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NEEDS AND ASSETS ASSESSMENT OF INFORMAL MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY LEADERS IN WATERLOO REGION

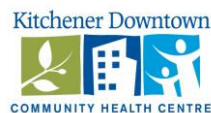


Report prepared for the

COMMUNITY COALITION ON REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT CONCERNS (CCORIC)
KITCHENER DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (KDCHC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC), in partnership with the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC), embarked on the exploration of the “Needs and Assets Assessment of Informal Multicultural Community Leaders” to better understand the context and the roles of informal connectors in the context of a multicultural community. CCORIC sought to create a well-informed action plan and to strengthen the collaboration with institutional partners in the Region to address the needs and barriers faced by the informal community leaders.

The limited scope of the project, determined by the time and resources available for its completion, was identified as an initial step to start a more intentional conversation in the community about the less understood work of informal community connectors/leaders and about the adequacy of supports that are currently available for their work. The project team was made up of persons with lived experience and a different set of skills in research, community engagement, anti-oppression and cross-sector collaboration.

In the period from September to December 2018, the exploration was done through the action research methods that included a review of literature, focus group discussions and a community forum.

The assets identified by the leaders were their readiness to take initiative, patience, dreams of a better future, self-confidence, altruism, diplomacy, and respect of diversity. The five themes identified during the two focus group discussions in response to the challenges faced by the informal leaders were: 1) Collaboration with other groups and organizations; 2) Preservation of cultural identity; 3) Dedicated funding for activities and events; 4) Common and affordable space for the work of diverse groups; 5) Supports for current and future leaders.

The recommendations formulated during the community forum reflected the conditions necessary to ensure growth of ‘ethno-specific’ groups, their mutual understanding and subsequent collaboration were: 1) Access to a common affordable space; 2) Distribution of resources in the community and 3) Consistent tools for information-sharing and communication among ethnocultural leaders.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & METHODOLOGY

The Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC) and the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC) have been partners in addressing a range of settlement, wellbeing and integration needs of immigrants and refugees in the community. The staff, community members and organizations working together have accumulated anecdotal knowledge about the wealth of informal community supports and identified the need to better understand their distinctive role, as well as the current context of the social and economic integration of ethnocultural communities in Waterloo Region.

In the current needs and assets assessment, informal community leaders are defined as leaders without a formal position of authority who have been in their role for at least three years. They are influential in their community because they are known as the “person to talk to” or as “somebody who gets things done”, not because they have a formal title or authority, such as faith or business leaders. Informal community leaders are individuals who choose to take on leadership roles because:

- They want to use their own learning and experience of settlement or integration to help others.
- They recognize that their “peerness” allows them to connect with and support members of their community in ways that professional service providers cannot.
- They volunteer without pay and/or compensation; their reward is deeply altruistic and/or it helps them validate their own cultural or professional identity.

Objectives of the exploration:

1. To conduct assets assessment to identify the type of informal services that the leaders provide to their communities.
2. To learn about the needs of informal community connectors/leaders from their standpoint.
3. To learn what supports informal connectors/community leaders need from formal organizations and other service providers.
4. To determine what agencies, institutions and service providers can do to better support informal community connectors/community leaders.
5. To assist formal organizations in connecting with ethnocultural groups and communities.

The action research methods used in this exploratory study included:

- A literature review of academic articles and community-based reports on informal community connectors/leaders and civic participation of the members of ethnocultural groups in Ontario and in Canada
- Two focus group discussions with the informal community leaders; and
- A community forum where the informal leaders and the representatives of non-profit service providers, public institutions and municipal governments had a chance to discuss the potential responses to the challenges identified by informal leaders.

The project team was comprised of people who themselves had experience as informal connectors/leaders. Some of the assumptions guiding the selection of participants and the development of the work plan were:

- Informal leaders have deep knowledge of their ethnocultural community and its internal diversity
- Informal leaders have extensive knowledge of the resources and services available in the community
- Participants in the project would have at least 3 years' experience in informal support and advocacy work within their ethnocultural community
- Participants exhibit strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Participants demonstrate non-judgmental attitude and sensitivity to a diversity of needs within their own community
- Participants have a good command of English which helps them serving as a bridge to the host society.

There were many connectors and informal support providers in each community. However, if they could not participate in conversations in English or have not done advocacy for their ethnocultural group, they were not included in the study.

The answers to the focus group questions were analyzed through a theme analysis, and due to a small number of participants, the answers were reported as general themes. These themes were used as openings for table discussions at the community forum to draw on a broader range of experiences and resources in the community. The suggestions and comments that arose from this discussion were compiled to create a baseline for further conversations, education and action.

Limitations of the Study

This study presents a limited exploration of the domain of activity of informal community supports that is impacted by the changing context of the broader social, political and economic relationships at both the local and the global level. The following contextual factors were also outside of the scope of the current study: discrimination and exclusion in education or employment, funding policies of the province and the regional municipalities dedicated to settlement and inclusion, resources allocated for collaboration among the institutions and social service agencies to support integration.

Other limitations to be considered in interpreting the results are:

- Short time-frame and limited resources available,
- Small sample of participants,
- Participants self-identified, and
- Research bias as there was no participant review of the interim or final analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

A brief literature review was undertaken in order to present a context in which informal leaders work in Canada and Ontario. The key-words used to search for relevant documents were: informal, leaders, services, community, ethnocultural, multicultural, faith-based, peer, supports, needs, assets, social, inclusion, civic, participation, advocacy, immigrants, refugees, visible minorities.

The reports, research and journal articles were accessed through academic databases and Internet search. In addition, we reached out to local organizations to identify (unpublished) studies or project reports and reviewed online resources produced by the organizations such as the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration, and Settlement and Metropolis Canada.

The initial search resulted in 15 articles and reports that led to further bibliographic references. We were mindful of including studies about first-generation immigrant and refugee communities, and the studies about informal leaders from established visible minority, ethno-cultural, faith and linguistic communities.

The reports and the research that we found come from different Canadian provinces, from the Maritimes to British Columbia. Reports found in Ontario mostly came from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto regions. The research was mostly done in the broader area of civic participation, volunteerism and leadership development. There was a small number of studies focused specifically on the characteristics and assets of ethnocultural informal community leaders. The needs and challenges of the informal leaders were mostly extrapolated from the studies about the best practices to

support the ethnocultural groups and about the civic participation of immigrants and visible minorities.

Only one local study on informal community connectors' training has been identified, though we acknowledge that there may be more unpublished reports about the needs and assets of peer-leaders or informal leaders.

This literature review was divided in three main areas that provide the context for the current exploration and learning:

1. Importance and recognition of the role of informal ethnocultural groups/leaders in Canadian society

There is a general recognition by the research community that 'ethnospecific organizations' play an important role in the social integration process of its members. By creating a strong positive self-image, visible minority and ethnic group members were able to prosper and respond to the challenges they faced. The informal leaders, elders, faith leaders, artists and business people, being assets themselves, were able to ensure that the voices of immigrants and visible minority groups were represented in policy- and decision-making. Their role is essential in mediating their community's relationships with the state and the institutions, or in striking a balance that is necessary for the vitality of the society as a whole (Jedwab, 2001).

The multicultural funding policies introduced in the 90's, favouring cross-cultural and multicultural projects and festivals over 'ethnospecific' projects and events, had a detrimental consequence for many forming and emerging communities across Canada (Jedwab, 2001; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). It became obvious that the communities who benefitted from the previous funding to create provincial or even national organizations, such as Ukrainian, Portuguese and Chinese, have achieved higher levels of integration, representation and influence at different levels.

2. Characteristics, assets and challenges of informal ethnocultural community leaders

The role of ethnocultural groups and leaders was particularly important for the earlier waves of immigration when the formal supports and services were few. Today, they share the supporting roles with a range of service providers and remain the first point of contact for many newcomers, particularly refugees, persons living on low income/no income and for visible minorities.

