



SERVING ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES:

A Scan of Organizational Capacities in 24 Ethnocultural Community Organizations

Final Report

Reporting on the Serving Ethnocultural Communities Research Project: Research Findings and Steps Forward

Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health and Wellbeing

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Interview Data Analysis

This document provides tables that summarize key themes arising from the 24 organizations scanned.

Appendix B - Profile Summaries of Interviewed Ethnocultural Organizations

This appendix provides summaries of the 24 organization scanned for this project.

Appendix C - Moving Forward: Results from the Ethnocultural Community Leaders' Workshop

This appendix is a workshop report from the community leaders' workshop held September 10, 2005.

Appendix D – Data Collection Forms

Appendix E – Educational Materials for Coalition Members on Qualitative Methods for Data Collection

Appendix F – Ethics Approval, Consent Forms, Letter of Introduction to Participants

Appendix G – Project Proposal to PCERII

Appendix H – Workshop Agenda, Letter of Invitation

Executive Summary

Background

The Edmonton Multicultural Society reports that in Edmonton there are over 130 formally registered ethno-cultural community groups. Over half of these groups are focused on their specific communities.¹

The Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health and Wellbeing believes that a collaborative effort between such organizations and the Coalition would increase both of their abilities to address the advocacy needs of the immigrant and refugee communities.

In order to engage these organizations, the Coalition conducted an organizational survey of 24 ethnocultural community associations (2004-2005) in order to address the gap in knowledge with respect to such groups and to understand their needs, successes, strategies, and experience serving their communities.

The organizations scanned served the following communities: Burma, Bosnia, Caribbean, Columbia, Congo, El Salvador, Philippines, Haiti, India, Kenya, Kurdish, Mexico, Romania, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The key findings of the research were presented to community leaders during a workshop on September 10, 2005. This workshop was a forum to discuss the findings and invite their participation as members or collaborators of the Coalition while considering future directions to address common interests collectively.

Key Research Findings

BARRIERS

Organizations recognize barriers faced by their communities are shared by other immigrant groups. 83% agreed that the Coalition's four key issues of immigrants' access to employment, education, health services, and social inclusion resonated with their communities' experiences.

Youth is an emergent priority. 17% emphasized youth as an emerging priority and 33% already focused services on youth and children (21%).

Efforts to address barriers have an internal focus on the community. Most organization provide one-on-one support (87.5%) with settlement and integration and coordination social and cultural events (80%). 42% engage in advocacy efforts.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Community organizations see their ability to engage their members as their greatest strength and challenge. 92% reported being effective at mobilizing and engaging members in activities, 83% believe to be influential with community members, and 79% reported that their organizations were perceived to have legitimacy in their communities. Yet, 75% reported struggling to maintain community and mobilize towards common goals and 21% saw the maintenance of internal cohesion to be a challenge.

Networking is the key strategy of communication. 79% word of mouth and networking were the most preferred means of communicating with community members. 54% used written material to advertise events and services, particularly through regular community newsletters.

¹ <http://www.edmontonmulticultural.org/>

25% used ethnic media, which includes community newspapers and radio. 12.5% reported having a website.

Most are working in collaboration with other groups and organizations. 87.5% reported that they collaborate with other community groups to provide services and organize events. 67% collaborate with non-profit organizations focused on settlement and 29% report that other non-profit organizations help fund their activities.

GOVERNMENT

There is a correlation between the amount of interaction with government and perceived influence with decision makers. Only 2 organizations, or 8%, reported having significant influence and 12.5% reported having significant amounts of interaction with the government.

Organizations recognized their inability to effectively engage in politics and policy change. 37.5% reported having some influence and interaction, while 42% had very little or no influence and 17% had very little or no interaction.

FUNDING

The most common funding sources came from the community served. Main sources include membership fees (67%), social events (58%), donations (54%).

Funding is a key challenge for organizations. 58% reported that shortage in funding restricted its activities.

Access to government funds is difficult. 54% reported having government grants and 21% held casinos and bingos.

