



Immigration Partnership Winnipeg

Stakeholder Consultation

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April 2015

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IPW Stakeholder Consultation Summary Report

1. INTRODUCTION

The Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW) public consultations sought to stimulate a dialogue among community stakeholders on what is being done and what needs to be done to help immigrants and refugees integrate into Winnipeg life. Discussions among sector oriented groups was the start of an ongoing conversation to assist the IPW Council in its mandate to improve integration services and supports.

The areas of involvement and sector themes included:

- Ethno-cultural communities and service providers
- English as an Additional Language Training Programs
- Governmental programs (multi-sector and tri-level)
- Youth Issues
- Housing Needs
- Health Needs
- Education Needs

1.1. Representation

Representatives of organizations, agencies, departments and communities included: senior administration, program Directors / managers/coordinators, direct services or support staff, and cultural 'connectors', interpreters, liaisons.

Representatives of the following organizations participated:

1. Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
2. Family Dynamics
3. Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC) -Welcome place
4. Mount Carmel Clinic
5. Aurora Family Therapy Centre
6. Nor'West Coop
7. Centennial Community Improvement Association
8. Riverwood Community Church
9. Ethiopian Society of Winnipeg
10. Women's Health Clinic
11. Success Skills Centre
12. Seven Oaks Learning Centre
13. RCMP
14. Child and Family Services – All Nations Coordinated Response Network (ANCR)
15. English in Tune Inc.
16. University of Winnipeg (English)
17. Mosaic Newcomer Family Resource Network
18. A&O Entry Program - Older Adults
19. River East Transcona School Div.
20. Klinik Community Health Centre
21. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
22. Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD)
23. University of Manitoba
24. Young United church
25. Manitoba English As an Additional Organization (MEALO)
26. New Journey Housing

27. North End Sponsorship Team
28. Newcomer Employment and Education Development Services (NEEDs) Centre
29. Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
30. SEED Winnipeg
31. Healthy Start for Mom and Me
32. YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg
33. Youth Agencies Alliance (YAA)
34. Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker Program/ William White Residents Association
35. City of Winnipeg
 - a. Winnipeg Transit
 - b. Winnipeg Fire & Paramedic Services
 - c. Community Services Dept.
 - d. Winnipeg Police Service
 - e. Housing & Strategic Initiatives
 - f. Winnipeg Public Library
36. Manitoba Education & Advanced Learning
37. Winnipeg School Division
38. Manitoba Adult Learning & Literacy
39. Manitoba Labour & Immigration
40. Settlement and Language Training
41. Manitoba Housing and Community Development
42. Manitoba Early Learning/Family Services
43. Manitoba Immigrant & Refugee Settlement Sector Association (MIRSSA)

Every consultation session asked the group to brainstorm on:

- STRENGTHS of current programs and efforts to support immigrants and refugees.
- GAPS in services and BARRIERS in meeting the needs of newcomers.
- POTENTIAL for change and PRIORITIES for improvements.

1.2. Output/Discussion Highlights

In all sessions the participants noted that the main issue areas of housing, employment, education and transportation are all interrelated and should be worked on simultaneously rather than putting one of those as a top priority issue before the others.

Participants felt that discrimination, racism and negative stereotyping are a problem that needs attention by government and service providers. Cross-cultural and intercultural anti-racism education should be provided to all populations and at all levels/ages. A stronger collaborative relationship between the newcomer community and indigenous community should be actively fostered in particular.

Strong and effective local programming is often time limited (available for too short a period) and the eligibility categories of certain newcomers and criteria for selection of services can prevent some newcomers from accessing services and supports. In some cases, the system itself results in people 'falling through the gaps'.

Culturally appropriate and competent service design is crucial for effective and successful service delivery.

There are meaningful, high quality, highly effective programs and services available that need to be maintained and expanded to meet growing demands and new populations. Manitoba Start, for example, is recognized as a useful or productive service but it is not serving all newcomers across the city. One concern is that for some cases the service is too centralized.

Generally, there was a sense that a number of organizations and agencies are providing important supports, but that all are struggling to maintain their capacity. The lack of funding is a constant issue for them while many are experiencing increased participation rates.

There was a sense also among participants, that there are stakeholders in our community who could grow their involvement, role and contribution (example: faith communities and businesses). As well there was the recognition that involvement needs to be managed and facilitated, to help identify and engage those stakeholders.

