

Report of the Newcomer Youth Gathering

April 9, 2015

Bulman Centre, University of Winnipeg

Public Version



Ubuntu

Celebrating Our Common Humanity, Building Community

May 15, 2015



Manitoba Newcomer Education
Coalition

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INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of the workshops and discussion sessions held as part of the New Canadian Youth Gathering held at the Bulman Centre, University of Winnipeg on April 9, 2015.

The Gathering was organized by the Newcomer Education Coalition and included youth from several afterschool programs. These included:

- Community Education Development Association (CEDA) **Pathways to Education**
- Newcomer Employment Education Development Services (NEEDS) **Youth Afterschool Program**
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) **Homework and Education for Youth Program (HEY)**
- Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP), **Peaceful Village**

The day was divided into two parts, with a keynote speaker and workshops in the morning, followed by discussion groups and sharing sessions in the afternoon.



FOREWORD

By Vinh Huynh on Behalf of the Newcomer Education Coalition

On behalf of members of the Newcomer Education Coalition, it is my honour to express our collective vision and commitment to the work of ensuring that all newcomer youth are able to access the resources, learning and livelihood to lead a life of dignity, meaning and purpose. In the subsequent pages in this narrative report, our young people's voices gathered in strength to project their hopes and aspirations to our Canadian, Manitoban and Winnipeg society and context. Weaving throughout this document are expressions of the essential and universal longing for belonging, relevance and purpose. This desire is reflected in four questions and the corresponding responses. Who am I? I am a person of worth with a strong sense of identity as an individual human being within the context of my community and society. Do I matter? I do matter and I possess gifts and talents that I can contribute to the vitality and well-being of Canadian society? Do I have a voice? I do have a voice and my voice matters and I have a responsibility and a right to express it in a manner that contributes to the evolution of a free and democratic society. Do I know how to sound my voice? I do know how to express my voice in the medium that reflects my preferences and gifts whether it is written, verbal, artistic, athletics or services. In sounding my voice, I am contributing to the health of Canadian society from a place of strength.



The seed for our work in answering these essential questions together started last year when a group of citizens formed the Newcomer Education Coalition to explore possible ways for newcomer youth to share their learning experiences about their new school settings in Canada. The group is comprised of a diversity of dedicated citizens and staff members from many agencies who work with our young people, their families and respective communities. They include: IRCOM, NEEDS, Peaceful Village, school division personnel, CEDA, Mount Carmel Clinic, consultants, and the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship. The mission of the group is to work together with and on behalf of all new Canadian youth to ensure that they will have the appropriate and rich learning opportunities that are essential for their development and will allow them to flourish. By doing so, we will assure that Newcomer Youth will become full and contributing members of our ever evolving Canadian mosaic that is the foundation of the current and growing strength of Canada in the dawn

of the 21st Century.

The majority of the members of the coalition work directly with newcomer youth and recognize their desire to have their voices heard in both the wider society and places of influence. In response to these young people, a number of gatherings were organized for our youth to do just that—speak their minds about what they believe and think our society needs to do and change for all newcomer youth in our schools to attain equity of access to a high quality learning experience that is second to none. The adult participants accepted the responsibility to facilitate discussions and cultivate safe spaces for our young people to speak and share about their learning experiences. All of the participants, whether youth or adults, were actively engaged in the Gathering, listening and attending to each other with both our hearts and our minds. In the process, our youth voices from these gatherings were collected and synthesized in this comprehensive narrative document that will give voice to their hopes and aspirations. This document will be shared with government departments, school divisions, and community organizations and it is our recommendation and expectation that it informs the collective work all of us are doing to ensure that new Canadian youth are accessing the academic, social and cultural supports they will need to succeed in school, start meaningful careers and settle successfully into their new home here in Canada.

As we mutually commit to advancing this crucial work at a societal, organizational and personal level, we will be able to answer in good conscience the question that our newcomer youth have posed to us throughout these youth consultations, “Is my voice heard and reflected in the decisions that affect me, my family and community?” In response, those of us who are in positions of influence and trust should be able to affirm that we are doing our utmost to make decisions, develop and implement policies and practices that are instrumental in assisting our newcomer youth in realizing their dreams, hopes and aspirations to be informed, engaged and contributing citizens in their new homeland – Canada.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF YOUTH VOICES

Participants

- There were approximately 34 new Canadian youth who participated.
- The youth came from a variety of school divisions, although the majority were from Winnipeg School Division. Schools represented included:
 - ✓ Collège Louis-Riel
 - ✓ Churchill High School
 - ✓ Daniel Macintyre Collegiate Institute (DMCI)
 - ✓ Elmwood High School
 - ✓ General Wolfe School
 - ✓ Gordon Bell High School
 - ✓ Hugh John Macdonald School
 - ✓ Red River Valley Junior Academy
 - ✓ St. Aidan's Christian School
 - ✓ Tec Voc High School
- Students were from diverse cultural backgrounds with a significant African and Muslim presence. Countries of origin included:
 - ✓ Bhutan
 - ✓ Burma
 - ✓ Canada
 - ✓ Congo
 - ✓ Eritrea
 - ✓ Kenya
 - ✓ Nepal
 - ✓ Rwanda
 - ✓ Somalia
 - ✓ Thailand



INCLUSION AND BELONGING

- Many of the students indicated that they felt included in their school. Some after some initial difficulties.
- For some students, especially those of African or Muslim backgrounds say that they felt excluded at times because of racism, negative teacher attitudes and behaviours, or lack of accommodations especially for Muslim female students.
- Participation in sports, physical education (gym), dance, and other school activities were important in creating feelings of belonging.
- Positive relationships/friendships with other students were also cited as being important to feeling that they belonged and were welcomed.
- Many of the students have difficulty feeling they belong because of racism or ignorance of newcomer and war-affected youth and their culture, languages, experiences, and needs and/or expectations.



CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

- The challenges of learning a new language, adapting to a new culture, and a different school system were common themes throughout the day. Youth who had little or no previous experience with learning English found these to be major concerns.
- Youth also reported their own challenges adapting to a new school environment and curriculum, many felt lost in their first weeks in school. For some, the Canadian curriculum and courses were too challenging and demanding.
- A smaller number of students felt that the courses in Canada were less demanding or 'easier'. They complained of low teacher expectations or estimation of their abilities.
- The lack of appropriate assessment of students' prior learning and skills was often cited as a problem. New Canadian youth come from very different social and environmental contexts and school systems.
- Too much emphasis on deficits and a lack of acknowledgement by many teachers of what the students do possess in terms of abilities, potential, and other assets.
- Teachers' lack of understanding, knowledge, and willingness to accommodate the Muslim faith was often cited by participants as an issue. Many female Muslim youth voiced strong concerns about the lack of accommodations for their dress, especially in physical education and sports.
- Youth often felt caught between conflicting home cultures and school cultures and expectations. The challenges of adapting and fitting into the dominant social and school culture are a key challenge.
- Female Muslim youth also voiced strong concerns about conflict with home cultures and gender roles and expectations. Community pressures on some parents caused them to threaten to remove their children from school or from participating in certain subjects (such as Arts-Dance), extracurricular activities, and sports.