COALITION'S ROLE

Community organizations recognize the need for collective action to address immigrant issues, a stronger political voice and participation in policy change 46% of the research participants suggested that it should act as a catalyst to bring other communities together to address shared issues and overcome divisions. 42% saw it as a potential collective voice for ethnocultural communities' shared issues and a vehicle for advocacy on the political stage.

25% suggested that the Coalition assist or collaborate with them to obtain government funding and advocate for better access to funds. 25% prompted the Coalition to take on the issue of foreign credentials as a its main advocacy priority.

Key Priorities Emerging from the Community Leaders' Workshop

The following issues have been identified as common to all of the participating ethnocultural community organizations:

Organizational Capacity - There is a consistent lack of funding for activities and services and a Need for committed leadership and agreement on vision.

Intra/inter-Community Relations - There is little knowledge of "who else is out there" and thus limited collaboration for common goals. Organizations struggle to bring other ethnocultural groups together because of differences.

Barriers to Integration - Social inclusion was the overarching theme in perceived community needs and access to employment opportunities was noted as a key issue (foreign credentials).

External Linkages - Because there are so many divisions in communities, groups are not seen as legitimate by government. Government criteria for funding create hindrances for groups and impact ability to provide services.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

In order to address these common issues, participants made the following recommendations for existing community groups:

Increase Capacity for Leadership

- Increase leadership's knowledge on engaging group on the vision.
- Provide on-going training (workshops) to facilitate capacity building for leadership, networking, and team building.
- Train new leaders and find new ways to include young people in organization's leadership.
- Older organizations should support younger organizations through mentoring relationships.
- Garner help or training to develop funding proposals and to meet funding criteria.
- Increase organizations' knowledge about and transparency regarding finances.

Build a Collective Voice

- Strive to develop common goals.
- Become more knowledgeable about other organizations.
- Create research that validates existing organizations, bridges existing and new organizations, and determines possible avenues for future collaboration.
- Develop a centralized coordination for information sharing between immigrant organization and mainstream organizations
- Collectively lobby policy makers and accreditation bodies to recognize foreign qualifications. Recommend that information is a major issue. Immigrants should receive information on foreign credentials and demands for their skills before coming to Canada.
- Involve more media to increase the profile of pre-existing multicultural organizations.

The Role of the Coalition

Workshop and research participants made specific recommendations for the Coalition:

Workshop	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a united voice for other organizations and act as an advocate common issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% saw it as a potential collective voice for ethnocultural communities' shared issues and a vehicle for advocacy on the political stage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a coordination role and facilitate the coming together of communities for shared purposes, provide leadership and mentoring to other community organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46% of the research participants suggested that it should act as a catalyst to bring other communities together to address shared issues and overcome divisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage communities in research on shared issues of employment, education, health services, and social inclusion in collaboration with other organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% prompted the Coalition to take on the issue of foreign credentials as a its main advocacy priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research available funders and opportunities available to ethnocultural groups. These should be disseminated in workshops and help other organizations to write proposals for funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% suggested that the Coalition assist or collaborate with them to obtain government funding and advocate for better access to funds.

Purpose of this Report

This report summarizes the process and findings of the Serving Ethnocultural Communities Project undertaken by the Multicultural Coalition for Equity in Health and Wellbeing from November 2004 to September 2005 in Edmonton, Alberta.

The community led research aimed to document the organizational capacities of 24 ethnocultural community organizations.

This report also presents the results of a community leaders' workshop and community members' recommendations for future mobilization of ethnocultural communities towards policy change to address systemic barriers.

Background and Introduction

Since 2002, the Multicultural Health Brokers Coop has spearheaded an innovative project which aimed to develop of a civic space for ethnic minority engagement through a coalition project in Edmonton, Alberta. The project was initially funded by Health Canada through the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI).

At the project's outset, a total of 120 community members participated in 36 policy education workshops. Four priority issues were identified by community participants as major determinants of ethnic minority health. These are:

1. unequal access to suitable employment opportunities for foreign-trained professionals and workers;
2. limited access to educational opportunities for newcomers and underfunding of ESL supports;
3. inability to access affordable and culturally appropriate health services;
4. and isolation and exclusion of ethnic minorities from civic and political participation in Canadian society.