Though the consultation involved Winnipeg organizations and participants, there were comments and observations about the needs of immigrants outside of the City of Winnipeg. Some stakeholders were either working with and / or aware of the needs and the resources outside of Winnipeg and suggested IPW reach outside of the City to include rural communities or consider a rural Local Immigration Partnership (LIP).

2. METHODOLOGY

A team of people were involved in producing this series of successful community and stakeholder consultation events. The content design and invitation list was the responsibility of the IPW Coordinator in consultation with the Steering Committee. The Consultant Facilitator and her assistant were responsible for facilitating the conversations and documenting the feedback and results.

The logistical supports and hospitality was provided by Social Planning Council staff and volunteers. The photo/video services were provided by SPCW and MIRSSA staff.

Six consultations and the reporting back event in March are considered the starting point of a continuing community consultation, to be added to other research to help orient and inform the IPW Council.

Attendance was voluntary and by invitation. Over 100 people attended the 7 sessions. A small number of people attended more than one session. A significant percentage of the participants, in every session group, had or is currently having the “lived experience” of being a newcomer and may consider themselves still engaged in their own settlement process. The team considered the sessions well attended, demonstrating high engagement, a solid level of knowledge and a commitment of community members and professionals. The outreach efforts undertaken by the Coordinator were instrumental in ensuring strong participation in the events.

Though each event had a different focus and participants, locations and slightly different activities, all meetings followed a fairly standard meeting format and process. Every meeting would begin with everyone introducing themselves and the organization or community they came from. The Coordinator would deliver his power point and narrative presentation about the history and purpose of IPW, and answer any questions about the local immigration partnership concept. The most common questions were to clarify what a LIP is and is not, a request to hear some concrete examples from other cities about LIP accomplishments and about who will be on the IPW Council. Once the presentation was complete (which usually took about 30 minutes) the Coordinator would hand it over to the Facilitator.

The Facilitator would review group guidelines, the agenda for the session and conduct a warm-up exercise to increase comfort and trust in the group before posing the focused question to them. All comments made were recorded both on flip chart in front and to confirm with the speakers as well as by a note taker on the side. The consultation section of the meetings were all approximately 2 – 2.5 hours long, with the two large group sessions being closer to three hours.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Each consultation session discussed;

- STRENGTHS of current programs and efforts to support immigrants and refugees.
- GAPS in services and BARRIERS in meeting the needs of newcomers.
- POTENTIAL for change and PRIORITIES for improvements.

3.1. Newcomer / Ethno-cultural Groups Session (December 11, 2014)

Approximately 25 people attended this session, either representing organizations or communities, or as individuals. The majority of people had a lived experience of being an immigrant or refugee. All sectors or issue areas were raised in small group discussions.

The design of this session included participants writing out a few of their own individual ideas or concerns on what issues they thought were important to newcomers. Then all participants were placed in small groups for two rounds of brainstorming, discussion and prioritizing. There was some consistency in identifying issues and priorities among the groups. However, each group also tended to discuss the issues differently, so that there were a variety of perspectives shared. Participants also felt that the discussions were useful for their own learning and contributing to their work and efforts.

By noting the number of times an issue was raised by the six small group discussions, a ranking of the issues was achieved. Participants noted that addressing many of these issues required an integrated and multi-sector approach, rather than attempting to only deal with single issues individually. The issues raised by participants are listed in their order of importance (frequency mentioned):

Housing (18)

- There is a lack of adequate, suitable, safe, affordable, accessible, with support services housing
- In addition to accessible housing there is a need for support services to navigate, obtain and manage and maintain newcomer housing needs

Employment (14)

- Newcomers need more recognition of their skills and previous education
- Newcomers need to be encouraged to upgrade their education for better jobs rather than being allowed to settle into start up or transitional jobs
- There is a need for more vocational training programs with internships and co-op programs
- More employers need to offer Work Place English language Training (for the workplace) programs

Education (11)

- There is a need for more free English as an Additional Language classes for all ages, and available throughout the city
- Delays and difficulties in getting documentation regarding foreign credentials and education can be a barrier to getting services

- There needs to be continued recognition of foreign credentials
- There needs to be some accelerated programs for newcomers with previous education or training, to shorten the accreditation time.

