

Planting Seeds and Nurturing Growth

The Menonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) has spent decades creating a bedrock of integration programs and services with the aim of holistically assisting newcomers as they make Canada home. Upon this foundation of settlement, language, mental health, and adult education programming, the Centre plants seeds of hope, inclusivity, diversity, and compassion - so that all who make Canada home can experience acceptance, prosperity, and belonging. The Centre, much like a garden, is a place of refuge, support, and hope for our clients, participants, neighbours, and friends.

In 2018, the fruits of MNLCT's efforts to cultivate its strategic priorities became reality; the Centre was awarded eleven funding grants and approximately \$725 000 was added to operations for new settlement, mental health, and adult education programming. MNLCT saw incredible growth from the seeds planted in the past few years - the Centre reached new clients and like-minded supporters, received new funding, forged new relationships and partnerships, hired new staff, moved into a new building, and offered an outstanding mix of new, revised, and expanded programming to meet the diverse needs of newcomers to Canada.

Looking towards the future, MNLCT will take the time to observe and evaluate - to see what thrives, what is taking root, and what is branching and sprouting. There is a lot of work to be done, but the Centre has the tools and resources to make a beautiful garden for all to enjoy and where all are welcome.

Shelly D'Mello
Executive Director



www.mnlct.org

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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

In 2018, our 5-year Strategic Plan (2014 – 2018) came to an end. In anticipation of needing to continue to build MNLCT's organizational capacity in the face of the tremendous growth experienced in 2018, as well as recognizing the need to develop a new strategic plan, MNLCT partnered with LIFT Philanthropy Partners to develop foundational capacity in the areas of impact measurement, operational efficiency, accountability, and marketing. With this support, MNLCT will be able to evaluate, assess, and determine its strategic direction more comprehensively over the next 18 months. The Centre will continue to be guided by the existing strategic plan until 2021, when it is expected that MNLCT will publish its new strategic direction for living out its mission and vision.

Strategic Priority

Strategic Objectives

Building a Resilient Organization

- Development of strategic alliances and sectoral 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.

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.

Remembering Adolfo Puricelli

Founding Director of the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto

August 24th, 1936 – December 31st, 2018

Adolfo Puricelli, along with his wife and colleague Betty Puricelli, had a vision of a multipurpose community centre that would address the barriers faced by refugees and immigrants. With the support of Mennonite churches from across Canada, this vision was realized through the creation of the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto in August 1983. In response to the growing number of newcomers from Latin America who were experiencing migration stress, unemployment, and language barriers, Adolfo and Betty believed strongly that “affection, understanding, responsibility and solidarity are the essence of the Mennonite New Life Centre” and of meaningful support.



The embodiment of work that became the Centre, however, cannot be fully understood without first appreciating the deep belief Adolfo had in the Anabaptist faith and his conviction for working with a multicultural immigrant and refugee population trying to rebuild their lives and cultures within a Canadian context. From the very first meetings with Latin American families in their home in Toronto to the thousands of clients from around the world the Centre receives and supports today, Adolfo and Betty modeled for us a calling towards servant leadership and humanitarian service.

Even after his and Betty’s retirement from the MNLCT in 2006, Adolfo remained a champion of immigrant and refugee integration through his life and work. He has forever shaped the Centre through his kindness, generosity of spirit, and his infinite understanding of how to make anyone needing help feel welcomed and respected, and we will continue in his example.

Adolfo passed away on December 31st, 2018 surrounded by his loving family and community.

New Location: 1122 Finch Ave West

MNLCT is branching out! The success of MNLCT’s Bridging Programs meant that more space was needed to house the operations of these much-needed programs. In response to changing needs, and in anticipation of future growth, MNLCT leased a new space located at 1122 Finch Ave West Unit 1, North York, Ontario. Construction of the space began in Fall 2018 and was completed in January 2019. The beautiful new facility is home to MNLCT’s two bridging programs - Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health (BREM) and Bridge to Employment in Media and Communications (BEMC) - as well as settlement and mental health counselling services. The space is bright and welcoming, and all classrooms are equipped with video-conferencing capabilities, allowing learners and guests to participate in classes from any location, in real time.

LIFT Philanthropy Partners: Better Beginnings, Bigger Impact

MNLCT is planting seeds for growth. Throughout 2018, MNLCT applied and moved through the various phases of the LIFT Philanthropy Partners application and selection process for the Better Beginnings, Bigger Impact initiative that would provide social purpose organizations with the strategic consultation and implementation support to develop each organization's organizational capacity and deepen their impact.

In October 2018, MNLCT was thrilled to learn that it had been selected as one of only 10 agencies, nation-wide. This initiative is intended to support MNLCT in strengthening the critical foundational elements of the organization required to continue on its path of growth and innovative program design. LIFT offers access to a team of one-on-one management consultants who assist with providing strategic thinking opportunities to the MNLCT leadership team and Board in addressing strategic planning issues, succession planning, and operational efficiencies to manage through adversity, be resilient, and remain agile in the ever-shifting settlement sector.