- Many students don't get enough time with their teachers or get extra support, which is essential for English as an Additional Language (EAL) students and those with disrupted education.
- A common theme was the challenge posed by teacher favouritism towards other groups or their own, or outright racism and discrimination towards newcomer students. This is especially true of students of African/Black identity.
- Youth often felt that they were excluded because they were not allowed or discouraged from speaking their first or home languages. They also felt that they were discriminated because some teachers would speak in their home languages with students from similar backgrounds, while discouraging or preventing the use of the newcomers' home languages.
- Lack of diversity among teachers was cited by many as a barrier.
- Math and science were often cited as being the most challenging subject areas for most students.



WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN BEING SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL?

- The importance of afterschool programs in their survival academically and socially was a common theme. As youth participants all were involved in some form of an after school program, this perhaps is not surprising. Nevertheless youth voiced the importance of these programs in helping them stay in school and succeed. This testimony about their school experiences in and value placed on after school programs should not be underestimated.
- For the most part, students found that English as an Additional Language (EAL) classrooms and teachers helped them to survive and flourish. For many, these were the keys to their survival. Some of the aspects that were seen to be important included:
 - ✓ Effective, culturally sensitive, and caring EAL teachers and Educational Assistants (EAs)
 - ✓ Support with homework and assignments in 'mainstream' classes
 - ✓ Welcoming and caring classroom environment
 - ✓ Encouraging and helping guide students
 - ✓ Checking in with students to address problems or needs
- A few students felt that the pace of learning in EAL classrooms was too slow or the course work below their skill and knowledge level. At least one student felt that the teacher was biased and discriminated.
- EAL teachers were most often credited for working to build positive relationships with newcomer students, however many participants felt that many teachers, including EAL teachers, have a serious lack of understanding about and empathy towards newcomer students in terms of transition stages for students in a new country, students' cultural backgrounds, tapping into students' prior knowledge, facilitating language learning and content instruction in mainstream classes, teachers' bias, misunderstandings around first language use and other aspects.



- The need to improve the experiences of newcomers and supports in subject area, non-EAL classrooms was a common theme. Those students who reported getting support from their teachers or those teachers were welcoming and accommodating all reported being more successful.
- The importance of schools and teachers that welcome diversity, teachers who are from similar backgrounds of the students or are comfortable with cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity was commonly seen as being an important aspect of successful schools.
- Parental support and encouragement was also an important aspect of the life many of the students present. The encouragement of parents for students to persevere and stay in school even when they were experiencing difficulties was key.
- A sense of self-efficacy and confidence gained in the home country and from prior school experiences were also cited by some as important.



DETAILED YOUTH GATHERING NOTES

OPENING AND GREETINGS

Ismaila Alfa opened the event and acted as master of ceremonies. Ismaila Alfa is the host of **Manitoba Scene** as well as the interim host of **Up To Speed** on CBC Radio One 89.3 FM / 990 AM in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Ismaila Alfa was born in Nigeria to a Nigerian father and Canadian mother. In fact, his mom hails from Pipestone, Manitoba.

Greetings were provided by Vinh Huynh (Newcomer Education Coalition), Rob Riel (Winnipeg School Division), and Diana Turner (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning). They welcomed the youth and expressed their great desire to hear the voices of youth present.



Rob Riel, Director of Aboriginal Education in Winnipeg School Division spoke about the importance of the newcomer population in the school division and improving educational opportunities for all learners. He acknowledged that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners and newcomer and refugee learners faced some similar challenges in schools. However, he also reminded those present that Canada's indigenous peoples faced some unique challenges and social contexts. He congratulated the students for taking the time to participate and invited them to be active participants.

Diana Turner welcomed the participants on behalf of Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and thanked the many people who have made the day possible, especially the members of the Newcomer Education Coalition, who planned and organized the day.

She stated that Coalition's concern for the well-being of our youth inspires educators in schools to really listen and see how they can better support newcomer youth.

She thanked the students for taking time away from their classes to bring their voices, experiences, and recommendations to the Gathering. Diana acknowledged the importance of student voice in today's educational system. Youth are learning to participate in a democratic society that functions best when it hears from all of its citizens. Events like the Gathering are one of the ways newcomer youth can begin to express their experiences, hopes and dreams to each other and to adults who want to listen.



Diana noted that in the past five years, Manitoba public schools have welcomed over 23,000 new students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 who are learning English as an additional language. Some of these are young children, born to new Canadian families or newly arrived with their families, but many students are like those at the Gathering; youth and young adults. The success of the youth meeting their goals in life will depend a great deal

on getting a great education. As the government department that is responsible for education, it wants to make sure all have great opportunities for that education.

Vinh Huynh, Principal of Hugh John Macdonald School, was recipient of the first ever IRCOM Mosaic Merit Award in recognition of his commitment to helping inner-city children achieve their dreams. Huynh is of Vietnamese-Chinese origins who arrived as a privately sponsored refugee in Manitoba in 1979, at age 10.

Vinh shared his own personal experiences as a refugee newcomer to Canada. His family supported South Vietnam in the civil war and was forced to leave when North Vietnam won the war. Huynh and his family fled Saigon and spent time in a refugee camp, where he remembers being interviewed by different countries for a chance to come and restart their lives in a different land. Eventually, he and his family arrived in Winnipeg and spent their first days at the Balmoral Hotel.

He humorously recalls that it was winter and when his family arrived in our prairie city and he was struck by how much it looked like the Siberia he had seen in many Russian films before coming to Canada. But in spite of the cold and the difficulties of learning a new language and culture, Vinh not only survived, he flourished.

His experiences as a newcomer learner in Manitoba's schools led him to want to become a teacher so that he could contribute to making schools a great place for all learners. One of the ways that he gives back to the community is as a Winnipeg inner-city school principal.

He and his staff at the school, in partnership with the community, work hard to make HJM a place where all students are safe, focused, and happy. While the students and teachers face challenges, there is a strong spirit of hope and purpose. He is pleased that students at the school have a sense of pride in where they are and what they're doing. The school has launched many initiatives, all with the intention of building community and a sense of citizenship. EAL programming and the Peaceful Village program are part of the important supports offered by the school.

He encouraged students present to persevere and not let go of their dreams and aspirations, no matter how bleak things may look at this point in time for them. As a teacher and a principal he has seen many newcomer and war-affected students overcome many challenges and initial difficulties to eventually succeed and make their dreams reality.



[Keep Fighting](#) is a song and video by Samson Gebreyesius (AKA Supa Sam) from Just TV, Broadway Neighbourhood Centre. Supa Sam is a former participant in IRCOM's programs.

The song is described by Supa Sam as:

"This song is about following your dreams. Sometimes you have to grind it out and fight through the challenges. But through determination and persistence, one can achieve anything."



MORNING KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MS WARDA AHMED

Warda Ahmed, Neighborhood Immigrant Settlement Worker (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) used her personal story as the background to her reflections as to the challenges and successes newcomer youth may experience in Canada.

Warda recounted her family's experience in leaving Somalia and seeking asylum in India before coming to Canada. Warda's family left Somalia after war broke out. Warda was very young when the family left for India. They went to India because an older sister was studying there.

She went to school in India until grade 10, and there learned Urdu, Hindi, and also English. But at home they continued to speak Somali and she is fluent in her first language. After some years, the family was accepted as Government Sponsored Refugees by Canada. All that her mother told her was that they were going to Canada.

Warda knew nothing about Canada, so she decided to try to find out about Canada, but all she was able to get information about was Vancouver.