Home and Family Support (6)

- There is a need for in-home supports around parenting and home- schooling communication
- Family support around health and healthy relationships, caring for youth and elders

Orientation (4)

- Improvements to the orientations for newcomers are needed, starting from providing more realistic expectations regarding education and employment upon arrival to Canada, to the length that newcomers can access settlement programs and supports, and for how long they can be considered a client of a settlement agency

Mental health / medical (3)

- Needs that were identified in this topic included assessment and counseling and cross-cultural or culturally appropriate medical care
- A focus on mental health and the issues that come with trauma and war history. The stress that accompanies culture shock (which varies depending on culture and level of supports and context of arrival) was also raised

Engage the youth (3)

- There is a concern regarding the potentially risky behavior and vulnerability of youth and therefore the need for a wide variety of in school and out of school supports and programs. For youth to become involved in; promoting positive self-image, social skill development and help to link them to employment

Engage the community

- There was a lot of energy and support for a public awareness and relations efforts and educational campaigns.
- A hopeful and inspiring strategy for educating others and leveraging their involvement is to share stories of successful models and community efforts.
- An important aspect of improving community relations is to highlight the contributions and value of newcomers to Winnipeg.
- It is also useful to identify and utilize ‘Champions’ who have a profile in the community and who can influence others.

3.2. English as an Additional Language (EAL) Training group session (December 15, 2014)

There were seven professionals in attendance at this session which was held in the Immigrant Centre. The group was organized with the help of MEALO and included EAL teachers, program managers and representatives of the school system, community-based and workplace based programs. The main focus of the discussion seemed to be on EAL for adults, and not a lot on EAL for students (children) in the school system.

STRENGTHS:

- In Winnipeg there is a wide variety of programs – for diverse ages and stages of life, at various locations spread throughout the city, and delivered by diverse providers
- The Manitoba EAL community is innovative - for example they have created pilot programs for over the phone and online classes
- Some of the EAL programs offer child care, which makes them accessible to parents of young children
- A few programs offer transportation, which removes a potential barrier to the training
- The caliber of the EAL community of professionals includes a large number of very experienced personnel, who are capable of strong collegial relationships
- Manitoba has a history of being one of the most progressive EAL communities and there is a feeling that some of the progress made is at risk of being lost due to funding limits
- Manitoba recognizes the difference between immigrants and refugees
- Conversation circles have taken off and are a good strategy that could be expanded

NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES:

- The fairly recent changes in funding arrangements have had a negative impact on the relationship with service agencies and have presented communication challenges for advocates (There are eligibility issues and Citizenship and Immigration Canada officials are still on a learning curve and are not as accessible or aware as the previous Provincial government program counterparts were)
- There are not enough EAL services being offered in the city of Winnipeg. There needs to be an increase in the number of programs and classes, with specific attention on sub-groups, i.e. neighborhoods or populations who are not accessing classes or who don't have courses to graduate on to, such as seniors
- Deal with people on waiting lists (both for classes and for child care spaces to allow them to be able to attend classes)
- More EAL programs should offer child minding or transportation to remove two very real barriers to accessing training
- Locate some classes in community spaces other than schools, like community centers, Libraries
- Have 311 in different languages, that would address accessibility to essential services information (which is part of orientation) as well as help with language acquisition
- Some newcomers may not be eligible for free EAL and may have no other option than to pay for EAL classes. For some this can present a financial barrier. As well there are not a lot of the paid for classes available right now
- Assessment and referral happens centrally now and the suggestion is to have a mobile assessment team travel to various areas in the city, which has worked in Seven Oaks
- There is a potential to increase conversation circles in the workplaces, however, there is a concern that these will be viewed as a replacement for EAL classes which they are not, as these augment a language learning strategy
- There is a need in the sector to raise the recognition factor for the EAL professional teachers and administrators (like has been done for settlement workers) through MEALO, to maintain and grow standards, increase professional development.

3.3. Inter-governmental Officials session (January 16, 2015)

This was one of the largest consultation groups, with over 30 people in attendance. The session was held at the Millennium Library. Participants came from all three levels and a wide range of departments and service areas; the City (16), the Province (11), Federal agencies (1). There were other stakeholders (5) from institutions like the Winnipeg School Division.

A general perspective for the session was that all levels of government are doing a lot of meaningful programming and are providing services for newcomers (as well as other under-served or marginalized groups), but an on-going challenge is getting the information out to citizens and community groups as to what is available and accessible for newcomers.

