



Immigration Partnership Winnipeg

**Creating inter-cultural understanding:
Relationship between Urban Indigenous Communities and Immigrant
and Refugee Newcomers in Winnipeg's inner-city**

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1. Executive Summary

In February and March 2014, a number of discussions between Aboriginal citizens and newcomers were facilitated by consultants for Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW).

About 88 participants from each of the Aboriginal and newcomer communities were involved in this study. The focus group discussions were facilitated by Jackie Hogue of Jackie Hogue and Associates, with the assistance of elder, Albert McLeod. The report on the discussion was then written by Muuxi Adam.

The operational focus of this inquiry was to hold conversations between elders, community leaders, parents and youth from both newcomer and Aboriginal communities. Through interviews, focus group discussions and observations, the study examined the relationships and opportunities for engagement between these communities. The subsequent analysis proposes strategies for developing a closer working relationship that bridges the distance between them.

The underlying question motivating this study, is, what are the possibilities of establishing community interactions and relationships that promote harmonious coexistence between the diverse newcomer communities and Aboriginal peoples?

Young people noted a passive but occasionally aggressive relationship between both communities. While they would co-exist in a school environment, they tended to exclude the other from their peer groups. They admitted that they had pre-existing opinions of each other, but that these were largely what they heard from their parents or on social media.

Adult participants in the discussions reflected many similar perceptions of each other. However, they had fewer opportunities to meet and work with individuals from the other community. Some of the respondents expressed fairly strong views of why there was a distance between the communities – competition for housing, jobs and services!

The elders or community leaders were the most understanding of the social situations being experienced by both communities. They were therefore more prone to suggesting how the different communities could be encouraged to engage and get to know each other.

A consistent theme running through the discussions, was how both groups held negative perceptions of the other, that they acknowledged were not accurate. Within the stereotypes each group held, were also some sympathy for each other, as they acknowledged the struggles and difficulties they were experiencing coming to Winnipeg. This led to observations that as minorities, the two communities actually had a lot in common and shared experiences.

The result of this inquiry illustrates the potential role of community members as active citizens in their respective communities on taking positive action to bridge the gaps between the two communities. In particular, there is potential in focusing on attitude and behavior change on the perception of others. It further calls for real efforts to open up spaces for dialogue in both communities, so that there is a feeling of connectedness in the shared neighborhoods. More importantly, community members feel the need to see programs that motivate and support them to make contributions to positive cultural exchanges and tolerance of each other's differences in their neighbourhoods.

This study uncovers barriers that hinder interaction between the newcomers and Aboriginal communities, and some of the ways these barriers can be overcome. However, further exploration of the attitudes and interaction between newcomer and Aboriginal communities in their engagement with each other is needed.

NOTE: This is one of a series of research projects conducted in early 2015 for Immigration Partnership Winnipeg. The other studies on employment, policy factors affecting settlement services, services available for newcomers and public opinions on immigration are available from IPW, at www.spcw.mb.ca/immigration.

2. Introduction

Canada has welcomed immigrants and refugees from around the world for centuries; in fact they are the second peoples of this land. Historically, immigration has been dominated by immigrants and refugees of European heritage. However, as Statistics Canada reveals, the ethnic diversity of new Canadians has increased dramatically during the past decade.

In Winnipeg for instance, there has recently been an increase of immigrants and refugees from Asian, Middle Eastern and African countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma and Sudan. Migration is a reality for most of the advanced countries all over the world and Canada as one of these countries has welcomed thousands of migrants' from all over the world year after year. In Canada, one often hears the common phrase "everyone in Canada is an immigrant" whether they are recent immigrants or their ancestors came as immigrants. The exception to this perspective is the Aboriginal people who are Canada's First Nations.

Immigrants and Refugees who are moving to Canada create multicultural cities and societies where people from different cultural background live or work together, and share resources.

According to Jim Silver (2006, *In Their Own Voices: Building Urban Aboriginal Communities*. Halifax: Fernwood), the number of newcomers in the city is on the rise, not only in terms of immigrants from abroad, but also in terms of the Aboriginal population. Winnipeg is cited as home to the largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada. More and more Aboriginal people are continuing to move into the city; in 2006 there were 63,745 Aboriginal people, making up 10% of the population. In 1981, there were 16,575 (DeVerteuil & Wilson, 2010, p.500).

Together, newcomers and Aboriginal people make up almost 50% of the inner city's population. These areas are also associated with higher rates of crime and poverty than in the rest of the city. There certainly exists an increase in tension and occasional clashes among youth, particularly Aboriginal and those of mainly African, background in the inner city. With the level of intolerance, negative perception of the other group and mistrust among youth, there is obviously a need to be addressed in order to create and maintain cohesive friendly neighborhoods.

3. Methodology

The study used multiple methods of data collection, in particular, two data collection techniques; interviews and focus groups, to collect a rich narrative of qualitative data. Data were collected from newcomer youth, parents, leaders, and Aboriginal youth, parents and leaders/elders. The choice of collective narrative was consistent with the nature of the Local Immigration Partnership model and the purpose of the study. Participants were put in their respective community groups as Aboriginal or as newcomers in order to provide a comfortable environment for the free flow of information within each group. The newcomer participants came from diverse national backgrounds including: South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Philippines, Rwanda, Liberia, Pakistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Nepal, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chili and Thailand.

The questionnaires used for the focus group and interviews included open ended questions that were designed in a conversational manner to encourage discussion. The focus group questionnaires included questions which concentrated on gathering data on cross-cultural knowledge gained from Aboriginal and newcomer participants. For the purpose of recruiting potential participants for the interviews and focus groups, the researchers made multiple attempts to reach out to different organizations and individuals who are working in the area of cross cultural education. The researchers partnered with an Aboriginal elder, two newcomer community workers and an Aboriginal organization that assisted with the process of recruitment. The partners were extremely interested in this subject and understood the purpose of the study and the potential benefits. Their involvement in the study made participants feel comfortable and voice their views freely.

Some data collection limitations were identified through consultation with these partners. Adjustments to the data collection were therefore made and some of the limitations were addressed.

–For example, a number of efforts were made to put youth participants at ease with the research process. A trusted adult person was present for the whole focus group duration to build bridges with the researchers and to let participants know that a trusted member of their community endorsed the study. These trusted adult members knew the focus group was for the youth but were encouraged to contribute and perhaps often interpret the questions if was necessary. Food was served for each focus group, and the focus groups were held during afterschool program times to make the sessions convenient for participants.