When she asked a teacher about Winnipeg and Manitoba she was told that they were tourist destinations.

When they finally arrived in Winnipeg and were picked up by a settlement person from Welcome Place, she was surprised that during the trip to their first home in Winnipeg, that it did not look at all like a vacation or tourist destination.

Warda went to Churchill School and found it to be a positive experience where the teachers and students were friendly. She found that her teachers and the school counsellor were really important in helping her integrate and sort out the cultural differences that she was experiencing. For example, in India, when she sat with her friends for lunch they would share their food and if she wanted something she would just reach into their lunch boxes and take it. This is not true in Canada.

She saw her teachers or counsellor and talked to them almost every day. She encourages all students to ask questions and talk to their teachers and school counsellors.

Warda soon realized that although education was crucial she needed to work to help her family and make her way in her new country. Her multilingual language skills were very helpful as she soon got part-time work as an interpreter.

After graduating from high school, Warda took a year off to earn some money to help pay for her university courses and to decide what career would be best for her. She found that her part time job as an interpreter helped



her decide. She realized she really liked talking to and helping people. She decided that she wanted to be a social worker. So after her year off she enrolled at the University of Winnipeg.

Warda advised the youth present not to take time off from education without a concrete plan and date to return. For her, the year off helped her prepare for university and consider the choices she had.

Soon after beginning her university studies she realized that her oral English language skills were good but her writing skills needed to improve if she was going to be successful in passing her courses. She was struggling with the essays and other academic papers she had to read and produce. Therefore, she enrolled in writing courses and worked hard at improving her writing skills.

Along the way, Warda has always worked to pay for her studies. This is often hard and she has had to give up many weekends and evenings, but she still makes time to play basketball and be active. Luckily, she learned about the Inner City Social Work program, applied, and was accepted. She works full time as a settlement worker and interpreter and studies part time. She is in the 5th year of studies now and is looking forward to graduating from the social work program.

Warda encouraged the students present to follow their own path and dreams to a fulfilling career. It will take hard work but it is possible.

She encouraged youth to be who they are: To be proud of their origins, their culture, language and people and to not be afraid to show this aspect of their lives to others. She pointed to her own physical person who dresses in traditional Somalian clothes and wears a hijab. Her dress is part of who she is and helps to define her.

But she also advised that it is important to respect and get to know other cultures, languages, and ways of being and doing. Intercultural communication and understanding is critically important and we all must learn to live together in peace.

Warda sees Canada as a country of democracy and one with a great acceptance of diversity, and while not perfect, a great country for her and her family. She encouraged all the youth present to not give up, have hope for the future, and with hard work and a little help, they all can be successful and achieve their dreams.



Three workshops were held in the morning sessions, with participating youth having the opportunity to attend two workshops (See appendix for Agenda).

STORYTELLING WORKSHOP: SESSION 1&2

ARTIST: MUUXI ADAMS & FACILITATOR: KATHLEEN VYRAUEN

The workshop began with the screening of a video from the Canadian Council for Refugees, [In My Own Voice: A Visual Diary of Newcomer Youth](#), created by a group of youth at the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization's Youth Program (YOCISO) - with artist Allan André.



DISCUSSION

Introductions

Students introduced themselves, the schools they attended, and their backgrounds/origins.

Muuxi spoke about storytelling and its role in teaching us about our families and communities.

Video

- Identified with the experiences of the youth featured in the video and their experiences, such as refugees fleeing war, being separated from their families, and other challenges
- The students featured in the video were speaking from their hearts
- Shared the same experiences and frustration concerning the challenges of learning a new language and the differences in cultures and ways of doing things
- Everything here is completely different from back home
- Was reassuring to know that the challenges experienced are common

Question: What was the first day of school like?

- Difficult experience as a result of not knowing the language, no friends, clueless about what was going on.
- Three students talked about adapting to the different school days and schedules, getting lost in the school while navigating through hallways to the next classroom (previous schools in Egypt and other places everything was held in one classroom or the school was small).
- Disliked the stereotypes that other students had of newcomers (I have never been to school...I went to an English school back home).
- Scared, most of the kids were white...
- Relationship and interaction with teachers in Canada completely different.



- Different curriculum and practices in Canada (e.g. not being allowed to use a calculator in math but now in Canada calculators are allowed).
- I changed schools three times, as I felt that the teachers were picking on me and I did not feel safe.
- I attended an independent/private school and I found the teachers to be more difficult to deal with than the students. The children of the teacher attended the same school and received preferential treatment.
- Worst thing at school was the locker (It was hard to ask someone because they look different/speak different/act different, so I did not use the locker for 6 months.
- Two students felt depressed/sad about going to school because they felt so different from everyone at the school.
- Uncomfortable eating my lunch at school, maybe the other students felt it was weird to eat cultural/traditional foods, so often I did not even eat my lunch.
- Difficulty attending a large high school, previous experience was with schools that were K-12 so all the siblings attended the same school. In Canada, I am the only one in the family attending that school while the others in my family attend other schools. This makes me feel lonely.



Question: What were the challenges or opportunities you experienced in your school?

- At DMCI they were given many opportunities (teachers were accommodating of youth, lots of options).
- Five students liked the opportunity to make new friends.
- The way some teachers treated newcomers was a challenge (e. g. When the Black newcomer kids walked down the hallway as a group they got in trouble for hanging out together but Asian/White kids who would do the same thing were treated differently.). The issue of racism went beyond how students were treated in the hallways, and extended to a feeling that some teachers consistently discriminated against newcomer students in all aspects of school life. For example, one teacher at DMCI grabbed a student by his collar.
- Students noted that there were many Asian teachers; there were few Black/African teachers.
- Age was changed and student placed in a higher grade level than appropriate for his/her true age.
- I was not accepted at school, which decreased my sense of confidence.
- Opportunity to realize your dreams in comparison to back home, and following your parents dreams for you
- Five students commented on the difficulties of learning a new language, English.
- Challenge of dealing with subject choices and classes, in the previous school the program was mandatory (some teachers pressure students to not take sciences and more university geared courses towards vocational/professional programs or just the basics).
- Bad experiences with teachers discouraging me from my initial passions (I loved sciences/math but those negative experiences swayed me away from the sciences).
- General feeling that Muslim girls are not wanted/welcomed in school.



Quotes

- It was interesting that they all left their countries because of war.

- The video tells it as it was I think for most of us.
- They were separated from their families.
- I couldn't read, so I pretended to read.
- We help each other.
- I didn't want to be at school, I wanted to go home. It was hard.
- The only word I knew was Hi! So I said that to everyone.
- I was scared to eat. I thought they would make fun of me, eating newcomer food.
- I would run home away from school.
- People would ask me "how are you?" and I would say "fifteen", I thought they were asking "How old are you?"
- People would say let's play soccer! I didn't know soccer. We call it football. Soccer is a word for something sweet in my language!
- Getting to know the people was the hard part of going to school in Canada, not the education.
- I was scared all of the first day of school.
- With my mom at the doctors. She was telling me in our language what was wrong with her. She kept talking and I had to tell her to slow down and finish before I had to tell him. She was getting mixed up with the words of the doctor and her daughter.
- We were not allowed to use calculators where I came from. So when I did my first exam, I did all the calculations on a sheet of paper. I only managed to answer one page of the exam. My teacher was surprised and said "you can use a calculator here!" So I told my Mom I need a calculator."
- It was a challenge to get in shape for gym class! Back home, we didn't really care about gym/physical education. Here, it was taken seriously!
- If you get in trouble, the principal always takes the teacher's side.
- The challenge is to be accepted.
- It was a challenge because of our age, birth date, trying to register for school, and having to get new ID.
- It was a challenge to make friends.
- Just asking to go to the washroom! What do you say?
- I did not know about resources such as IRCOM and the Immigrant Centre.
- They are not OK with Muslim people going to the gym, especially girls.