Participants of this consultation process decided to come together and form a multicultural coalition which would articulate and advocate a policy agenda for health and well-being addressing the identified 4 priority issues in collaboration with government and community organizations.

Introduction to the Edmonton Collation for Equity in Health and Wellbeing

One of the main learnings gained in the mobilization process for the Coalition has been the realization that immigrant and refugees from a diversity of cultural backgrounds share common barriers to integration in Canadian society. A necessary element for the development of the Coalition's group solidarity included the ability to move beyond speaking for a specific ethnic minority group (e.g. "These are the issues that face the South Asian community") to *speaking on behalf of immigrant issues as a whole* (e.g. "These are the issues that face the immigrant community").

The Coalition is guided by the principles of conscientization, participation, and community capacity building. The ongoing objectives are to:

- enable ethnic minorities to generate collective knowledge about health issues and recognize the policy implications of these issues
- create opportunities for institutional/sector partners to build their “participatory capacity”
- foster organizational skills of ethnic minorities to act in their own interest and become agents of policy
- establish an alliance of organizational and community partners, across health sectors, committed to ethnic minorities and equity in health.

Community Capacity Building and Mobilization: The SEC (Serving Ethnocultural Communities) Project

The Coalition has realized the need to better attract the participating of ethno-cultural serving community groups. The Edmonton Multicultural Society reports that in Edmonton there are over 130 formally registered ethno-cultural community groups. Over half of these groups are focused on their specific communities.² A collaborative effort between such organizations and the Coalition would increase both of their abilities to address the advocacy needs of the immigrant and refugee communities.

In order to engage these organizations, the Coalition realized the need to understand their profiles: their needs, successes, strategies, main players, and overall experience serving their communities. In November 2004 the Coalition and the Coop were awarded a Prairie Centre for Excellence in Immigration and Integration funding to conduct an organizational survey of ethnocultural community associations in order to address the gap in knowledge with respect to such groups, particularly newer and growing immigrant communities.

The research was developed by the Coalition members and facilitated by a Masters trained social researcher. It was guided by a Participatory Action Research framework where Coalition members determined the scope and methods of data collection. Each interviewer selected, contacted, and interviewed community leaders from the following. The Coalition members also increased their capacity to undertake qualitative research and took on the data collection themselves. They also participated in the data analysis process. The ethnocultural community leaders who were interviewed also provided input to the final report during a workshop where findings were presented.

The Coalition members received ethics and qualitative ethics training in January 2005. This project has approved ethics review from the Social Sciences Tri-Council organizations.

Between February and June 2005, 26 interviewees represented the following formalized ethnocultural organizations. Another 3 informal leaders who were not associated with a particular organization or association were also interviewed because Coalition members saw them as potential influential leaders in future Coalition work.

The organizations scanned served the following communities: Burma, Bosnia, Caribbean, Columbia, Congo, El Salvador, Philippines, Haiti, India, Kenya, Kurdish, Mexico, Romania, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

² <http://www.edmontonmulticultural.org/>

Organizations Scanned

1. Association of Haitians in Edmonton (AHE)
2. Association of the Congolese Community of Edmonton (ACCE)
3. Bosnian Community Association (BCA)
4. Burma Watch International (BWI)
5. Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
6. Canadian Kurdish Friendship Association (CKFA)
7. Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Communities (CCACC)
8. Council of Edmonton Filipino Association (CEFA)
9. ECCOS – Colombia
10. Filipino Nurses Association in Alberta (FNAA)
11. Filipino Senior Citizen Association in Alberta (FSCAA)
12. Handicraft Centre - South Asian (HC)
13. Indo Canadian Women's Association (ICWA)
14. Kenya Community in Greater Edmonton (KCGE)
15. Mexican Cultural Society of Edmonton (MCSE)
16. Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe Church - El Salvador (NSGH)
17. Pangasinan Dynamics of Canada – Filipino (PDC)
18. Philippine Women's Association in Alberta (PWAA)
19. Romanian Community Newspaper "Aici Romania" (AR)
20. Romanian Orthodox Church Constantin and Elena (ROC)
21. Sudakan Organization (SO)
22. Sudanese Canadian Community in Edmonton (SCCE)
23. Ugandan Cultural Association of Alberta (UGAA)
24. Zimbabwe Cultural Society of Alberta (ZCSA)

The interviews were the beginning of rapport and relationship building between the Coalition members and the ethnocultural community leaders. The data was analyzed by a graduate trained social scientist and through the prepared report the Coalition aimed to show ethnocultural community organizations' shared issues.