In spite of these considerations, there were noticeable limits to the feedback from the youth focus groups. While a number of youth were boisterous and outspoken, some

appeared self-conscious and perhaps guarded. It was a challenge at times to elicit responses from them. Questions may have been too analytical or abstract for them, or they may have been self-conscious in responding.

4. Results from Focus Group Conversations

4.1. Conversation with youth

Conflict among youth groups has made news headlines recently. The city of Winnipeg has faced, and continues to face, gang-related crime that is also found in most cities with a large and diverse population. The news reports rarely attempt to investigate or address the roots causes of urban youth conflict, but rather tend to perpetuate common stereotypes about Aboriginal youth and newcomers. The daily challenges for these youth and what often precipitates aggression, is discrimination, poverty, poor neighborhoods, language barriers, social isolation, loss of self-identity, loss of status, loneliness.

Conflicts between newcomer and Aboriginal youth have become a serious concern for many community stakeholders. Some organizations have made effort to create programs that promote understanding of the complexity of this conflict and then create an environment where they can strengthen cooperation among young people. Some of these efforts are to help discuss youth issues and to be more involve in issues that bounds them together rather divides them.

This study aimed to examine the interactions between newcomer youth and Aboriginal youth and to identify the knowledge each group has of each other.

Five main issues emerged from all the groups.

Issue 1: Knowledge of the “other” group

The first part of the questionnaire examined knowledge of the other group prior to interaction. For the case of the newcomers, prior to coming to Canada and for the Aboriginal youth prior to contact with the newcomer youth in Winnipeg’s inner city. Responding to this question, almost all newcomer youth in the focus group had heard nothing about Aboriginal people prior to coming to Canada. They did know about the existence of Aboriginal people Canada but they only came to know them after coming into contact. Only one youth had prior knowledge of the residential school system and its effects on Aboriginal people. Many of the newcomer youth participants in the study overwhelmingly agreed that the little they knew about Aboriginal people’s history and heritage was learnt through their school curriculum after arriving in Canada. Even after

being in Canada for a while, they summed their knowledge of Aboriginal people as follows;

- They originally came from Asia.
- They are considered dangerous.
- They play drums/traditional musical instruments.
- They are in touch with their ancestors/spirit world.
- They organize Pow-wows.
- They are hunters.
- They are involved in agriculture.
- They live up north in reserves.
- They like the cold weather.
- The government wants them in reserves.
- Their traditions and agricultural tools are better suited up north.
- They speak Cree, Ojibway.

Newcomer youth however indicated a deep empathy for Aboriginal communities and the impact the residential school system had on them. A newcomer youth said;

“I am deeply saddened by what happened to indigenous peoples in Canada and particularly to the thousands and thousands of children who have been removed from their homes, communities, cultures, traditions and most importantly from their families” (NY 8).

Another youth posed a question; *“How can innocent children be taken away from their loved ones - in the name of what?” (NY 14).*

With regards to experience with Aboriginal culture, the newcomer youth saw Aboriginal people as a people who were maintaining a strong connection to their cultures. One newcomer youth remarked that she enjoyed watching a Pow-wow dance.

“I feel like they are very traditional oriented people, they have strong connection with their ancestors and they are spiritual people like us” (NY 1).

The Aboriginal youth respondents also indicated that they did not know much about the history, culture and places of origin of newcomers. Mostly, they said, it was because they seemed to come from many parts of the world and it was difficult to define any particular group. They were, however, quite interested to learn about the cultures of this diverse newcomer population. One of the youth captured the difficulty in identifying ‘who was who’;

“Sometime I wonder who is a newcomer and who isn’t? Because to us, it is very hard to tell just because of their look or even their accent, you can tell some wear head covers, other don’t, so I think they have different cultures among each them too but I just can’t tell who is who? (AY1)

Issue 2: Perception

Both youth groups reported holding common stereotypes of each other. They seem to absorb inherent bias and stereotypes that they see and hear in their daily lives. A particular focus of the study was to see how the youth perceived each other. Newcomer youth had a mixed perception of Aboriginal people. Some of the comments were extremely negative while a few were very positive;

- Aboriginals are violent.
- They are gang members.
- They are irresponsible.
- They are on welfare.
- They are not involved in the community.
- They are alcoholics.
- Most of the girls are involved in prostitution.
- They are druggies.
- They are abusive.

Whenever these comments were made, a further enquiry was made on how they formed these perceptions. The newcomer youth responded that; they were told by their family members who came to Canada before them, or they heard it from other newcomer youth. One youth made this statement;

“I am scared of them, based on the time of day, especially I am scared at night time because of other people’s negative experiences. During the day, I am okay with meeting Aboriginal persons.” (NY5)

However, when it came to actual interactions the experiences were different. A few had negative experiences but many also had very positive experiences interacting with Aboriginal people. One newcomer youth put it this way;

“When I was new, everyone was telling me that I should try to be very careful about Aboriginal people. One day, I was taking the bus to go home and this Aboriginal lady came and sits beside me, and I was wondering why she needs to sit beside me. The whole bus was almost empty and I was scared of her. And then she started to have some small talk with me, and I was not comfortable but the lady was so soft spoken and so nice that I could not resist but have real conversation. She shared some of her early struggles with me. Despite these struggles she told me that today she is attending university. She gave the best advice and she has changed my perception of Aboriginal people. She helped me understand that Aboriginal persons are nice, contrary to the typical notion that they are rude.” (NY4)

Others reported experiences interacting that were not so positive. One youth for instance provided two examples of negative interactions. He lived in the north end and had many Aboriginal neighbours;

“Our neighbor is Aboriginal and I think she does not like our family because we are immigrants. One time her younger child came to our house to play with my little brother and his mother stormed into our house picked her child who came to play and she screamed at us. That woman was violent” (NY 6)

“I am afraid of Aboriginal people because of personal experiences. One day I was walking to school and these Aboriginal guys wanted to jump on me, I had to run for my life man. If I did not run fast, can you imagine what would have happened to me? I would probably be dead this time. The worse thing is that they don’t even ask you anything, like you know, if I belong to any gang group or not, but they will just jump on you and stab you till you die and this scares me a lot.” (NY 6)

Many of the newcomer youth residing in the inner city stated that Aboriginal youth and newcomer youth do not get along very well. According to the youth, one of the main reasons they don’t get long is that Aboriginal youth bully newcomer youth and make fun of their accent or that they cannot speak English.

Another newcomer youth claimed that bullying occurs when an Aboriginal youth sees a newcomer youth dressed in the latest trends (clothing, shoes) that they desire. Other newcomer youth respondents rejected the generalization that all Aboriginal youth are violent and bullies. Based on personal experiences, they claimed that Aboriginal youth would be nice to them if they were also nice. It depended on who you interacted with, as some might be aggressive but it is also true of other youth.

