

Facilitator's
manual



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MENTAL HEALTH AND social change

Affirming Strengths, Building Leadership

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About the authors

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About this manual

This manual is the product of a six week group engagement process with Latin American immigrants at the Mennonite New Life Centre. Rooted in a strengths-based empowerment framework, the group process supported newcomers to connect with their personal, professional and cultural strengths, and to develop facilitation and leadership skills in order to become leaders for change in their communities.

Too often, newcomers are told that their past counts for nothing in Canada. International credentials and experience evaporate, unrecognized or unvalued. Cultural traditions and wisdom go underground, ignored or misunderstood. Both individual dignity and community well being suffer. The road to mental health and social change involves reclaiming strengths and taking back agency. It also involves building new relationships and stitching together the cloth of community.

We share this manual as a guide to all those who would walk with newcomers of diverse cultural backgrounds on the journey to mental health and social change.

The manual will help group facilitators to:

- engage participants in a culturally sensitive group experience, where all feel affirmed and understood
- develop their own cultural competency, learning from group participants the significance of diverse cultural values and traditions
- facilitate leadership development, and support participants in responding to needs in their communities

The manual seeks to bridge a gap in culturally appropriate mental health services for newcomers. Many immigrants and refugees are not comfortable in mainstream counselling facilities. They may feel anxious, fearing misunderstanding, or sensing a lack of relatedness to their cultural background. Settlement agencies offer cultural understanding, but often lack specific mental health expertise. This facilitator's manual can be used by mental health professionals or settlement workers to create a culturally sensitive group space for emotional support and leadership development. The content and exercises can be adapted to different cultures and groups.

Acknowledgements

The development of this manual was an activity of the Mental Health and Social Change Internship Program at the Mennonite New Life Centre. The Mennonite New Life Centre is a community based settlement agency that facilitates newcomer settlement and integration through holistic services and community engagement, carried out within a gender justice and anti-oppression framework.

In September 2008, the New Life Centre offered paid internships to two internationally trained mental health practitioners. The interns provided individual counselling to Spanish-speaking newcomers struggling with different kinds of stress and trauma. They also participated in advocacy work to address the systemic injustices affecting the mental health of newcomers. The interns were asked to design a group process that would connect mental health and social change. This facilitator's manual seeks to share that group experience.

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Introduction

Over the past 100 years, more than 13 million immigrants have arrived to start a new life in this country, making Canada one of the world's most ethnically diverse nations. During the first half of the twentieth century, most immigrants came from Europe. As time passed and immigration policies changed, immigration became more diverse. By 1970, half of all immigrants were coming from Caribbean nations, Asia, Africa, Central and South America.

Every migration experience is unique, and influenced by intersecting oppressions based on grounds such as race, gender, class. At the same time, there are many common threads in the migration experience – threads of loss, stress, struggle. In particular, non-European newcomers share a common struggle against discrimination, and the challenge of rebuilding identity and community in an environment which often fails to acknowledge or affirm their strengths.

The group process described in this manual was piloted with a group of immigrants from Latin America, and is shared here in solidarity with all newcomers seeking to reclaim their strengths and build up their communities.

Latin Americans in Canada

Latinos have come to Canada from countries with diverse histories and ideologies. They mostly have settled in the province of Ontario. Colombia and Mexico are among the top Latin American countries in Canada's Ethno Cultural Mosaic (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Latin Americans are not a homogeneous group. They share a common language but they also consider each other to be different based on political ideologies, cultural idiosyncrasies and values. However, Latin Americans are united by the optimism and hope that brought them to Canada to improve their families' life. They also share a sense of realism about the challenges and struggles involved in their integration to the new life (Saphir, 2008).