THEATRE WORKSHOP

ARTIST: IAN ROSS & FACILITATOR: WARDA AHMED

Ian Ross introduced himself and his background in theatre and storytelling.

Ian led students through several steps of the workshop.

The first exercise was a deep breathing exercise- breathing deeply to reach the bottom of one's lungs.

The next exercise was Zip, Zap, Boing (sometimes known as "**Zip**" or "**Zip , Zap, Zop**") is a game often used as a theatre preparation exercise and sometimes as an elimination game. The rules of this game have many variations. The most basic form of the game involves a circle of people sending a "clap" or "impulse" or "ball of energy" to each other in turn, saying the word "zip" each time. Other moves such as "zap" send the clap in different directions.



The youth participants enjoyed this activity. In Ian's variation, students went from speaking to using only gestures, to only head movements, to lying down with their hands overlapping (chain of movement in hands).

The participants then engaged in **Mirrored Movements** with a partner. One partner leads by making a movement which is copied by the other, starting with hands and then to other parts of the body-all in slow motion.

A **Samurai Sword** activity followed, with partners pretending to hit each other with their Samurai swords in slow motion. This was then done as a large group.

Ian then spoke about the importance of theatre and its' impact on people.

The last exercise was a group sing-a-long led by Ian, called *The River is flowing Down to the Sea* accompanied by the participants' actions.

The workshop ended with Ian affirming their experiences as New Canadians and encouraging them to incorporate song and dance into their lives as they benefit one's entire body and life.

Students were engaged during the workshop and appeared to be relaxed, but active participants who were highly interactive. There was a lot of laughter and smiles.



ARTIST: LOC LU

Loc Lu introduced himself and his background in theatre and storytelling.

First the participants made frozen images/statues of different objects, such as toasters, elephants, & etc. Then they moved around the room each making frozen images for each other. They then moved from making frozen images to action images.

In the next exercise the participants in a circle were guided to make images with their bodies and then add to their images (a book, then a reader, then someone comes to braid the reader's hair while they are reading a book).

The next part of the workshop students transitioned to creating a variety of scenes depicting their school experiences (playing a sport, sitting in the classroom...).

Students then paired up to play the roles of artist/sculptor and clay. The artist 'sculpts' the "clay" into an image and provides a facial expression for the "clay" to express. The pairs then reverse roles. The next step was for the pairs to choose a specific moment in school where they struggled. They were given 5 minutes to discuss the moment and then "sculpt" the moment. They were not required to explain their sculpture.



The students then shared their "sculptures" or images to the group as a whole. During each presentation, the large group is asked to guess what the sculpture is about by giving it a title. Each character in the sculpture is asked to say "I want _____." and act out the scene.



Sculptures/moments presented included:

- The teacher has their back to the class while a student is about to punch another person in the class.
 - A student is about to tell the teacher that 2 students are cheating.
 - A group of students eating together and point to another student sitting alone looking sad.
- A teacher gets mad at African students, but not Asian students (who just watched and got away with their misbehaviour).
 - A student being beaten up by a group of other students.

Normally, the students would then work on acting out solutions for these moments, but the group ran out of time.



GRAFFITI WORKSHOP

ARTIST: CHLOE CHAFE & FACILITATOR:
MARC KULY

Chloe Chafe is a visual artist that mentors youth in the Graffiti Gallery's art program.

The Graffiti Art session introduced students to two key techniques in street art as well as the activist ethos of the form. Focusing on prompts from the opening panel around sounding your own voice to the world, the students used stenciling and wheat pasting to create public art. The art created by the students reflected their challenges

and desires for a good life. Students worked as groups and individuals and the process was an effective means for generating student discussions about their hopes and dreams and fuelled interests in the role of art in advocacy.



LUNCH

SPENCE NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION (SNA) YOUTH CREW

A healthy and filling lunch was provided by the SNA Youth Crew. The Youth Crew program offers **occasional odd jobs/training opportunities** for local youth, ages 11-16. Youth develop skills in yard care, snow and ice removal, cooking, baking and catering, building projects and community relationships.



MARTHA STREET STUDIO PRINT MAKING

During lunch participants in the gathering had an opportunity to make their own reusable tote bags with special silk screened sayings such as *Educate Don't Hate*, *New Canadian Youth*... Martha Street Studio is a community-based printmaking facility, located in Winnipeg's Historic Exchange District. Its 4000 square foot production space, studio, sales area, and gallery occupy a fully-renovated heritage structure bordering on the newly developing Waterfront Drive neighbourhood.



AFTERNOON SESSIONS

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

GROUP 1: REUBEN GARANG FACILITATOR & GOLOLCHA BORU NOTETAKER

What has it been like for you to go to school here in Canada? Do you feel included, and a part of your school? What kinds of things are you involved at your school?

- 2 x I feel included/involved, especially in sports, football (soccer), track, and basketball.
- I feel confident now in Canada.
- I feel I am part of something at school. All the teachers, the students, and principal know me.
- Sometimes I feel that I am accepted, and sometimes I don't. When I don't it is mostly about the way that teachers look at me and interact with me. When I walk into the classroom they look at me in a different way than they look at other students.

What are some of the challenging things about going to school here in Canada? (Ask kids to think about the same ideas as were asked in the question above.)

- 2 x The initial challenge was making friends, overwhelming switching and finding classrooms.
- The initial challenges was the English language and being in predominately white school. I was worried about what white people were saying about me (how I look, the clothing I wear, and the food I eat).
- Getting bullied because of the language barrier.
- Not understanding the importance of O Canada.
- In elementary and middle school the teachers were accommodating and there were smaller class sizes. There were less negative experiences. In high school, teachers don't care; they are much more worried about other things than studies... (social life, staying away from bad influences, balancing sports and studies).
- Learning math and sciences (I don't understand how algebra will help me, they don't use it in the real world)
- 6 x I think that some teachers are racist in my high school. For example, teachers say that we should only speak English in the classroom, but some Filipino students are allowed to speak Pilipino in the classroom. We get punished if teachers catch us speaking our languages and some teachers even speak to some students in other languages to help them understand.
- 6 x Teachers favour other students (those that are not Black, Muslim, or Arabic). For example, not letting us go to the bathroom, not giving as much extra help as they do to some students, and getting into trouble because we walk together or hang out in a group.



What helped you to do well in school? (think academically, socially, etc.) Were there any people or special programs that helped you out? (Ask about EAL programming or other programs the youth have benefited from.)

- 2 x Family pushing us to do better in school even when we struggle or find it difficult
- Already having educational knowledge from back home.
- My relationship with my math teacher. He helps me with homework and gives me advice with my future life goals and how to achieve them.
- EAL was helpful, but we progress slowly. There are two teachers and one student EAL teacher.

