue or cause and may be encouraged to get involved. Consider which social media platforms your audience is most likely to use and whether it would make sense for your group or organization to have a presence there. The following information and sample practices from the sponsorship community may be helpful.

Facebook is a free social networking website with more than 845 million users. After creating a profile account, users can add others as friends, exchange messages, join or create common-interest user groups, schedule an event and create a page.

Initially, the **Office for Refugees at the Archdiocese of Toronto** (ORAT) started using facebook in 2009 to mobilize its volunteers. It quickly proved to be an effective communication tool, so its use was extended to communicating important program and policy updates and answering case processing-related inquiries from sponsoring groups. While ORAT continues to use more traditional outreach and communication strategies, using facebook has helped the organization in streamlining the large number of inquiries that it receives regularly.



ORAT's facebook page has also become a place where members of constituent groups share practices, experiences and ideas with one another. This has been of great help to particularly new sponsoring groups. It has helped strengthen the capacities and ties within the Archdiocese's sponsoring community and has bridged a communication gap between refugees abroad and their sponsors. Volunteers and student interns maintain and monitor the page with the help of administrative staff. They also post information on a daily basis and respond to facebook 'friend' requests.

For more information on how to get started on facebook, visit www.facebook.com/help/sign-up

Twitter is a microblogging website service. Comparable to cell phone-based text messaging services, users can send and read text messages of up to 140 characters (“tweets”). Given the instant and short tweets, twitter is useful for quick updates and sharing of news. Twitter has currently over 300 million users and its usage is becoming increasingly popular among organizations and politicians.

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile for ISIS (@isisns). The profile bio reads: "We are Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services, a non-profit providing services to help immigrants participate fully in Canadian life. Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada http://www.isisns.ca". The profile has 349 tweets, 106 following, and 358 followers. A sidebar on the left allows users to "Stay in touch with ISIS" by joining Twitter, with fields for full name, email, and password, and a "Sign up" button. Below this are links for "Tweets", "Following", and "Followers".

Immigrant Settlement & Immigration Services (ISIS) in Halifax has been using twitter to promote ISIS events, post updates, and connect with clients and other community members since January 2010. With over 355 tweets to date, twitter.com/isisns has currently 396 followers. “Twitter isn’t the best tool for connecting with refugee clients, but rather other non-profits, settlement organizations, and employers”, says Kristy Read, Website Development Coordinator at ISIS.

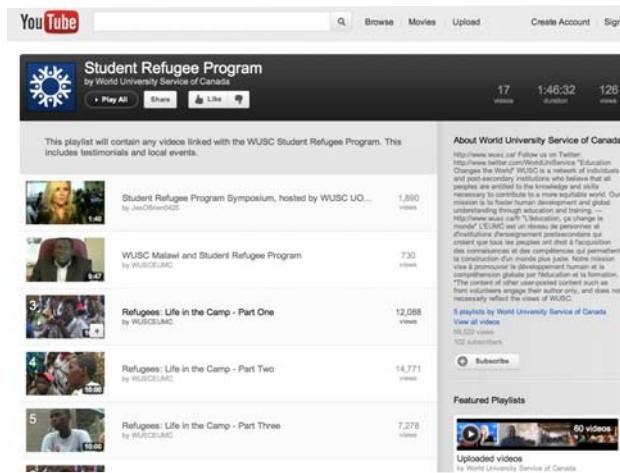
“There is a strong presence of community groups – which disperse information to their networks when we have events and information to share. Posts related to employment (like the recent International Job Fair) and our business networking events inspire the most activity on Twitter. [...] It not only strengthens supports and is community building, it also serves the great purpose of just creating awareness – many people still do not know about ISIS, or the breadth of our services. Anytime we get re-tweeted by someone it means that someone new is probably becoming aware that we exist!”

For more information on how to get started on twitter, visit <http://support.twitter.com>.

YouTube is a video-sharing website that displays a variety of user-generated video content. Registered users can create their own channel to share videos with the public or with select users.

The Student Refugee Program is the private refugee sponsorship program of the **World University Service of Canada** (WUSC), and has a YouTube video channel online at <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL62AC228DE87280E4>.