Immigration and Mental Health

The immigration process is a hard and stressful journey. It occurs in three stages. The pre-migration stage involves the decision and preparation to move. The migration stage marks the physical relocation into another place, and the post-migration stage, the integration of the immigrant within the social and cultural framework of the new society (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Latinos have gone through this process like many other immigrant groups. They have struggled with the difficult tasks of learning a new language and finding a job. They have experience social isolation, living with low income, loss of social status, and suffering discrimination among other problems. Research indicates that if an individual feels isolated from his/her culture, unaccepted by the host culture, and has a lack of social support, a consequent sense of rejection, alienation and poor self-esteem may occur (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Refugees experience additional challenges. Many Latin Americans have experienced trauma and persecution previous to their arrival in Canada. All these issues have an effect on their mental health and quality of life (Canadian Task Force On Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees, 1988).

Immigrants' health is a focus of interest and concern among social agencies. While there is still a long road ahead to providing language and culture appropriate services, some efforts are being made in trying to meet the mental health needs of newcomers. From the Latin American perspective, promising developments include hiring workers who understand the culture and Spanish language; as well as developing information resources and educational materials in Spanish. One of the community agencies which has given priority to the needs and participation of Latin American newcomers is the Mennonite New Life Centre, a multicultural agency for newcomers in Toronto. Its stated goal is "to support people from diverse cultural backgrounds to participate and contribute in all areas of Canadian life – social, economic, cultural and political. We do this through the vehicle of supportive and empowering relationships" (Mennonite New Life Centre, 2008). The centre believes that newcomers must have equal opportunity to voice their priorities and shape their environment. Achieving this goal means listening to newcomers' voices.

Empowerment and Community

The concepts of empowerment and dialogue constitute the philosophical foundation of the group experience that is described in this manual. Empowerment is understood as a participatory-developmental process occurring over time, involving active and sustained engagement, and resulting in growth, awareness and self-sufficiency (Keiffer, 1984). Dialogue or informal education is conceptualized as a co-operative activity involving respect. It does not involve one person acting on another, but rather people working with each other. It is about enhancing community, leading us to act in ways that make for justice and human flourishing (Freire, 1968). Thus, empowerment is developing consciousness that has the power to transform reality. It is about giving voice to the oppressed.

The ultimate goal of our group engagement process was to pursue the empowerment of the Latin American community by increasing their participatory role. We believe that disadvantaged groups need to be assisted in recognizing the ways they have benefits/

rights and also how they may perpetuate oppression in their life. As with any advocacy initiative, giving voice can be accomplished by approaching groups as if they themselves have the answers to the problems in their communities, but need assistance in implementing effective strategies for dealing with these issues. We look to empower participants to access tools that give them control of their lives and consequently improve them.

Affirming Strengths, Building Leadership

In listening and giving voice to the oppressed, it is always important to incorporate the culture and context from which the person has developed his/her identity and worldview. Since community members may not always be aware of their own strengths in dealing with problems, it is important to elicit stories about ways in which individuals from this community solved problems, in an effort to build upon current strategies and increase community self-efficacy.

Positive strengths are essential for individuals and societies to thrive. Psychology's interest in human strengths has been rekindled by positive psychology which is the study of positive emotions, positive character, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Research from different fields has stressed the need to help clients shift from a problem-saturated narrative to a solution-saturated narrative, emphasizing human potential in the face of adversity (White & Epston, 1990). Saleebey (1992) states "the strengths perspective obligates practitioners to understand that however downtrodden or sick, individuals have survived (and in some cases even thrived). They have taken steps, summoned up resources, and coped. We need to know what they have done, how they have done it, what they have learned from doing it, what resources (inner and outer) were available in their struggle to surmount their troubles" (pp1 71-172). In summary, positive psychologists have enhanced our understanding of how, why, and under what conditions positive character flourishes.

The Group Model

The authors developed a strengths-based empowerment model, which was piloted with eleven highly engaged and committed Latin American women. Several of the participants benefited so much from the experience that they sought to replicate the model in their own local context. We believe that this is a model that can be adapted across a variety of cultures and contexts. The activities, themes and design of each session can be adapted to the reality of the cultural group(s) you work with in your particular agency.

Theoretical framework and approach

This group experience focuses on helping members to identify their individual and cultural strengths and apply them in times of adversity, such as the immigration process.