- I experienced a lot of racism, the teacher showed favouritism towards other students in the EAL classroom.

What would you change to make it easier for you to be successful in school? What advice would you give to schools to help youth succeed?

- School system to hear our voices.
- Diversity among teachers.
- Better orientation to school, two weeks for students to know the building and get to know the teachers.
- Treat us like they do others, respect us.
- More educational assistant help. Two teachers in the classroom, one to lead the classroom, the other to support students.
- Help the quiet student who is too shy to ask a question or for help directly.
- Student led help in learning English (peer tutors, homework clubs).

Is there anything else you would like to share?

- Better orientation on what it takes to graduate and pursue post-secondary education (what courses I need to take).
- Mandatory meetings with the Guidance Counsellors (so all students get the information they need to graduate. For example, what courses are needed to pursue a science career at the University, or classes need for arts careers. What options are available for post-secondary level (programs, Canada World Youth, internships, sports and other scholarships ...)?



GROUP 2: MARC KULY FACILITATOR & LACEY FORBES NOTETAKER

What has it been like for you to go to school here in Canada? Do you feel included, and a part of your school? What kinds of things are you involved at your school?

- It's been quite a trip. I play sports, soccer, and basketball. We have this thing at for homework at TEC VOC called TLC. (N. B. The **Tec Learning Centre** operates Monday through Thursday from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Students can work on homework, projects, and assignments in the library. Teachers and volunteers are available to assist the students.) We had a project; I was the only Black person in that group in that period, with Filipino and Asian kids. I ended up doing the project alone.
- 5 x I feel included/involved, especially in sports, football (soccer), track, and basketball.
- Struggle with being accepted, not stereotyped. The teachers underestimate you because they don't think you are smart enough or brave enough smart. Mostly struggled with teacher acceptance.
- There are no sports except for the guys. Principal can seem rude. Says our group (Eritreans) is dividing the school when we hang out together. He comes up to us and says/suggests that we will gang up against other students. Principal is from Caribbean origins and says we have to do things a certain way because we are coloured.
- Some teachers share the same language as some of the students and will talk with those students in their language while leaving other students left out.
- The regular classes, they always treat the English speaking students differently than the EAL students. As if there are two separate classes in the same room.
- It's a matter of teachers – they way they act towards new students.
- The students in the school see how teachers treat the new students and subsequently treat them in the same way.
- Teachers don't realize students learn in different ways.
- We are told to "sit down and watch", instead of being invited to join the class.
- Allow the students to decide if they can't do it-not the teacher's decision.
- The biggest thing is having confidence when you arrive in a new country.
- Speaking English, Language Story project involving only Black students, the Filipino and Asian students were excluded. I told the teacher.
- Some teachers are racist or favour kids from their own group. They don't acknowledge the EAL learners in their classrooms and don't give us the same attention as they do Canadian born students.
- Sometimes I feel that I am accepted, and sometimes I don't. When I don't it is mostly about the way that teachers look at me and interact with me. When I walk into the classroom they look at me in a different way than they look at other students.
- Already speaking English when starting school in Canada.
- It helps when we try to talk in English.



What are some of the challenging things about going to school here in Canada? (Ask kids to think about the same ideas as were asked in the question above.)

- The biggest challenge is getting caught between the clash of home and school cultures. At home there is an emphasis on money and in schools on academics and skills. What I love gets ignored.

- There is a need for a person in a counselor type role or trusted adult, who will work with students and who will not contact parents, or at least will understand the cultural differences and worldviews of the parents and schools.
- Teachers interpret our needs as being rebellion.
- Giving marks for gym clothes.
- The tension between Sunni and Shia.
- Pressure from within the ethnic/cultural group for girls to behave or dress in a certain way. Parents are judged by their communities based on the actions of their children, especially girls. Those that are not seen to behave appropriately are threatened with “We will take you out of school” or “We will send you back home”.
- Students finding belonging by participating in dance classes, sports, and other activities and then having to drop out/quit because of conflicting family values.
- They use the ‘gender card’.
- Issues with Muslim dress and the hijab. For example:
 - In one situation the referee told a student that they needed to take her hijab off if she wanted to play, but the team stood in solidarity with her, but they lost the game by default. As a Muslim I felt violated.
 - In another case the PHYS ED teacher would not allow the students to be dressed in skirts in the gym. The teacher said that they needed to change and sent them to the office. The principal called home and said that they had to change their clothing. The girls ended up failing their gym class.

What helped you to do well in school? (think academically, socially, etc.) Were there any people or special programs that helped you out? (Ask about EAL programming or other programs the youth have benefited from.)

- Freedom to choose my own passions – not my parents’.
- Consistent behaviour and expectations across the school.

What would you change to make it easier for you to be successful in school? What advice would you give to schools to help youth succeed?

- Teachers need to see the whole person, not just the student’s ability or performance in their course.
- Make everyone feel welcomed and equal. Students of colour often believe that their teachers are more friendly and warm to white students or students from their own backgrounds.
- Teacher behaviours that are supportive:
 - Need to treat newcomers well and with respect. Students can see how teachers behave.
 - Need to explain things in different ways and be patient.
 - They need to give time to allow students to understand what they are saying. We are listening, but we can’t understand you.
- Need recognize the different levels of schooling, prior language and other skills. Do not assume we can’t do anything. Often teachers assume we don’t know anything and ignore us.
- Sit down and watch students at work. Teachers in all subject areas need to care and pay attention to newcomer students.
- One caring teacher in the school can make a world of difference.
- Teachers who are not welcoming of newcomer students and open to diversity make it difficult.

GROUP 3: ABDIKHEIR AHMED FACILITATOR & NADIA PAUL NOTETAKER

What has it been like for you to go to school here in Canada? Do you feel included, and a part of your school? What kinds of things are you involved at your school?

- 6 x I feel included in my school.
- I get help from my teachers and have lots of friends.
- My teachers encourage me.
- 2 x Whatever you say, it's your own opinion, and they do not judge you for that. Everyone is very respected.
- They are very supportive.
- Because the teachers are always there for you. They push you and encourage you
- We need more encouraging. That's why there are no newcomer students in the classroom. Teachers don't care because it's not their business.
- Good environment, tons of extracurricular activities.
- Sometimes I feel I belong, mostly when I am with friends. Sometimes don't, mostly when I am back in class.
- Some students don't go to school because:
 - They do not have an authority figure; they don't have someone pushing them.
 - Cyber-bullying
 - Racism-by students and teachers. Some students from certain races are not getting help. Teachers being more acquainted with "white kids".
 - A lot of segregation between all groups. e. g. White, Filipino, African...
 - Peer pressure
- Do some teachers reach out to youth who are not attending?
 - Yes, especially if you have/show some potential.



What are some of the challenging things about going to school here in Canada? (Ask kids to think about the same ideas as were asked in the question above)

- Language barriers, most newcomers don't have English language skills and will be too afraid to talk around people who have been here for a long time.
- Racism.
- Waking up early, getting to school, how to tell time in a rigid society.
- Math being taught differently.
- Not comfortable asking questions.
 - Teachers don't give you the answers you need.
 - No further explanations or information given.
 - Teachers don't explain/teach concepts well or use the best approach.
 - Use the same difficult concepts repeatedly.
- Youth can be the problem.
 - Not willing to admit they don't understand.
 - Not willing to ask questions.