“To be honest, I find it easy to make friends with Aboriginal youth; it’s just like making friends with other immigrants. Obviously, you have to be careful with who you become friends with and that goes to everyone. But I do not like labeling that all Aboriginal youth are scary as that is not true, my friends are not scary. In fact they are more honest than my immigrant friends.” (NY 4)

In contrast to the perception by newcomer youth, most of the Aboriginal youth showed a more tolerant perspective. Even though there are some who shared negative perceptions, they generally saw newcomers as people needing support to adjust to life in Canada. Some made friendships with newcomer youth and saw their newcomer friends as just like any other of their friends;

“My best friend is Muslim girl, we pretty get along very well. We are friends so we don’t see each other as newcomer or Aboriginal. We just have a normal relationship and we have been friends since elementary.” (AY1)

While the Aboriginal youth showed an interest in connecting with and making friendships with newcomer youth, they cited language barrier as a big problem that hinders their interaction. One of the youth reported this difficulty in trying to connect with a newcomer youth;

“I was attending Hugh John Macdonald School and I was playing basketball at the gym and this kid was playing by himself and I felt sorry for him; you know. So I go there to see if he wants to play with me but then he just keeps ignoring me and I got mad at him and left. But later I

learnt that the kid couldn't speak any English so he couldn't communicate with me... before I found out that the kid didn't speak English, I thought he was rude and mean.” (AY 6)

Another Aboriginal youth had a similar experience;

“It's very hard to make friends with them, they speak their own language most of the time, so you know you don't understand what they are saying and in general they like to stay with their own group, they like to stick together.” (AY 5)

Aboriginal youth however agree that there is prejudice and tension between both groups. They say that there is name-calling between both groups, and that they put each other down. Individuals from both groups also give each other dirty looks, point out themselves in places such as the mall, and even pass on rumours about each other. The Aboriginal youth basically claim that tension is everywhere. A female Aboriginal youth claimed there is a Facebook page where pictures and comments of these acts of racism and tension are posted for the public to see.

Issue 3: Interaction

Newcomer youth interaction with their Aboriginal counterparts is often determined by their perception and how they have formed these perceptions. If a newcomer has 'bought' heavily into the existing stereotypes they are less likely to interact with Aboriginal youth. Some believe that there are already set social rules that prevent youth from getting along with each other or establishing any meaningful relationship.

“If my friends see me hanging out with an Aboriginal person, they would think that I am joining a gang or selling drugs and if my family sees me, that is a whole different matter. I think my mom would probably be scared and faint, while my dad will probably murder me.” (NY6)

“I think sometimes we interact with each other here and there like in the gym, but it is common to ignore each other because that's the norm so even if you are cool with an Aboriginal youth, once your friends come you will excuse and go to your immigrant friends. That's how it is.” (NY 9)

Some newcomer youth believe Aboriginal youth avoid them. Again, newcomer youth say this is because Aboriginal youth disregard them and never make the attempt to reach out. Others claim that Aboriginal youth give them 'angry looks' and accuse them of being here to 'take their land for free'.

On the other hand, Aboriginal youth believe that the reasons that both groups do not interact is because there is significant differences in beliefs, values, personalities, prejudice and stereotypes. When asked if the Newcomers' perception of Aboriginal people impacts their interaction with indigenous people, all the Aboriginal youth overwhelmingly agreed. Many expressed the opinion that newcomers interact with Aboriginal people based on their assumptions and negative ideas fed by family, friends and others. Indigenous youth reported that conflicts were not very common within

schools but there are frequent clashes outside the school. For instance, much of the tension was found in areas previously dominated by indigenous communities but have recently seen an increase in newcomer populations.

“Gang fights and clashes happen outside of school quite often. Mostly, in the North End, downtown, Central Park and Portage but not in the school” (AY 3)

The majority of the Aboriginal youth reported having positive experiences with the other community, unlike the newcomer youth. Only three aboriginal youth had never talked to newcomers or had any interaction.

Overall, the existing tension and mistrust was seen to be a result of existing stereotypes based on how the adults perceive each other. When asked how they formed these perceptions both groups stated that they learn them from each other, from family, friends, media and social media.

Issue 4: Commonalities

Both groups seemed to be aware of the social issues that were common to them all. They saw their vulnerability, challenges of social inequality, cultural oppression, and loss of identity common to both groups. They share the same neighbourhoods that are often characterized by low income residents and struggles with high rates of crime.

Youth were clearly aware of these issues. A newcomer youth stated;

“We both live in the inner city, or what is called the ghetto, we share the same Manitoba Housing project, and they are struggling just the same way that we are struggling. Their parents are on welfare. My parents are on welfare because my mom still cannot work as she only has bench mark 2¹.” (NY 7)

While the concept of newcomer is often applied to immigrant and refugee youth, the Aboriginal youth also see themselves as newcomers. An Aboriginal youth said;

“They are new to the city, so are we, youth that are coming from the reserve don’t know the city life you know, so they struggle a bit and I think these newcomers are also facing that kind of problem. It’s hard if you don’t know your way around the city and I can’t imagine if you don’t speak the language how much you have to go through.” (AY5)

A few other examples of youth sharing an understanding of their common social problems

“We both live in poor neighborhoods and face the same sort of social problems, like gangs are serious problem that both newcomer and Aboriginals face. Our problems are not isolated but in fact are similar.” (NY)

“We tend to like sports more than school and I think is safe perception that newcomers also enjoy sports more than the school.” (AY 2)

¹ Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB)

Issue 5: Fostering better relationships

Negative perceptions, stereotypes, mistrust, prejudice are not just misinformation but are also part of larger social exclusion that youth encounter on a daily basis. Both youth groups reported having been affected at an individual level or at community level. We enquired of the youth, about how to address the stereotyping of each other and how to foster better relationships, so that they could coexist in harmony. A majority of the Aboriginal youth had participated in a cross-cultural event organized annually by Rossbrook House and Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM). The aim of the event was to bring the communities of West Alexander neighborhood together in a fun community event. This event spotlighted many similarities they have within the wider community and it allowed for a friendlier feel in the neighborhood, creating a safer community in all. The youth have talked positively about this sort of cross-cultural event that promotes awareness of each other.

Other recommendations the youth made to create positive relations included cross-ethnic pairing in after-school programs and sports, summer youth camp, and sharing their cultures in the form of food, music, storytelling, and dance, to create better understanding and appreciation for one another.

