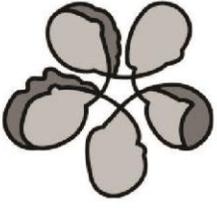


NBDMC TDMC



2016 -
2017

annual
report

Thank you to our funders

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre and its satellite office, the Timmins & District Multicultural Centre, provide newcomer settlement services for the region from Parry Sound in the south to the James Bay Coast in the north—20 per cent of Ontario's land mass.

In addition, we operate the North Bay Local Immigration Partnership initiative, the North Bay Newcomer Network, and the Timmins Local Immigration Partnership.

We are grateful for operational funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

Additional funding from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, the City of North Bay, Timmins Economic Development Corporation, Ontario150, MCI Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program and the Ontario Trillium Foundation is very much appreciated. We also thank those who chose to make charitable donations to us in the past year.

A message from the Chair of the Board

Continuing change may be the theme for 2017 as we helped organize immigration forums in Sundridge and Kirkland Lake to help smaller communities get involved, served the Syrian refugee families that came to our catchment area, and initiated discussions inside both our Timmins and North Bay Local Immigration Partnerships to expand their circles of influence.

A significant constant was the continuing success of the annual International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination project which runs every year in the North Bay and Timmins regions. Teachers and school administrators continue to embrace the project, which has been responsible for anti-racism education reaching thousands of people since its inception. I want to thank Tom Baby in Timmins and Meg Ramore in North Bay for ensuring the project continues to thrive.

Executive Director Deborah Robertson led a strategic planning process that involved clients, staff and board members, and that plan will guide agency initiatives over the next two years.

We lost the second of our original three board members as Joanne B nard left the board after serving since its inception in 2008, and years before that as a board member of the founding agency, Young People’s Press. Thank you, Joanne, for your many years of valued service and wisdom.

Only Gary Gould remains of the original three, as former board chair Susan Church resigned her position the previous year, also after many years of much appreciated service with both NBDMC and YPP.

Susan Pratt came on board to replace Joanne, and we look forward to working with her in the years to come. Current board members are: Simon Blakeley, Natalya Brown, George Burton, Don Curry, Marcus  tienne, Gary Gould, Brian Marks, Susan Pratt and Dave Wolfe.

Apart from board meetings, I was able to attend the immigration forums in Sundridge and Kirkland Lake, the NBDMC-sponsored Drumming and Dance Festival at Summer in the Park in North Bay, a Timmins Local Immigration Partnership meeting in October, and board strategic planning sessions. I also enjoyed numerous conversations with Deborah over the year as we bounced ideas around and discussed future initiatives.

We were all very sad to learn of the untimely death of John Santarossa, economic development officer for the Central Almaguin Economic Development Association. John had a passion for everything he was involved in and it was very evident in his work on immigration. It was a testament to his organizing ability that the immigration forum was held in Sundridge shortly after his death.

We thank Stacie Fiddler of the Labour Market Group for stepping in to help plan what turned out to be a successful forum, despite John’s absence. Chris Nicholson of the CAEDA board ably represented the organization at the event.

Sundridge, Kirkland Lake and many other smaller communities now have a presence on the new Northeastern Ontario immigration portal, a project led by NBDMC and its Timmins office and the Timmins Economic Development Corporation. Check it out at www.neoimmigration.ca

Don Curry

Board of Directors

Don Curry, Chair
Simon Blakeley
Natalya Brown
George Burton
Marcus Étienne
Gary Gould
Brian Marks
Susan Pratt
Dave Wolfe

Staff

North Bay

Deborah Robertson, Executive Director
Vindra Sahadeo, Program Coordinator
Meg Ramore, LIP Coordinator
Cindy Tibbles, Settlement Worker & Volunteer Coordinator
Taslina Ahmed, Settlement Worker
Sara Falah, Settlement Worker
Tara Gillies, Office Manager
Candace Ghent, Positive Spaces Research Project Coordinator
Brittany Pentland, Outreach & Events Intern
Ziyaad Rajabalee, ESL Teacher

Timmins

Tom Baby, LIP Coordinator
Chantal Boudreau, Settlement Worker & Volunteer Coordinator

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www.nbdmc.ca

Timmins & District Multicultural Centre

119 Pine Street, Suite 10
Timmins, ON P4N 2K3
www.timminsmulticultural.ca

A message from the Executive Director

“With the new day there comes new strength, and new thoughts.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

This past year has seen new funding opportunities and many exciting challenges.