What helped you to do well in school? (think academically, socially, etc.) Were there any people or special programs that helped you out? (Ask about EAL programming or other programs the youth have benefited from.)

- CEDA (Pathways to Education)
 - University students/tutors help.

- Speaking with teachers helps.
- Talking with teachers during lunch-socially.
- 2 x Teachers helping & encouraging.
- After school programs.
- Homework clubs/programs.
- Family, working hard to make them happy.
- EAL
 - Helped me understand English better.
 - Wanted to stay longer, but was not allowed to do so.
 - Didn't help me the way they were supposed to help.

Have you ever thought about leaving school before graduating? If so, why? Did you talk to anybody about this? If so, what happened? Is graduating from high school important to you? Is it important to your family? Why/why not?

- Thought about dropping out because:
 - Didn't understand what the teacher said, & couldn't ask for clarification.
 - Found a program that I was interested in.
 - Classes too hard.

What would you change to make it easier for you to be successful in school? What advice would you give to schools to help youth succeed?

- Getting more help from teachers.
- Teachers from more and different backgrounds.
- More EAs in classes.
- Not just dumping kids in whatever classes without paper tests (assessment of prior learning).
- Students paying less attention to or caring less about what others think.
- Provide free school supplies.
- Students should help each other more
- More activities.
- More attention paid to newcomer youth.

GROUP 4: KATHLEEN VYRAUEN FACILITATOR, ANITA RIEDL HEIDE
NOTETAKER

What has it been like for you to go to school here in Canada? Do you feel included, and a part of your school? What kinds of things are you involved at your school?

- 6 x Yes I feel included
 - I know the teachers.
 - Playing soccer at school makes me feel included.
 - Feel I belong because of friends at school
 - Feel welcomed.
 - My teacher would notice if I was absent from class.
- Students participate in activities including soccer, Frisbee, ping pong, school committees, and school council, organizing gym ‘riots.’
- Special language credits makes us feel valued.
- EAL programming allows us to catch up; Regular classes sometimes go too fast or don’t provide enough time to prepare for tests.



What are some of the positive things about going to school here in Canada? (Ask about school subjects they enjoy, school teams, clubs, making friends, teaching style, teachers etc.)

- School is free.
- Opportunities for post-secondary education, students can get loans.
- Environment better because teachers don’t beat you like back home and you can make things right if you make a mistake.
- More access and opportunities to play sports.
- Academic courses are better quality.
- You can dress as you want, uniforms are not required.
- After school programs are helpful.
- Girls back home have a lot of responsibilities (cleaning, fetching water...).
- Academic courses are easier than back home.
- Less language to learn here.
- Having options is great to have (dance, etc.).

What are some of the challenging things about going to school here in Canada? (Ask kids to think about the same ideas as were asked in the question above.)

- Racist behaviour of peers.
- Not enough explanation/information about the courses we are taking.
- Mainstream teachers don’t understand us as well as our EAL teachers.
- Mainstream teachers singling out EAL students from the rest of the class.

Have you ever thought about leaving school before graduating? If so, why? Did you talk to anybody about this? If so, what happened? Is graduating from high school important to you? Is it important to your family? Why/why not?

- Yes, I have thought about dropping out because:
 - Family problems and conflict.
 - Very difficult to learn English.

What helped you to do well in school? (think academically, socially, etc.) Were there any people or special programs that helped you out? (Ask about EAL programming or other programs the youth have benefited from.)

- Having friends.
- EAL teachers.
- 7 of the youth attend afterschool programs, because it really helps with homework, money, and food.
- After school programs like Pathways and Peaceful Village (money for transportation and free tutoring).
- Feel comfortable asking for help at afterschool programs.

What would you change to make it easier for you to be successful in school? What advice would you give to schools to help youth succeed?

- Principals should ensure teachers are doing their jobs helping students who need it.
- Teachers should smile every day; treat students as people who are valued.
- Guidance counselors and academic advisors need to be more open about students' choices in school, i.e. what courses they should take or drop.



GROUP 5: MATTHEW FAST FACILITATOR, PAMELA COLPITTS NOTETAKER

Expectations of School

- Religious acceptance.
- Challenging school work.
- Religious freedom.
- Choice of school subjects.

What has it been like for you to go to school here in Canada? Do you feel included, and a part of your school? What kinds of things are you involved at your school?

- I attend a French language school. The French students are nicer. I felt included right away and I play sports at school.
- After school programs-what if all kids can get help, like meeting every Wednesday to get homework help. How about an African night in May?
- I did not feel included at first.
- 2 x Playing soccer helps.
- Failed my English exam, it was too difficult.
- School curriculum very challenging.
- School too easy.
- 2 x Easy to make friends.
- 2 x It was easy to adjust, there were lot of kids from African backgrounds like me.
- I had a little difficulty adjusting to the new culture.
- I got into trouble a lot for talking and arguing with students.
- 3 x I felt accepted.
- Had trouble with the principal.
- I don't like having to take music classes.
- My teacher doesn't like it when I wear cross on my necklace.
- I feel discriminated against by my Caribbean principal.



What are some of the challenging things about going to school here in Canada? (Ask kids to think about the same ideas as were asked in the question above.)

- I was lost in this very different school system.
- 2 x Curriculum is different.
- Making friends was hard.
- Being the only Black person in the class.
- Changing culture and speaking English 24/7.
- Too much homework.
- Too many notes to take.

- No extra help at school.
- 2 x Opportunity to practice religion in Canadian schools.
- Required to sing Christian songs in choir.

What helped you to do well in school? (think academically, socially, etc.) Were there any people or special programs that helped you out? (Ask about EAL programming or other programs the youth have benefited from.)

- 3x The teacher-every day I am asked if I have any problems/trouble.
- 2 x After school programs.
- Field trips.
- My own perseverance and dedication.
- My friends.
- 4 x Mom (parents) pushing me/encouraging me.

What would you change to make it easier for you to be successful in school? What advice would you give to schools to help youth succeed?

- Have religious courses
- 2 x Career advice/counselling
- Less homework so that kids can keep up
- Understanding students' needs
- Putting us in courses that will help us move forward to post-secondary education
- Don't make us take classes we don't need
- Plan our courses so that they relate to careers we want to have
- More hands-on activities.



GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Each of the five discussion groups presented a summary of their discussions. The presentations included reports, role playing, singing, and poster presentations.