Both youth groups talked about the need to bridge the existing gap between them and cautioned if nothing is done to bring the youth together, they are certain that the division will continue to grow and might result in clashes in the street or more youth joining gangs for protection. Most of the youth, newcomers and Aboriginal were optimistic and often sympathized with each other.

4.2. Conversation with Parents

A second level of looking at the relationship between newcomers and Aboriginal communities in the inner city was to ask the same questions asked of the youth to a select number of parents from diverse backgrounds. Twelve newcomer parents and twelve Aboriginal parents were engaged in a focus group format for discussion.

Issue 1: Knowledge of others

Core to the building of positive relationships between communities and individuals is knowledge of each other's background. This often avoids misconceptions and the formation of perceptions that can ruin future relations, said the participants.

Both groups of parents were asked of their knowledge of the other before contact here in Winnipeg. Only two parents out of the twelve newcomer parents had some

knowledge of Aboriginal peoples prior coming to Canada. The majority of the newcomer parents did not know about the history of the Aboriginal peoples, cultures and traditions.

"I attended a workshop in my country Burundi, and in that workshop they talked about the native people in Canada, they told us that they are not white people and most of them live in Northern part of Canada." (NP3).

One other newcomer parent said that he read about Aboriginal people, but was not aware of their living conditions. This person had also watched some cartoons about Native Americans in the United States.

The rest indicated that they only came to learn about Aboriginal people after coming into contact with them in Winnipeg. A follow up question probed whether they were told of Aboriginal people during their orientation to Canada before departure and if they were in agreement that this did not take place.

"When we were new to Winnipeg, they told us about these people (Aboriginals), that they are poor, homeless and often you might find them beg for money which I find it confusing because how can you live in Canada and beg for money. I thought they are bizarre." (NP 4)

Aboriginal parents were also equally unfamiliar with the diverse newcomer communities and were unaware of the distinction between refugees and immigrants. In fact, Aboriginal parents affirmed that the issues regarding citizenship and immigration were not prominent issues that they were concerned about. They were more concerned about other stereotypes they heard from the media. For instance one female Aboriginal parent worries about terrorism;

"We do not know where these people (newcomer) are coming from; obviously they have different values and faiths. We heard a lot of people who are involved with terrorist activities so I don't know if the guy next door is linked to Al-Qaida." (AP 1)

Aboriginal people also welcomed the idea of hosting and supporting refugees. Though there were mixed feelings, there seemed to empathy for people who were here as refugees.

"I feel it is great that people are coming to Canada, it allows everyone to connect together and we can learn a lot from newcomers." (AP 5)

Issue: 2 Negative Perceptions

Similar to the youth, adults also formed certain perceptions of each other, before actually meeting their counterparts. Often these perceptions were negative in nature and were rooted in existing stereotypes that are commonly used to identify these groups. Parents seemed to be more extreme in their characterization of the other groups as compared to the youth. In contrast to the youth, both groups in the parent focus groups were vocal about their dislike for and negative stereotyping of each other.

The newcomers claimed that Aboriginal people were a bad influence on their children and youth. In addition to picking up existing stereotypes of Aboriginal people, some indicated that their dislike was based on their experience interacting with them. One newcomer parent told of how his son was negatively influenced by his Aboriginal friends, staying away from home temporarily to live with and engage in bad behavior with his Aboriginal friends.

“My experience taught me to be very careful about these people (Aboriginals), my son was a nice boy before he had any interaction with our neighbor. My kid was only twelve years old, and my son’s behaviour became erratic after he started hanging out with Aboriginal youth. My son got into trouble at home and in school, started taking marijuana and is presently in the custody of the police. So I will advise other immigrant/newcomer parents never to let their children associate with Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal people in general.” (NP4)

Two other male newcomer parents were also vocal in their depiction of Aboriginal people. One claimed that Aboriginal people do not want newcomers in Canada. He said, “they do not show love, they are bizarre, and they think newcomers have come to take the country”. The other one asserted that Aboriginal people are beggars, and that “many of them are not clean”, and “they do not care about others”.

A few newcomers also reported positive relationships with their Aboriginal neighbors. One female participant regretted her Aboriginal neighbor moved away when she just starting to establish the relationship with her.

“My neighbor was friendly and would say hi whenever we see each other. One day she needed help so she came to my house and said that she needed to borrow \$ 20. At that time I have only \$ 25 so I give her the \$20 that she needed and she was very appreciative. Eventually, she moved and I express regrets that she moved without saying bye.”

The views of newcomer women were mixed, while some reported some aggressive interaction with Aboriginal people, others were more positive. One woman said for example, that she had an issue with Aboriginal bus drivers. She said that they, “come across as angry, sad and aggressive toward her”. She claimed that they act differently toward other passengers when she is on the bus. Another newcomer woman however provided an entirely different perspective. She told of how her Aboriginal school teacher was very kind to her, giving her advice, calling a cab when she was ill, and just asking of her well-being every time he saw her.

“Every community has good and bad, for example, my teacher is one of the nicest people, she always asks me how is my family and she does not get mad when I am late, she understands that I have small children and sometimes will tell me is fine to come late if you have family emergency.” (NP 9)

Aboriginal parents were equally vocal about their perception of and dislike for newcomers. One female Aboriginal parent thought newcomer men target young Aboriginal women. She suggested that Aboriginal families need to be strict in order to

provide security for their young women. "Our daughters are not safe in the community," she said. Another female participant agreed and claimed that newcomers do not have good intentions when coming to Canada. An Aboriginal male participant remarked that it was difficult to establish friendships with the newcomers because they often stick to their own groups. He also claimed that 'they have very different lifestyles and cultures' from Aboriginal people. Another male participant reported that he established relationships with newcomer inmates while he was incarcerated. He claimed that the newcomer inmates liked the jail system. In his own words;

"It was easy-peasy for them, they have more things in jail, than they had back home. These kids from Somalia and Ethiopia did not have food so now you get to eat three times, you have access to TV, and play what else do they need? To be honest, they don't have any remorse for why they are there, they would say to me, this is better than home." (AP 7)

One other participant indicated that newcomers did not understand the history, struggles and cultures of the Aboriginal population and often dwelt on the negatives they heard in the media.