Through the BBBI initiative, LIFT Philanthropy Partners works with organizations that help individuals overcome barriers specific to the newcomer experience. These organizations help integrate newcomers into Canadian life and support individuals with language skills, employment assistance, community connections and needs assessments for smooth integration. Better Beginnings, Bigger Impact is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

MNLCT looks forward to working with LIFT to build capacity and achieve scalable and measurable growth.

Welcome Home Benefit Concert

In November, MNLCT held its second fundraising concert, this time at the Tranzac Club and featuring two local bands: The Fires Of, and Chad Price. The Fires Of is a band whose members play the sport of Ultimate Frisbee within the Toronto Ultimate Club (TUC) community. The band chose to contribute to the Centre by donating their talents in support of creating a community inclusive of newcomers.

One sponsor donated 30% of product sales to the Centre, and The Unicorn Project – an organization that cooperates with charities to provide entertainment for fundraisers and events, and with artists to promote the recording and promotion of their art – covered the full cost of the opening band. The Ultimate Frisbee community actively supported the event by donating door prizes, buying tickets, and participating in the 50/50 draw.

As a direct result of the concert, support for MNLCT's work extended to include individuals and organizations that would not normally interact with a settlement agency. It is expected that financial and collaborative contributions from these nontraditional stakeholders will improve organizational resiliency in the years to come.



DESIGNING RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS

LIGHTS:

Language Instruction Giving Hope to Trauma Survivors

Newcomers need language skills for real-life situations like grocery shopping, taking the bus, or going to the doctor. But some vulnerable newcomers face emotional, cognitive, or academic barriers to learning in traditional ESL/EAL or LINC classes. These clients are caught in a seemingly impossible situation, where emotional and mental health issues prevent them from learning, while at the same time they cannot access traditional mental health support due to insufficient language levels. To respond to these needs, the MNLCT created LIGHTS – an innovative program which supports refugee claimants, convention refugees, and permanent residents at the intersection of mental health and language learning. LIGHTS is important because it addresses both needs, giving hope to vulnerable newcomers and removing the barriers inherent in more traditional language-learning settings. The 12-week program provides professional coaching in mindfulness, wellness, meditation, relaxation, art, and drama, while learners focus on acquiring the communication skills needed to participate in everyday situations outside the home.

Integration Through Recreation Project

MNLCT continues to build on successes! In 2017, MNLCT piloted the Let's Play Ultimate! (frisbee) Project, designed to respond to the needs of vulnerable newcomers and youth who want to better integrate into their communities. The success of that pilot secured funding for 18 months of programming to explore the use of organized sport as a vehicle to promote inclusion and integration of Refugees and Vulnerable Newcomer Youth into Canadian society.

The Integration Through Recreation Project (ITR) aimed to provide the environment and resources for newcomer youth to feel welcomed and build relationships through a fun and engaging activity. It fostered connections between newcomer youth and non-newcomer youth and provided opportunities for networking and integration. While newcomer youth face multiple barriers in many parts of their lives, sports and recreation activities do not care what language you speak or where you come from and this offered a level playing field for everyone.

HOPES:

Helping Our Newcomers Prepare for Employment Success

HOPES helps newcomers who are struggling to find employment appropriate to their education, skills, and experience, and who need individual support in the context of resettlement stress. The program runs for eight weeks and flows through three phases: individual counselling, group workshops, and employment agency connections and coaching. Participants learn how to redefine employment goals within a new cultural context, take advantage of counselling and support from employment agencies and programs, and integrate successfully into the Canadian workforce.

HOPES has been running since 2015 when it was funded by the Province of Ontario. In 2018, United Way provided us with sustaining funding to keep the program thriving.

As part of program review, MNLCT recognized that in some instances newcomers lacked the English language level required to enroll in the program. The HOPES Program did not want to leave those who needed these services without an option, so the Pre-Hopes program was created. Pre-Hopes offers workshops where participants learn mental health strategies, coping skills, and prepare realistic career and/or employment action plans according to their goals and strengths. A series of short videos derived from the Pre-Hopes curriculum will be developed so that newcomers facing multiple barriers can access supportive content earlier in their integration process.



MAXIMIZING COMMUNITY IMPACT

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

BREM

Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health

The BTMH (Bridge Training for Internationally Trained Psychologists & Allied Mental Health Professionals) Program, which had been in operation since 2010, was redeveloped in 2017 to become BREM. In partnership with community-based mental health and settlement organizations, the new program supports internationally trained mental health professionals in accessing training, occupation-specific language and workplace communication, and supervised placements, leading to employment and/or application to register with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO), a provincial regulatory body.



brem

Bridge to Registration and
Employment in Mental Health

But the story does not end there. Our goal is to build an inclusive and globally minded society where everyone is welcome to participate. These professionals bring valuable international perspectives to the Canadian labour market, resulting in a strong, resilient, and culturally competent workforce — and society.