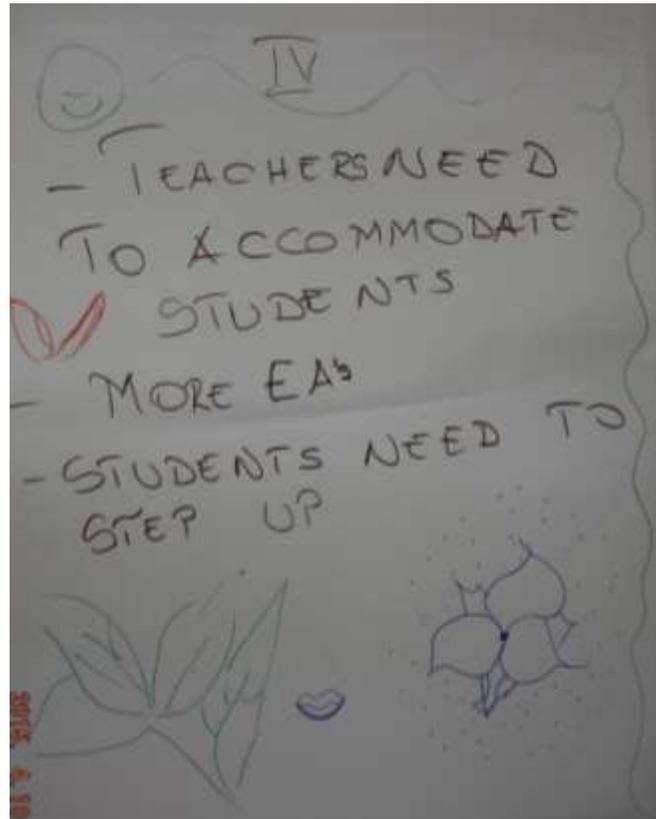
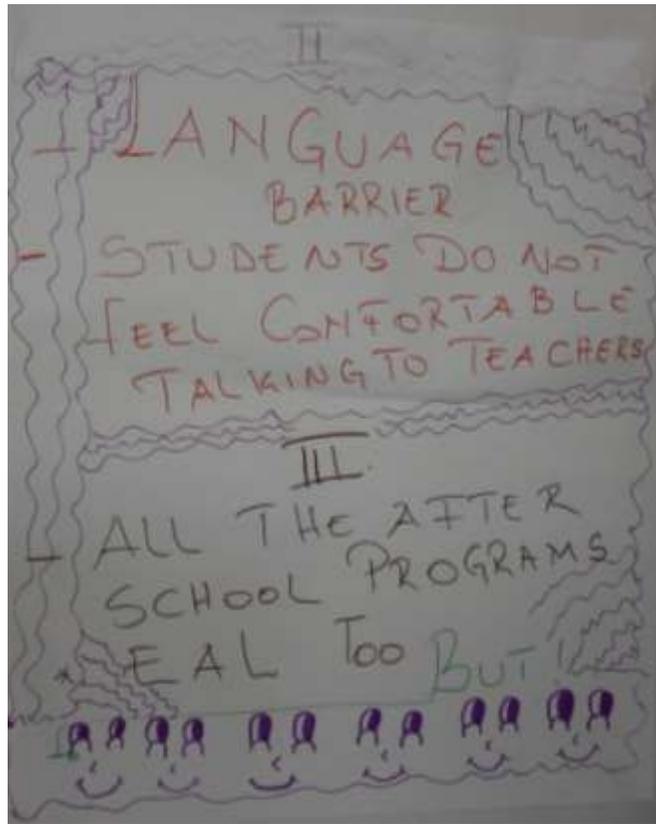
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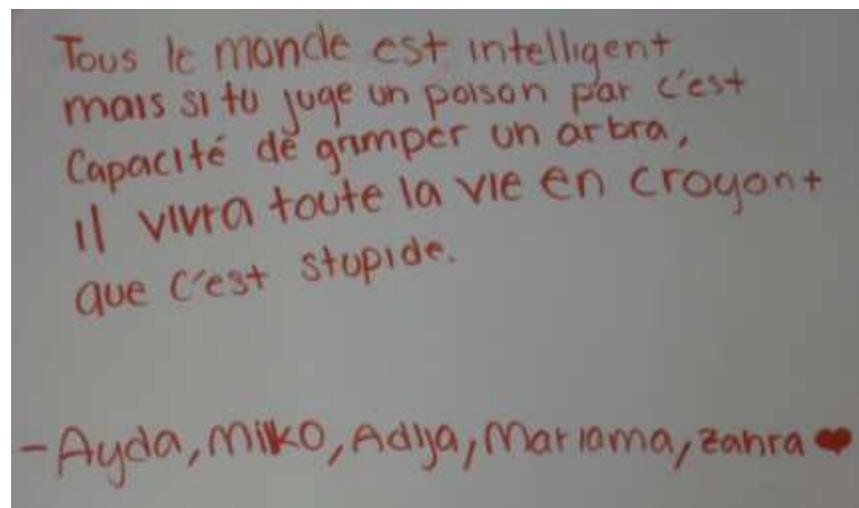
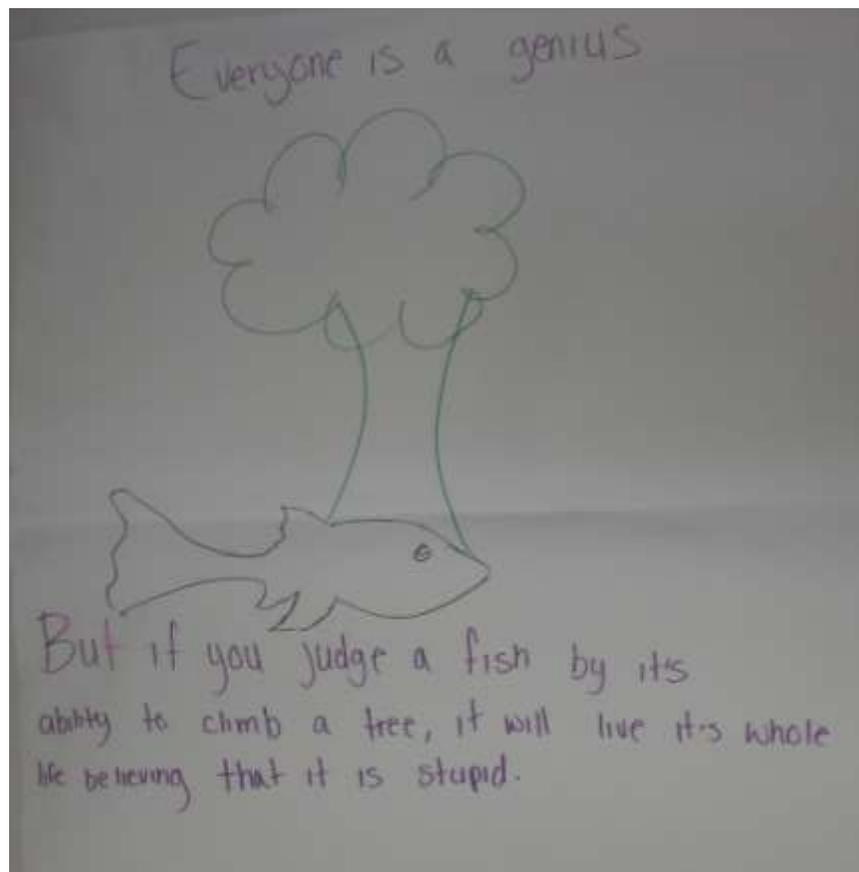
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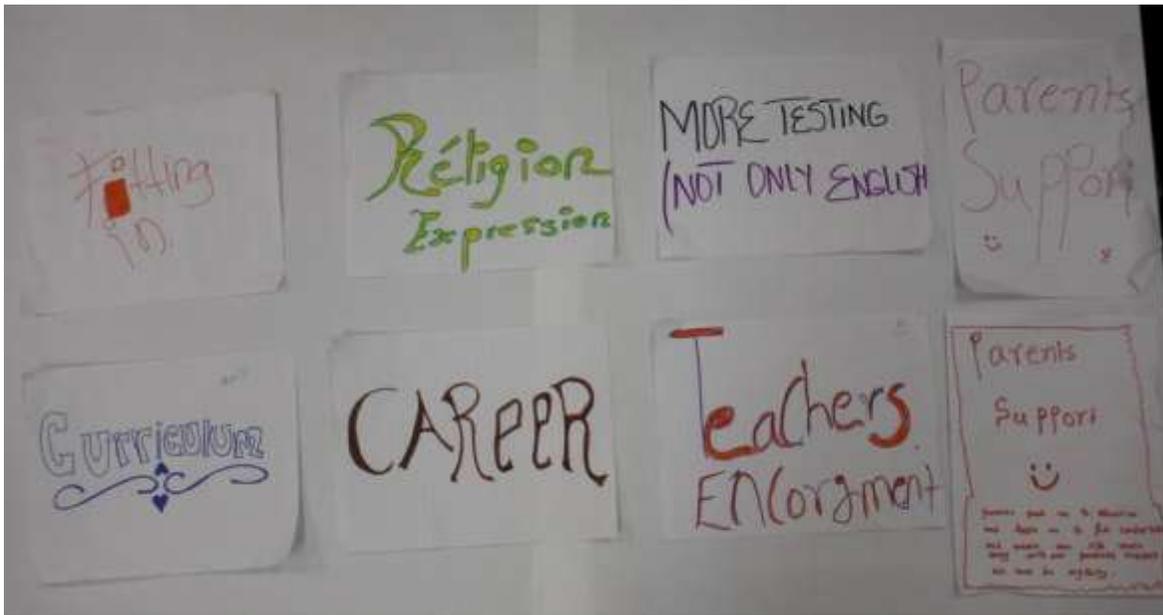
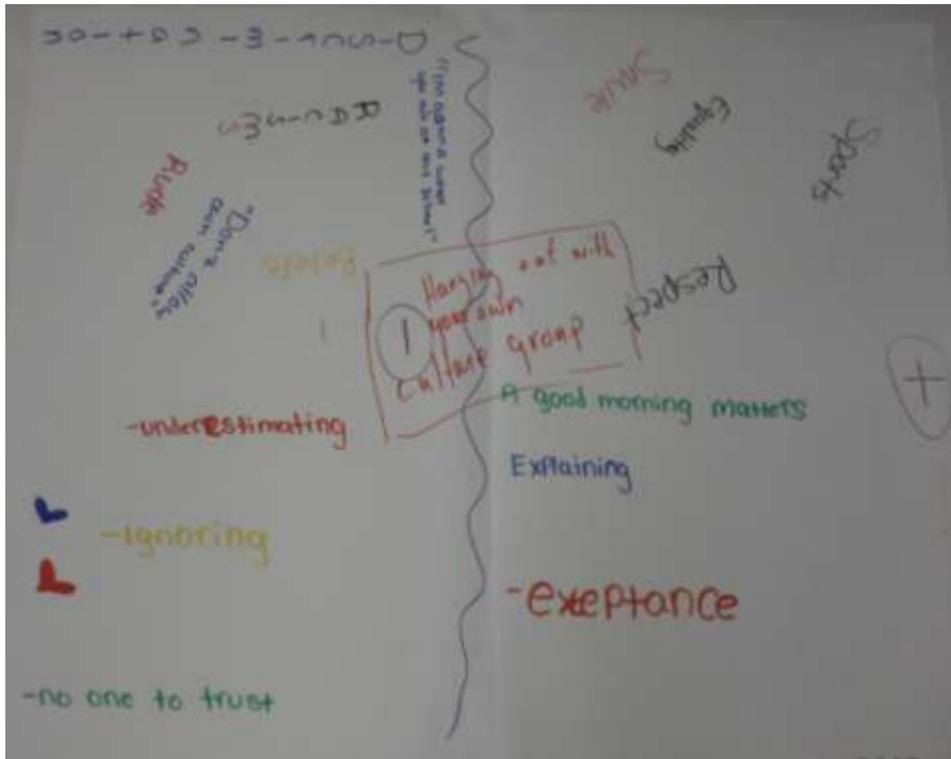
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Newcomer Education Coalition May 15, 2015