The key findings of the research were presented to the community leaders during a workshop on September 10, 2005. This workshop was a forum to discuss the findings and invite their participation as members or collaborators of the Coalition while considering future directions to address common interests collectively.

The results from this dialogue were an increased knowledge of immigrant and refugee issues and an ability to move from the particularities of their communities to a stronger voice untied across ethnic and religious divisions as agents for policy change committed to ethnic minorities.

Summary of Research Findings

The interview notes of the Coalition members have been transcribed and summarized separately; the following is an analysis of the findings. Appendix A provides detailed tables that summaries the data analysis and Appendix B provides 24 ethnocultural association profiles.

The research findings have been analyzed to describe the following categories:

- Circumstances of Formation

- Services Provided
- Communication Strategies
- Internal Links
- External Links
- Relations with Government
- Funding Sources
- Challenges to Integration
- Organization Response to Community Issues
- Key Challenges for Organization
- Suggested Role for the Coalition

Circumstances of Formation

The periods the groups formed reflect larger patterns of migration and settlement. Certain groups gain membership from increasing arrivals of migrants. For example, the Romanian Orthodox Church was established in the 1970s by 2nd generation pioneers; after communism fell and more immigrants arrived in Canada, they became part of a long-standing community. The first formal Kurdish community organization was formed in 2000, although an informal group existed prior to this.

It is important to note that there are groups go through several stages of formalization and can remain informal for long periods and never become organizations at all. Such groups are still functioning in their communities. This project captured formal organizations.

Circumstances of Formation	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Assist Community Members	18	72%
Social Events	9	36%
Maintain Culture	8	32%
Advocacy in Canada	3	12%
Coordinate Efforts	3	12%
Focus on Home Country	3	12%

The main circumstances of formation were the desire to assist fellow community members by providing settlement services (72%). Groups formed because immigrants realized informally that their community members were experiencing difficulties with life in Canada. These difficulties included a lack of friends or social networks and wanting to maintain traditions and language. Newcomers also needed support with basic needs when arriving in Canada, such as finding housing and navigating Canadian systems.

There was also a concern with the new generation growing up in Canada and not learning about their culture and language, which would be provided by these ethnocultural groups. To this end, organizations were created to provide opportunities for members to maintain their cultural practices (32%), mainly through celebrations and social events (36%), which would also address the need for social inclusion.

12% had a marked a focus on advocacy. Another 12% were created to coordinate the efforts of other existing community organizations. 12% had a focus on the home country or of co-nationals' struggles in the Diaspora and not on their local community in Canada.

Services Provided

Since formation, the groups focused on providing services specific to their communities. All but two groups reported having elected boards to direct activities (92%). A small number are still in their infancy and do not have set structures.

Services Provided	Total (from 24)	Percentage
On-on-One Support	21	87.5%
Social/ Cultural Events	19	80%
Education	16	67%
Advocacy	10	42%
Coordinate Other Orgs.	2	8%

These services reflect the needs perceived by the community surrounding social inclusion. Most activities are cultural events, social gatherings, ESL, help with understanding Canadian systems and culture for newcomers. The main services provided aimed at assisting community members' settlement and inclusion in Canada.

To this end 87.5% provided their communities with one-on-one support which included counseling, information, and referrals. 80% reported coordinating social and cultural events and celebrations and 67% offered educational programs, workshops (particularly ESL and computer classes). 42% engaged in advocacy for their community and members' issues.

Special Populations	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Women	9	37.5%
Youth	8	33%
Children	5	21%
Seniors	4	17%

In certain cases, subgroups were specified: 37% focused services on women, 33% on youth, 21% on children, and 17% on seniors. For example, the Sudanese Community Association's services are mostly geared towards youth, women, and elders because they are seen to be the most vulnerable members of their community. Some aim at helping co-nationals affected by disasters, civil wars, and instability in African regions. One interviewee noted,

"We are concentrating in Sudan, mainly the internal displaced refugees, victims of wars in Sudan such as those in Darfur, and Southern Sudan, as well as helping the most vulnerable groups in disaster zones".