The more recent trend, especially among economic immigrants or from westernized European countries, shows that belonging to an ethnocultural group may be of a more symbolic nature, rather than a practical nature (Jurkova, 2014). On the other hand, racialized populations, those coming from conflict zones, or the populations

coming from cultures that are vastly different from the mainstream norms, would rely much more on their ethnocultural connections.

Pre-settlement experience is a strong predictor of the taking of leadership roles, as well as the personal and the community settlement trajectory. Gender, marital status, education, employment and income remain determining factors of leadership capacity and agency (Saloojee, 2004).

3. Relationship between formal and informal organizations and leaders

We see individual leadership developing through an interplay of social relationships and social systems. Formal leaders need the informal leaders to keep the ideas fresh, to stay in touch with their constituency and to ensure broader support (Simpson et al., 2010). At the same time, the informal leaders need formal leaders in order to see the macro perspective, to connect with other leaders, to access resources and build capacity. Together they are able to provide balanced solutions for the whole community.

Major themes presented in the studies about volunteerism and civic participation validate the anecdotal knowledge that informed the current exploration:

- Informal leaders have a strong sense of their cultural and linguistic identity and see the preservation of that identity as a foundation of their engagement in the broader society;
- Successful informal leaders have deep knowledge of their ethnocultural community and its internal diversity;
- Informal leaders work in broad networks of connections and have extensive knowledge of the resources in the community;
- Informal leaders are brokers in mediating relationships with the mainstream society, and the activities they are involved in range from providing supports in crisis situations to advocacy for changes in policies and services;
- Informal leaders speak multiple languages and exhibit strong communication and interpersonal skills;
- Informal leaders distinguish themselves from many hard-working community volunteers by offering a broad vision, motivating participation towards fulfillment of that vision, seeking resources necessary to accomplish common goals, and striving to represent the interests of the community in decision-making at different levels.

There are a number of fundamental questions posed in literature that need to be answered at the level of national policy, as well as at the level of local equity and inclusion strategies:

- How can we assess the successful transition from a needs-based to an assets-based integration process, policy and services?
- How can we create a sense of belonging to increase participation and engagement of members of ethnocultural communities instead of relying on information dissemination?
- What are the ways to ensure collaboration with informal leaders and established organizations without tokenism, creation of dependency, or assimilation?
- How can we maximize the benefits of informal community supports and bring the expertise of diverse communities into the continuum of service delivery?
- How can we develop an assessment model of the success of the work of informal community connectors/leaders that reflects their views and values, instead of relying on the white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class conventions?

A number of studies and consultations have been done to identify the best practices in support of ethnocultural groups in Ontario:

- Funding for ethno-specific groups
- Free/affordable space
- Assessing success and impact of ethno-cultural groups by their own measures of integration
- Supports for networking and collaboration
- Strong neighbourhood-based social networks
- Support to volunteers and leaders
- Community diversity reflected in mainstream organizations
- Improvement of information-sharing systems

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS SUMMARY

The objectives for the focus group conversations were:

- Learn more about the needs, assets, motivation and challenges of informal leaders and the type of informal services and supports they provide;
- Identify which supports informal community leaders need from the established local service providers and institutions;
- Determine which organizations and institutions to recruit for the follow-up forum discussion.

Considering the experiences of other cities and regions presented in the literature review, we decided to focus on the following questions:

- How did you come into the role of an informal community leader?
- In what ways have you supported your community?
- Which of your personal assets/qualities have helped you the most in being a successful leader?
- What are the external supports and resources that were most helpful in your work?
- What do you need to be more successful as a community leader?

The recruitment of participants was done through informal networks, through a call for referrals from ethnocultural groups and organizations serving immigrants and refugees, as well as groups and organizations working on common challenges such as Islamophobia, racism, women's rights, disabilities, etc. We also employed the 'snowball' technique and invited potential participants to share the invitation within their own networks.

Our objective was to recruit 15 participants from different global migration regions, drawing from both the well-established ethnocultural communities as well as the more recently-established ones. We wanted to include youth, older adults, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. We did not intentionally seek diversity of income, education, sexual and gender expression, faith or mother tongue, even though we were aware that those societal factors also determine access to resources and structures for participation.

Eleven leaders participated in two focus group conversations, and one participant, who was unable to attend, answered the questions through a survey.

Participants came from 11 countries and 7 global regions (Europe, North Africa, East/Central Africa, West Africa, South/Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia). The number of years they have supported their community ranged from 3 to 30.

We had representatives of long-established communities, such as Chinese or Hungarian, as well as the more recent Rohingya community.

There were five female and seven male participants. Two were in their twenties, and two were over 60 years of age. Eleven self-identified as a visible minority and one as a person with a disability. Ten had higher education and eight were employed.

All participants signed their consent to have their conversations audio-recorded. The two concurrent focus group discussions were transcribed and used for thematic analysis.

MOTIVATION FOR TAKING THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS.

Some of the leaders described experiences where they were intentional in taking on leadership roles to:

- “Alleviate suffering” of the members of their community,
- “Educate the Canadian society” about their community’s culture and heritage,
- “Do something for the kids so they feel proud of their culture”,
- “Share what they learned as immigrants” with others, and
- “Bring their community together to preserve the culture and language”.

Others were unintentionally pulled into a leadership role to fill the gaps in supports experienced by their community members or to provide a role model for others in their community. Some examples include: helping someone who lost a home, borrowing money, translating and interpreting in formal situations, helping in refugee settlement, etc.

THE WAYS IN WHICH THE INFORMAL LEADERS SUPPORT THEIR COMMUNITY

Activities supported and organized by the informal community leaders are many:

- (Multi)cultural events and festivals,
- Settlement supports,
- Sports and recreation programs, workshops,
- Skills training,
- Providing basic needs for the vulnerable members of the community,
- Interpretation,
- Mother tongue teaching,
- Music and dance classes,
- Lobbying,
- Advocating on behalf of individuals and families before institutions such as schools and Family and Children's Services,
- Computer and Internet supports,
- Volunteering,
- Social activities to combat loneliness,
- Religious celebrations,
- Summer camps and after school programs,
- Advisory committees.

PERSONAL ASSETS AND QUALITIES

Participants identified the following personal assets as crucial to this self-sacrificing and painstaking work:

- Initiative
- Patience and perseverance
- Self-confidence
- Altruism
- Diplomacy
- Focus on the positive
- Understanding diversity
- Having passion and dreams

EXTERNAL SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

The external supports they identified as helpful for their ongoing engagement were:

- Collaboration with other ethno-cultural groups
- Recognition from established leaders in the community (politicians, staff in nonprofit agencies)
- Support from established non-profit organizations
- Spirituality and cultural beliefs
- Financial supports from governments and the members of their ethnocultural community

It is not easy for the leaders to disregard the challenges they are facing. While discussing the external supports and resources that are helpful for their work, they were also asked about the lack of supports and assistance. These are some of the challenges they identified:

- Bringing their own community together (working with internal division and diversity)
- Lack of recognition by the mainstream leaders/institutions
- Limited access to free and affordable space for meetings and events
- Inadequate funding for activities and festivals
- Relying on volunteers to sustain ongoing activities
- Limited resources for the preservation of their own culture and language
- Racism and discrimination
- Leaders struggle to support each other and work together

Many of the challenges identified by the ethnocultural leaders were coloured by the experience of discrimination and exclusion. Each of the identified broad themes that speak to the needs of the community leaders can be examined through the prism of discriminatory policies and practices that remain operational in the mainstream society and its norms.

INFORMAL LEADERS' NEEDS

When asked about their needs, the informal leaders' comments could be summarized into these five general themes:

1. Collaboration with other groups and organizations

There is a shared understanding of the multicultural society in which all members of the ethnocultural groups live and work in interdependency. It is extremely important to prepare future generations for this more connected and equitable world.