BREM, which launched in May 2018 with 20 participants, is ramping up its Ontario-wide recruitment and outreach. Already, several participants have joined the program online from Sarnia, Ottawa and Windsor.

Additionally, in 2018, BREM staff worked with CRPO to attain program recognition with the College. This formal recognition would allow successful graduates of BREM to receive the status of “Registered Psychotherapist (Qualifying)”, which allows these professionals to practice as psychotherapists, under supervision until they write the National Exam. A favourable decision for program recognition was achieved in Spring 2019.



bemc
Bridge to Employment
in Media & Communications



BEMC

Bridge to Employment in Media & Communications

Similar to BREM, the BEMC Program works towards an inclusive and globally-minded society. Through this bridging program, MNLCT is excited to raise awareness of the value internationally trained media and communications professionals bring to the Canadian media landscape. Their diverse perspectives and wealth of knowledge enrich the field and broaden Canada's collective ability to tell and to hear diverse stories and voices while reducing the barriers that often result in social exclusion.

BEMC is a 6-month full-time program that prepares internationally trained media and communications professionals to secure meaningful employment or entrepreneurship in Ontario in the fields of Journalism, Communications & Public Relations, Broadcast Media, Management of Entrepreneurial Media, Photography and Photojournalism, Videography, and Web & Graphic Design.

The first cohort launched in October 2018 with 10 participants, and, similar in approach to BREM, provides occupation-specific language and workplace communication training, develops knowledge and skills to better navigate the media and communications sector in Canada, and offers a supervised placement and employment supports. The program continues to invest in outreach to internationally trained media and communications professionals across the province of Ontario while it simultaneously makes in-roads with media and communications employers to seek out qualified graduates of the program for employment.

Holiday Craft & Food Marketplace

Organized in collaboration with Aurora House, the Marketplace was held on December 8 at the Queen location. There were 45 vendors, including 12 that identified as newcomers, and this year a silent auction and a gift-wrapping station were introduced.

This event strengthened the relationship between MNLCT and Aurora House and helped increase awareness in newcomer communities and the general public about civic participation, social change, and the value of newcomers to our economy and society. All proceeds from the event went towards programs and services for newcomers and people who have been trafficked in Canada.



FINANCES AND SERVICE STATISTICS

We are able to offer our programs and services because of the continued generosity of individual donors and foundations, as well as funding from the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

MNLCT recognizes the financial support received to ensure the successful operations of programs and services:

Aurora House
Catherine Donnelly Foundation
Catholic Children's Aid Society
City of Toronto
Department of Justice
DUKE Heights BIA
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Canada (IRCC)
Mennonite Central Committee

Ontario Ministry of Children, Community
and Social Services (formerly Ministry of
Citizenship and Immigration (MCI))
Ontario Trillium Foundation
RBC Royal Bank
The Unicorn Project
United Way of Greater Toronto
Wallenstein Feed

A heartfelt thanks is extended to all funders and financial contributors! Beyond financial support, MNLCT would like to thank its members, partners, placement students and volunteers who offered non-monetary contributions throughout the year – with this support the Centre is able to engage in community activities that extend beyond current funding levels and test new projects to meet the emerging needs of newcomers.

2018 Board of Directors

Miriam Reesor (Chair)
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Summary of Audited Financials

MNLCT received \$3.14 million in revenues, an increase of approximately \$724K over 2017 levels. In addition, MNLCT saw continued support from donors and foundations that fund important mental health and integration projects throughout the year. Expenses were managed to budget and created a small surplus of \$9,800.

REVENUE

	2017	2018	Estimate 2019
Government	2,279,569	3,028,132	3,074,402
Donations	39,242	41,683	43,537
Foundations + Other	97,667	71,092	274,983
TOTAL	2,416,478	3,140,907	3,392,922

EXPENSES

	2017	2018	Estimate 2019
Staff	1,761,550	2,158,642	2,333,399
Building	345,070	378,628	583,053
Program	207,760	405,198	415,568
Office + Other	97,667	188,634	56,650
	2,412,047	3,131,102	3,388,670
Excess of revenues over expenses	4,431	9,805	4,252

SERVICE STATISTICS

January 1st to December 31st 2018

Number of Clients and Visits by Program



Client Services

Top 5 countries of origin of clients and participants across all programs:

- 1 Colombia
- 2 Mexico
- 3 Syria
- 4 China
- 5 Venezuela

Top 5 languages of clients and participants across all programs

- 1 Spanish
- 2 English
- 3 Arabic
- 4 Mandarin
- 5 Filipino