The participants expressed the desire to be in mixed groups as opposed to sector or issue homogenous groups. They wanted to learn from each other and make inter-sector connections. Small groups focused on strengths and then reported back to the large group. The discussions were broad and far reaching. The comments and suggestions which came up at the Intergovernmental session very much echoed and reinforced the comments at more focused issue or population specific consultation sessions.

SUGGESTIONS

- The orientation process for newcomers is part of what creates confusion, anxiety and misunderstanding. We need to better prepare newcomers by giving more accurate information before and after they arrive
- There is a lack of adequate, safe and affordable housing and if housing is unstable or unsuitable it makes it very difficult for someone to be successful in school or work
- All programs and services need to recognize the specific needs of populations within populations or sub groups like: women with children, youth and seniors
- We need to make more essential services free and continued for newcomers – greater access to essential services would enable newcomers to be more successful in their settlement and remove some of the stress and barriers during settlement
- Better and more successful newcomer settlement requires an inter-related or multi-sector plan and approach. We need a comprehensive environmental approach to the provision of services
- The following areas are all a priority and require increased funding - housing, education, language training, employment, safety, health
- We need a clearer ‘road map’ to be working from for the development of services
- We need to get a clearer understanding of what synergies exist across departments and agencies so that we might capitalize on them and work more collaboratively on them
- We need to introduce the concept of fostering a ‘welcoming community’ – creating a greater understanding and appreciation of newcomers and their needs as well as instilling a sense of shared responsibility to be a welcoming new home for newcomers
- We need multiple opportunities for communities to demonstrate being a welcoming community,
- The ‘hub’ concept or the ‘block by block’ geographic approach has been used on other issues or with other populations, including locally with some success. Consider learning more about and adopting that approach.

- We need to utilize the buddy concept or adopting a family or mentorship that has been so essential in successful settlement stories
- Fostering on-going communication, information sharing and collaboration across sectors has proven helpful for integration
- More employer engagement – we need to ask more from key employers of newcomers as they benefit from that workforce – there should be clear incentives for employers to employ and support their newcomer employees
- There need to be more after school programs and home / family / school supports. Communities and divisions where that are in place are working well and fewer kids are falling through the gaps.
- Professionals in health care, the school system, justice and even employers need to recognize danger signs of when newcomers are experiencing a crisis, and how they need to know how to direct an employee to counseling sooner to avert crisis
- There is a need to have even more flexible language instruction services
- There is a lack of positive messages about value and contribution of newcomers. We need an Advocacy / PR campaign – promote shared responsibility for welcoming and ensuring the success of newcomers
- Across government, leadership needs training in valuing and managing diversity
- Analysis, planning and events are needed to help breakdown ‘silos’ and improve the continuum of services and programs
- We need to bring or leverage more resources and people of influence to the settlement process and needs
- We need to look at criteria for all the various programs and see where criteria could be loosened or relaxed to allow programs to be more accessible and meet more newcomers needs, especially until new programming is developed
- We need to take a person-centered approach and have the programs fit the person not the other way around
- We need to have a focus on jobs, with the integration of skilled workers, apprenticeships, and better promotion of careers, for example via trade shows

3.4. Youth session (January 29, 2015)

The youth session had 12 people attending, from settlement agencies, community-based and school-based programs. It was held at the Social Planning Council.

STRENGTHS

- We have lots of good quality options and programming within the city of Winnipeg
- IRCOM and Welcome Place (temporary housing) provide an automatic, quick and direct access to newly arrived youth
- The partnership between community organizations and schools has grown and strengthened over the past ten years with schools making their spaces more available
- There is a high use of unpaid personnel (volunteers) in youth programs which means these are very cost efficient
- There is strong and regular inter-agency communication and thus collaboration amongst youth serving organizations which is facilitated and assisted by the Youth Agencies Alliance Network

- The amount of staffing in programs has grown over last ten years, but is still not enough to meet the population needs
- Many youth serving organizations have the ethic and practice of encouraging youth participants to become youth leaders and role models. Former participants, volunteer and staff stay involved and are giving back
- Some businesses are accepting youth as volunteers to develop their job skills and sometimes leading to employment
- The programs with a gang prevention component are showing positive results
- MIRSSA has identified youth as a priority for service support and are conducting a needs assessment which can be useful for agencies throughout the sector
- Many programs take a holistic, family-centered approach.