"We volunteered at the temple and tried to connect with the community. We would like to grow as a team, as a family in Canada".

"I want my community to be involved. I see some... just stay home because of their culture or language. That motivates me to connect my community to other communities."

"When you invite someone to come to the festival, and they come, your eyes brighten, you say, oh, my friend is coming! You run and start embracing everyone. When someone invites you, you have to come. We have to work together and support each other".

"I honestly believe that there is strength in networking and working together. Because a lot of the times when it comes to funding, what ends up happening is that we are all fighting for the same amount of money. So, it is only when we have partnered with somebody else, with a project that is similar to ours, and we find the money, it is divided up a little bit differently, but then we are building each other up".

"We want to connect not only as Hindus, we want to connect as Canadians. We want our roots, and the roots are the community with people from Afghanistan as well, and from there, our kids are going to work with others and we have to work together".

2. Preservation of cultural and linguistic identity

At the same time, as we move into a world that truly respects difference, we must allow for the development of a strong cultural and linguistic diversity. Without the preservation of their language, many foresee a certain death of their culture and identity. This is not seen as a way of healthy integration and coexistence with other communities.

"I have strong [motivation for] leadership because this is a country where you can live with your culture and your past."

“I do not want to lose my language because I would lose my community and my culture.”

“I don’t want my kids to end up not knowing where they come from or just see all the negative that is out there about what Africa is about.”

“What really motivates me to stay and to help out is the preservation of Chinese culture to make sure that people or kids like me, who are born here can still learn the Chinese culture. But I also wanted to have immigrants coming or some of our older folks here to share their culture with the community and just to embrace each other.”

“During this period, I myself went to several other neighbourhood associations, community organizations, [the city], MPs to request for support to run a class for our children. We have more than 30 kids in KW. We wanted to run a class to preserve our language and culture. None of these organizations including MPs were supportive. They always said “yes” outwardly, but inside them was a big “NO”. I have so many bitter realities and experiences. I found they are self-centered. They look at our population. ... asked about our adult population (perhaps there was counting votes). We are around 35-40 families. ... This doesn’t demonstrate a true leadership; doesn’t demonstrate that you understood the meaning of diversity and multiculturalism.”

3. Dedicated funding for activities of small and informal ethnocultural groups

The work of people in informal and small groups is not compensated. The groups rely on volunteers who already have commitments to their work and families. They are struggling to sustain activities and to increase the reach and quality of the offering to the community. Their experience is that their work is undervalued, and that they are constantly competing with organizations and social service agencies that are more connected, more structured, and larger than they are.. The process of accessing resources is complicated and overwhelming.

“Since we do not have any income, and our communities are new and living in poverty, they do not have enough to support the organization, pay membership, and when they give you money, they would expect to receive something from that.”

“I think for our organization, like every community organization, funding is a real big issue. Every year we go through the process of applying, every year, so it is very hard. ... it is very hard to build in sustainability plan in a community organization because of the funding aspect of it. We are fighting for scraps, we are all fighting for the same pot of money for valid reasons.”

"We have very little support in the sense that everybody is working and has family, and now, we have to work as volunteers in the community. How can we make it easier? That is the challenge."

"...people come and go. Sometimes we bring students. You brought someone today and tomorrow he finds a job and he leaves, and you bring [someone less experienced], that is another issue too. So, we really need help from the government to make this sustainable. If we can hire one person full-time, have the time to do the job and organize everything..."

"Definitely, in terms of support, we need to figure out a structural plan to survive, whether it is grants, sponsorship, anything that can give us [resources] to be able to sustain the work."

4. Affordable and shared space for activities and collaboration

Informal leaders bring people together at their homes, in parks, or at commercial places such as Tim Horton's. Municipal community centres, libraries and schools are not willing to share their resources for informal meetings and gatherings of small ethnocultural groups, which is an important point of frustration. Besides needing accessible and affordable space to meet, plan and host events, representatives from different groups recognize that they need consistent opportunities to interact and learn from each other. They recognize the need not only for a space for their group, but for a space shared with other groups.

"I am looking at the list of people, and there are 100 people signing up and there is no way they can fit into my house".

"Of course, during the summer it was easier to meet. In the winter it was really challenging. At Tim's they have limited spaces and second, too much noise. We really couldn't focus too much. We have the same challenge now."

"The organizations in 1960 had a chance to buy their facilities. We cannot even think about it today. No facility means not coming together. We are not a priority in community centres. The multicultural centre should be much bigger to welcome communities for annual meetings, for events. Not to go to Tim Horton's."

"The challenge is finding that common space where we can all exist with our different backgrounds and work towards our common goal."

"We want to make one voice and take it to the higher level and get this space. [It is] not only a problem of us sitting at this table. According to my experience for the last 7 years, I talked with many groups and organizations, and many groups have this problem. To get [a space] for all the communities."

5. Supports to current and future leaders

Since there is a growing expression of diversity within ethnocultural communities, bringing people together under the same banner is posing a greater challenge. Both mature and young leaders recognized this and acknowledged that they will not be able to overcome that challenge without additional help to bring new people in. Recruiting and retaining new leaders also requires more resources and different strategies. It is particularly important to be able to reach out and engage youth.

“Sure, I can always go University of Waterloo or Laurier and ask for help, but nowadays as much as the kids or the younger generation want to learn more about or share their culture, right now they are concentrating on what they want to do for their future.”

“Sometimes, it seems hard for people to acknowledge that nothing is built on one person’s back. Things are built in the community with a lot of sacrifices from different people and I have had to fight that battle, an uphill battle. ... I need the black youth to see me, maybe not for me, but for them, to know that there are people out there fighting for them, representing them.”

“So, honestly speaking, our community is desperately needing several things to be visible in the community. We are a small community, but we have very strong manpower including doctors, nurses, professors, scientist, IT experts, businessmen, and so on. The city and other community organizations tremendously benefit from our professionals, but we, as a community, have very little to enjoy.”

“We definitely know that our work is in youth leadership and mentorship. We have the young kids that come to camp. We’ve seen those kids grow up to become leaders at the camp and some end up joining the festival and be in our team as well. So, I would like to think our work will keep evolving that way.”

“Right now, there is too much differences between the new [immigrants] and old Canadians issued from immigration. No relationship and no connection at all. That is tough. The new do not know much about the community but how do we call them, we listen, help them to settle down and share our experiences. A lot of questions about informal and formal supports.”

“How much I have worked and the people instead of helping me or supporting me, they criticize. I'm sure it happens to all the leaders. Sometimes after I have meetings in my community, I do not sleep at all until the morning. All the stress and thinking of things that happened. You have to be really strong with all those challenges.”

COMMUNITY FORUM DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Based on the experiences shared by the community leaders, the project team invited organizations and institutions that have a mandate and resources to support the integration and capacity-building of ethnocultural communities to participate in a community forum discussion. The municipal community services, libraries and social service agencies were invited to contribute to our conversations about the availability of space. Federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as the local funding agencies, were invited to share what is being done in terms of ensuring grants and more accessible application processes for financial supports. Organizations providing settlement supports to immigrants and refugees, as well as the regional Immigration Partnership, were invited to contribute to the conversation regarding mutual collaboration and capacity-building for ethnocultural community leaders.

The forum opened with the presentation of the five major challenges identified by the informal community leaders. There were thirty-four participants at the forum. The majority of the participants from the focus groups were able to attend, and many invited their peers from other communities as well. There were 12 ethnocultural communities represented in the conversations.

The leadership from the YMCA Immigrant Services, KW Reception House, KW Multicultural Centre, Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region, Carizon Family Services, and Wellbeing Waterloo Region responded to the invitation. The Kitchener Public Library, the City of Waterloo and the Waterloo Member of Parliament also sent representatives to take part in these round table discussions to brainstorm collective responses to the needs expressed by the informal leaders.