This is a group characterized by:

- A theoretical framework based on positive psychology and adult learning theory.
- A culturally-sensitive approach. The pilot group was conducted in Spanish and the content and activities were based on the values and traditions of Latin American culture (music, sense of humour, folktales, art, cultural traditions).
- Interactive activities. It is built on the participants' personal experiences and knowledge.
- A skill-building format. Participants learn basic group facilitation skills.
- Transfer of knowledge and leadership into the community. It emphasizes the idea of advocacy.

Main goals

- To document the participants' personal journeys of migration to Canada.
- To explore the transition from powerlessness to empowerment, engaging newcomers in identifying the personal and cultural sources of strength that helped them in adjusting to life in Canada.
- To empower newcomers to draw on these strengths to solve problems, advocating for themselves and for their community.
- To facilitate the creation of a network of newcomers interested in becoming mentors for other newcomers adjusting to their new life.

The strategies are

- Recruitment of ten to fifteen newcomers interested in sharing their personal experiences to help other immigrants and participate in a process of mutual learning.
- Group work. Six semi-structured, two-hour weekly group sessions with participants to identify their strengths and empower them to replicate this group in their own communities.

The Workshop Agenda: An Overview

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
<p>Workshop opening</p> <p>Introduction of the program & the facilitators</p> <p>Icebreaker:</p> <p>Knowing each other</p> <p>Ground rules</p> <p>Expectations</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Presentation & discussion of agenda</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>Words of wisdom</p> <p>Topic: Strengths</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Presentation & discussion of agenda</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>Laughing matters</p> <p>Topic: Organizing a group</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Presentation & discussion of agenda</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>Cultural traditions</p> <p>Topic: Central themes in Latino culture</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Presentation & discussion of agenda</p> <p>Exercise: My struggles</p> <p>Topic: Facilitation styles & skills</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Presentation & discussion of agenda</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>Your strength is...</p> <p>Topic: Challenges in facilitation</p>
<p>Break</p> <p>Brainstorming:</p> <p>What is Facilitation?</p> <p>Exercise: Read my gestures</p> <p>Characteristics of a good facilitator</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Break</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>The Postcard.</p> <p>Exercise: Group Poem:</p> <p>Using art expressions</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Break</p> <p>Exercise: My T-Shirt.</p> <p>Self-Identity</p> <p>Exercise: I am _____</p> <p>Cultural identity</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Break</p> <p>Exercise: Writing my personal-cultural story</p> <p>Exercise: Storytelling</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Break</p> <p>Exercise: Circle of strengths</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Break</p> <p>Exercise: Community Mural</p> <p>Exercise: Letter from the future</p> <p>Wrap up</p>

Agenda Session 1

1	Workshop Opening	10 min
2	Introduction of the facilitators & program	10 min
3	Icebreaker exercise (Knowing each other)	15 min
4	Setting ground rules	10 min
5	Members' expectations	10 min
6	Break	10 min
7	Group activity: Brainstorming (Facilitation)	15 min
8	Exercise: Read my gestures (A good facilitator)	10 min
9	Topic: Facilitation & facilitator's traits	10 min
10	Wrap up	10 min

Session 1



Objectives of the session

- To begin getting to know the group members
- To allow the members to understand the purpose and dynamic of the workshop

1. Workshop Opening

A welcome session can vary depending on the style of the host organization and on the local traditions. It is important that the group members are given a voice during this important first meeting.

2. Introduction of the facilitators and the program

The facilitators introduce themselves and briefly tell the group members about their background and training, emphasizing their enthusiasm for the opportunity to work with this group.

This workshop starts with a brief welcome and introduction to the host organization. The organizers have the opportunity to explain the background of the program, and also give the group members any additional information about the sessions, the schedule and housekeeping issues.

3. Icebreaker exercise: Knowing each other

Purpose: In this activity participants introduce themselves to the group with the purpose of getting to know each other.