Its playlist includes 3 to 10-minute videos about the living conditions in refugee camps, the personal experiences of refugees as narrated by former refugees, and WUSC's refugee programs. WUSC constituent groups use these to raise awareness about refugee issues, barriers to education, and to assist them in raising funds necessary for the sponsorships. In addition to the informational videos, WUSC will soon be launching short training videos that will help CGs better prepare for and support the sponsored refugees upon their arrival to Canada. With 17 videos currently on display, the program has 102 subscribers and 69,531 views so far.



For more information on how to start your own YouTube channel, visit:

www.youtube.com/t/about_getting_started.

A blog generally refers to a website where a 'blogger' publishes his or her personal writing (a 'post'). Blogs are usually written regularly and appear on the website in chronological order. Some blogs allow readers to leave comments and track updates to the blog by subscribing through an RSS feed. Unlike tweets, there is no limit to the word count and posts are often long. While most bloggers are individuals, some groups and organizations also blog to engage and inform their constituents. Special blog search engines enable interested users to find blog posts on a topic of interest through key word searches.

There are many blogging websites. Among the most popular are **WordPress.com**, **blogger.com** and **typepad.com**.

Blogger Profile: OGADEN REFUGEE RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

My blogs
OGADEN REFUGEE RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

About me

Industry: Human Resources
Introduction: I, Dr. Mohamed love human rights and will never stop to talk human right issues about Ogaden refugee community and I'll work to strengthen Human Rights Policy about Vulnerable People of Ogaden Refugee Community in Kenya
Interests: I, Dr. Mohamed love human rights and will never stop to talk human right issues about Ogaden refugee community and I'll work to strengthen Human Rights Policy about Vulnerable People of Ogaden Refugee Community in Kenya
Favourite Films: I, Dr. Mohamed love human rights and will never stop to talk human right issues about Ogaden refugee community and I'll work to strengthen Human Rights Policy about Vulnerable People of Ogaden Refugee Community in Kenya
Favourite Music: I, Dr. Mohamed love human rights and will never stop to talk human right issues about Ogaden refugee community and I'll work to strengthen Human Rights Policy about Vulnerable People of Ogaden Refugee Community in Kenya
Favourite Books: I, Dr. Mohamed love human rights and will never stop to talk human right issues about Ogaden refugee community and I'll work to strengthen Human Rights Policy about Vulnerable People of Ogaden Refugee Community in Kenya

I, Dr. Mohamed love human rights and will never stop to talk human right issues about Ogaden refugee community and I'll work to strengthen Human Rights Policy about Vulnerable People of Ogaden Refugee Community in Kenya

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LGBTI Refugees hurt if Canada changes Refugee Sponsorship Program

LGBTI REFUGEES HURT IF CANADA CHANGES REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Asylum for LGBTI refugees is fraught with hurdles. Canada has been viewed as a country that provides some measure of promise and hope, but now the Canadian government is proposing changes to regulations pertaining to refugee sponsorship, which could have a dramatic impact on LGBTI applications for asylum.

The Department of Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) has published the proposed changes in the Canada Gazette, which will limit refugees sponsored under the groups of five (G5s) and community sponsors (C5) categories.

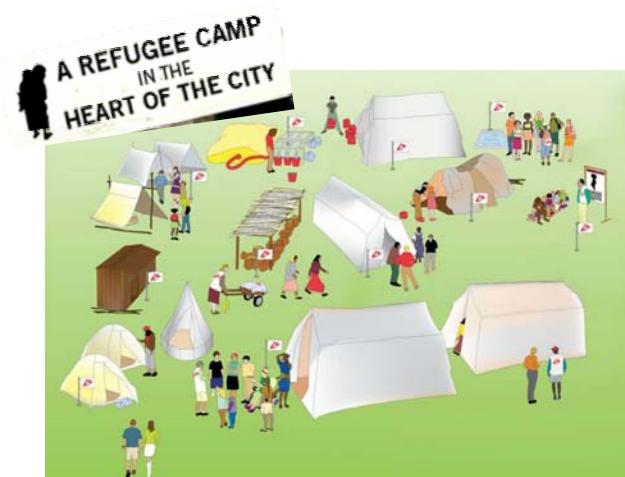
Simulated Refugee Camp



Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City in Quebec City, 2011

in the fall of 2011.

The Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City is a free, interactive, awareness-raising public event that aims to raise awareness about the plight of the world's 43 million refugees and internally displaced people uprooted by war and conflict. It consists of an 8,000 square feet outdoor reconstruction of a refugee camp, where experienced MSF field staff guide visitors through a one-hour interactive tour, explaining the crucial elements for survival in a refugee crisis. Visitors are asked to imagine that they are one of the millions of people fleeing persecution in places such as Somalia, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Sudan. They are confronted with questions such as: Will I be safe? What will I eat? How do I find water? Can I get medical care? Where will I sleep?



Perhaps the best known example of a simulated refugee camp in Canada is the **Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City** exhibit. It is organized by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Doctors Without Borders in various regions of Canada, and was last held in St. John's, Halifax, Moncton and Quebec City

Visitors learn about the challenges of trying to access food, shelter, water and medical care as they visit the exhibit's shelter, food distribution, latrine, water supply, health clinic, nutrition treatment centre, cholera treatment centre and vaccination areas. With approximately 1,200 visitors a day, this exhibit is well attended, receives local media coverage and inspires others to organize similar events in their localities.

The Central Alberta Refugee Effort and Catholic Social Services in Red Deer, Alberta, for example, hosted several **Refugee Camp in the City** events at local schools to commemorate World Refugee Day in 2010 and 2011. Students and teachers as well as the general public participated in this event, which was financially supported through funding from the Government of Alberta and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The video clip, "A Touch of Refugee Life", courtesy of Red Deer Advocate shows the simulated camp at one of Red Deer's schools in 2010: <http://youtu.be/stajp7COQoU>.



Setting up. Tiffany Sigurdson/
Red Deer Express

MSF and Dr. Jan Stewart from the University of Winnipeg have created learning resource materials which were designed for better understanding refugee and displacement issues. The lesson plans can also be adapted to increase sensitivity to the refugee experience and mobilize community support. The resources can be accessed at <http://refugeecamp.ca/learning-resources>.

For more information about the Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City exhibit and upcoming dates, visit the MSF website at www.refugeecamp.ca.

Mobilizing constituents

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Charlottetown

When Bishop Richard Grecco of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Charlottetown, in PEI, announced a new Iraqi Refugee Sponsorship initiative, the refugee sponsorship committee of the Archdiocese brainstormed the ways in which they could reach out to more parishioners and members of the community. The Diocese had committed to sponsoring 3 to 4 families through their SAH agreement.

In the short-run, the committee hoped to find 3 to 4 parishes who would take the lead in sponsoring these families. The long-term objective was to create greater awareness and understanding in the wider community as well as increased sensitivity and receptivity to the notion of sponsoring refugees locally. The group hoped to foster engagement in among the community to either contribute monetarily or become more practically involved in the actual sponsorship work. The Bishop's leadership and voice was a big source of support for the initiative.

The Diocese realized it needed to go the extra mile to reach these goals. The Bishop sent out two public press releases. Both have been picked up by the local media and have received considerable attention. A letter to parishes along with a pamphlet calling for parishioners' attention to the new initiative was sent to all 50 parishes. About 9 to 10 parishes responded with interest. They invited committee members to present to their communities about the project and what private refugee sponsorship would entail. The refugee sponsorship committee created a power point presentation with telling photographs to bring the lived experiences of Iraqi refugees closer to home for the audience. The presentation included information about the living conditions for religious minority refugees from Iraq, the status of the Diocese as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, the sponsorship process and an appeal for parish communities to get involved. It also allowed for a discussion about the next steps should a parish be interested in participating and ways in which the project could move forward.

Iraqi Refugee Appeal Initiative 2011-2012



Diocese of Charlottetown
(Sponsorship Agreement Holder)

Iraqi Refugee Appeal Initiative

Ever wonder what it would be like
to be a refugee?



Iraqi Refugee Appeal Initiative

Ever wonder
what it would
be like to live



in a refugee camp?

Iraqi Refugee Appeal Initiative

Three basic components are necessary
for an effective response:

1. A caring, compassionate parish
community....
2. Sufficient monetary and in-kind resources
(Est. \$15,000. – 20,000.) per family....
3. A willingness to commit one year to help
family members integrate into our Island
community....