Based on the needs identified by the informal leaders to be more successful in their role, five discussion tables were set up to gather the voices of informal leaders and the staff from established organizations and institutions.

SUMMARY OF THE TABLE DISCUSSIONS

There were five groups composed of representatives of ethnocultural groups and institutional and service agencies. The main points of their discussion were recorded by volunteers at the tables, which provides a selection of the issues discussed but not a complete record of the conversations. Based on those notes, we have compiled the comments and suggestions raised in the forum discussions, which can be found listed below.

COLLABORATION AMONG GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

It was suggested that a centralized location and opportunities for groups to learn about each other's culture was a foundation for collaboration.

A virtual central location was also discussed for information and resource-sharing, and a calendar of cultural events. For greater interactivity, a formal communication channel between groups, such as a Listserv, would be needed.

It was acknowledged that it would take time to build understanding among different groups to ultimately allow for collaboration. Space, information exchange and opportunities for interaction are the foundation for that understanding to develop.

Formal and resourced organizations have a role to play in supporting and connecting small ethnocultural and multicultural groups and organizations.

PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY

There are many ways in which culture and language can be nurtured:

- Teaching mother tongue to children
- Teaching music/dance/folklore
- Organizing traditional events and celebrations
- Teaching family values
- Teaching ethnic cooking

All levels of government have a responsibility to provide funding to support this work in cultural communities.

Educational institutions also have a role to play by dedicating a greater part of the curriculum to world geography, history, and cultural diversity.

The participants also discussed the necessity of a formalized umbrella group to connect ethnocultural communities and to provide supports in accessing funding and services. All of the cities within Waterloo Region offer cash grants and matching

grants, but these programs are difficult for many small groups to navigate. This umbrella group would also be responsible for raising awareness of cultural diversity and advocacy for the rights of ethnocultural communities.

DEDICATED FUNDING FOR SMALL AND INFORMAL ETHNOCULTURAL GROUPS

The government funding for ethnocultural groups is limited and highly competitive. Accessing information about the funding opportunities remains a challenge. There is a need for a centralized and specialized online information management tool to:

- List all the funding opportunities for small groups from different levels of government and make a strong case for an increase in funding
- Send email alerts about the deadlines for applications to informal leaders
- Larger organizations can support small and emerging groups with similar activities
- Provide orientation to small groups regarding the application processes or how to raise money from businesses, corporations, and private donors
- Track corporate funding opportunities (credit unions, local businesses, stores and entrepreneurs) and create a listing of businesses open to philanthropic activities (e.g. donations in materials like paint or free graphic design).
- Organize 'speed-dating' events to bring funders and philanthropists to connect with ethnocultural groups
- Work on the ideas such as "adopt an organization" and offer it to the corporate and tech industry

COMMON AND ACCESSIBLE SPACE

In order to access underused spaces, there has to be an increased openness to collaborate in the community. The policies will need to prioritize emerging groups representing minority voices and allow them to access spaces more easily. Both the cities and the neighbourhood associations have a role to play in supporting a bottom-up approach with a greater understanding of the needs of small ethnocultural groups.

The use of existing resources can be reinvented through a genuine and meaningful collaboration with social service agencies and mental health providers, for example, in order to create informal supports outside of mandated programs. Many entities would have a say in such a client-driven, assets-based process: community centre staff, faith congregations, settlement organizations, schools, private businesses, etc. The costs can be shared among larger organizations, businesses, schools and settlement programs.

Space is needed for social inclusion activities for women, seniors, persons with disabilities, and all those who feel isolated. There are many small groups that could be more flexible in creating social spaces, not only for formal programming. Thinking together and creating relationships is the key to informal community-based activities. Cities and schools have a special responsibility and currently need to open up and offer more flexible community spaces.

NURTURING CURRENT & FUTURE LEADERS

Positive images and stories about informal community leaders deserve ongoing media attention. The small groups need dedicated social media managers, especially for youth engagement.

Informal leaders need assistance to build greater inclusion within groups and to ensure that their groups are represented in the city's decision-making processes.

Giving youth a voice to build engagement is of special importance. Schools have a central role in supporting and growing future leaders. However, we also have to support the voices of seniors, parents and families. We need to find ways to empower all generations to have a strong voice and to provide hands-on training opportunities for future leaders. Mentorship programs are effective ways of transferring knowledge and skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the closing of the forum, participants of the table discussions shared with the large group the main points from their conversations regarding the five identified needs of informal leaders. These comments were typed up as they were being shared, to function as a validation and expansion of the points that were recorded during table discussions.

The established leaders and staff from settlement organizations testified that the same conversations have been going on in the community for a number of decades. Despite the needs and challenges being already identified, the participants suggested that there was no concerted effort to respond to the needs of small ethnocultural groups in ways that would make a difference. The lack of appropriate response so far from organizations and institutions that have resources has resulted in an expressed disillusionment that the resources will ever be dedicated to support the leaders of ethnocultural groups in the creation of effective solutions.

The service providers also shared information about existing programs and underutilized supports that exist in the community. However, it seems that there are still no efficient ways to share that information in a timely and accessible manner with the large number of groups who may benefit.

The members of the ethnocultural groups recognize that they need to work together towards common goals and advocate for recognition and resources. The challenge will be to give every community an equal voice, where no one speaks on behalf of another, and to create safe spaces where minority voices can be heard.

A catalyst umbrella group would be helpful in bringing the ethnocultural groups together to advocate for dedicated resources and simplified ways of accessing them. Groups can learn to collaborate in many respects, including fundraising. There is a common understanding that building relationships among diverse groups takes time. To mitigate the sense of competition, ongoing understanding and sharing has to be nurtured.

Access to physical space remains one of the major concerns for the small groups. They cannot come together and share information in a vacuum. There is unused space in every neighbourhood, as well as in the WR Police Services, Family Centre, community organizations, schools, libraries, etc. One organization or entity has to step up and take responsibility for addressing the need for affordable space and regular networking meetings.

A central virtual space is also needed. One of the first tasks would be to share the available information about each of the groups, and to compile a directory of accessible spaces for meetings and events with the necessary details (i.e. capacity,

affordability, access to kitchen, parking, accessibility). A centralized communication channel would need to be maintained.

The recruitment of community leaders can start at ESL classes to connect people from different ethnocultural communities and from different walks of life in order to create a sense of purpose and unity. This role can be played by the settlement agencies and other networks where different cultural, linguistic and faith groups intersect. Together, they can create bottom-up approaches to reach out to different communities and connect them. Giving voice to seniors, youth, and the marginalized is extremely important to get a complete picture of what the broader community needs. Large organizations can mentor small ones, share assets and resources, provide placements in nonprofits and a greater presence in schools.

We also need to change the ways in which we measure success. It is not about the number of participants or programs delivered. It is about each individual we touch. If one person is saved, it is a success. What happens among people in informal interactions counts, as many members of ethnocultural communities still do not reach out to formal services. We need different ways to assess the impact of the work done by the informal community leaders and learn more about their view of the multicultural society.

APPENDIX 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Needs and Assets Assessment of Informal Multicultural Community Leaders in Waterloo Region

LITERATURE REVIEW

August 2018

Purpose of the Project

In August 2018, the Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC) in collaboration with the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC) launched an exploration project “Needs and Assets Assessment of Informal Multicultural Community Leaders in Waterloo Region”. This project, funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Ontario, engages informal community leaders in a focus group discussion to better understand their context, motivation, needs, assets and the challenges they face. Based on the challenges and opportunities identified, a round table discussion will follow with representatives of established services in the community. This follow-up round table discussion would determine what can be done to better support the leaders to be more effective in their roles, and at the same time, assist formal organizations in creating stronger connections with multicultural communities.

Purpose of the Literature Review

A brief literature review has been conducted to present the broader context in which informal leaders work across Canada and within Ontario. It will also support the design of the focus group questions.