In the year Canada turned 150 years old, we were able to contribute to the local celebrations by organizing a Drum and Dance Festival in partnership with the Summer in the Park Committee and funding gratefully received from Ontario150. Featuring African and Indigenous art, this new partnership allowed us to showcase some amazing drumming and dance performances, and facilitated four workshops that introduced youth to drums from all over the world. Despite the unseasonably chilly weather over the August long weekend, the festival was well attended and a great success.

It was a privilege to be selected to take part in the artsVest program this year. This initiative, a flagship program for Business for the Arts, allowed us access to training, tools and mentorship opportunities regarding fundraising and sponsorship opportunities. We were also able to leverage matching funds from the sponsors of our Drum and Dance Festival - Clark Marketing, Caisse Populaire and CanAfrique. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors again for their amazing support!

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre received Seed funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for 12 months. We welcomed aboard Candace Ghent in September, who is tasked with researching the needs of the LGBTQ2S+ community, with a focus on LGBTQ2S+ newcomers and refugees. Candace will be conducting a thorough assessment of what is needed to ensure safe and inclusive services locally and will present their report to the community in September next year.

We are happy to welcome two summer students, funded by the Canada Summer Jobs program, to the team in June. Each student, one in Timmins and one in North Bay, will be providing support 12 weeks over the summer period. This was wonderful news as in the past we have only been approved for 8 weeks per location. In North Bay, the focus was on support for the Dance and Drumming festival while in Timmins the focus was on the Welcome to Timmins Night event in September. The value of these students is immense, who are also able to provide much needed reception/front desk assistance in addition to targeted program support. Thank you to the Canada Summer Jobs program for their continued support.

Next year will be the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre's 10th anniversary. I am preparing to reflect on all we have accomplished during that time and focus on how much more can be achieved in the next 10 years.

Deborah Robertson

A message from the Program Coordinator

The first step towards change is awareness- Nathaniel Branden

This year was filled with new challenges and experiences that allowed for growth and development in many ways.

The settlement department successfully guided some of our Syrian families through the end of their sponsorship period and into becoming independent. A new and enlightening experience for our staff and one with many lessons learned.

For the second consecutive year we hosted a Canadian Citizenship test and ceremony in North Bay. This served to reduce a tremendous barrier for our clients, many of whom have difficulty in getting to Sudbury for this test and ceremony.

This year we also launched ESL by Skype, an initiative of the settlement department aimed at meeting the needs of clients who live outside of North Bay and do not have access to the North Bay adult ESL class. With new funding from IRCC we were able to hire a part time ESL instructor who conducts classes by Skype from our boardroom.

We also welcomed this year our temporary part time Arabic speaking settlement worker, a lifeline for our many new Arabic speaking clients with little or no English.

More staff changes saw us welcoming a new Settlement Worker in Timmins and saying thank you to Maryline Pillet for filling in for Cindy Tibbles while on maternity leave. We welcomed Cindy back in the fall.

Vindra Sahadeo

A message from the Settlement Worker & Volunteer Coordinator

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

After spending an incredible year with my beautiful son Jack, I returned to work in October of 2017. Although it is difficult to be apart from my son, my colleagues and superiors have made it a particularly easy transition. Thank you for the warm welcome back. I also want to thank Maryline Pillet, acting settlement worker, for her phenomenal work in my absence.

Upon my return it was brought to my attention that we are celebrating our 10 year anniversary (wow!). Upon reflection, I believe we can all look back on our journey as an agency with a sense of pride, triumph and an ever-growing hunger for positive change.

While clients do continue to face discrimination within our community, the predominant story I hear from clients is one of strength and empowerment. We must not neglect the strength there is in our diversity. Newcomers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our communities, and it is our role as settlement workers to help shine a light on these strengths. We must approach our work within the context of strengths versus needs.

As trusted advisors we must do work with our clients, and not for our clients. We must allow for our clients to have the opportunity to learn, and to not build dependencies. Newcomers to Canada need to be given the opportunity to find their place within our communities and to feel as though they are equal contributors in all aspects of life. This is the goal of integration and I am very privileged and honored to be a part of such a remarkable journey.

Looking ahead to our next fiscal year, we hope to make even greater positive change within our community. I want to say a sincere thank you to our volunteers for all their hard work and dedication. We look forward to orienting and training new volunteers in 2018.