APPENDIX

PROGRAM NEW CANADIAN YOUTH GATHERING

8:30 am	Registration		
9:00 am	Welcome: Ismaila Alfa Greetings: Vinh Huynh (Newcomer Education Coalition), Rob Riel (Winnipeg School Division), Diana Turner (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning)		
9:15 am	Key Note Address: Warda Ahmed		
9:45 am	Storytelling Workshop Lockhart 1LO4 Artist: Muuxi Adams Facilitator: Kathleen Vyrauen	Theatre Workshop Lockhart 1LO6 Artist: Ian Ross Facilitator: Warda Ahmed	Graffiti Workshop Lockhart 1LO7 Artist: Chloe Chafe Facilitator: Marc Kuly
10:45 am	Health Break		
11:00 am	Storytelling Workshop Lockhart 1LO4 Artist: Muuxi Adams Facilitator: Kathleen Vyrauen	Theatre Workshop Lockhart 1LO6 Artist: Loc Li Facilitator: Warda Ahmed	Graffiti Workshop Lockhart 1LO7 Artist: Chloe Chafe Facilitator: Marc Kuly
12:00 pm	Lunch at Bulman Centre provided by SNA Youth Crew Martha Street Studio Print Making		
1:00 pm	Group Discussions		
1:45 pm	Health Break		
2:00 pm	Group Presentations		
3:00 pm	Closing		

Newcomer Education Coalition May 15, 2015

Name	Agency
Omar Abdullahi	Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty & Citizenship
Muuxi Adam	Newcomer Program , Aurora Family Therapy Centre
Abdikheir Ahmed	Local Immigration Council of Winnipeg, Social Planning Council
Parshu Dahal	Peaceful Village (HJM)
Noelle DePape	Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
Matthew Fast	Newcomer Employment and Education Development Services Inc. (NEEDS)
Reuben Garang	Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty & Citizenship
Sue Hoang	Newcomer Service Coordinator, Winnipeg School Division
Vinh Huynh	Principal, Hugh John Macdonald School
Justine Kiwanuka	Community Support Worker, Winnipeg School Division Adult EAL Program
Alfred Koineh	Mount Carmel Clinic
Surafel Kuchem	Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
Mark Kuly	Teacher Professional Development, Winnipeg School Division
Carolyn Loeppky	Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty & Citizenship
Suni Matthews	Retired Principal, Community Member
Faven Mergia	Peaceful Village (FRC)
Raymond Ngarbouie	Community Education Development Association (CEDA)
Anita Riedl Heide	English as an Additional Language (EAL) Teacher, General Wolfe School
Heather Robertson	Newcomer Employment and Education Development Services Inc. (NEEDS)
Ian Ross	Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty & Citizenship
Daniel Swaka	Peaceful Village, Executive Director
Tony Tavares	Diversity Education Consultant , Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning
Tom Simms	Executive Director, Community Education Development Association (CEDA)
Diana Turner	Manager, EAL, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning
Kathleen Vyrauen	Newcomer Employment and Education Development Services Inc. (NEEDS)
Sally Wai	Pathways to Education, Community Education Development Association (CEDA)
Nick Wanwilaiwan	Coordinator, Peaceful Village, Manitoba School Improvement Project
Allan Wise	Central Neighbourhoods Development Corporation (CNDC)