GAPS, UNMET NEEDS, BARRIERS

- The negative news media reports about newcomer youth, and the profiling by police is harmful to the self-perceptions of newcomer youth and contributes to their mistrust of authority. The youth are reticent to then take advantage of opportunities and services
- The newcomer youth voice and experience is being overlooked in the current city-wide racism conversation
- Newcomer youth also experience discrimination in schools
- There is a need for an advocating body for newcomer youth, comparable to that for Aboriginal youth
- Newcomer youth need role models i.e. high profile people with status they can relate to (as celebrity and status appear important to all youth)
- Government funded programs and services need to be available longer, as the time frame assumed for settlement are currently unrealistic for youth
- One of the most difficult transitions is from high school to work – it would be better to have many more transitioning supports and programs i.e. opportunities leading up to and during that period
- Due to the high percentage of newcomer youth who are trauma-affected, there is an emergent training gap for front line staff in schools and community organizations there is therefore a need for training related to trauma-informed service delivery
- Youth need more opportunities to participate in restorative justice processes and programs. The Justice Department appears to be not sharing stats or working collaboratively with community agencies as they could on early identification, redirection and prevention
- There is a need for more access to recreation activities including sport and the arts. The arts, being more inclusive and non-competitive, are a particularly positive type of programming and skill development for newcomer youth, hence there needs to be more community-based arts programming throughout the city
- Newcomer students are sometimes being moved upward through the grades without having the demonstrated proficiencies that would be expected of other students (they are missing the basics), and students are falling through the gaps in the schools system in terms of their education. More EAL in the schools and more after school tutoring and school supports programs should be made available to every newcomer student
- There is a need for homework support when newcomer students are in university

- The majority of services are concentrated in central Winnipeg but there is a need to have programs located throughout the entire city as newcomer youth live all over the city of Winnipeg.

3.5. Housing session (February 5, 2015)

Approximately 15 participants were hosted by New Journey Housing at their new location, it was the first time for most participants to be there.

STRENGTHS

- IRCOM and Welcome Place are well established organizations and have a good history of relationship with CIC
- New Journey Housing and the range of housing support services it provides is making a huge difference through having a cultural housing worker, training on how to rent, urgent situation response capacity, first language resources and confidential referral
- There are some really good private landlords who are compassionate, understanding of the system, and open to meet new challenges
- There are some very helpful financial programs, such as those provided by Hydro (affordable energy program) and Manitoba Housing (rental supplement program) that people are accessing
- Residential Tenancies Branch is more aware and open to accommodating newcomers, but there was a mixed experience with that, as not all participants agreed
- There are developed information resources on housing as well as programs in the community, for example: A MIRSSA Booklet, From Rental to Home Purchase
- The SEED Winnipeg Asset Building Home Buyers Individual Development Account program, is a success and needs to be expanded and offered to a wider group.
- New Canadians are resilient and are improving neighborhoods

GAPS, BARRIERS, CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

- Existing organizations are serving only a fraction of the newcomers who have supportive housing as many newcomers are figuring “it” out on their own, or with friends and family. They may be getting misinformed or bad advice, for example, newcomers taking up another’s lease from a family member and getting into a situation they cannot get out of
- Transportation can be a barrier to finding housing. Available housing may take one outside their work area and force them to get costly transportation to get to work or school, rather than be within walking distance.
- Though there are supports, programs and subsidies in place, the funding levels are not sufficient to meet newcomer needs.
- There is not enough safe, affordable, suitable housing available; especially for large families - more large families are coming and need affordable housing with 5 or 6 bedrooms per unit not 1 – 3.
- Negative public stereotypes and attitudes that newcomers experience upon arrival (what newcomers hear about their new community and what host community hears about them are often negative and distortions) can create a barrier to moving into some neighborhoods

- Renting in our culture is a very bureaucratic process and costly in terms of both time energy and money. It is confusing, complicated, intimidating and stressful even for Canadian born. Newcomers need support through that entire process and a place to go to if their housing is in jeopardy
- There are systemic barriers to renting such as not having a rental history, not having the necessary documentation, not knowing what documentation to keep once renting
- We need to promote home ownership and provide supports and education on a continuum from renting through home ownership
- It will be helpful to have more (new) faith groups to get involved and to take on housing projects that can build on or be modeled after local successful projects
- Large housing management companies are more rigid and difficult to deal with, as the staff are often not the decision makers and don't have the authority to exercise some flexibility in assisting newcomers with their housing issues
- EAL classes are a good place to teach newcomers about renting and home ownership
- National occupancy standard protects the landlord and often leave the newcomer tenants in a vulnerable position.