Iraqi Refugee Appeal Initiative

Are you
willing to
step forward
to help make
this initiative
happen?



The project is further supported through donations which will be earmarked and collected specifically for this cause through Bishop Grecco's special Projects Collection for Ash Wednesday in 2012. The Diocese has also set up a separate fund to which individuals, groups and corporations may make donations.

All these efforts seem to be fruitful. To date, two of the Diocese's parishes have agreed to take the lead in sponsoring a family each, and one other en route to confirming their participation. A number of other parish communities have expressed a willingness to provide assistance even if they do not have the capacity to take on a sponsorship themselves.

For Immediate Release

November 28, 2011

Diocese of Charlottetown New Initiative-Sponsorship of Iraqi Refugees

The plight of Christians in the Middle East is dire and has drawn media attention internationally. Several countries, including Canada, have responded in prioritizing Iraqi refugees.

"Clearly there is an urgent need to help these refugees who have had to flee their homeland because of religious persecution." stated Bishop Richard Grecco, Diocese of Charlottetown. "I acknowledge that the situation is severe, and we can only meet a small portion of the need, but I believe we should."

The Island Roman Catholic community wants to sponsor 3 - 4 Iraqi families. The Diocese of Charlottetown has S. A. H. (Sponsorship Agreement Holder) accreditation from Citizenship and Immigration Canada that allows this religious organization to sanction would-be refugee sponsorship on Prince Edward Island.

"It is our hope that, with the collaborative support of several parish communities, we can give a "hand-up" to a number of refugee families" remarked Bishop Grecco. "This is the type of effort that requires caring, compassionate individuals to work closely with family members to help them address their personal and familial needs as they integrate into our community."

This effort to reach out to Iraqi refugees is new, but sponsoring refugees is certainly not new for many faith communities including Roman Catholic parishes on Prince Edward Island. These previous Island experiences have proven that sponsorship can make a difference - both for the refugee family and the sponsoring church community.

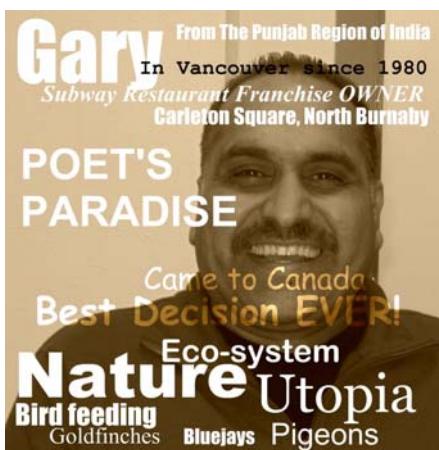
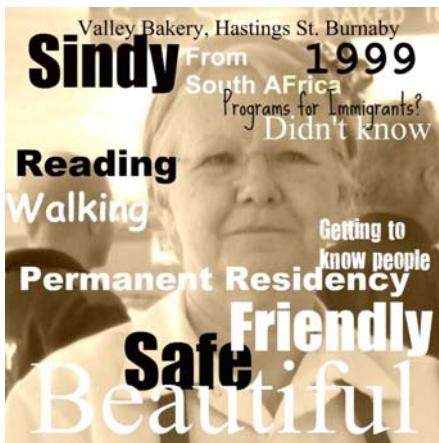
"There is a solid Christian basis for people of good will to come to the aid of refugees." offered Bishop Grecco. "If we stop to reflect, Jesus as a child was a refugee, as he and his parents averted a personal threat by escaping to Egypt."

The Diocese of Charlottetown is establishing a special fund for the expressed purpose of aiding refugees. Accordingly, in the new year (2012), at the time of the Bishop's Projects appeal, donations will be earmarked for the Iraqi refugee initiative.

For further information concerning making a contribution please contact: Ms. Mary Roche, Financial Administrator at finance@dioceseofcharlottetown.com or phone: (902) 368-8005, Extension 222.

