



Mennonite
new life
centre

Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto Annual Report 2015

With over 33 years of settlement experience, the Mennonite New Life Centre is a place of welcome and friendship to all who knock on our door. We are a member-based, community settlement agency with programs and services that help ease the settlement process for newcomers from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

Making Canada
Home



www.mnlct.org

For many, home is a meaningful word that conjures up feelings of warmth, comfort and belonging. At the heart of any home are the people who shape us, believe in us and are there for us such as family, friends, and neighbours. Home is where we hope and dream, where we reflect and share, and for most of us, is a brick-and-mortar place where, when we walk through its doors, we feel safe and protected.

At the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT), we walk together with newcomers and refugees from across the world and support them in building a new home in Canada. These newcomers have left their former homes for many reasons –escaping turmoil, persecution and in some cases even death, or simply wanting to build a prosperous and safe life for themselves and their families. When they arrive here, our focus is on helping them define home within a Canadian context. We do this by providing individuals and families with opportunities to build community connections and explore their talents and strengths, and by assisting them when needed in tearing down the barriers that impede their Canadian dreams.

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.

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.



Building a Resilient Organization

Strategic Alliances and Collaborations

There is a blurring of the lines between educational institutions and human services agencies as they begin to share resources to facilitate the holistic integration of newcomers and refugees. MNLCT continues to partner with Seneca College to offer its mental health certificate course to participants of the Centre's Bridge Training Program for Internationally Trained Mental Health Professionals. In 2015, MNLCT partnered with the G. Raymond Chang School for Continuing Education at Ryerson University to deliver essential skills training through the "Workplace Culture in Canada" certificate course. We have also begun collaborations with Employment Ontario providers and remain active participants in sectoral networks such as Local Immigration Partnerships. In November 2015, MNLCT was invited to a symposium for service providers in Kingston, ON where we delivered a workshop on newcomer challenges and the significant effect that lack of meaningful employment has on a person's physical, mental and social relationships.

Leadership Development

The leadership team and program staff continue to make strides in building their capacity to serve newcomers and refugees. In April 2015, MNLCT staff received Conflict Resolution and Cultural Competency training ahead of receiving and serving clients from the conflict-riddled Middle East. Leadership team members further developed their management skills by engaging in project management activities and directed leadership training.

Diversification of Funding

Over the years, MNLCT has amassed a considerable amount of intellectual property in workshop curriculum and resources that have transferrable and parallel uses for sectors beyond immigrant and refugee settlement. In 2015, this led to the development of a fee-for-service model that offers relevant workshops and mental health counselling services to organizations outside of the settlement sector. This model allows MNLCT to create a sustainable funding structure for its programs and services. We will continue to test this model with a vision of creating a social enterprise that builds upon our strengths as an information and adult education provider to a diverse set of clients and participants.

Designing Responsive Programs

Portfolio Based Learning Assessment (PBLA)

Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) is an approach to classroom-based language assessment which MNLCT's LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program began to adopt in 2015. Teachers and students collaborate to set language-learning goals, compile examples of language proficiency and learning in a variety of contexts over time, analyze the data, and reflect on progress. During the year, LINC teachers were trained on the development and implementation of PBLA and our Canadian Language Benchmark level 5/6 LINC class became an early-adapter of the model. It is expected that by the end of 2016, all LINC level classes will be fully PBLA implemented.

Community Mental Health Program: Building Strengths for Work Pilot



The "Building Strengths for Work" pilot project was designed to positively move newcomers towards employment and income security. In May 2015, the pilot launched with the aim of supporting newcomers in realizing their dream of taking their rightful place in the centre of a thriving Ontario economy. It attempted to address the problems that create deeply challenging experiences of poverty for newcomers such as the decline in mental health due to resettlement stress and/or geo-political trauma including depression, anxiety, isolation and post-traumatic stress disorder. The pilot addressed these issues within the context of economic integration. As a result of participant feedback and outcomes, MNLCT received program funding from the Ontario Treasury Board Secretariat through its "Local Poverty Reduction Fund".

Celebrating Citizenship

The Mennonite New Life Centre has prepared hundreds of newcomers on their journey to taking the citizenship oath. We have witnessed the pride and enthusiasm that citizenship candidates feel when preparing for that moment and, inspired by their achievement, MNLCT held its first annual Citizenship and Inclusion Ceremony in November 2015. We are proud to be part of the formation of a new citizenry that bases its relationship to Canada on acceptance of the values of democracy, solidarity, inclusion, tolerance, freedom and respect.