Many thanks to all our staff, volunteers and board members.

Cindy Tibbles

A message from the Newcomer Settlement Program Worker

“The secret of getting ahead is getting started”. - Mark Twain

It has been a productive, prosperous and certainly busy year for the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre. Newcomers to Canada bring rich professional, personal and cultural experiences and are eager to make their contribution to the community. The Centre provides valuable services for newcomer families each year. It is wonderful to see the Centre be a life-changing stop for many newcomers on their journey to becoming valuable members in the community.

Our programs addressed the complex settlement needs of our clients. We continued to offer group sessions, events and activities that are intended to meet our clients' needs and interests. Highlights of the year include our English as a Second Language program by Skype. This program was available only for clients with no English or a very low level of English, who are not already enrolled in ESL or LINC and who live outside of North Bay. This program is delivered by Skype to clients in their homes. Transparent Language ESL software and Syrian Families Networking events were other new initiatives we commenced and were well-received.

We continued to work in partnership with other community service providers to support newcomers to North Bay and the vicinity. Our efforts to reach out to the newcomers in the outlying area continues since they face greater challenges to settle in. We have created and maintained new contacts since it is crucial to reach out to those who need our services the most.

The year ahead promises new opportunities and growth. We thank our funders for their investment in the agency. Most especially, we thank our clients for using the services of the Centre to support their new life in Canada, and for speaking so highly about the value they receive. As we celebrate our 10th anniversary next year, we take pride in profiling the Centre's accomplishments and the important difference we make in the lives of newcomers.

Taslina Ahmed

A message from the Syrian Settlement Program Worker

“On every front there are a clear answers out there that can make this country stronger, but we’re going to break through the fear and the frustration people are feeling. Our job is to make sure that even as we make progress, that we are also giving people a sense of hope and vision for the future”.

- Barack Obama

I am thankful and proud to be a part of such an amazing team of staff, volunteers and clients in the year of 2017. Together we have worked to identify common challenges.

I started working with NBDMC in January of last year, as an Arabic Speaker Settlement Worker. As a new Settlement Worker I got the opportunity to work one-on-one with clients on settlement cases. My Executive Director, Program Coordinator, and specially my colleagues who are there for me regardless helped me fit in perfectly. Together we have organized many activities throughout the year that were very beneficial to the clients.

I have had the opportunity to help clients in so many different ways. With that experience comes learning as well as challenges, which have allowed me to grow as an individual and as a team player. It is a wonderful feeling to be able to interpret for clients. Interpreting is a crucial service for clients so they can be understood and advocate for their needs.

Our newcomer community overcame many challenges, achieved many triumphs and continues to break down barriers to integration. As we all know, the settlement process is highly individualized, so we assist clients at all stages of the journey. Common needs include: child care, housing, job search assistance, language training, accessing government services and benefits, citizenship and immigration services, translation and interpretation, rights and responsibilities, and access to local community services. We continue to provide monthly settlement visits to the Parry Sound District, Timmins, Sundridge, and South River. These would not have been possible without the generosity of the YMCA Employment Services, Parry Sound Public School and the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board in South River, who offer us office space to meet up with clients.

Finally, I continue to appreciate the support that is surrounding me from all the staff here at the North Bay and District and Multicultural. May God’s blessing continue to be upon us, and best of all a better future to come.

Sara Falah

A message from the North Bay Newcomer Network (NNN) / Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Coordinator

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” - Lilla Watson

The North Bay Newcomer Network had an exciting year of activities in 2017. As each year goes by it becomes more and more clear that there is much work to do to ensure newcomers are truly welcome in the North Bay community. This year LIP focused on various efforts to continue the work of creating and maintaining a welcoming North Bay. I will highlight two of these activities; the North Bay Drum and Dance Festival, and the North Bay Positive Spaces Research Project.

North Bay Drum and Dance Festival / Festival de tambour et de danse de North Bay:

During the Civic holiday weekend 2017 the North Bay Newcomer Network and the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre in partnership with CanAfrique Theatre hosted the North Bay Drum and Dance Festival / Festival de tambour et de danse de North Bay. This project received nearly \$20,000 in funding from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's Ontario 150 Grant and around \$10,000 from local sponsors (ArtsVest, Caisse Populaire, Summer in the Park, Réseau du Nord). The two day festival was held during the North Bay Summer in the Park Festival on the SITP grounds. It was free and open to all. In honour of Ontario's 150th Anniversary this exciting opportunity grew the publics' awareness of newcomers' and francophones' contributions to shaping Ontario's culture, people, and history over the past 150 years.

