

## “Living our vision from the inside out”

The Mennonite New Life Centre is a community based settlement agency, offering a broad range of programs and services for newcomers to Canada. In all that we do, we strive to be a place of welcome, friendship and community, where newcomers and neighbours gather to support each other, learn from each other, and take action together for a more just and compassionate society.

For the Mennonite New Life Centre, our strategic plan is about living our vision from the inside out - strengthening programs and partnerships to support full integration for newcomers, engaging communities in the work of justice and social change, and building organizational capacity and teamwork.

## The Strategic Planning Process

The Mennonite New Life Centre has gone through a period of major change over the past four years. The organization has welcomed new leadership at staff and board levels, and has broadened board membership to reflect greater diversity in terms of skills, perspectives, culture, and community connections. Over the same period, the Centre has more than doubled its budget and staff, adding two new service locations and a variety of new program initiatives, including a heightened focus on community engagement.

In this context, we decided that it was important to re-articulate our vision and mission, in order to guide program evaluation and a strategic planning process. In the spring of 2009, we engaged the consulting firm Harry Cummings and Associates (HCA) to facilitate a participatory process of program review and planning. Guided by input from a board-staff-community steering committee, HCA conducted four focus groups to listen to the experiences of program participants across the organization. An evaluation report captured the voices and suggestions of newcomers from a diversity of languages and cultures, immigration backgrounds and years in Canada. Board and staff reflection on this report led us to identify the following strategic directions to guide our work in 2010-2012.

### Vision

The Mennonite New Life Centre envisions a society in which all people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds participate fully in all aspects of Canadian life. We will model an approach that brings together community engagement and community services, working together with newcomers to reduce insecurity and reach integration, strengthen voices and increase social equality.

### Mission

The Mennonite New Life Centre's mission is to facilitate newcomer settlement and integration through holistic services and community engagement, carried out within a gender justice and anti-oppression framework.

### Objectives

- To assist newcomers to meet integration needs, form social networks, voice priorities and shape their environment through effective advocacy and community organizing.
- To provide caring and professional settlement services that address short and long term needs and aspirations for newcomers.
- To deliver high quality language instruction, employment and child minding services, that support newcomers to fulfill goals and contribute skills to Canada.
- To offer emotional support to newcomers struggling with different kinds of stress or trauma, and to promote resilience, strength and well-being at the individual and community level.

The Mennonite New Life Centre commits to public reporting on this strategic plan. An annual report or report card will summarize progress on each of these three strategic directions. Attend our AGM or watch [www.mnclct.org](http://www.mnclct.org) for an annual update!



## Strong Programs and Partnerships for Full Integration

As programs grow and diversify, we want to stay focused on the long term goal of full integration for newcomers. We will design new programs and community partnerships in such a way as to facilitate full participation of newcomers in all aspects of community life. We commit to using participatory processes to ask newcomers how successful we are in making a difference.

### Key objectives:

- Expand and consolidate programs in high density newcomer neighbourhoods.
- Promote program innovation and cross team collaboration to better support newcomers in overcoming barriers and participating fully in all aspects of Canadian life.
- Build relationships of collaboration and partnership with newcomers themselves and with other community groups, organizations, and institutions. Taking a partnership approach, develop new program initiatives in areas such as employment and legal services.
- Develop participatory processes to monitor and evaluate program outcomes.

## Community Engagement for Social Justice and Social Change

Full integration happens when newcomers participate in shaping their environment, rather than being simply shaped by it. We will use community engagement strategies to involve newcomers in shaping programs and formulating public policy recommendations. We will also work to engage community partners and the broader public.

### Key objectives:

- Develop outreach strategies for program participation and program input.
- Support newcomers to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to be empowered leaders for social change in their communities.
- Work with newcomers and community partners to influence the poverty reduction agenda, putting forward program and policy recommendations to improve access to fair and meaningful employment for newcomers.
- Use media and public education strategies to increase public awareness of the contributions and concerns of newcomers.

## Organizational Capacity

Building organizational capacity and infrastructure is key to organizational effectiveness. In the context of organizational growth, we will work to strengthen teamwork and participatory planning, while building capacity in the areas of finance, human resources, information technology and outreach.

### Key objectives:

- Actively engage a growing staff team in organizational reflection and planning, through all staff meetings and professional development, as well as development of a cross cutting program integration team to lead implementation of organizational vision and strategic plan.
- Hire, orient and support new staff in bringing specialized skills and expertise to strengthen organizational capacity, policy and practice in the areas of Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology and Outreach.
- Complete infrastructure improvements to allow for program growth and accessibility.
- Diversify funding base to support program innovation and organizational stability.

Achieving these strategic goals requires active participation and partnership of board, staff, community partners, and program participants. We need your ideas and input. If you have feedback or suggestions on this strategic plan, please contact us at 416-699-4527 or [mnlct@mnlct.org](mailto:mnlct@mnlct.org).