3.6. Health session (February 26, 2015)

Approximately 10 people attended this session held at SPCW. The participants included public health nurses, a counselor / family therapist, and a health clinic program director to name a few.

STRENGTHS

- There are programs for parents and children such as for pre/post-partum support, play groups, and parenting advice and help
- The newcomer specific programs such as Healthy Start, Aurora, and those at Mount Carmel Clinic are well used, successful and provide good models to emulate
- The Language access program is very useful and successful in helping newcomers
- There is more interest by medical professionals in cultural issues and trauma (for example, cross cultural education provided to emergency staff) and more should be done to assist them and have such professionals engaged on these issues
- The collaboration amongst the network of settlement providers enhances efficiency and stimulating best practice sharing
- Welcome Place and IRCOM are established and each provides unique reception centers
- There have been some investments or new developments in central neighborhoods and immediately around Welcome Place and IRCOM, for example, Central Park improvements (a well-designed, accessible, free, family friendly, welcoming space for people to experience community)

GAPS, BARRIERS, or CHALLENGES

- Long-term access to primary health care is limited
- Waiting lists are too long for assessment (example, Community Therapy Services)
- The pattern or trend is in some cases, that the health of newcomers deteriorates after they come here and in five years is worse than before they arrived

- Cross-cultural mental health is a fast growing need area - it is very specialized and there are a small number of local professionals with that specialized knowledge
- There are eligibility barriers for accessing health services i.e. International Students, foreign trained workers and refugees are not covered for all health needs
- The western medical model is Eurocentric and often does not recognize that newcomers have their own beliefs and practices, though the western model of care is often imposed
- Language interpreters are not used often enough or appropriately and sometimes both language and cultural interpreters are required
- The lack of cultural understanding on the part of the medical or school professional might result in an incorrect diagnosis - for example, a student may not want to go on field trips because of latent trauma that trigger a PTSD response
- Right now, mental health responses are reactive, incident-focused and potentially engaged too late. Services and supports should be more proactive, with early identification and treatment / support
- Isolation is a big risk factor across all ages and stages. We need to increase recreational, psychosocial programs for youth, the young, new mothers and seniors

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT/SOLUTIONS

- Form more partnerships and consider formalizing some collaborations
- Develop and use benchmarks to determine when a client is ready to move on, rather than end services and programs according to universal deadlines, when the newcomers may not be ready
- The most successful programs are the most inclusive, and which assure accessibility for newcomers to ensure service
- Have safe spaces and community locations that foster and facilitate cross and inter cultural exchange and relationship building
- Many of the issues, problems and concerns as well as potential of newcomers are similar to that experienced by the urban Aboriginal, First Nations, Metis and Inuit populations, and as such they could collaborate and be more active allies.

3.7. Education Session (April 8, 2015)

This session involved senior administrative staff, Louis Riel School Division. They focused their discussion around three main questions, and engaged in a vibrant exchange that exposed a number of issues and ideas for what could be done to help immigrant and refugee children adapt to the education system.

STRENGTHS

- School Division policies overall are sensitive to the needs of newcomers.
- There is a fair amount of programming designed to give students more opportunities for integration.
- There are some unique programs that are being available for adults – e.g. cooking classes at the Family Centre.
- There are Settlement Workers in some of the schools who provide a very useful information and integration service.

- Each school has its own means of accepting and allocating resources for new students.
- One school has a welcoming centre with ‘welcome’ on the wall in different languages.
- There are dedicated language programs for students, though students may not have the academic background required for different age cohorts and grades. They need more than language training.
- The intake process at Rene Deleurme school provides a single assessment and then can direct students to the appropriate school and programs.
- Schools have innovated to deal with the health needs of children, for example having optometrists coming to the division or hearing testing provided, which serves the needs of all the children, not just newcomers.
- Many of the schools have partnered with community organizations to provide immigrant parents with training programs for example.
- Teachers are getting training and sensitization to understand the needs of immigrant students.
- Busing can provide for some of the needs of children, but then they don’t have the support of their neighbourhoods.