Making community connections

A project by MOSAIC's North Burnaby Learning Centre



MOSAIC's North Burnaby Learning Centre in Burnaby, B.C., has recently undertaken a community outreach project that engages the Centre's newcomer clients as well as local community members and businesses in the process of settlement. Centre manager Mark Batt explains that the rationale was also

"...to provide a point of reference for those clients who may feel isolated or feel that nobody has experienced what they are now going through by presenting local members of the community who indeed have that experience. At the same time, we are enabling the local business community to become educated about our centre and the clients that are coming to us for various services."

The Centre partnered with the local Merchants Association and other local stakeholders and with their support was able to reach out to property and business owners who had been immigrants or refugees themselves. This connection enabled the newcomers enrolled in the English Language Service for Adults Program to meet with and interview local business and property owners about their settlement experience in Canada. Interviewers asked about length of time in Canada, countries of origin, adjustment difficulties, successes and disappointments, interests and hobbies and the interviewees' impressions of the Greater Vancouver Area.

The interviews' key messages were edited, summarized and compiled on a photographic image of the interviewee. The poster-sized artwork is now adorning the walls of the Centre and can be seen by anyone entering the Centre. According to Mark,

"The feedback from our clients is positive as they now feel comfortable going into those local businesses represented and speaking with confidence to those 'Community Partners'."

Countering Negative Stereotypes and Myths about Refugees

Gaining support in order to build welcoming communities is not always easy. You may find yourself confronted with arguments against refugee resettlement based on negative stereotypes and common anti-refugee sentiments. Typically, stereotypes involve generalizations about supposed characteristics of members in a particular group. In the context of private refugee sponsorship, there may be many stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes about refugees and newcomers in general. We tend to classify people into groups based on real or perceived common attributes. A lack of exposure to that ‘group’ and information about members of that group can lead to sweeping generalizations, misconceptions and distrust. Direct inter-group conflict and learned social values and attitudes from parents, teachers, friends and/or media, can further fuel prejudiced attitudes towards refugees. Fortunately, attitudes can change and myths can be dismantled. Using facts about refugee experiences and circumstances to inform the public can potentially weaken stereotypes. Consider the following responses to refute common misconceptions and prejudiced attitudes.

“Refugees do not integrate well. They go on welfare and become a drain on the system.”

Conflict and repression, rather than wealth and prosperity, are the reasons why people risk their lives to seek asylum in a different country. Refugees have experienced the most adverse situations in life and have emerged as survivors. They are resilient, resourceful and bring strengths as well as skills. As with other newcomers, refugees make many significant economic, political and social contributions to Canada; they raise families, start businesses, create jobs and hire Canadians, work, pay taxes, volunteer, contribute to the cultural mosaic that is Canada and give back to the community in many ways. Did you know, for example, that Adrienne Clarkson and Michaëlle Jean both former Governor Generals of Canada were refugees?

Settlement and integration also depend on the conditions in the hosting community. For example, there are often barriers that will prevent refugees and other newcomers from finding a job immediately in Canada. The labour market integration of newcomers is well documented and shows that potential employers are often reluctant to hire newcomers due to their lack of Canadian work experience, Canadian references and/or the employer’s cultural biases.

Refugees are a burden on the health care system, because of all their (mental) health issues.

Under Canadian immigration law, refugee applicants undergo a comprehensive medical exam as part of their application process overseas. Those who pose a risk to the health of the Canadian public will not be permitted to come to Canada. Statistics Canada conducted a study that looked at 2.7 million people over a span of 10 years, and found that newcomers are healthier overall and have a lower mortality rate than their Canadian-born counterparts. Receiving proper health care in Canada is vital to successful integration of those refugees who have suffered unusual stresses and threats to their health before coming to Canada.

"We are taking too many refugees in Canada. With the bad economy, we do not need more! Why can't other countries take them?"

While Canada and Canadians resettle refugees on an annual basis, Canada receives only 0.05% of the world's 43.7 million refugees every year. The ratio of the refugee population to the total Canadian population is about 1:459. Developing (and most often the world's poorest) countries host 80% of all refugees. In fact, Pakistan (1.9 million), Iran (1.1 million), and Syria (1 million) continue to be the top refugee hosting countries in the world. The UNHCR compares the refugee population in a given country with its average level of income (measured by the Gross Domestic Product per capita) to determine the relative impact of hosting refugees for that country. So, when the number of refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita is high, the country's effort and contribution in relation to its national economy could be considered high. The math just does not add up for Canada.