Time: 15–20 min

Materials: flipchart, markers

Suggested process:

- The facilitator explains the activity to the group members
- The members are asked to introduce themselves to the whole group saying:
 - a) Name
 - b) Country of birth
 - c) One thing the person loves/remembers the most about his/her country
- The facilitator writes on the flipchart the countries names and the list of things that participants like the most about their own country.
- This information is posted on the wall
- Group members are invited to make any comment related to the activity

4. Setting ground rules

The facilitator explains the purpose of establishing ground rules and their importance in the functioning of the group. Some common rules are given as example and the group members are invited to set their own rules.

Some of these common rules could include:

- Respecting each other, even when you disagree
- Listening to what other people say, without interrupting them
- Agreeing to participate in any way you decide
- Having the right not to participate in an activity that makes you feel uncomfortable
- No “put-downs”
- Respecting confidentiality
- Being on time

5. Members’ expectations

Participants are given the opportunity to speak about their expectations for this group and to state any concerns they would like to have addressed. Their expectations are recorded on a flip chart.

It is important to assess which expectations are likely to be met in the course of this workshop and which ones may go beyond its scope.



6. Break

7. Group activity: Brainstorming. What is Facilitation?

Purpose: To have a common understanding of the concept of facilitation and the facilitator’s role.

Time required: 10-15 min

Materials: 2 flipcharts and markers

Suggested process:

- The facilitator conducts three consecutive group “call-outs” (an activity similar to brainstorming in which group members call out their responses to the following questions):
 - a) What is facilitation? How do you understand it?
 - b) What is the role of a facilitator?
- All responses are recorded on flipchart

8. Group exercise: Read my gestures

Purpose: To identify the characteristics or attributes of a good facilitator

Time required: 10 min

Materials: flip chart and markers

Suggested process:

- Each group member is encouraged to write on a piece of paper one characteristic that identifies an individual as a facilitator.
- Each person is invited to come in front of the group and through gestures (no use of words) let the others guess the characteristic that is being simulated.
- The facilitator writes these attributes on a flipchart.
- The facilitator summarizes the theoretical content of the last two activities, clarifying the concept of facilitation, and the role and characteristics of a good facilitator.

9. Topic : Facilitation (Handout)

See handout at the end of this session. Make photocopies of this handout for each member of the group. Present the information and discuss together.



10. Wrap-up

The facilitator gives closure to session 1, expressing thanks to group members for their participation and inviting them for next session.

Facilitation and traits/role of the facilitator

- **To facilitate** is to lead people toward mutual objectives, encouraging participation, ownership and creativity from all involved. The most important task of a facilitator is to protect the process, the “how” the group goes about accomplishing their task. The content is what they’re working on. The facilitator helps to create the process, tune it, keep it moving in the right direction, and most importantly, keeps the people engaged. The facilitator helps the group stay focused and build cohesiveness, getting the job done.
- **Facilitators generally have the following traits:**
 - Flexibility
 - Objectivity
 - Patience
 - Organization
 - Active listening
 - Ability to confront when there is a need
 - Intuition
 - Responsiveness
 - Sense of humour
 - Empathy
- **A facilitator plays the role of:**
 - A provider of processes, tools and strategies that can get work done.
 - Someone who helps resolve conflict.
 - A motivator who draws out participation from everyone.
 - Someone who makes sure that the goals are met.
 - An organizer who provides structure to the work of a group.
 - A person who protects the work of a group
 - A helper bringing people to work together
 - Somebody who brings out the full potential of working groups.

Agenda Session 2

1 Welcome and questions about Session 1	10 min
2 Presentation & discussion of the agenda	15 min
3 Warm up exercise: Words of Wisdom (Proverbs)	10 min
4 Topic: Strengths	10 min
5 Break	10 min
6 Exercise: The postcard (Personal experiences)	40 min
7 Exercise: Group Poem	15 min
8 Wrap-up	5 min

Session 2



Objectives of the session

- To introduce the concept of Strengths to the group
- To provide experiences where participants explore their own strengths

1. Welcome and after thoughts about session 1

The facilitators start the session welcoming and asking the group members if they have any after-thoughts related to any aspect of last week's session. Their comments and feedback are taken into consideration in planning the coming sessions.