The key-words used to search for relevant documents were: **informal, leaders, services, community, ethnocultural, multicultural, faith-based, peer, supports, needs, assets, social, inclusion, civic, participation, advocacy, immigrants, refugees,** and **visible minorities.**

Reports, research and journal articles were collected through search engines and academic databases. In addition, we reached out to local organizations in search of (unpublished) reports and reviewed online resources of organizations such as Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration, and Settlement and Metropolis Canada.

The initial search resulted in 15 articles and reports that led to further bibliographic references. We were mindful to include references to research on first-generation immigrants and refugees, as well as studies that focused on the informal leaders in long-established visible minority, ethno-cultural, faith and linguistic groups.

The literature included findings from different Canadian provinces, spanning from the Maritimes to British Columbia. Reports found in Ontario were mostly from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto regions. The research tends to explore the broader areas of civic participation, volunteerism and leadership development. Only a few studies were found that focus specifically on the characteristics and assets of ethnocultural informal community leaders. Of these studies, the identified needs and challenges of the informal leaders were mostly extrapolated from previous studies on best practices for supporting ethnocultural groups. Therefore, there is a lack of primary data when it comes to studying the needs and assets of informal leaders of ethnocultural groups.

At this point, only one local study has been identified: an unpublished report by the Social Development Centre Waterloo Region, *Women Building Community* (2014), about the training program for current and emerging informal ethnocultural women leaders. We acknowledge that there may be more unpublished reports about the assets and needs of peer-leaders or informal leaders in Waterloo Region.

This literature review can be divided into three main areas, each providing context for our local exploration and learning:

1. Importance and recognition of the role of informal ethnocultural groups/leaders in Canadian society

Local informal leaders do not operate in a vacuum. There is a range of global, national and regional factors that influence the structures and supports to their work. Most still play an important role in responding to a range of challenges to integration in the host society.

2. Characteristics, assets and challenges of informal ethnocultural community leaders

This project defines informal community leaders as individuals who dedicated at least 3 years providing voluntary support to an ethnocultural group and who have extensive knowledge of the supports and services in their broader community. This has not been defined in most of the studies that were reviewed but there are useful

insights about the profiles, needs and assets of informal leaders that we can validate and explore further.

3. Relationship between formal and informal organizations and leaders

The third section will also include a brief overview of the interdependence of formal and informal leaders and structures. As much as we will focus on the individual informal leaders in this project, we also need to recognize the ecosystem, the enabling environments, in which they work. We cannot fully understand the complex interplay between an individual and their society without looking at current social, economic and political inequities, as well as the current theories of leadership.

1. Importance and recognition of the role of informal ethnocultural groups/leaders in Canadian society

This section of the review covers the following themes: recognizing the role that ethnocultural groups play in Canadian society; the need for building a strong ethnocultural identity; different ways in which diverse communities integrate into the host society; approaches of the host society towards integration.

Let's first look at the recognition of the role that ethnocultural groups play in the integration process, and the importance of creating a strong and positive self-image.

"Immigrants as Informal Givers

- In 2000, about 90% of immigrants made informal donations to others. The longer immigrants had lived in Canada, the more likely they were to engage in informal giving, from donating to a food bank to providing direct financial support to others, especially relatives.
- Over 70% of immigrants provided informal care or assistance to others. Those who had resided in Canada for 6 to 15 years provided the most informal care (79%), including such activities as shopping or driving for others, and caring for the sick and elderly."

(Making Connections: Social and Civic Engagement among Canadian Immigrants Canadian Council on Social Development (Scott, 2006) Retrieved from: <http://www.ccsd.ca/images/research/CulturalDiversity/PDF/MakingConnections.pdf>)

The Canadian Ethno-cultural Council (CEC), an umbrella organization that monitors federal policy, defines ethno-cultural organizations in terms of their functions for newcomers and for Canada as a whole:

- “Ethno-cultural organizations support settlement programs and associations involved in meeting the needs of newcomers to the country. They also strengthen the development of structures that form the underpinning of the economic, cultural, and social wellbeing of our society. The structures become part of the vital Canadian voluntary sector and contribute to nation building in Canada.”

(CEC, A toolkit for trainers. Retrieved from: <http://www.ethnocultural.ca/initiatives/capacity-building-strengthening-ethnocultural-communities>)

There is a general recognition by the research community that ‘ethnospecific organizations’ have an important role in the social integration process (Couton, 2014; Chekki, 2006). They played this pivotal role specifically for the older waves of immigration from Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. They helped newcomers cope with the host society’s norms and systems in education, employment, housing and governance. By creating a strong positive self-image, visible minority ethnic group members were able to prosper and deal with the challenging settlement experience they faced (Breton, 2005 in Jurkova, 2015, p. 26).

Ethno-cultural groups can address a full range of activities from information and referral, service delivery and cultural programming, individual and community capacity-building, policy-related advocacy, and research. In a survey report, *Exploration Overview of the Assets of Immigrant and Visible Minority Communities in Ottawa* by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2004), ethnocultural groups “spring up spontaneously in response to common concerns” (p.15). Similarly, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2004) found that the informal leaders, elders, faith leaders, artists and business people, being assets themselves, were able to ensure that the voices of immigrants and visible minority groups were represented in policy- and decision-making.

Similar to research done in the United States, Canadian studies that examine the neighbourhood-level relationships with the ever-increasing demographic diversity point to the lack of social cohesion and persisting barriers to the integration of newcomers or marginalized populations. The consultation report of the Bouchard and Taylor Accommodation Commission in Quebec (2009) points to the challenges of multicultural vs. intercultural policies, and to the current public debate which again poses the question whether too much diversity can endanger social cohesion (Wright, 2018). Visible minorities are especially vulnerable to experiences of racism and discrimination, which, together with their time- and resource-constraints, limit

their participation in social and community activities. This contributes to their reliance on small, closely-knit cultural communities (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). That being the case, the role of informal leaders becomes more important because they are able to build bridges to the supports in mainstream society. Their role can be pivotal in mediating the community's relationships with the state and with society, or in striking a balance that is necessary for the vitality of society as a whole (Jedwab, 2001).

There are differences in the ways in which ethnocultural communities integrate into the social and economic fabric of Canada. Some start with seeking supports from their peers. Some stay in this phase longer while others connect early on to the existing supports and services. In some ethnocultural communities, the role of groups and organizations is minimal or only symbolic.

In general, most newcomers first seek informational support from peers. As newcomers get more comfortable with the Canadian system, and as support from family, friends and peers is exhausted, their support-seeking strategies include more formal services, e.g. schools or education programs, health clinics, settlement and employment agencies (Stewart et al., 2008, p. 139-140).

A comparative in-depth study has been conducted between Korean and Ukrainian communities in Canada (Couton, 2014). It demonstrated that long-term benefits were achieved through a process of building a strong group identity and infrastructure for advocating for Ukrainian immigration in the late 19th century. The community was extremely well-organized and was recognized for its work. The more recent Korean immigration relied more on the economic pathways of integration through the support of the entrepreneurs within their community, but did not build a central organization as the Ukrainians did. The Ukrainians' central infrastructure provided greater stability for the delivery of programs, and at the same time provided strong advocacy for the needs and interests of their members (Couton, 2014). Being without a central organization, the Korean-Canadians lacked the collective capacity of the Ukrainians, which meant a lack of exposure to activities, practices and values of other groups in the mainstream, thereby slowing down their overall integration. The author also points out to the government's reluctance to fund 'ethnospecific' organizations starting in the 90s, which lead to exclusionary or racist treatment by the main society towards ethnocultural groups. The ethnocultural leaders were accused of "ethnicizing" the public debate, which led to a reduction in federal funding and making ethnocultural community organizations "less relevant on the national level" (Jedwab, 2001, p. 4). The lack of supports or acknowledgement on the role of ethnocultural groups resulted in a lack of assessment criteria to measure the effectiveness of ethnocultural leadership.