Maximizing Community Impact

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Project on Latin American Civic Participation

The Community Engagement Program began a 2-year project, funded by an Access, Equity and Human Rights grant from the City of Toronto, to investigate the complexities of civic and political engagement (CPE) in the newcomer Latin American community in Toronto. Published in Spring 2015, the findings of the PAR revealed how the Latin American community is marginalized by mainstream definitions of CPE which are traditionally bound to the electoral realm as opposed to engaging with the socio-economic realities of residents. Recommendations were made to the City of Toronto to broaden the definition of community engagement to explicitly include anti-oppression or social justice principles, and to recognize the engagement of newcomer parents in the public school system and promote their active participation in the decisions affecting their children's education. The full report can be found at mnlct.org. As a result of these findings, MNLCT.org received new funding for the project "Making the grade: Civic Engagement of Newcomer Latin American Parents in the School System" which began in Fall 2015.

Development of an Adult Education Framework

Our approach to civic leadership includes the creation of an adult education framework that respects the lived experiences of immigrants and refugees and provides them with the training, tools and resources to decide for themselves how best to use their voice within a Canadian context. Building on the success of our Civic Literacy workshops, MNLCT created a certificate program in Civic Leadership to support newcomers in participating in the civic and political spheres of our communities. Whether it is through a political process such as voting or participation in a school committee, immigrants and refugees have much to offer and the MNLCT endeavours to provide a platform by which immigrants and refugees can participate in Canadian life.



Finances

The Centre is abundantly thankful for the financial support of our funders and donors. A special thank you to our regular contributors, whose ongoing funding supports the majority of our programs and services:

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (formerly Citizenship and Immigration Canada)
- Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade
- City of Toronto: Investing in Neighbourhoods Fund, and Access, Equity and Human Rights Grant
- Mennonite Central Committee and local Mennonite churches
- Wallenstein Feed

We also gratefully acknowledge the generous donations of our members, clients and like-minded individuals and organizations that have made it possible to provide holistic support that extends beyond our current funding agreements. This support allows us to develop innovative pilot projects to meet emerging needs of newcomers and refugees – thank you.

	2014	2015	2016 (estimate)
Government	2,187,950	2,153,697	2,156,950
Churches & Individuals	36,487	25,895	166,769
Foundations & Other	31,746	43,861	65,150
TOTAL INCOME	2,256,183	2,223,453	2,388,869

	2014	2015	2016 (estimate)
Staff	1,583,858	1,583,259	1,706,085
Building	385,112	392,227	397,850
Program	158,575	142,589	142,689
Office & Other	131,773	97,998	146,690
TOTAL EXPENSES	2,259,318	2,216,073	2,393,314
Excess of Revenues Over Expenses	(3,135)	7,380	(4,445)

	2014	2015	2016 (estimate)
Settlement & Language Instruction	1,722,385	1,643,863	1,782,953
Bridge Training & Mental Health	432,953	485,006	466,081
Community Engagement	38,168	44,966	62,461
Core Support	65,812	69,238	81,819
TOTAL BY PROGRAM	2,259,318	2,216,073	2,393,314

Service Statistics

3,177

Total # of clients served

8,449

Total # of client visits

401

Total # of clients served by our Community Mental Health Program

1,428

Total # of clients visits to our community Mental Health Program

Top 5 countries of birth of clients

Colombia 18.9%
India 16.1%
Mexico 9.3%
China 6.5%
El Salvador 4.9%

Clients joined LINC program by gender



Male 45



Female 201

Total 246

Top 7 languages spoken by LINC Clients

Mandarin	56%
Arabic	14%
Tamil	12%
Cantonese	7%
Farsi	4%
Urdu	4%
Dari	3%

Attendees to our Citizenship Workshops

451

Attended workshops throughout 2015

59

Passed their citizenship test and became new citizens of Canada



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The Board of Directors

The 2015 Board of Directors, together with their affiliation, is as follows:

Miriam Reesor, Chair	<i>Markham Area Mennonite Churches</i>
Mohan Doss, Vice Chair	<i>Community</i>
Sam Sivarajan, Treasurer	<i>Community</i>
Miriam Wiebe, Secretary	<i>Toronto New Life Mennonite Church</i>
Helen Griebeling	<i>Mississauga Mennonite Church</i>
Julia He	<i>Community</i>
Leanne Buck	<i>Toronto United Mennonite Church</i>
Evan Heise	<i>Mennonite Central Committee</i>

The generosity of time, passion and dedication of all our supporters — board members, program participants, volunteers, donors, funders, and community members — contributes immensely to the success of the Centre.

With this in mind, we proudly share that in April 2016, at Seneca College's 6th Annual Immigrant and Refugee Forum, the Social Service Worker (Immigrants and Refugees) Program recognized the Mennonite New Life Centre for our commitment to improving the lives of immigrants and refugees. Thank you for walking with us as we walk together with newcomers.



You too can show your support by making a tax-deductible donation to the centre. Visit our CanadaHelps profile to learn more.



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