While there were some attempts at bringing various groups under umbrella organizations (8% coordinated the efforts of several organizations and served as umbrella bodies), ethnocultural organizations are generally divided by ethnicity or nationality. This is the case of the Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Communities, which formed in 1985 as an umbrella organization, it later split into individual groups. A member remembers that,

"We used to have a lot of influence in the past when we were the umbrella body for African and Caribbean communities".

Internal Links

The interviewees reported believing to have considerable influence in their communities because they are respected and trusted. Overwhelmingly, representatives reported that their organizations were perceived to have legitimacy (79%) in their communities as result of the work they had consistently done. They believe to be influential (83%) and effective at mobilizing and engaging members in activities (92%).

Internal Links	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Ability to Mobilize/ Engage	22	92%
Strong Influence	20	83%
Legitimacy: Trusted & Reliable	19	79%

Communication

The main means of communication with community members included informal word-of-mouth networking with key individuals in the community. Also, letters, fliers, email, publication in ethnic media were reported means of reaching community members.

Communication	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Word of mouth	19	79%
Written – Newsletter/Flyers	13	54%
Phone	11	46%
Email	10	42%
Ethnic Media	6	25%
Website	3	12.5%

Word of mouth and networking were by far the most preferred means of communicating with community members (79%). Organizations took the opportunity to network at community events and on a one-on-one basis. Phoning (46%) and email (42%) were other key strategies used. Only 12.5% or 3 organizations reported having a website.

Over half (54%) also used written material to advertise events and services, particularly through regular community newsletters. 25% used ethnic media, which includes community newspapers and radio, to communicate to members.

External Links

Most (87.5%) organizations reported that they collaborate with other community groups to provide services and organize events. 25% reported attending another cultural group's social events as well. Most collaborated with one or two organizations that serve the same national or religious group. For example, the Kenyan, Zimbabwean, Congolese and Haitian association are partnering and participating in the Heritage Days. Similarly, Latin American groups have common events, although this has decreased.

External Links	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Collaborate w. other community groups	21	87.5%
Collaborate w. NGOs (settlement service providers)	16	67%
Relations with government representatives (MLA, MP, funders)	11	46%

Attend other cultural groups' events	6	25%
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67% collaborate with non-profit organizations focused on settlement such as the Catholic Social Services, Edmonton Mennonite Centre, Changing Together...A Centre for Immigrant Women, and the Multicultural Health Brokers Coop.

Relations with the Government

46% reported having relations with government representatives, particularly MPs and MLAs, who attend their functions. Some also noted interacting with members of the bureaucracy, usually with respect to funding relationships.

Relations with the Government	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Influence		
Significant Influence	2	8%
Some Influence –MLA/MP, voting	9	37.5%
Very Little/ No Influence	10	42%
Interaction		
Significant of interaction	3	12.5%
Some Interaction	9	37.5%
Very Little/ No Interaction	4	17%

There is a clear correlation between the amount of interaction with government and perceived influence with decision makers.

Only 2 organizations, or 8%, reported having significant influence and 12.5% reported having significant amounts of interaction with the government. Thus, the Indo-Canadian Women's Association reported that politicians attend events regularly while the organization receives funding from all 3 levels of government.

Organizations recognized their inability to effectively engage in politics and policy change. 37.5% reported having some influence and interaction, while 42% had very little or no influence and 17% had very little or no interaction.

Funding

For most groups, funding sources came from membership fees, donations, and event sales. Most (67%) organizations reported that their main source of funding was a membership fee. Fundraising was also carried out through charges for attending social events (58%) and donations from members, the public, and businesses (54%).

Funding Sources	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Membership fees	16	67%
Social events	14	58%
Gov. Grants	13	54%
Donations	13	54%
Other NGOs	7	29%
Casino/ Bingo	5	21%

Government grants were sources of funding for 54% of the organizations and 29% also received support from other non-profit organizations to carry out their activities. 21% also held casinos and bingos.