Another in-depth study, comparing Chinese immigrants and Somali refugees in Toronto, Vancouver and Edmonton, shows two different integration paths due to the communities' differing views of formal services. The pre-immigration social context defined the way in which Chinese immigrants identified government services early as beneficial, while most of the Somali refugees, due to their specific cultural lens, sought informational support from their peers and took longer to adjust (Stewart et al., 2008, p. 139-140).

There is an altogether different process presented in Jurkova's *A Case Study of the Bulgarian Society in Western Canada* (2014). The recent immigration from Bulgaria showed that both those community members connected to the ethnic organization and those not connected, integrated equally at all levels in a parallel fashion, and that their sense of ethnic identity was primarily symbolic and emotional. Bulgarian society functions more as a source of "networking and cultural retention rather than as a main factor for their integration" (p.23). This is a recognizable trend in a number of more recent Central and Eastern European economic immigration waves from Caucasian societies that have been westernized, and do not experience the discrimination that visible minorities do. If we take into consideration the socio-economic status of individuals, we can observe that it can be a powerful predictor for a more individualistic integration path, regardless of whether they belong to a visible minority group. However, class has not been specifically discussed in the studies we reviewed.

Despite the recognition of ethnocultural community groups at the local level, Couton (2014) is critical of their role in the integration process where patriarchal, closely-knit communities may adversely impact women. Similarly, Lamba and Krahn (2003) have concluded that access to supports varies with gender and age. Men are less likely to seek formal supports regarding health and psychological supports, and at the same time are more likely to seek professional help regarding money matters. In this context, women and seniors might be excluded from domains that are traditionally assigned to adult men (Lamba & Krahn, 2003, p. 357).

There has been a shift in the approach to integration policy and programs from needs-based to assets-based. Leadership is sought from within ethnocultural communities, to identify and make use of their strengths and assets.

From the perspective of the host society, a study involving 137 service providers and policymakers in health and settlement identified a number of systemic challenges such as discrimination, lack of resources, lack of integrated policies and narrow service mandates as obstacles to integration (Simich, Beiser, Stewart, & Mwakarimba, 2005). The service providers recognized a remarkable resilience in the informal information-sharing, mutual support and collaboration to respond to

common needs through activities that fill service gaps. It comes as no surprise that social supports provided in the community by informal networks have a determining effect on the health and wellbeing of immigrant populations. This understanding promotes a positive shift in seeing minority group members not as service recipients or as a source of social problems, but as resourceful and active citizens who are working hard to resolve the dissonance between one's expectations and the reality of life in Canada (p. 265).

A research study developed through in-depth interviews focused on civic engagement and social integration of Latin American immigrants to Canada, Toronto and Montreal (Armony, Schugurensky, & Barriga, 2004) found that it may take time for newcomers to find out about the systems of the host country. As they become more engaged in the host country, they learn more about it, which creates a mutually-reinforcing cycle.

However, this observation could be more nuanced. Lai and Hynie (2010) conducted a study to see if increased knowledge about resources and services in the community increases engagement of immigrants in York Region. They found that information about services does not automatically result in engagement, while a stronger sense of belonging to a community can result in greater engagement.

This suggests that accessible information and services are important. It also suggests that a strong sense of identity and belonging to the ethnocultural community is an important mediating factor in one's integration. Advocacy and collaboration with ethnocultural groups have contributed to an important shift in service delivery: namely, needs-oriented approaches, which focus on a lack of resources and skills, are being replaced with an asset-based community development approach, where leadership comes from within and systems are built upon a community's strengths and assets.

As much as ethnocultural communities shape the fabric of the host society, mainstream organizations can shape the development of identity and leadership within ethnocultural communities. It is important to realize how this relationship is changing over time. Working with assets-based development models will prevent dependency of ethnocultural community leaders on external institutional frameworks.

2. Characteristics, assets and challenges of informal ethnocultural community leaders

This part of the review illustrates different types of informal leaders, their motivation and needs, their skills and values, and finally, the obstacles they face.

Different people get engaged in different ways. Some are intentional in taking on leadership roles and some are accidentally pulled in to fill the gaps in services and supports for their community.

Leadership is different from activism or volunteering. As activists and volunteers perform regular tasks, the leaders are able to recruit, motivate and ensure there is a structure and resources for those activities.

Henein and Morissette (2007, in Simpson, Miller, & Amant, 2010) identify a number of types of informal leaders that seldom have clearly-defined and singular roles. They say that there are innate leaders with specific characteristics that they rely on to take active roles in the community:

- Individuals who already have strong leadership skills and engage primarily in issue-based activities,
- Individuals who are driven by passion, knowledge or particular interest, without necessarily having previous leadership experience.

There are accidental leaders who are drawn into the role due to circumstance, and need support to express their potential:

- Individuals who participate in the activities of their community and like to help others,
- Individuals who share a need with others in the community and are able to offer or sustain a response to the need.

In other words, those who become leaders are those individuals who can maintain a sense of group identity, make connections to resources, advocate on behalf of the individuals or the group, and leverage resources for these purposes.

According to Basok (1983, in Jedwab, 2001, p. 8), the types of leaders can also be identified by looking at the roles they play in institutional settings: brokers that ensure resources, mediators that ensure flow of information, and representatives that bring the community perspective in advisory or decision-making forums.

Motivation can be influenced by individual and societal factors.

There are a number of factors that can encourage or discourage individuals from taking on leadership roles. Individual factors at play are many, some of which include gender, place of birth, marital status, education, socio-economic status, religion, employment, etc. (Scott, Selbee, & Reed, 2006; Frideres, 1997).

Armony and her colleagues (2004, p. 32) suggest that more studies are needed to shed light on personal pre-immigration trajectories, patterns of self-perception and group-affiliation, identities, and the informal civic learning processes of informal ethnocultural community leaders. In terms of motivation, they found three broad groups of motivation for individual engagement:

- To support their own integration into the host society,
- To support their own community, and
- To maintain links to the country of origin.

Tastsoglou & Miedema (2000) have done a comprehensive study of the civic participation of immigrant women in the Maritimes. They identified a number of goals for their engagement in mixed-gender cultural-social organizations, women's ethno-specific organizations and ethno-specific organizations with explicit goals in the country of origin:

- Socializing and breaking the isolation,
- Religious reasons,
- Promotion of ethnic identity,
- Political reasons,
- Expanding opportunities for paid employment,
- Broadening personal interests and engagement, or
- Choosing to represent the interests of immigrant women in mainstream groups.

The women in a number of studies played an important role by organizing for social change and addressing systemic barriers such as racism, sexism, citizenship status and ageism and the resulting ghettoization, exploitation and devaluation. This meaningful engagement increases the feelings of autonomy, environmental mastery, and purpose in life. Research done with youth also suggests that it also promotes personal growth and self-acceptance (Evans, 2007).

Immigrant women leaders in Waterloo Region, during the Women Building Community Project in 2014, identified the following benefits, as well as motivation, when helping others in neighbourhoods:

- Practice English,
- Put their professional skills to good use,
- Learn about other cultures,

- Increase a sense of belonging by building friendships,
- Increase personal strengths,
- Practice problem solving, and
- Share skills.

Skills and values of informal community leaders have evolved over time. The more democratic processes of recent decades have placed a different set of expectations on today's informal leaders than the appointed leaders of the early 20th century.

Before and after the Second World War, the role of the state in providing social services was minimal, which reinforced the role that faith-based organizations played in building community capacity. Religion and ethnicity were closely intertwined. With subsequent waves of immigration, differences within larger ethnocultural groups increased based on smaller geographies of origin and on the different context of immigration experiences. Leaders today have to deal with even greater diversity in the global migration context. Instead of relying on religious authority as before, a more secular, democratic and relational authority emerges. However, even with these changes in authority, it is still important to understand the interplay between the more formal and the informal leaders. For instance, an entrepreneurial spirit and one's social-economic standing still remain the primary assets of both the formal and the informal leaders.

