

Community Project: Immigrants and Engagement

Who is the community partner?

The **Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI)** which is in turn closely connected to other settlement agencies through LASI (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants) and OCASI (Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants) is our partner. CCI is one of the largest settlement agencies in Ottawa, and offers a full range of services to newcomers. The mission of CCI includes: a) promoting and facilitating the reception of newcomers to Canada, b) informing Canadian communities to address and respond to newcomers' needs, and c) helping newcomers in realizing their full potential in the Canadian society. The CCI serves over 8,000 clients annually, fundraises, and works with volunteers in a multitude of settings.

Why are the partners working on this project?

From the CSGVP, we know that immigrants are generally more interested in volunteering compared to Canadian-born individuals, but they tend to actually volunteer less. Many challenges are likely involved. New immigrants constitute a significant segment of the Canadian population such that about 1 in 5 Canadian residents is a new immigrant, and this proportion is expected to rise given immigration has become one of the most significant contributors to Canada's economic and population growth. This highlights the importance of considering ways for better immigrant integration and to build a caring community that is sensitive to the needs of newcomers. Previous research suggests that community engagement (e.g., volunteering, giving, participating) may help to build skills and knowledge in individuals, as well as to strengthen connections within a community. The partners are building on the findings from the CSGVP and literature to further understand how community engagement can contribute to immigrants' settlement transition and adaptation in Canadian communities. Of particular interest are interventions and initiatives that support new immigrants in making that first step, or "toe in the water", approach to community engagement.

What are the project's main activities?

Various activities are planned or underway for this project, with a particular focus on developing solid evidence that captures the contributions of 1-on-1 pairing between recent immigrants and long-term residents within the context of volunteering. Following up on the analysis and interpretation of the CSGVP data focused on immigrants, we are undertaking interviews with new immigrants and long term residents to identify themes such as past and current community engagement, definitions of volunteering, outcomes of community engagement, and experiences with the 1-on-1 pairing as an intervention to increase community engagement. A literature review on community engagement, intergroup contact and immigrants is also being used to interpret and integrate findings from the analyses and interviews. The findings from the project will be made accessible to networks of immigrant serving organizations, community development and volunteer networks, government, and academia in the form of community friendly reports, newsletters, book chapters, policy documents, information workshops, and scientific reports.

What are the anticipated results or outcomes from this project?

While the project focuses on the specific partner organizations and networks, within the context of the broader E=MC2 Project, we anticipate that the results will be relevant and useful for many other Canadian immigrant serving organizations, and community development and volunteer networks. In the short and medium term, the partners are aiming to learn about: barriers and facilitators for new immigrants volunteering; how new immigrants view and define volunteering; how to encourage and assist immigrant volunteers through pairing; and possible improvements to current settlement programming (e.g., employment search services) with respect to community engagement. Another anticipated outcome is having solid evidence to assist with obtaining resources for further development of settlement initiatives related to pairing and community engagement. The long-term goal of the current project is to increase community engagement among new immigrants, given the strong potential benefits to individuals, families, organizations and communities.



uOttawa

E=MC2

Mobilisation communautaire et collaboration
Mobilizing Communities and Collaboration



**CCI
OTTAWA**