2. Presentation & discussion of the agenda

The agenda is written on a flipchart where everybody can read it. It is presented to group members for discussion and any suggestions that contribute to improve the dynamic of the group are incorporated.

3. Warm-up exercise: Words of Wisdom (Proverbs)

Purpose: To gain insight about cultural strengths through the use of proverbs

Time: 15 min

Materials: papers, pencils, flipchart and markers

Suggested Process:

- The facilitator asks the big group to divide into 2-3 small sub-groups.
- Each sub-group is asked to write down a list of six (6) proverbs that are told commonly in their own countries.
- Each group writes their list on a paper posted on the wall
- The facilitator invites the group members to come up with the cultural strengths that are in each proverb.
- At the end of the exercise a list of strengths is compiled.

4 .Topic: Strengths (Handout)

See handout at the end of this session. Make photocopies of this handout for each member of the group. Present the information and discuss together.



5. Break

6. Exercise: The postcard (Sharing Personal experiences)

Purpose: To encourage group members to begin identifying their own personal strengths

Time: 40 min

Materials: paper or cards in different colors cut in the size and shape of a postcard; pens; markers

Suggested Process:

Read the following statement to the whole group:

“Imagine that a couple of days ago you received a letter from a friend of yours who lives in your home country and who is planning to immigrate to Canada. Your friend wants to know: **a)** about your own experience in this country; **b)** your advice to him/her in order to have the best experience himself/herself. You are going to answer his/her questions in a postcard. Take a moment to think about your own experience in Canada.

- Give each member a card and ask each person to write on the card:
 - a) The best two (2) things of your own experience of coming to Canada
 - b) Two pieces of advice you would want to give your friend
- Invite the group members to form small groups of 3–4 persons and share with each other what they wrote in their own postcards
- Ask them to write a Group Card, on flipchart paper, for their imaginary friend.
- Post all the group cards on the wall and invite all the members to walk by and read them
- Encourage them to give their comments about what they just read.

7. Exercise: Group poem

Purpose: To allow members express their feelings about the session that is ending

Time: 15 min.

Materials: paper and pencils.

Suggested process:

- Ask each group member to think of a phrase or sentence that expresses what this session meant for them
- The facilitator sits in a corner of the room and invites group members to come and tell him/her their sentence/phrase. She/he writes them down in a piece of paper.
- When everybody has finished, the facilitator reads aloud the poem that has been created by the group.



8. Wrap up

The facilitator gives closure to session 2, expressing appreciation to group members for their participation and inviting them to the next session.

Strengths

Strength is understood as the capacity

- To cope with difficulties
- To maintain functioning in the face of stress
- To bounce back in the face of significant trauma
- To use external challenges as stimulus for growth
- To use social supports as a source of resilience

Positive psychology is an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive traits and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychologists have been studying mental health and well-being and they have enhanced our understanding of how, why and under what conditions positive emotions, positive character and the institutions that enable them flourish.

● **Classification of Character Strengths** (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

1. Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge.

- ◆ Creativity [originality, ingenuity]
- ◆ Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking]
- ◆ Judgment & Open-Mindedness [critical thinking]
- ◆ Love of Learning
- ◆ Perspective [wisdom]

2. Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

- ◆ Bravery [valor]
- ◆ Perseverance [persistence, industriousness]
- ◆ Honesty [authenticity, integrity]
- ◆ Zest [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]

3. Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

- ◆ Capacity to Love and Be Loved
- ◆ Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, niceness]
- ◆ Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]

4. Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

- ◆ Teamwork [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]
- ◆ Fairness
- ◆ Leadership

5. Strengths that protect against excess

- ◆ Forgiveness & Mercy
- ◆ Modesty & Humility
- ◆ Prudence
- ◆ Self-Regulation [self-control]