In his master's thesis, Daniel R. Sheffield (2001) explored an educational model for leaders in multicultural congregations. It is suggested that multi-ethnic congregations must move through a process of cognitive and affective redefinition to develop multicultural self-awareness and enable the development of authentic communities. "Inclusive leader sees difference as an asset to the faith community" (p. 81). Power also has to be redistributed in a manner that allows all cultural groups to have a sense of ownership in the life of the faith community.

In the doctoral dissertation on Self-Concept Complexity of Multicultural Leaders, Jeffrey L. Herman (2012) explores a complex web of perceptions, cultural domains and critical experiences that influence leadership. Cultural adaptability was one of the most important determinants of self-concepts. In its turn, cultural adaptability related positively to the quality of previous cross-cultural experiences. Some of the recommendations include coaching and mentoring to support the transformative nature of cross-cultural developmental experiences. "In acting with integrity, authentic leaders know who they are, what they believe and value, and they act upon those values and beliefs while transparently interacting with others" (Avolio, et al., 2004, p. 803 in Herman, 2012). Also, Jadwab (2001) concludes that leaders are able to mobilize the community to the extent in which they can negotiate and reflect its multidimensional character.

As much as the ethnocultural identity is still a determining factor for the roles of informal leaders, we have to acknowledge that for the younger generations, the equity, human rights and civic participation may be equally important. It can be seen in the mutual supports provided within visible minority or religious groups that focus on the commonality of experience of discrimination, such as Black, African, or Muslim organizations across the region.

Some of the values of successful leaders (Simpson et al., 2010) are togetherness, vision for positive change, and accountability in decision-making. The associated skills can be articulated as:

- Systems thinking (navigators between residents, neighbourhoods and systems of support),
- Communication skills (articulation of ideas and motivating people),
- Administration (strategic planning, conflict management, equitable distribution of resources with other leaders),
- Evaluation (monitoring and validating progress).

This is how immigrant women leaders in Waterloo Region identified informal leadership (Petrovic et al., 2014):

- Togetherness: women who support other women, mingle and connect
- Sharing knowledge: pass information and resources, learn on an ongoing basis about services and resources, share experiences and support English language acquisition
- Mutual support: break isolation, help in crises, act as social workers, create friendships
- Open up the community: improve lives, break isolation, help everyone in the community, create social spaces.

Tastsoglou & Miedema reported testimonies from immigrant women in the Maritimes that also point to specific qualities of women leaders: "This demanding, emotional and time-consuming process necessitates a strong personality, a positive personal attitude, accepting personal sacrifices, adaptability and perseverance to deal with the dissonance of expectations and reality of life in Canada" (2000, p. 52).

Obstacles to the development of leadership can be personal, specific to the ethnocultural group, and tied to the norms of the host society.

Barriers can be real or perceived. They can be physical, psychological, financial, attitudinal, socio-economic, etc.

We have to be aware of our personal bias: “each of us also has personal preferences and occasionally we act on these preferences in a manner that is exclusionary and may constitute bias. A bias is a point of view or inclination that may manifest itself through favouritism, dislike, prejudice and even fear because of a person’s looks, behaviour, lifestyle or circumstances” (Kit, 2004, p. 16). Personal biases can be very strong. Factors such as income status, education level, ability, faith-based beliefs, sexual orientation, gender and age heavily influence both participation and taking on leadership roles.

Other researchers state that factors influencing engagement can be based on the individual “cost-reward’ mental model: perception of environment, one’s social relations and benefit, and perceived control and empowerment (Frideres, 1997).

More broadly, socio-economic factors such as a lack of either personal or group resources are often cited as obstacles. Armony et al. (2004) identified the following obstacles to engagement: “lack of information, lack of resources, linguistic barriers, and cultural gaps” (p. 32).

Societal factors, such as the personal experience of discrimination, can determine access to resources and structures that encourage participation. Saloojee (2004) identifies four sets of factors:

- 1) Individual resources (i.e. age, marital status, education, income, rootedness into the community, previous experiences);
- 2) The trajectory of settlement and integration (i.e. pre-existing level of community organization, size of the community and its internal diversity, length of residence, language proficiency, knowledge of the political system and knowledge of tactics of political influence);
- 3) Relationship between formal political participation and participation in ethno-cultural organizations (i.e. social capital); and
- 4) The interplay between social identity and the “persistence and reproduction of racial oppression and discrimination.” (Saloojee, 2004, in Best & Dustan, 2004, p. 15)

Throughout the Social Development Centre Waterloo Region’s exploration of the ways in which informal female leaders in immigrant communities in Waterloo Region learn about services and supports in *Women Building Community Project* (2014), , language was by far the greatest obstacle, as well as the lack of accessible information, lack of resources, and the cultural norms within their respective communities.

In the following section, we will also look at the obstacles that can result from the lack of recognition, supports and collaboration with the institutions of the mainstream society.

3. Relationship between formal organizations and informal leaders

"Understanding the process by which leaders emerge can provide valuable insights into institutional life and the manner in which a community sets its agenda and establishes priorities." (Jedwab, 2001, p. 5)

Leaders of small ethnocultural groups in Ottawa (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2010) who participated in a survey to identify best practices of integration, pointed out a very important change in the context of service delivery and the evolving needs in the communities. Besides rapid economic changes, there is also a greater awareness of cultural and racial diversity, and the variability of needs recognized by gender, age, ability, sexual orientation and so forth. People expect greater awareness from staff in agencies and more personalized services. Finding a home, registering for programs, or having access to language courses is not enough anymore. For example, there is a greater need for advocacy regarding the quality of housing, affordability of programs and the quality of education. There is also a need for building their own group's social capital to ensure mutual help and a sense of belonging. In the words of one of the informal leaders in the study: "We are the only ones that can provide services to our community in their own language and culture. We have a profile in the community and our work is recognized. We have developed a network with [people from our community] based in different organizations who can help. Large organizations and settlement services are not equipped to provide these services. They do not have the network we have in the community." The type and quality of networks is seen as determining the success of the integration process overall. These findings support the importance of governmental and non-governmental organizations' collaboration to improve the social, economic and political engagement and integration of diverse communities.

As much as governments would follow the letter of 'multiculturalism' and develop policies to strengthen early integration of individuals into the mainstream, the evidence supports the importance of funding and recognition for ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and faith-based groups and organizations. Strong identity of an ethnocultural group, especially in the case of racialized groups, seems in many cases to lead to stronger advocacy and social integration.

Similarly, it is important to understand how “the intensity, quality, form, and language of participation varies significantly according to particular combinations of individual, social, and structural factors” (Armony et al., 2004). They state that there are economic, political and social stratifications that shape the political and civic engagement of individuals from ethnocultural groups. It is crucial that service providers and public services do not judge the successes and challenges of informal leaders solely on the basis of their individual characteristics and knowledge. There is caution expressed against assimilation where formal structures expect members of ethno-cultural groups to adjust and adapt to the norms of the majority ethno-cultural group. It was documented that in the case of an Indo-Caribbean association, the multicultural policies prevented the formation of a unified national identity and weakened its efficacy (Singh, 2000 in Armony et al., 2004). It is still common that standards of Canadians, which are of Anglo-Saxon origin, are used to measure successful integration. Cultural and religious differences are seen as obstacles to integration. In this context, informal ethno-cultural leaders have to be organized enough to be able to shift the dominant belief systems.

It was also observed by Simich et al. (2005) that the funding going towards multicultural settlement agencies, aiming to create connections across cultures and facilitate further social integration, can give positive results in promoting interaction across ethnocultural groups within the programs. It would not have impact in connecting newcomers to the larger community beyond its programs. The study conducted by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2010) concluded that strong neighbourhood-based social networks are key to integration. There is a need for collaborative service delivery and equitable access to resources between large organizations and small community groups.

