Annual Report 2017

Mennonite new life centre

Opening Doors

How many doors do you go through in a day? The doors of your home, your workplace, your school, your child's classroom, the supermarket, the gym? What if one day, all the doors were locked? Who would you turn to for help?

While Canada continues to respond to global humanitarian crises by opening its arms to newcomers and refugees, the experiences of many newcomers demonstrate that too often upon arrival, too many doors remain closed: newcomer school children face discrimination in the classroom, young adults struggle to attain their first job, and internationally trained professionals find they need Canadian experience to continue their careers.

In 2017, despite absorbing a funding cut of over $100K by a major funder, the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) remained resilient and opened its doors to thousands of newcomer families in need of support. By bringing together practical assistance, educational tools, emotional and mental health resources and community engagement practices, the MNLCT demonstrates our commitment to newcomer integration and provides the keys to open, not only hearts and minds, but a multitude of "locked doors" that newcomers can face in a new country.

Today, the MNLCT is a member-based community settlement agency that serves newcomers and their families from diverse cultural backgrounds to build community connections, explore their talents and strengths, and to make Canada their home.



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Mission

Our mission is to facilitate newcomer settlement and integration through holistic services and community engagement, carried out within a gender justice and anti-oppression framework.

Vision

We envision 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.

Strategic Direction

Building a Resilient Organization

- Development of strategic alliances and sectorial collaboration.
- Succession planning supporting organizational sustainability.
- Leadership and staff development through the building of strengths in cultural competency, evaluative capacity and cross-program collaboration.
- Diversification of funding streams to include alternative funding models such as social impact bonds and social enterprise.

Designing Responsive Programs

- Conversion of the Community Mental Health Program to a core service.
- Innovation in service delivery model through the development of self-directed, on-line integration content and reaching out to newcomers where they live, work and play.
- Creation of program initiatives that support the economic integration of newcomers.

Maximizing Community Impact

- Development of an adult education framework for community engagement.
- Increased awareness in newcomer communities and the public at large about civic participation, social change, and the value of newcomers to our economy and society.
- Engagement of policy makers through participatory action research to enable systemic change.



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Building a Resilient Organization

Effective leadership guided by a sound governing body while working collaboratively with traditional and nontraditional stakeholders to develop new initiatives in response to an ever changing environment.

Diversification of funding streams

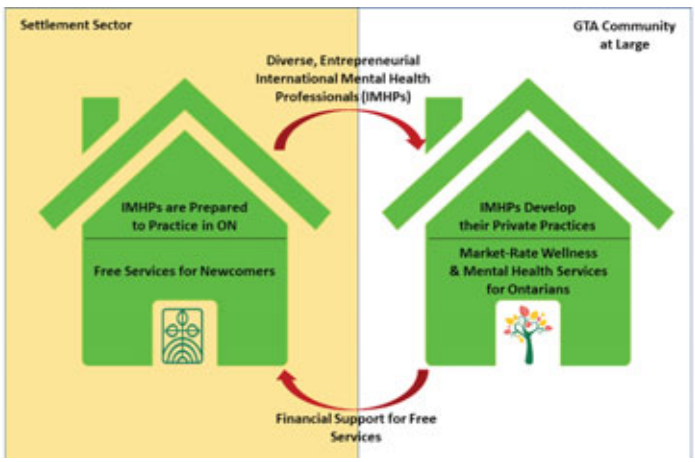
One of the goals in MNLCT's 2014-2018 strategic plan is to not be heavily dependent on any one funder for operational and programming funding. Therefore, the Centre developed programming responses that would meet the needs of participants and went to market to seek funding and support from a number of different sources. These included federal, provincial and municipal funders as well as like-minded organizations. The leadership team wrote approximately 17 proposals and/or letters of intent to over 6 different funding bodies. In 2018, MNLCT was awarded 11 funding grants which will be shared in our 2018 annual report.

Toronto New Life Wellness Place

The Toronto New Life Wellness Place opened its doors on June 17, 2017, offering a broad range of wellness and mental health services within a welcoming, multicultural, and multilingual environment, and bridging the wellness and mental health service gaps that exist in Toronto.

The Wellness Place also offers an opportunity for entrepreneurial internationally trained mental health professionals to receive ongoing professional development and grow their independent practices. Participants in MNLCT's Bridge Training Program for Internationally Trained Mental Health Professionals (BTMH Program) have a place in which to serve clients beyond the scope and resources of the MNLCT.