"Newcomers do not understand the sufferings of Indigenous people. They have been told negative things about Aboriginal people and they are not interested in learning about the history and the culture of Indigenous people - and that bothers me a lot. I would like them to know the history of Aboriginal people, specifically about the treaties, why the treaties were established, and when they were formed." (AP 1)

Some Aboriginal parents had the perception that the government is bringing newcomers for labor purposes, to drive the economy and to create a multicultural society. One of the participants asserted that government policies are racist and unfair towards Indigenous people. He claimed that the government subsidizes newcomers for work because their labor is cheap and 'affordable for the government'. While a female Aboriginal participant felt that they are competing with newcomers for the limited work opportunities. "Newcomers are getting all the jobs in my workplace and I see nepotism operating in my workplace," she stated. She claims that the Filipino woman in charge of recruiting employees into the aerospace manufacturing program is reluctant to employ Native persons. However, she is quick to hire persons of Filipino descent.

One of the other Aboriginal female participants claimed that newcomers are brought into Canada to work at 7-Eleven and MacDonald restaurants. She argued that there is no room for Aboriginal individuals to work in these places.

"Tim Horton's franchise in my hometown of Swan River, Manitoba, refuses to hire Aboriginal people. I was refused employment there, despite pestering them and showing willingness to work. Tim Horton's brought four newcomers to work there, and even operate 24 hours now. Since that day I boycott Tim Horton's and will never buy from them." (AP11)

Issue: 3 Interactions

All the newcomer parents believe that there is very little interaction between Aboriginal people and newcomers, because racism and stereotyping plays a big role. Here are a few participant comments explaining why they believe there is little interaction with their Aboriginal neighbours.

“How can you interact with them (Aboriginal people) when you are consistently hearing from everyone in the community that they are a bad influence to the children?”

“At my work, Aboriginal workmates show me in their actions that I do not belong here. So I do not talk to them and I get along with everyone else. I have a lot of friends at work but none of them are Aboriginal.” (NP 4)

“I live with Aboriginal neighbours in the North End and after six pm no one goes out in my family because it is not a safe area. We have been terrorized by what is happening in the area. Forget about interacting with them and getting to know them, we just want to be safe.” (NP 10)

It is ironic that these two communities who live in the same neighborhood, often in the same apartment blocks or social housing projects, have little or no interactions with each other. It raises the complexity of this social phenomena and why newcomers that live among Aboriginal people take strong positions to the idea of interacting with them?

Aboriginal parents single out the negative stereotypes that newcomers pick up from other Canadians and newcomers who arrived before them, as the cause of their negative perceptions. They agreed that newcomers often paint Aboriginal people as alcoholics, lazy and violent. Most of them were of the opinion that newcomer parents do not want their children hanging out with Aboriginal youth. A female Aboriginal parent claimed that newcomers are “misogynistic”, and she asserted that “they have values and beliefs that put women down. Women are seen as inferior in some of their cultures and this perception prevents possible interactions.”

Amid the tension, a few parents also reported some positive stories of interaction between newcomers and their Aboriginal neighbours. One Aboriginal parent talked of his son who can now speak some Filipino words and has quite a few Filipino friends. He thinks that his son is doing very well socially and academically because of these healthy interactions with newcomers.

Issue 4: Fostering Better Relationship

Both parent groups saw dialogue as the only way to foster understanding between Aboriginal and newcomer families. They said that adults need to start this initiative so that children can emulate their example.

“We have to see each other as human beings, as neighbors, as equals and stop accepting these outdated and harmful stereotypes about each other. We need to come together and bring

our kids so that they can see adults talking among each other, no long regarding each other as enemies or bad neighbors. We have to address this stereotype so we can give the kids a chance to have healthier relationships with their peers.” (NP8).

Aboriginal parents would like to see some education of newcomers and greater dialogue on Aboriginal history, in this way then the newcomers can understand where Aboriginal people came from and what created the situation of poverty that they see in many Aboriginal people and in the inner city. “We should all talk about where we once were as a people, where we are now, and where we would like to go,” one of the Aboriginal participants. Some of the Aboriginal parents talked of the need to start educating newcomers about Aboriginal people and their diversity of cultures, right from the time they arrive in Winnipeg. One of the parents suggested that pamphlets about all the Aboriginal groups be placed at Welcome Place and other places of first intake for newcomers.

Both groups see the need for greater knowledge sharing and educating each other about their cultures. They suggest that newcomer serving organizations should partner with Aboriginal community organizations to foster cross-cultural exchanges. They should share food, music and cultural presentations as a starting point, they said. Another parent talked of the need to create toolkits that promote understanding of different cultures and communities in Manitoba.

One female Aboriginal participant is already aware of the ‘Moon Drumming’ activity at the North End Women’s Centre, where Newcomer and Aboriginal women come together as ‘Buffalo Girls’. She saw this program as creating an opportunity where all the women saw each other as sisters.

Another participant was aware of the ‘Rec and Read Aboriginal Mentorship Program’ at the University of Manitoba. In this program, a diverse group of university students including newcomers mentor Aboriginal high school students, who in turn mentor elementary school students. They said that there should be more programs like this one.

4.3. Conversation with Community Leaders/Elders

A third category of people engaged in a focus group discussion were leaders and elders with newcomer and Aboriginal backgrounds. The newcomer elders came from eight different countries had mostly arrived as refugees and lived in the inner city or the north end of Winnipeg. The Aboriginal leaders on the other hand identified themselves as;

- Native
- Anishinaabe
- Anishinaabe and Metis

- Aboriginal
- Oji-Cree
- Aboriginal and Canadian
- First Nations Canadian
- Non-status
- Cree
- Proud to be Aboriginal
- Urban Canadian
- Proud to practice elements of both Anishinaabe and Icelandic cultures.

Issue 1: Knowledge of the others

Both newcomer and Aboriginal elders/leaders expressed the view that both communities are communal in nature, are more cultural in values and bonds, with customs and traditions that are deeply rooted in spiritual ceremonies.

Both groups were asked the same pattern of questions about their knowledge of each other prior to coming into contact.

From the newcomer leaders' perspective, seven out of the nine leaders had some limited knowledge about Aboriginal people. One newcomer leader illustrated that before coming to Canada, he was interested about the realities of marginalized people in North America and therefore, he had taken university courses about Native people in North America.

“Looking back at the history of indigenous people in North America, I saw them as glorified and dignified peoples, but also as victims of mass genocide and the recipient of pure evil. I must admit, when I first came to Canada, I had a different impression in my mind about indigenous peoples. I expected to see a proud people, powerful and glorious, not to say that they are not, but when I came to Canada I saw the degrading treatment that indigenous peoples received at the hand of the white people, the non-indigenous peoples. This shameful history often gets cast aside and is systematically kept hidden from the wider population. The vast majority of Canadians and new Canadians, I believe, are kept ignorant and isolated from this - all to serve a very carefully calculated purpose – continuations of colonization. My own country had also been colonized by the Europeans, so I am no stranger to colonization and its damaging effects.” (NL3)

Another participant had no idea that there were Aboriginals in Canada. He thought the country was predominantly populated by White people.