As a signatory to the United Nation's 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Canada has made a humanitarian commitment to protect people who are or have been in need of refuge. In addition, refugees help balance Canada's declining birth rate and aging population. They also start businesses that create jobs, do volunteer work and pay taxes. With the labour shortages that exist in many occupations across Canada, the Canadian economy needs them.

"Refugees are a threat to our national security. They import their own conflicts and issues."

Refugees are persons who have fled their countries of origin in order to find protection and safety for themselves and their families. As with refugee claimants, refugees who apply for permanent residence in Canada from overseas go through a criminality and security screening by Canadian authorities. In addition, refugee applicants are interviewed by Canadian visa officers before coming to Canada. If they have engaged in organized crime, espionage, subversion, violence or terrorism; committed human rights violations such as war crimes or crimes against humanity; or committed a crime that would be punishable by a maximum of 10 years in prison in Canada, the Canadian government will find them inadmissible to Canada which means that they are not granted entry into Canada.

References:

US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). (2009). *World Refugee Survey 2009: Ratios of Refugees to Host Country Populations*.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). (2011). *Facts and Figures 2010 - Immigration Overview: Permanent and temporary residents*. Source: www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2010/permanent/02.asp

UNHCR. (2011). *UNHCR Global Trends 2010*. Source: www.unhcr.org/4dfa11499.html

Tools & Resources

* PUBLIC EDUCATION * AWARENESS RAISING * COMMUNITY BUILDING *

Against All Odds

Created by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Source: www.playagainstallodds.com

Against All Odds is an online game created to increase awareness and knowledge about refugee situations by putting players in the position of a refugee.

Attracting and retaining immigrants: A toolbox of ideas for smaller centres

(2nd edition)

Produced by the National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007

Source: www.icavictoria.org/services/resources/toolbox-ideas

This tool box was created to support smaller centres address some of the challenges of retaining newcomers. It also covers how to develop community consensus and attributes of welcoming communities.

How do I create a welcoming neighbourhood for newcomers?

Produced by the Halifax Regional Municipality

Source: <http://halifax.ca/newcomers/Documents/WelcomingNewcomers.pdf>

This is a two-page fact sheet with quick tips for neighbourhood residents.

Local Immigration Partnerships: Building welcoming and inclusive communities through multi-level governance.

Written by Kathleen Burr, 2011. Published in Horizons by the Policy Research Initiative

Source: www.horizons.gc.ca/doclib/2011_0061_Burr_e.pdf

Passages: An awareness game confronting the plight of refugees.

Created by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1995

Source: www.unhcr.org/473dc1772.html

Passages is an educational tool that consists of a simulation game that has been designed to create a better understanding of refugee issues. It includes an instructions guide for the game facilitator and materials.

Paving the way: A Handbook on the reception and integration of resettled refugees.

Produced by the International Catholic Migration Commission, 2011

Source:

www.icmc.net/pubs/paving-way-a-handbook-reception-and-integration-resettled-refugees

This publication provides practical information and examples of facilitating the integration of refugees in the country of resettlement.

Tools & Resources continued...

Refugees: A Canadian perspective

Produced by the United Nations Association in Canada

Source: www.unac.org/learn/wrld/Refugees/REFeng.htm

This set of resources has been designed to increase sensitivity to the plight of refugees.

It includes a teacher's guide with activity sheets, action strategies and resources.

The Community Development Handbook

Produced by Human Resources Development Canada, 2000

Source: <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/245322/publication.html>

This handbook is a resource for those interested in exploring and initiating a community development and capacity building project. It provides information about the basic steps of the community development process, ideas for overcoming common challenges and real life stories to illustrate the process.

Welcoming & Inclusive Communities Toolkit

Produced by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, 2011

Source:

<http://welcomingcommunities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Welcoming-Inclusive-Communities-Toolkit2.pdf>

This publication was developed for local municipalities that were pursuing an agenda to reduce racism and discrimination and build welcoming and inclusive communities. This resource identifies key ingredients for success and provides information for planning purposes.