CURRENT GAPS AND BARRIERS

- Poverty –the social and economic level facing most immigrants underlines most issues children bring to school.
- The lack of day care spaces puts a huge pressure on students, parents and the schools. As many immigrants are anxious to find work, the availability or lack of child care is critically important.
- For some families and children the lack of child care also means children caring for children, as older siblings are required to care for children after school.
- Immigration does not follow school year schedule so students are coming in constantly which means teachers having to constantly orient and help individual students
- Schools are only able to plan for the children when they are in school, for the 10 month period – however there needs to be a way of meeting their needs during holidays and summer, and for older students providing support when they graduate.
- Because of ties to home countries, students may be taken out of class for a month or more, which puts strains on teachers to accommodate their learning loss.
- Immigrant parents may be interested in supporting their children’s education, but they are often unable to be as much of a part of the school – they are working a lot, don’t always have the language and cultural background.
- There are sometimes inadequate activities for students after school – they often report they return home and merely watch television or play video games until their parents get home.
- Some students say they spend much of their leisure time at home and on TV or computers because they don’t have other activities or are insecure in their communities.
- There is a vast diversity in immigrant and refugee backgrounds that makes systemic support difficult to implement: language, cultural backgrounds, income levels etc.

- The constant requests for student records for CIC Citizenship Application processing means a level of administration is working to gather information, often which is hard to access because students are so transient.
- There is also some sense in the non-immigration community that immigrants get a lot more attention, which has some racial overtones, but which has not been a public tension.

IMPROVEMENTS

- The system for tracking language acquisition and proficiency works well though tracking for other facts is lacking.
- Supports for identifying trauma in students early on and then finding the appropriate supports the child needs.
- More counselling for children suffering different types and levels of trauma.
- Child and Family Services is not able to take children who are not clearly within their mandate, though teachers may see behavioral problems that could be addressed with early intervention.
- It could help the education system if the public knew more about the challenges the schools and teachers face with immigrants and the emotional needs of all children living in poverty.
- More can and should be done to help parents understand the integration needs of children and the dangers in not supervising or paying attention to their children.
- Some solutions to the student load problem are being thwarted - at one school, staff proposed using an empty class room for expanding child care, but the provincial regulatory requirements were so onerous that the effort was dropped.
- Housing is a major need for new families, but agencies helping secure housing are overwhelmed and there is just a shortage of affordable, safe housing, particularly for large families.
- Access for various charitable grants would help schools get funds for new programs that cannot be covered by existing provincial funding.
- Funding for community liaison staff would facilitate better integration of students and involvement of parents in their children's education.
- If parents had better access to information about other non-school programs and activities it would assist the schools – e.g.: understanding how to use the City of Winnipeg Leisure Guide.
- Simplifying and reducing the forms that immigrants often have to complete for CIC, landlords, employers etc. etc. would help reduce administrative workloads
- While the grading system gives some measure of achievement, it may not identify the deficiencies immigrant students' exhibit, which hampers their post-secondary opportunities.
- Programs that segregate students with special needs for short periods, to concentrate appropriate supports, has proven successful in developing firm foundations.

Summary and Highlights:

- Though the school system operates on a yearly cycle, newcomer children enter the system constantly meaning teachers have almost daily adjustments to make for new students
- While the school institution is designed to meet aggregate needs of children, the immigrants' children have such a diversity of needs and abilities, that they require individual attention.
- There are staff who work with newcomer children and who provide important supports, but there are not enough of them to deal with the volume of new students coming each year.
- The understanding of the needs of immigrant children exists in the schools system, and programs and staff efforts are directed at helping students, but the resources for addressing the number of children with their diverse needs coming into the school system are inadequate.

4. CONTINUING CONVERSATION

The stakeholder consultations that took place at the end of 2014 and into early 2015 were only a start to an ongoing conversation that will be a part of IPW. While representatives of the following were included, there will be opportunities for further conversations.

At this point, the representatives of the key sectors, who were initially included, were people from;

- Health
- Education
- Family services and seniors
- Housing
- Settlement Services
- Employment
- Language
- Justice and Security
- Government Policy

The stakeholder groups, who are so essential to the IPW effort, represented;

- Ethno-cultural groups
- Immigrants
- Refugees
- Women
- Youth
- Aboriginal people

In particular, the newcomers were those who were;

- Sponsored family members
- Economic immigrants
- Convention Refugees
- Refugee claimants
- Temporary Foreign Workers
- Live-in caregivers
- Provincial Nominees
- International students
- Protected persons with a Notice of Decision from the Immigration and Refugee Board
- Any other individual with or seeking permanent residence in Canada.