“When you see the immigration officer is a white person, the visa officer is another white person, the people from the embassy are white people, you simply assume that the country is dominated by white people.” (NL 1)

Prior to coming here one of the leaders had heard some negative information about Aboriginal people from relatives who lived here while another one was aware of 'Red Indians' in North America and he expected them to be traditional.

It also emerged that many of the newcomer leaders had already taken courses on intercultural learning or trainings about Aboriginal people. One of the participants said that these learnings opened his eyes to the truth about Aboriginal people and the negative perceptions of them held by mainstream society. He also learnt about them at his workplace, through the employee training organized by the Aboriginal Education Department in Winnipeg.

"From international stand point of view, we regard Canada as "peacemakers", but my first year at the University of Winnipeg, I had learned the history of residential schools and how that impacted and continue to impact many generation of Aboriginal people." (NL 6).

Aboriginal leaders had little knowledge of where the diverse newcomers were coming from, however, they empathized with those who had to escape their homeland due to violence, wars or chronic poverty.

"To leave your whole life, your history, your family and everything you owned behind and try to settle into a new country with strange cultures and complicated history, full of unhealed wounds, is difficult for them." (AL 5).

The leaders were worried that many people have been showing up in their neighbourhoods without anyone preparing them to relate to the people living there or at least building some bridges between the different groups. They were confused about what countries or parts of the world the newcomers came from, what issues they came with and how they could settle into their neighbourhood. One of the elders remarked;

"We do not know anything about them but we would like to know, we would like to introduce them into our people, our neighbourhoods and our families, but no one seems to acknowledge our existence on the land."(AL5).

They further stressed that they were interested in building a better relationships with newcomers but they were themselves newcomers on their own land and no one provided them support to in settle into the city

"Those Aboriginal newcomers have a lot of challenges and there is no immigration office that is providing them with support because they are not emigrating from another country. Yet, their challenges and sufferings might even be worse and yes there are common grounds and common challenges between both groups". (AL 1)

Issue: 2 Negative Perceptions

Both Aboriginal and newcomer leaders, including some elders, expressed the view that distorted perceptions; stereotyping and discrimination have negative impacts on their communities, individually and collectively. They were in agreement that these

biases were a problem that were preventing relationships in reality and that there were too many tensions in the community between the two groups.

“Tensions and prejudice exist and are a sad reality. Before they arrive in Canada, newcomers are told negative things about Aboriginal people, and it does not stop even when they come in through major cities like Toronto. I believe that this is deliberately done by the government to separate minorities, stopping them from recognizing the commonalities in their oppression, so they do not proactively demand equality and change. Basically, it is a tactic to keep the marginalized in perpetual subordination.” (AL 9).

A newcomer leader also affirmed that these negative perceptions of each other are in fact what is preventing positive relationships from happening in the community. He recalled the negative feedback he received from people in his community when they discovered that he lived amongst Aboriginal people in the north end. His friends refused to visit him or come to his house as they were worried about being attacked by Aboriginal people. They said things like, “you have decided to live in the north end; your life is done”. He believes that such perceptions prevent positive relationships, and suggests efforts should be made to eradicate them.

Another female newcomer leader thought that Aboriginal people experience rejection and tend to internalize their anger. She recalls how her young daughter had asked her why Aboriginal people behave negatively on the bus and how she had explained that it all stems from oppression. She believed that the immigrant community is largely unaware of the Aboriginal experience, and therefore “they do not know where the anger Aboriginal people express is coming from.” Another male newcomer leader also thought that Aboriginal people are discriminated against and newcomers have negative perceptions of them. He recalled a scenario where his friend was displeased because he had brought his Aboriginal colleague as a guest to dinner. He had to let his friend know that the Aboriginal person was of good conduct and is his daughter’s teacher.

Almost all newcomer leaders said that they noticed that White people treat Aboriginals differently. One participant claims that when she tells White people that she lives downtown, they remark that “oh, that’s a dangerous place.”

Issue 3: Interaction

Many of the leaders from both groups observed that there are tensions between these two communities, and because of the tensions, there is no interaction. One Aboriginal leader mentioned the aspect of competition for resources, jobs and housing. He believes that newcomers have options because they are resettling, “they have support here and many organizations help newcomers.” He also believes that newcomers advance faster than his community because they come with skills and

qualifications, so it is easier for them to navigate the system. One Aboriginal female leader believes that the reason that there are no interactions is due to the negative stereotyping of Aboriginal people and that most of the tensions are based on jealousy.

“Aboriginal people are angry that newcomers get more help from the government than we do. We are even more angry that the government is using up resources meant for Aboriginal people (land etc.), and they are left with limited recourses.” (AL 7).

The increase population of newcomers in the downtown and north end is inevitable and that poses many challenges for indigenous people living in those areas. The perception is that ‘the pie gets smaller and smaller’ as more and more newcomers arrive. Another Aboriginal leader stated that there are tensions between both groups, because both groups are pitted against each other for limited resources.

“We’re fighting for the same limited resources, (for example) the new building on Isabel street, IRCOM House Two, the government has given that building to newcomers and it is good that newcomers are getting housing, but one must ask who used to live in that building? Now that building is for newcomers and this is a good example of displacement.” (AL 2).

Another female Aboriginal leader likens the competition between newcomers and Aboriginal people to the ‘Hunger Games’ movie. Both groups are pitted against each other for resources, and only the fittest survive.

However a newcomer leader rejects the idea that newcomers are in competition with Aboriginal people and claims that newcomers are coming from poor backgrounds and vying with everyone for the same jobs.

“I believe strongly that we are competing against everybody else in the society, including other newcomers. It is just that when we come to this country we are coming with sense of urgent to establish here and make a good life for our families and very often we don’t get jobs in our field right away and that’s why you see doctors who are taxi drivers.” (NL 4).

Another female newcomer leader thought that the social system is all they have to depend on. She claims that the saying, “do not give a man fish, but teach him how to fish”, comes to mind in analyzing the system’s treatment of Aboriginal people. She asserts that the “system is doling out handouts and not providing opportunities for Aboriginal people. She thinks that the system was designed to keep Aboriginal people dependent. “History shows that they were originally a self-sufficient people but because of oppression, Aboriginal people are marginalized in their own land.”