The Wellness Place is a social enterprise which aims to create a viable business model that will invest in the social services of the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto, leading to a stable, non-directed source of funding. A continuous, value-added loop between the MNLCT and the Wellness Place will enable MNLCT to prepare and support International Mental Health Professionals as they establish their own practices, while the Wellness Place serves the mental health needs of the GTA community and provides financial support to the MNLCT.



Designing Responsive Programs

The design of responsive programs requires innovation, creative thinking and the incorporation of new technologies in service delivery as well as a heightened capacity for data analysis to stay abreast of emerging trends.

Let's PLAY Ultimate! Project

True integration does not happen when newcomers meet only with newcomers, but when newcomers meet and engage with the communities in which they live, work and play. In July, 2017, MNLCT launched the Let's PLAY Ultimate! (frisbee) pilot project to test how to better integrate vulnerable and newcomer youth and their families into their communities. With the support of Ultimate Canada, Toronto Ultimate Club, Elites Ultimate and the TDSB, the pilot ran for six weeks in the Downsview-Roding area, serving these youth aged 8 – 17, and reaching 27 families.

The community came together as newcomer families and youth had the opportunity to learn a new sport, newcomer parents were able to connect with each other, and we engaged non-newcomer youth to act as volunteers and to outreach to newcomer youth and their families. Due to the success of the pilot, the project received funding to offer these services to a wider range of refugee and vulnerable newcomer youth beginning in Spring 2018.

Opening Doors Symposium 2017

The Opening Doors Symposium ran from May 23 – 26, 2017 at the Victoria Park location and featured a MNLCT-hosted job fair, a resume clinic, 35 workshops, an open house and an art exhibition in support of newcomer labour market integration. The symposium attracted 600 participants, 8 job fair employers, 15 community partners, and 17 visual artists alongside 40 MNLCT staff members and 25 volunteers.

Newcomers had the opportunity to learn and collaborate with employers and service providers and presented themselves as professional and active job seekers, ready and willing to participate in the Canadian workforce and community at large.


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Open House

The Open House was MNLCT's official public opening of the new Victoria Park site. It welcomed past and future stakeholders to check out the new location, meet the MNLCT staff, and ask questions about our innovative programs.

Workshops

Hundreds of people took advantage of 35 workshops focused on newcomers' needs and required supports for entering the labour market. Workshops were offered in English, Arabic, Farsi, French and Spanish and participants could receive individual feedback on their resumes in our Resume Clinics. Workshops focused on the following themes:

- Meeting Canadian Employers
- Preparation for Employment
- MNLCT Services & Supports
- Financial Solutions
- Home & Family Services & Supports (including mental health & wellness)

Job & Community Fair

Employers and community partners were on site for the Opening Doors Job Fair on May 25 where newcomers had the opportunity to chat and practice their elevator speeches showcasing their skills. Many job seekers began the hiring process and plans are underway to run the Job & Community Fair again in 2018.

Art Exhibition

The Art Exhibition gave artists from around the globe the chance to show their talent and express their experiences as newcomers. More than 350 people visited the Art Gallery and voted for their favourite artwork. Venezuelan artist, Nellys Garcia won the Opening Doors Community Choice Award 2017 and Jaime Portillo, from El Salvador, was acknowledged as runner up.

Maximizing Community Impact

By combining adult education and participatory action research, we can promote active civic participation in immigrant communities to help address barriers that result in social exclusion. The outcome is an inclusive and globally minded society.

LatinX Parents Project

The LatinX Parents Project brings together Spanish-speaking newcomer parents of elementary school children in marginalized communities, to support them and offer opportunities for networking, relationship-building and advocacy. The program enables parents to better understand the school system, learn how to navigate it to access support for their children, and come together to make a difference in their schools.

The program which was funded by a City of Toronto Access, Equity and Human Rights (AEHR) grant ended in September 2017 after being funded for over two years. The long-term effects of the project are evident in the parents who are mobilizing through the community and training other parents to become Parent Ambassadors.

As a result of three think-labs, parents created a parent-based advocacy group name PLACE (Latin Parent Advocacy Committee for Equity in Education) which provides a space where parents learn how to navigate the school boards and get resources on how to deal with difficult situations. PLACE provides leadership training, and advocacy building capacity. Parent Ambassadors have developed outreach strategies such as creating flyers, a successful Facebook page and other social media channels.