6. Transcendence - Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

- ◆ Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]
- ◆ Gratitude
- ◆ Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]
- ◆ Humour [playfulness]
- ◆ Religiousness & Spirituality [faith, purpose]

Agenda Session 3

1	Welcome and questions about Session 2	10 min
2	Presentation & discussion of the agenda	10 min
3	Warm-up exercise: Laughing Matters	15 min
4	Topic: Organizing a support group	10 min
5	Break	10 min
6	Exercise: My T-Shirt: Self-Identity	25 min
7	Exercise: I am _____ Cultural Identity	25 min
8	Wrap-up	5 min

Session 3



Objectives of the session

- To help group members start thinking about transferring the skills they are learning to their community
- To teach them the basic steps taken in organizing a support group

1. Welcome and feedback on session 2

The facilitators start the sessions welcoming and asking the group members if they have any comments in relation to last week's session. Their feedback is taken into consideration in planning the coming sessions.

2. Presentation & discussion of the agenda

The agenda is written on a flipchart where everybody can read it. It is presented to the members for discussion, and any suggestions that contribute to improve the dynamic of the group are incorporated.

3. Warm-up exercise: Laughing matters

Purpose: To help group members see the value of sense of humour as a personal strength

Time: 15 min

Materials: none

Suggested process:

- Ask the group members to get up from their chairs and greet everybody the way they normally do (e.g. shake hands) and replace words with laughter.
Ask the members to form two rows, and each person will walk like a queen or king, moving the right hand and laughing, between the rows of applauding subjects.
Have the members sit in a circle, and invite them to tell jokes from their own culture. Have a couple of jokes at hand to help them.
- Discuss the experience with participants. Answer the following questions:
 - a) What is the effect that laughter has on you?
 - b) How often do you use your sense of humour as a strength?
 - c) Was laughter part of your upbringing?
- Discuss with group members the importance of laughter in a group process.

4. Topic: Organizing a group (Handout)

See handout at the end of this session. Make photocopies of this handout for each member of the group. Present the information and discuss together.



5. Break

6. Exercise: My T-Shirt: Self-Identity

Purpose: To raise participants' awareness of their own identity

Time: 25 min

Materials: sheets of paper with the T-shirt drawing, pens

Suggested process:

- Give a T-shirt drawing to each one of the group members. Explain to them that the T-shirt symbolizes their identity, the way we see ourselves.
- Ask them to write on the T-shirt attributes, characteristics, accomplishments and all the things that identify them as....(say their names)
- When they have finished, participants come in front of the whole group and talk about what is written on their T-shirts
- When everybody has finished talking, the facilitators ask the group:

a) What did you learn from your T-shirts? Similarities & differences

b) How can you use the strengths and values of your identity to help you in this process of adjustment to a new culture?

7. Exercise: I am Latino/a. I am _____ Cultural Identity

Purpose: To raise participants awareness of how culture has influenced their identity

Time: 25 min

Materials: none

Suggested process:

- Ask the group members what messages they received in their culture when they were growing up, and how these same messages have affected their lives? (e.g. "A man is the breadwinner of the family")
- Let the group discuss each other's messages



8. Wrap-up

The facilitator gives closure to session 3, expressing appreciation to group members for their participation and inviting them to the next session.

Organizing a group

The following ideas can help you in organizing a support group:

- **Energy and commitment are main components in a group.** Find people who feel strongly about developing the group and who are willing to devote time and energy to get it going.
- **Word of mouth.** Use personal invitation. If each committed person reaches out and asks one or more persons to join the group, it will grow and evolve. Brochures or newspaper announcements can be helpful for raising awareness about the group.
- **Group size is important.** The group should be large enough to offer support even when some group members are missing; yet it should be small enough that group members feel comfortable sharing personal feelings and stories. Generally, between 10 and 15 people is suggested for a group.
- **Location.** Meetings should be held in a place that is easily accessible, convenient and neutral, ie. a facility that does not trigger negative associations for potential group members. Meeting in the homes of group members has an element of comfort, yet the group will be much more accessible to newcomers if held in a public facility such as a church, community centre, or library.
- **Time management.** Group meetings usually last between one hour and two hours. They should start and end on time so participants don't get tired of long sessions. There is one exception--if the group is in the midst of a personal discussion or is helping a member to solve a problem, additional time may be needed to reach closure on the issue
- **Emphasize nurturing and acceptance.** Members should feel free and encouraged to share their ideas, feelings and experiences without fear of being criticized or judged. Have a stated policy of confidentiality to provide assurance and to encourage people to honestly share.
- **Allow participation.** Most groups have people who are natural talkers and others who are quiet. It's important that someone moderates the discussion and that this person or another group member gently brings the conversation back on course and involves others.

Once established, groups can offer a great deal of support and encouragement to their members. They can also provide tangible help in dealing with day-to-day struggles and issues.

Agenda Session 4

1	Welcome & questions about Session 3	10 min
2	Presentation & discussion of the agenda	10 min
3	Warm up exercise: Cultural Traditions	40 min
4	Topic: Central themes in Latino-based cultures	10 min
5	Break	10 min
6	Exercise: Writing my personal cultural story	25 min
7	Exercises: Storytelling or Inspirational Models	15 min
8	Wrap-up	5 min

Session 4



Objectives of the session

- To develop an awareness of how cultural values and traditions influence our worldview
- To help participants in recognizing some elements of their ethnic identity

1. Welcome & questions about session 3

The facilitators start the session welcoming and asking the group members if they have any comments in relation to last week's session. Their feedback is taken into consideration in planning the coming sessions.

2. Presentation & discussion of the agenda

The agenda is written on a flipchart where everybody can read it. It is presented to the members for discussion, and any suggestions that contribute to improve the dynamic of the group are incorporated.

3. Warm-up exercise: Cultural traditions

Purpose: To learn about significant cultural traditions, their personal meaning for the participants and how these traditions have influenced character development in each group member.

Time: 40 min

Materials: paper and pen

Suggested process:

- Divide the large group into 3 small groups.
- Ask group #1 to discuss "coming of age" traditions in their own countries. (e.g. Latinos celebrate "los Quince Anos" (15th birthday of their daughters)
- Ask group #2 to discuss religious/civic celebrations, traditions & rituals in their respective countries. (e.g. Latinos have different rituals around Christmas celebrations)
- Each small group presents to the large group the commonalities and differences that they came up with.
- Ask each member to share with the large group the following:
 - a) What feelings come to your mind when you talk about your traditions?
 - b) What traditions are you passing on to your own family?
 - c) How have your traditions shaped your character?

4. Topic: Central themes in Latino-based cultures (Handout)

See handout at the end of this session. Make photocopies of this handout for each member of the group. Present the information and discuss together. If working with a non-latino group prepare your own handout or work with the group to brainstorm themes in their own culture(s).

Note to Facilitator working with different cultural groups:

- a) What are the key values and beliefs of the cultural group you are working with that can be mobilized to support healthy integration?
- b) What characteristics, like machismo, need to be challenged or reinterpreted to reclaim their positive meaning?
- c) Reflect on this yourself and/or work with the group to identify key themes



5. Break

6.Exercise: Writing my personal cultural story

Purpose: To help participants make meaning of their cultural experiences through a story.

Time: 25 min

Materials: paper, pens

Suggested process:

- Tell the group members that they are going to write a story. It is their own story and how it is shaped by their culture. For example: How was illnesses treated in their families during their childhood? Were they taken to see a traditional healer (curanderos)?
- Tell them the story needs to include the following points: a) describe a significant event that happened; b) describe the setting (time & ambience) and character(s) involved; c) what stands out from the story; d) what is about this story that makes it worth telling?
- Share your story with other group members.

7.Exercise A: Storytelling

Purpose: To help participants connect with a folktale/legend from their country and its personal meaning

Time: 15 min

Materials: none

Suggested process:

- Ask the participants to think of a folktale from their countries
- Invite them to share the story with the large group
- When the participation has ended, ask everybody to answer the following questions:
 - a)What strengths are reflected in your story?