Issue 4: Commonalities

Despite the negative perceptions that each group has of the other, there was some understanding that these two communities are experiencing similar challenges as minorities. The participants spoke about the social marginalization and exclusion they

felt which continues to undermine their efforts for community development. A newcomer leader stated that both groups face similar social challenges;

“We both face discrimination, high rate of unemployment, we have similar experience of interrelation of oppressions, we are both minorities, we are fighting and competing for same resources, so when it comes to social issues, we face the same issue, yet we view each other differently.”

One Aboriginal leader noted that these communities are vulnerable and encounter many challenges, particularly the youth;

“Our youth are discriminated, because of our skin color they are systematically discriminated against by the school administration, the teachers and even the principals. They are humiliated, bullied and made fun of because of their skin color or how they don’t fit the school culture.”

5. Analysis of the emerging issues across all the respondents

The difficulties faced by both Aboriginal and newcomer youth represent a significant challenge for creating positive relationships in Winnipeg’s inner city. Both groups are at risk of social exclusion and frequently experience prejudice and discrimination. Negative treatment of the youth built on this prejudice and discrimination is a major obstacle to their interaction and the successful building of positive relationships.

Newcomer and Aboriginal parents also collectively stated that the experience of racial discrimination against each other negatively affects them socially, psychologically, mentally and physically, causing distress and a feeling of hopelessness. In addition, newcomer parents stated that they frequently find themselves marginalized from the English-speaking mainstream society and develop a sense of inferiority. Majority of newcomer parents reported having an experience of prejudice and micro aggression (from verbal abuse to racially motivated harassment, name calling to physical harassment). Notably, both parent groups in this study experienced multiple forms of prejudice compared to the youth and elders/leaders.

Most of the newcomer parent respondents reported to have had little exposure to Aboriginal people; with some saying they have had absolutely no interaction with Aboriginal people who are their neighbors. .

Most newcomer parents indicated they maintain existing stereotypes that Aboriginal people engage in criminal activity. There are no interventions to address these perceptions and the newcomers internalize the fear of people who are often the subject of ingrained marginalization.

Our findings suggest that Winnipeg’s inner city neighborhood is more divided than we may be willing to admit. The division is rooted in identity and existing stereotypes that are perpetuated by the mainstream population and media. Often it is the clash of these enduring stereotyping and racist discrimination that makes the disengagement so

persistent. Widespread stereotyping has sowed the seeds for the polarized neighborhoods that exist today between these two communities. This is the result of misappropriation of information for both communities as well as in the media. Stereotypes play a significant role in our thinking and interaction with other people.

Often public assumptions are linked to perceived racial identities and these perceived stereotypes could become evil when it results in harmful consequences such as barrier for community interaction. Media, which could otherwise serve to educate a misinformed public, fails to embrace this opportunity and instead perpetuate stereotypes, which reinforce a particular image, providing an enduring basis for hatred. The lack of interactions between these two communities today and the risks of continued isolation highlight the urgent and necessary need to create safe spaces for dialogue. A failure to do so risks exacerbating the existing problems discussed above; fuelling a growing sentiment of alienation towards each other; and pushing more youth towards the use of more violent means.

While talking to the youth in the focus group discussions, a large number of youth both newcomers and Aboriginals acknowledge that the existing relationship between them is weak. The youth are aware and are able to pinpoint exactly the root causes of their limited relationship. Yet, they appear hesitant to challenge their individualities in order to debunk the myth and eradicate stereotypes towards each other. What I have gathered by talking to the youth is that they are actually uncertain about strangers and what interacting with this stranger might entail. Newcomer youth, particularly those who are new or have been here for less than 3 years have stated that it is common a behavior of them to avoid interacting with other youth outside of their circle of friends. These youth not interacting with other youth especially Aboriginal youth is a defensive mechanism; they simply do not want to be judged or made fun of due to their pronunciation or lack of understanding of the English language. The norm is to sit every class and do not ask or say anything while avoiding any eye contact with the teacher or classmates. Although, many of the established newcomers have admitted that they too have been invisible in their own schools and communities they recognize that other factors beyond being invisible contribute to the lack of interaction between newcomers and Aboriginal youth.

Both Aboriginal elders and newcomer leaders displayed an eagerness to dialogue, a willingness to foster relationship and ultimately to eliminate stereotypes and negative perceptions. Yet, providing opportunities and space for dialogue between these communities has not been seen as a priority for most policy makers. Aboriginal and newcomer youth aspire to contribute positively to their own community, yet the continued poverty, insecurity, and the challenge of finding fulfilling educational careers and meaningful employment, hinders their ability to do so.

The youth's recognition of their ability to speak with fellow youth on issues of mutual concern is an invaluable starting point for promoting understanding of different perspectives. Dialogue within communities as well as between communities is significant to humanize each other group by reflecting their shared realities and similarities.

This study highlights the important role of civil society and policy makers to create and promote appropriate spaces for youth to engage in dialogue and work on their vision for a peaceful, inclusive and thriving community. However, without a serious and sincere effort to address the root causes of poverty in the inner city and without much improvement in addressing underlying issues such as better housing and more employment opportunities for these marginalized communities, the impact of implementing these suggestions will be limited.

6. Recommendations

Aboriginal people welcomed settlers to this land centuries ago to share in its bounties and resources for the good of all. While the settlers brought different values and cultural traits, Aboriginal people continue to maintain their identity, celebrate their culture, their traditions and way of life. It is in this spirit of maintaining one's own culture while celebrating with others that many newcomer leaders and Aboriginal elders have suggested is a basis for intermingling.

Both communities agreed that newcomers need opportunities to be better informed about the histories and contemporary issues of Aboriginal peoples during their orientation period (first six weeks in Winnipeg). Newcomers have mentioned that the orientation about Aboriginal people that they receive at the Entry program is insufficient and does not paint a true picture of the complexities of the contemporary issues facing Aboriginal people. Although, many of the newcomer respondents live in inner city neighbourhoods which are dominated by Aboriginal people, they were not informed about the history, culture and traditions of their neighbors.

Aboriginal leaders also feel they have not been given a role in the orientation of newcomers and would like to be included in the welcoming process. They said they thought this immediate and early on contact will address some of the prejudice and stereotypes newcomers form of Aboriginal people soon after arrival in Winnipeg.