Participation among LatinX mothers has been extraordinary, with one third of the graduated participants involved in committees such as lunch programs and parent advisory committees. The TCDSB and TDSB continue to meet with the participants to improve navigation of their websites and services provided to students and parents. The skills that the Parent Ambassadors develop will enable them to act on behalf of their children throughout their education and to work together to create change at the individual and systemic levels.

Righting Relations: Strengthening Adult Education for Social Change

The MNLCT, funded by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, was one of the lead partners in their program "Righting Relations: Strengthening Adult Education for Social Change". Our shared purpose is to strengthen the capacity of adult educators and adult education to bring about radical social change through political and economic literacy for a just society in Canada. In 2017, the focus was on strengthening the Southern Ontario Circle and the expansion of the Central Hub.

As a result of the Righting Relations Initiative, the Southern Ontario Circle is today a strong network of adult educators who designed and delivered:

- 2 workshops on the topic of Decolonization on March 14 and November 30, 2017 (Hamilton)
- 1 workshop on Community organizing and popular education on April 7, 2017
- 1 Circle in building common ground towards economic and racial justice and solidarity on November 1, 2017
- 1 Circle in All my relations: building relations through solidarity on November 15, 2017

To consolidate the Central Hub, members from the Southern Circle came together in February, 2017 to present a comprehensive proposal on addressing discrimination and islamophobia, resulting in the creation of the Ottawa circle.

In November, a regional gathering was hosted and organized by the Southern Ontario Circle, bringing together 35 community leaders from across Ontario representing immigrant and indigenous communities. It was an opportunity for adult educators to reflect on their own experiences and how as agents of change they can stand in solidarity with indigenous communities. The group gained an important awareness on what it means to be settlers in Canada. The consensus was that new immigrants and refugees to Canada should have access to the multiple narratives that configure the colonial history of Canada.

This project deeply transformed our analysis of our colonizing process. Being able to reflect and connect the analysis with our current experience advances our understanding of what Righting Relations means.

Finances

All programs and services offered by MNLCT are funded by the generous gifts of donors and foundations, and by grants from ministries and departments within the federal, provincial and municipal governments.
In 2017, we were able to ensure the successful operation of our programs and services thanks to financial support from the following organizations:

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)
- City of Toronto
- Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Department of Justice
- Catherine Donnelly Foundation
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Wallenstein Feed

MNLCT also receives support from members, clients and individual donors whose generosity makes it possible to support activities that fall outside our current funding agreements such as: professional development and staff training, senior and youth programming and pilot projects to meet the emerging needs of newcomers and refugees.
We also extend thanks to our clients, volunteers, donors, funders and community members who offer their time, passion and dedication. Thank you for helping us to open doors!

2017 Board of Directors

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Summary of Audited Financials

Revenue

	2015	2016	2017
Government	2,153,697	2,257,209	2,279,569
Donations	25,895	41,361	39,242
Foundations + Other	43,861	70,343	97,667
TOTAL	**2,223,453**	**2,368,913**	**2,416,478**

Expenses

	2015	2016	2017
Staff	1,583,259	1,731,823	1,761,550
Building	392,227	345,614	345,070
Program	142,589	176,509	207,760
Office + Other	97,998	110,400	97,667
	2,216,073	**2,364,346**	**2,412,047**
Excess of revenues over expenses	7,380	4,567	4,431

Service Statistics

LINC January 1st to December 31st 2017

Number of clients who joined LINC Program by Gender	Males	Females	TOTAL
	66	138	204
	32%	**68%**	

Top 5 Languages Spoken by LINC Clients (% of Total)

- Mandarin 45%
- Arabic 32%
- Cantonese 4%
- Tamil 3%
- Persian / Farsi 2%

Client Services

3,060 Total # of Clients served

11,862 Total # of Client Visits

386 Total # of Clients served by our Community Mental Health Program

1,226 Total # of Client visits to our Community Mental Health Program

Top Five Countries of Birth in order :

1. Colombia
2. Mexico
3. India
4. Syria
5. El Salvador

Top Five Languages Spoken by Clients in order:

1. Spanish
2. Arabic
3. Mandarin
4. Hindi
5. Malayalam