Challenges to Integration

The majority (83%) agreed that the Coalition's 4 issues resonated with the experiences of their community members. When asked whether their communities faced access barriers to employment, education, health services, and social inclusion, there was a general resonance that these issues were shared across immigrant groups. Yet, interviewees also qualified that the degree of commonalities still differed among and within various groups. For example, visible minorities have a different experience with these barriers than non. Similarly, those who do not have language barriers also reported different levels of experience with these barriers.

Challenges to Integration	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Coalition's 4 Issues	20	83%
Inclusion	12	50%
Employment	10	42%
Language	6	25%
Youth	4	17%

50% also emphasized the issue of inclusion and ethnocultural community members' lack of access to employment opportunities (42%). 25% also stressed the barriers of language and lack of access to educational opportunities.

Youth emerged as a key priority issue for 17% of the organizations who recognized the barriers of the younger generations, particularly in relation to participation in crime (gangs, prostitution) and low rates of high school completion.

Responding to Community Challenges

To address the barriers faced by their communities, all of the ethnocultural organizations strive to provide services that ameliorate members' conditions. 96% reported engaging their communities in activities to address shared issues. To 67%, strong and committed leadership from the organization was key to mobilizing the community to address barriers collectively.

Group Response to Challenges	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Offer Services	24	100%
Engaging Community	23	96%
Strong leadership	16	67%
Perseverance	8	33%

33% saw the perseverance of the organization leaders to be an important part of this mobilization process; there was also a shared perception that members of these groups had a strong vision and commitment to their work which motivated them to pursue funding and address internal divisions for the good of their communities.

Main Challenges for Association

The main challenge for the organization to carry out its work has been the struggle to maintain community engagement towards goals and mobilize members to partake and volunteer in its activities (75%).

58% reported that shortage in funding restricted its activities and was a key challenge. Only 21% reported maintenance of internal cohesion to be a challenge.

Main Challenges for Association	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Maintaining Engagement	18	75%
Meeting Comm. Needs	17	71%
Lack of Funding	14	58%
Internal Cohesion	5	21%

The Role of the Coalition

All of the interviewees expressed their support for the work of the Coalition. Some saw the Coalition's role to be the intermediary position between the government and ethnic groups. They regarded the Coalition as a stronger collective "voice" for immigrants regarding shared issues and expressed an interest in becoming involved and supporting Coalition activities. Some suggested that the Coalition should continue its research function in conjunction with "bringing people together." However, one interviewee cautioned that,

"This is a very good exercise however as long as it does not become a research shop, it can attain so much. We have tried in our community to work with many agencies but they have let us down."

Coalition's Role	Total (from 24)	Percentage
Catalyst to bring immigrant communities together	11	46%
Collaborate on shared issues	11	46%
Collective voice for shared issues	10	42%
Advocate foreign credentials	6	25%
Collaborate to obtain funds	6	25%

With respect to the role the Coalition could play in the future, 46% suggested that it could act as a catalyst to bring other communities together to address shared issues and overcome divisions.

42% noted that the Coalition could act as a collective voice for ethnocultural communities' shared issues. This was seen as a major missing factor in the organizations' own work: their perceived lack of interaction and influence with the government to address systemic barriers prompted many to suggest that the Coalition should be a vehicle for advocacy on the political stage.

25% suggested that the Coalition assist or collaborate with them to obtain government funding and advocate for better access to funds, while 25% also prompted the Coalition to take on the issue of foreign credentials as a its main advocacy priority.

Numerous interviewees raised concerns about the need to address the issues faced by immigrant youth, particularly gang violence and drug use. There was a recognition that intergenerational dialogue is necessary and that youth must be engaged in discussions. One leader remarked that we should,

“Look at the issue of employment; this demoralizes immigrant and refugee youth to work hard in their lives because they see that their parents who are highly qualified are not employed in their professions”.

Results from the Community Leaders’ Workshop

In order to present research findings and begin engaging ethnocultural associations in the Coalition’s work, a community leaders’ workshop took place September 10, 2005. Appendix H includes the workshop agenda, invitation letter, and identified needs worksheet.