Aboriginal Elders and newcomer leaders in Winnipeg are invaluable voices for their concerns and those of their communities. In this study they provided unique, first hand perspectives on the ongoing stereotypes, conflicts and violence that young people in their communities face. These elders and leaders offered viable solutions and described the serious consequences of inaction on their recommendations. However, their concerns differed between groups and depended on the nature and status of each

group's experiences. Both groups suggested moving forward with a focus on the communities' commonalities. It is necessary to avoid generating false hopes and expectations that the situation of these communities is going to be vastly improved by creating cross cultural programs alone. **There is a need for holistic and cross-cutting programs that take into account the necessity of working at multiple levels of society (youth, families, community leaders and elders) and creating programs that directly target youth in the inner city.** Furthermore, the new programs must take into account the necessity for location specific implementation. In the introductory stages, needs assessments should be situation-based, age-specific and participatory, and should investigate the resourcefulness of young people targeted.

This study proposes that Aboriginal and newcomer youth difficulties in dealing with the stereotypes and negative perception need to be further studied so that the youth can receive an adequate and culturally relevant learning opportunities. This suggestion is particularly noteworthy because newcomer youth particularly those who are new (less than three years since arriving in Canada), are vulnerable to racism and often unable to seek institutional support due to limited English proficiency

It has been suggested that school administrations take an active role in preventing vulnerable youth from being bullied and racially assaulted, while creating opportunities for interaction between Aboriginal and newcomer youth. This will encourage youth to speak up, share their thoughts and experiences, and feel empowered.

All stakeholders that have the desire to address what these youth face must involve young people. Young people tend to be more tolerant and open minded than their parents and are more inclined to learn about the various ways to connect and build relationships with others. However, any initiatives or programs that bridge the gap between these two communities need to be supported not only by the schools, service providers and the governments but also by the community as a whole.

Both Aboriginal and newcomer leaders suggest the need for individual elders and leaders who have an interest in bringing these two communities together to take a role in shaping the direction of future consultations between these communities. As the time progresses, the need for dialogue and understanding is becoming more apparent. Support and encouragement from the community, especially the elders, and leaders goes a long way to stimulate participation in the cross cultural learning while also creating new patterns of positive interactions.

A majority of the respondents live in the inner city and have first-hand experience of the complexities of the situation both communities face. They are interested in seeing grassroots programs that break down the barriers that have been preventing neighbors from coming together and sharing a vision that is based on the wellbeing of their neighborhood.

There was also a general consensus on the need for cross-cultural exchange opportunities between both Aboriginal and Newcomer communities, in order to foster positive relationships and interconnectedness. One participant from the focus group of Newcomer leaders asserted that “both groups should exchange ideas and culture, and this can be done through organizations such as the Welcome Place and IRCOM”. A Newcomer youth participant also advocated cultural exchanges, stating that “we should talk to Indigenous People and get to know their culture”. More than two participants from the Aboriginal Leaders focus group agree that the culture and experiences of both communities be inter-shared.

The cross-cultural experience sharing should focus on the shared experiences of colonization, oppression and marginalization between both communities. One Newcomer leader insisted that both Aboriginal people and Newcomers have a history of being colonized in their homelands, and experience the same trauma of colonization and oppression. Aboriginal youth participants also stated that “Native people are not that different from Newcomers. They (Newcomers) need to understand that being Native is just like being a Newcomer. Both groups face the same prejudices, judgements and stereotypes”.

Participants of the focus groups also emphasized the importance of dialogue in building positive relations between Aboriginal and Newcomer communities. Several of the participants from the Aboriginal parents’ focus group suggest that both communities engage in greater dialogue about Aboriginal history. “We should all talk about where we once were as a people, where we are now, and where we would like to go”. Participants of the focus group of Aboriginal leaders also postulate that community leaders and organizations should share stories about the community and how it was built by Aboriginal people. They further recommend that this particular project should be supported by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. One Newcomer youth participant recommended that Aboriginal persons and organizations be invited to schools to present about Aboriginal history, culture, and background.

Participants from both groups suggest that programs and workshops that promote awareness of both Aboriginal and Newcomer cultures be created. One Aboriginal parent recommended that toolkits or similar documents, that promote the understanding of different cultures and communities in Manitoba be created. She further stated that these resources be placed at Welcome Place, Manitoba Start and other organizations that receive newcomers during their arrival. Newcomer youth also propose more programs that foster interaction between Aboriginal and newcomer youth, like those operated by IRCOM and the Boys and Girls Club. Likewise, Aboriginal youth implore Newcomers to attend ‘Folklorama ’and try to learn about the different cultures that exist in Manitoba.

All the participants in the focus groups suggest that partnerships should be established between Aboriginal organizations and Newcomer organizations. They recommend that both communities hold special events like 'potluck dinners', which would foster awareness about the diverse cultures within both communities and provide a platform for the elders and leaders to engage and strategize on how to improve their relationship.

A summary of the suggested ideas for grassroots activities include:

- cross-cultural events,
- a community newspaper that promotes positive stories,
- neighborhood ambassadors made up of newcomers and Aboriginal people that welcome new residents and
- also organize neighborhood events that bring communities together,
- a community based youth program that brings newcomer youth and Aboriginal youth together and finally,
- a program that allows newcomers to see first-hand how Aboriginal people live in the reserves and gain hands-on experience of what living in the reserve looks like. This will allow newcomers to see the challenges and opportunities that exist for Aboriginal people in the reserves?

7. Conclusion

Majority of the newcomer respondents stated that they have encountered many difficulties in adjusting to life in Canada. This includes culture shock, social isolation, and loss of self-identity, loss of status, loneliness, discrimination, change in family dynamics, limited day care, a different educational system, and lack of foreign credential recognition, exclusion from workplaces, access to health care, housing, and settlement procedures. These challenges generally affect almost every newcomer to Winnipeg or Canada but some of these challenges affect each newcomer differently and the challenges depend on their needs and available support.

On the other hand, Aboriginal people in Winnipeg are at greater risk of being victimized by violent crimes or assault, and involvement in the criminal justice system. For instance, young Indigenous women are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence.

Both groups acknowledged that Aboriginal people have not recovered from the tragic history and the damage caused by residential school system. Yet, both of these marginalized communities continue to be vulnerable and exposed to poverty. Coincidentally, Aboriginal people and Newcomers live in the same low-income neighborhoods; but due to fear, stereotypes and negative preconceptions about each other, there is no connection or interaction between them.

Through the focus groups and interviews, we found that there is lack of knowledge and interaction between newcomers and Aboriginal people but that both groups acknowledged that there is an opportunity to foster relationships that might close the divide between them.

Both groups highlighted the need to have cultural events and cultural sharing that engage diverse cultures on a common ground to interact, and share their histories, experiences, personal stories and to learn to honor their differences, eradicate negative stereotypes and co-exist as friendly Manitoban neighbors.

8. References

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