The festival showcased the talent of drummers and dancers from various parts of Ontario, representing newcomer, francophone and multicultural communities. We presented a series of performances featuring both professional artists and young up-and-coming artists. In addition we offered two youth drum and dance workshops entitled "Dreams and Possibilities". The workshops, encouraged youth to become more involved in creative works and helped them feel valued, confident and proud of who they are and their cultures. Drumming is a universal language that allows people to transcend their differences. The echo of the drum calls for unity. Bringing Northern Ontarians together in this unique way promoted the inclusion of newcomers to Canada, multicultural groups, and francophones, ultimately growing community pride and engagement.

The media coverage of the event itself (and during the run up to the event), was also extremely successful in exposing the community to local diversity and demonstrating how different cultures contribute to a vibrant community. Check out some of the media coverage here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2iAocei6B0&t=3s>,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhBuJn4W1yc>

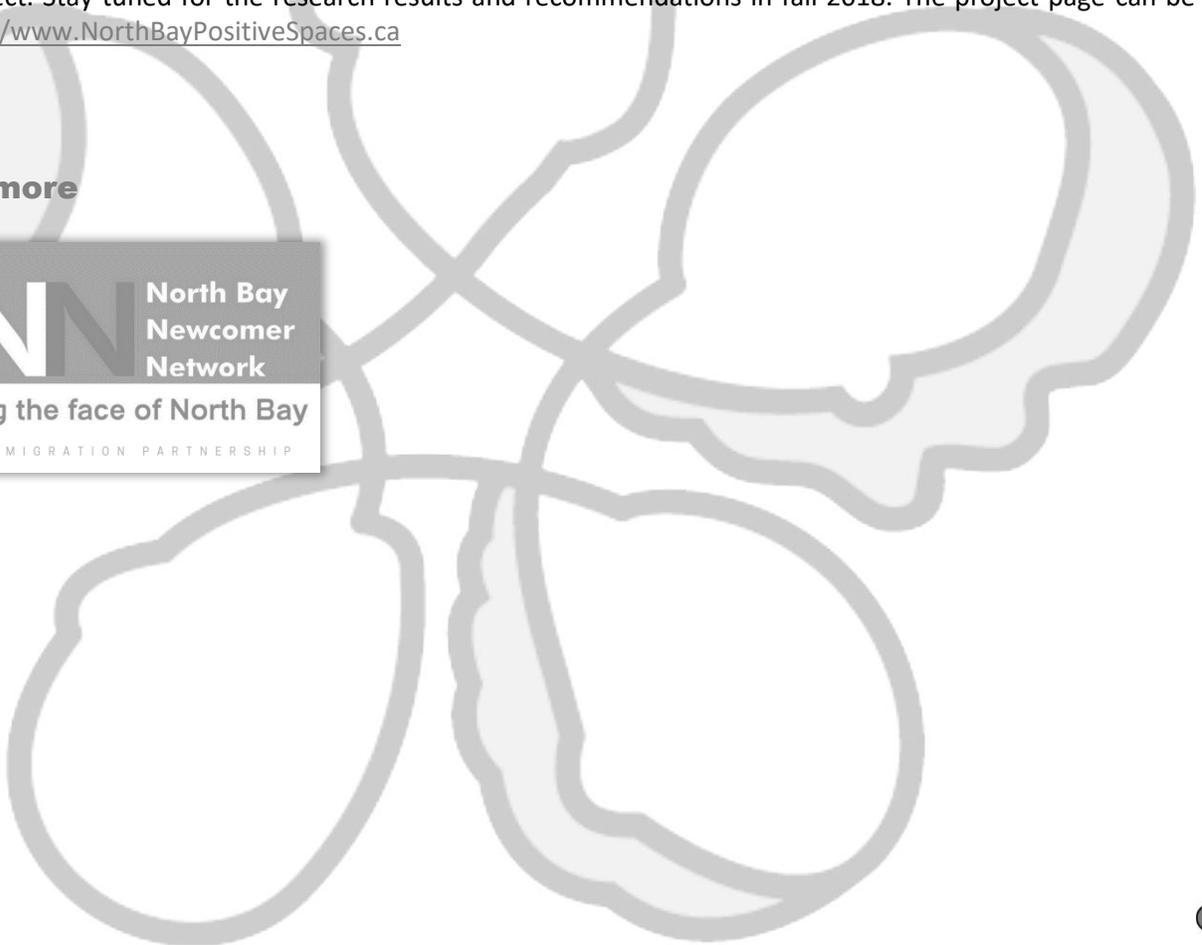
The North Bay Positive Spaces Research Project:

The North Bay LIP has done a lot of work over the last several years to educate and offer training opportunities to the North Bay community on positive spaces for *LGBTQ2S+ newcomers and refugees. As a result, the North Bay LIP, and by extension the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre have become local leaders in this type of work, despite not offering specific LGBTQ2S+ services.

It is well documented that LGBTQ2S+ persons experience a myriad of challenges. These challenges are exacerbated by North Bay's small and rural/isolated location. This has created a local LGBTQ2S+ population that has low visibility, few active community groups/hubs, scarce/inaccessible educational resources, few trained positive/safe spaces, lack of ally groups, and no safe spaces listings. And most importantly, LGBTQ2S+ newcomers/refugees experience additional challenges of language, cultural differences, immigration experiences, and possible trauma. It was clear there was a need to determine what services local LGBTQ2S+ persons (with an emphasis on newcomers and refugees) want/need from service provider organizations (SPOs). Based on our clear designation as a safe and positive space, our profile in the community, and current referrals despite lack of service, we were well positioned to lead this research.

With \$72,500 of Ontario Trillium Foundation funding over 12 months (September 2017-September 2018) the project coordinator will explore what LGBTQ2S+ persons need from North Bay SPOs to receive appropriate, safe/ inclusive services. LGBTQ2S+ persons' lived experiences, stories and recommendations will be at the center, informing all facets of the project. Stay tuned for the research results and recommendations in fall 2018. The project page can be found here: <http://www.NorthBayPositiveSpaces.ca>

Meg Ramore



A message from the Timmins Settlement Worker and Volunteer Coordinator

“We embrace diversity because by doing so our understanding of our world and our emotional and intellectual horizons are expanded, making us better advocates for our clients and better members of the communities in which we work and live.” Michael Tanenbaum

I began working as a Settlement Worker and Volunteer Coordinator for the Timmins and District Multicultural Centre in January 2017. I grew up in Timmins and had a vast knowledge of the services available to the public. As such, the information I had enabled me to assist many clients to serve with various needs.

I have been fortunate to be a part of several committees including: The Timmins Refugee and Sponsorship Committee, The Timmins Local Immigration Partnership, The Timmins Agency and Networking Group, and the Hub Meeting with Associations and Non-Profits.

The Timmins and Refugee Sponsorship Committee was created by members of the community who sought to assist families affected by the ongoing Syrian crisis. One family arrived in March 2017, and another will be arriving in May 2018. The experience of meeting the family and helping them integrate has affected me personally as well as professionally. People from different walks of life offered to donate various items, as well as their time, and ultimately form a strong friendship. The community as a whole demonstrated why our city is called the “City with the Heart of Gold.”

The Timmins Local Immigration Partnership works collaboratively with community agencies and stakeholders to build capacity and implement programs for the successful integration of newcomers who choose to live in our area. Taking part of these meetings has increased my understanding of the barriers newcomers have and may face in our region. I’m encouraged to see how agencies are working to help newcomers and establish services that will ensure an inclusive community.

I am grateful to be able to assist newcomers from Kirkland Lake to up the coast with various inquiries. Although I am able to travel to some destinations, there are times that I’m not able to thus I’m fortunate to be able to provide services by phone, email and Skype. I have met and heard of many people’s experiences immigrating to Canada.

My colleagues from the North Bay office applied and received funding for English as a Second Language programming as it has been a barrier for newcomers in the North. The program was highly beneficial! I had one Spanish speaking client who could not speak nor understand English. One month of working with the language program, the client was able to converse in English without assistance from technology!

I am immensely grateful for the support I receive from my colleagues from the North Bay and District Multicultural Centre. The staff in North Bay are well versed and experienced within the immigration sphere. From my colleagues support and knowledge I have been able to assist clients with sometimes complex needs and direct them to the appropriate services. In all, I have learned the importance of working collaboratively with other agencies to ensure the successful integration to newcomers in our area.

Chantal Boudreau