Broadly, the workshop followed the following process:

1. The research findings were presented to the participants.
2. The participants were divided into 4 working groups to discuss research findings and identify common issues during Session 1 according to the four main themes arising from the research. These were: Organizational Capacity, Intra/inter-Community Relations, Barriers, and External Linkages. Issues were then prioritized to be presented to the larger group.
3. During the second session, each group took on a particular priority and worked on making specific recommendations for moving forward. Participants engaged in a solution-seeking and planning process to address the most important issue or concerns articulated by the workshop groups. The discussion focused on these questions:
4. The Coalition considered the findings of the participants and prioritized its future steps.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

Organizational Capacity

Key Priority

Consistent lack of funding for activities and services

Recommendations

1. Unify ourselves to be perceived as one united group with same goals or vision.
2. Have more representatives in the three levels of government.
3. More media should be involved.
4. Become more knowledgeable about other organizations.
5. Garner help or training to develop funding proposals and to meet funding criteria.
6. Increase our organizations’ knowledge about and transparency regarding finances.

7. Older organizations should support younger organizations through mentoring relationships.

Key Priority

Need for committed leadership and agreement on vision.

Recommendations

1. Increase leadership's knowledge on engaging group on the vision.
2. Provide on-going training to facilitate capacity building for leadership and team building.
3. Train new leaders. Find new ways to include young people in organization's leadership.
4. Develop incentive programs to enhance leadership roles.

Intra/inter-Community Relations**Key Priority**

Little knowledge of "who else is out there" and thus limited collaboration for common goals.

Recommendations

1. Established organizations should mentor newer organizations.
2. Develop a centralized coordination for information sharing between immigrant organization and mainstream organizations

Key Priority

Struggle to bring other ethnocultural groups together because of differences.

Recommendations

1. Develop common goals.
2. Increase the profile of pre-existing multicultural organizations.
3. Promote 'openness' and new information from research to show positive approach to move forward.
4. Need to address protectionism and 'fear' of new organizations. Focus on advantages of collaboration.
5. Create research that validates existing organizations, bridges existing and new organizations, and determines possible avenues.
6. The Coalition should play a coordination role.

Barriers to Integration**Key Priority**

Social inclusion was the overarching theme in perceived community needs.

Recommendations

1. In the short term, the Coalition should strive to build a stronger profile.
2. The Coalition should do more research projects on community issues of employment, education, health services, and social inclusion in collaboration with other organizations.
3. The Coalition should research available funders and opportunities available to ethnocultural groups. These should be disseminated in workshops.
4. The Coalition should engage in more capacity building and engage communities in research projects (there is a need to address the need for administrative capacity to achieve this).
5. Fundraising ideas should be shared.
6. Leadership workshops and networking opportunities should be facilitated.

Key Priority

Access to employment opportunities was noted as a key issue (foreign credentials).

Recommendations

1. In the short term, existing ethnocultural organization can continue to help immigrant with basic job seeking skills (interviews, resumes, and accreditation).
2. In the long term, collectively lobby policy makers and accreditation bodies to recognize foreign qualifications. Recommend that information is a major issue. Immigrants should receive information on foreign credentials and demands for their skills before coming to Canada.
3. The Coalition should facilitate the coming together of communities for this purpose.

External Linkages

Key Priority

Because there are so many divisions in communities, groups are not seen as legitimate by government.

Recommendations

1. Increase leadership's capacity to engage communities towards the vision.
2. Workshops on leadership.
3. On-going training to facilitate leadership's roles.
4. Team building.
5. Train new leaders. Find new ways to include young people in organizations leadership.
6. Incentive programs to enhance leadership roles.
7. Concept of leadership should follow informal leadership more.

Key Priority

Government criteria for funding create hindrances for groups and impact ability to provide services.

Recommendations

1. Have the same vision or issues.
2. Increase awareness in government funding.
3. Open criteria, should be flexible or accessible to all members of the community
4. Role of the Coalition
 - Help other organizations to write proposals for funding.
 - Act as a united voice for other organizations, advocate for other community organizations.
 - Provide leadership to other community organizations (mentorship).
 - Get involved with other organizations as a guest speaker.