Here is the list of recorded best practices for service agencies in support of informal leaders and small ethnocultural organizations:

1. Improve opportunities for smaller groups to develop equitable partnerships with larger community organizations
2. Increase access to funding for small ethnocultural groups
3. Provide opportunities for small ethnocultural groups to get access to free or affordable space for administration and for programs / activities
4. Help small ethnocultural groups to address volunteer challenges
5. Help mainstream organizations better integrate diversity into their service delivery
6. Provide leaders and volunteers with better access to information, to help them in their role of making referrals and providing orientation regarding settlement, other services and how Canadian society works (e.g. the school system)
7. Provide opportunities for basic capacity-building for some organizations (e.g. bookkeeping)
8. Provide support to use appropriate “best practices”

At the same time, the informal leaders in Ottawa pointed out a trend in earlier research, which leads to a reduction of government responsibility in service delivery and downloading to the informal support groups. The right approach identifies investments that maximize the role played by informal groups and their leaders: better understanding of the distinctness of immigrant and visible minority groups, appropriate funding, better access to space, capacity building and skills development, improved information sharing opportunities, improved supports for networking and collaboration, and improved ways of bringing the expertise of diverse communities into the mainstream public discourse (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2004, p. 20).

Intentional strategies at the municipal level could avoid the often-identified frustration regarding token representation and avoid the pitfalls of occasional consultations for pre-set agendas: "... it would be important to continue to identify such individuals from a wide variety of immigrant and visible minority communities, to seek their input on public policy matters, to provide one more means to connect with diverse communities, and to encourage their involvement in collective advocacy with other immigrant and visible minority leaders. ... in order that they could collectively speak out on issues of concern affecting immigrant and visible minority groups (Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2004, p. 38)".

Informal women leaders in Waterloo Region also identified that strengthened peer support is indispensable for successful integration and community social capital. Without the acknowledgement of informal peer support systems and their advocacy role, the existing service systems cannot be improved or fully functional (Social Development Centre Waterloo Region, 2014)

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP¹⁵

INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP

- > Leader is the sole decision maker and goal-setter
- > Linear relationship in a vertical direction (with leader at the top and followers at the bottom)
- > Followers are subordinate to the leader
- > Leader is charismatic
- > Leader is strong in vision, discipline and action



SHARED LEADERSHIP

- > Leaders and followers interact and share decision-making and goal-setting
- > Linear relationship between leaders and followers in a horizontal direction
- > Followers are more equal to leaders
- > Leader is understanding and listening
- > Leader promotes vision, listens to followers, directs decisions and encourages followers



ECOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

- > Leaders are constantly changing and emerging, trading roles and promoting vision
- > Non-linear relationship where leaders and followers may change places and roles
- > All participants are equal and may have an equal potential to lead
- > Leader inclusive, changing and mentoring
- > Leader works with others to achieve vision, changes roles as necessary and helps to develop other emergent leaders

Formal leaders need the informal leaders to keep the ideas fresh, to stay in touch with their constituency and to ensure broader support (Simpson et al., 2010). At the same time, the informal leaders need formal leaders in order to see the macro perspective, to connect with other leaders, to access funds resources and build capacity. Together they are able to provide balanced solutions for the whole community.

This leads us to our closing remarks on the changing understanding of leadership. The assumption involved is that the characteristics and skills of an individual are determining the outcomes of their work. If we see individual leadership existing within an interplay of social relationships and social systems, then we have outlined shared responsibility for supporting and advancing the work of informal community leaders.

This may be an important message to both the ethnocultural groups, as well as

to existing organizations, to look into their respective roles in supporting shared accountability. In the current context, as we are facing highly complex challenges, we can solve them only “in a web of interdependent social and biological systems” (Simpson et al., 2010).

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How did you come into the role of an informal community leader and What motivates you?
2. In which ways have you supported your community?
3. What personal assets/qualities do you think helped you the most in being a successful leader?
4. What are the external supports and resources that were most helpful?
5. What are the challenges you are facing as a leader? What do you need to be more successful as a leader?
6. What supports do you need to be successful in your role as an informal leader to support your community? Whose support do you need?

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APPENDIX 3

Action Plan to Build New and reciprocal Relationship Between informal multicultural leaders and organization

Initiatives Recommended to Implement	Activities	Priority When	Who will be involved? Resources	Completion
<p>Enhance collaboration among groups and organizations</p>	<p>Secure a centralized location for all groups to meet</p> <p>Set up an inter-group online platform (i.e. to post relevant info and resources, list underused social services, and a calendar of cultural events)</p> <p>Consider Listserv as an inter-group communication tool</p>		<p>Ethnocultural groups</p> <p>Local social services</p>	
<p>Preserving cultural identity</p>	<p>Advocate for more funding to be dedicated to cultural preservation</p> <p>Advocate for greater diversity in school curriculums (e.g. world geography, history, cultural diversity)</p> <p>Organize a formalized umbrella group (i.e. to form a significant body for advocacy, to connect groups for relationship-forming, resource sharing, and teaming up to access funding and fundraising)</p> <p>Run programs that teach language, music, dance, folklore, family values, ethnic cooking; and organize traditional cultural events</p>		<p>All levels of government</p> <p>Educational institutions</p> <p>Ethnocultural groups (formal and informal)</p>	

Initiatives Recommended to Implement	Activities	Priority When	Who will be involved	Completion
Dedicated funding for small and informal ethnocultural groups	<p>Set up an inter-group online platform that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Lists all eligible government funding opportunities (2) Tracks corporate funding opportunities (3) Sends email alerts re: application deadlines (4) Includes a list of philanthropic businesses <p>Run orientations for small groups on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Funding-application processes (2) Obtaining funding from corporations/private donors <p>Organize “speed-dating” events to connect funders, philanthropists and ethnocultural groups</p> <p>Pitch “adopt an organization” to tech industries and corporations</p>		<p>All levels of government</p> <p>Tech. Industry</p> <p>Philanthropic businesses</p> <p>Credit unions</p> <p>Private funders</p>	
Common and accessible space	<p>Advocate for policies that prioritize lending space to emerging minority groups</p> <p>Connect with local organizations to reimagine how their spaces could be used by ethnocultural groups (Note: Particularly cities and schools)</p> <p>Encourage small groups to facilitate informal social spaces to supplement their formal programming (Especially for women, seniors, persons with disabilities, isolated)</p>		<p>Cities</p> <p>Neighbourhood associations</p> <p>Social service agencies</p> <p>Mental health providers</p> <p>Community centers</p>	

<p>Common and accessible space</p>	<p>Set up an inter-group online platform that holds a directory of accessible, local spaces</p> <p>Compile a directory of spaces for meetings and events (Note: Include affordability, capacity, kitchen, parking, accessibility)</p> <p>Recruit someone to maintain this online platform</p>		<p>Faith congregations</p> <p>Settlement organizations</p> <p>Schools</p> <p>Private businesses</p> <p>WR Police Services</p> <p>Family Centre</p> <p>Community organizations</p> <p>Libraries</p>	
<p>Nurturing current & future leaders</p>	<p>Recruit social media managers to spotlight positive stories about informal community leaders</p> <p>Assist leaders in building greater inclusivity in their groups</p> <p>Assist leaders in ensuring that their groups are represented in the city's decision-making processes</p> <p>Find ways to empower youth, seniors, parents, and families</p> <p>Provide hands-on training opportunities for future leaders</p> <p>Develop mentorship programs as a means of transferring leadership knowledge and skills</p> <p>Use ESL classes to recruit and connect future community leaders</p> <p>Find larger organizations to mentor smaller organizations, share resources, provide placements in nonprofits, and a greater presence in schools</p>		<p>Schools</p> <p>City's decision-makers</p> <p>Media outlets</p> <p>Settlement agencies</p> <p>KW Counselling (leadership program)</p> <p>CCORIC</p>	