



Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto launches new initiatives to engage newcomers and vulnerable individuals during COVID-19

Live media and public webinar/Q&A session on May 20

(Toronto, Ontario – Tuesday, May 19, 2020) The Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) is gearing up for the launch of its Newcomer Support mobile application, on May 21st, that allows immigrants and refugees to easily access a wide range of programs and services as well as information that will help make Canada their home. A live webinar and Q&A session open to the media and members of community organizations is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 12:00 PM ET.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MNLCT – an Ontario-based charitable organization dedicated to providing newcomers with tools and resources to help them integrate socially and financially – was eager to roll out this initiative ahead of schedule realizing how much it will benefit communities.

The user-friendly mobile application was developed in partnership with iCent – a platform for international students and newcomers – and is designed to provide virtual tools for better support to those who are settled or settling in Ontario. Aside from the Centre’s services, the app offers trustworthy information – in English, Arabic, Mandarin, and Spanish – on settlement, immigration, legal rights, employment, health, recreation and the latest incidents affecting our communities. There is a section devoted to COVID-19 with up-to-date advice on how to deal with the physical, mental, emotional and financial impact the pandemic has had on families and individuals.

“At this critical moment, vulnerable individuals need us more than ever as they try to access various service networks that are constantly changing,” says Shelly D’Mello, Executive Director of MNLCT. “I am proud to say MNLCT has served more than 2,000 people since the lockdown began, as our Centre has continued to provide uninterrupted support to clients and ensured our essential service offerings – from mental health counselling and settlement advice to language and career-enriching classes – were fully operational.”

From the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the organization was quick to endorse public health guidelines and implement appropriate procedures to protect their clients and staff. They were able to offer essential services online and over the phone within two days of the decision to close all offices on March 15th.

Since then, the Centre has stepped up its efforts to offer individual mental health counselling sessions to clients who have exhibited high levels of anxiety and depression due to the current circumstances. “Some people have language barriers and are isolated; and they are greatly relieved to have us as their main point of contact. We’re thrilled to be launching secure online video counselling later in May as an additional way to connect with such clients,” says D’Mello.

Despite the challenges of physical distancing and working remotely, the Centre was able to resume modified Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes and launch its bridging programs cohorts as scheduled, where the instructors and students were properly trained to navigate their virtual classrooms efficiently. BREM (Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health) and BEMC (Bridge to Employment in Media and Communications) classes kicked off on May 4th with the programs conducted online in real time via video streaming.

“Since all our LINC classes have been delivered online, we are extremely proud of our students’ shared enthusiasm and dedication, especially since past pupils have rejoined us in order to continue their learning under these new circumstances,” commented D’Mello.

In addition to maintaining its range of virtual service offerings, the Centre launched another initiative in April – #AskMNLCT is an open forum that provides significant assistance and detailed information to questions asked by the community. These weekly written frequently asked questions are supported by live webinar chats – in English, Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish – which are themed and encompass a range of topics, including settlement issues, bridging programs, language classes, community mental health and current events, such as the COVID-19 crisis. New topics are posted on Fridays on MNLCT’s dedicated #AskMNLCT webpage, some focusing on schooling, conflict resolution, managing financial constraints and creating stability during COVID-19.

“As we remain committed to achieving our vision of fostering healthy and socially viable communities by providing immigrants and refugees with opportunities to realize their full potential, we felt the #AskMNLCT initiative filled an important gap for members of our community – clients and sector partners – to obtain quick and meaningful access to vital information on how to navigate COVID-19 while supporting socio-economic and mental health wellbeing. #AskMNLCT provided the platform for our community members to connect with our program staff, who can share their expertise and support others in obtaining the information they need to manage their personal situations or those of their clients,” explained D’Mello.

– ENDS –

For more information on #AskMNLCT, visit: mnlct.org/askmnlct

For more information on MNLCT iCent Newcomer Support app, visit mnlct.org/app

To access the MNLCT iCent Newcomer Support app, follow the steps below:

Open the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#) on your smartphone.

Search for 'iCent' and install the app.

Open the app, type in "Canada" as the country, and type "Mennonite New Life Centre" as the institution name.

Enter your email address as your ID. You will receive an email with a secure PIN to log in.

Once you are logged in, select your language, accept the terms, then fill in the required fields. Be sure to choose the appropriate category when prompted.

Register for the live webinar and Q&A session

Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 12:00 PM ET

<https://us02web.zoom.us/webina...>

About Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT)

The Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto has been providing newcomers and immigrants of all ages and gender identities with the tools and resources needed for social and economic integration into Canadian life since 1983. As a community, member-based non-profit charity, the Centre is committed to creating meaningful pathways by which newcomers and immigrants can contribute their skills, talents and voices to their communities wherever they live, work, play and learn.

MNLCT's core mandate is to assist newcomers, immigrants and vulnerable clients to meet integration needs, form social networks, voice priorities and shape their environment through community engagement. Through their expertise and knowledge-base, the organization provides caring and professional services that address short- and long-term needs and aspirations for clients. These include delivering high quality language instruction and employment supports to ensure clients fulfill their goals and contribute skills to their local economies; offering mental health counselling to clients struggling with different types of stress or trauma; and promoting resilience, strength and well-being at individual and community levels.