- b) What stories do you tell your children?
- c) What strengths/values have you passed on to your children?
- d) In moments of adversity, we tend to look for shelter in our own cultural expressions (music, poetry). Why do you think we do it?

Or

Exercise B: Inspirational Models

Purpose: To identify a character (relative, heroine, author) from their culture and become aware of his/her significance in their lives

Time: 15 min

Materials: none

Suggested process:

- Ask the members to think of a significant figure/person in their lives
- Recall one character strength of that person
- Think about how that person had an impact/influence on your life
- How did this connection with this person shape who you are today



8.Wrap-up

The facilitator gives closure to session 4, expressing appreciation to group members for their participation and inviting them to the next session

Central themes in Latino-based cultures

- A central element to working effectively with Latinos is not only to get to know the individual client but to go beyond the individual to consider the cultural context. Latinos hold a collective worldview.
- Culture can be understood as an integrated set of values and beliefs that shapes how individuals view the world, themselves and others.
- Culture includes thoughts, language, experiences, customs, traditions, religious beliefs and social interactions.
- Culture shapes the way that individuals view their problems and the ways in which they respond to interventions.
- Cultural values of Latino Families: (Arredondo, P. 2002)
 - ◆ **Familismo** refers to a profound sense of family and social support for Latino/as. Thus, support from the family may be an important buffer for immigrants encountering stressful situations. The family unit generally extends beyond the parents and children living in the home.
 - ◆ **Personalism** refers to the importance of warm, friendly, interpersonal relationships. Simpatia is a value orientation and a social script emphasizing a pleasant demeanor aimed at reducing conflict and promoting agreement. This value orientation encourages conformity, smooth communication, cooperation, and pleasant interactions.
 - ◆ **Respeto (Respect)** involves deferential behaviour with authority figures, somebody who holds a position of prominence in the community and elders.
 - ◆ **Confianza (Trust):** professional relationships are based on a mutual trust established between parties
 - ◆ **Dignidad (Dignity)** refers to a strong sense of pride. Latinos are particularly proud of their family and their ability to support and raise their children.
 - ◆ **Marianismo & Machismo.** Roles and responsibilities for Latinos are very prescribed, from a traditional upbringing. Marianismo refers to the expectation that a woman grow up to be like the Virgin Mary: humble, self-sacrificing, and other-centered. Contemporary women may struggle with the cultural expectation that they “put up with” undesirable family and/or gender roles. Machismo refers to a man’s responsibility to provide for, protect and defend his family. The traditional definition of macho that describes sexist, male-chauvinistic behaviour is different from the original Latino meaning of machismo which conveys the notion of “an honourable and responsible man.”

- ♦ **Religion & spirituality.** For many Latinos families, religion plays a very large role in everyday life. Religion & spirituality have served as anchors for many families, and these are fundamental to Latino value orientations and identity. Prayer is commonly practiced for spiritual support and may be directed to saints (santos). Often heard is the expression, “Si Dios quiere”, “if it is God’s will,” a recognition that one is not fully in control of everything in life. Catholicism is still widely practiced by many Latino immigrants.
- ♦ **Health & Illness.** Religious and indigenous beliefs play a role in the interpretation and response to disease. Common forms of illness prevention include prayer, wearing religious symbols, and altars devoted to particular saints. Latinos may seek help from folk healers, such as curanderos (healers), espiritistas (spiritual guides), and santeros (worshippers of Catholic saints and African gods) and they are called upon to diagnose ailments and perform healing rituals. Being labelled with a mental illness carries a stigma in many Latino families.

Agenda Session 5

1	Welcome & questions about Session 4	10 min
2	Presentation & discussion of the agenda	10 min
3	Warm up exercise: My Struggles	40 min
4	Topic: Facilitation Styles & Skills	10 min
5	Break	10 min
6	Exercise: Circle of strengths	30 min
7	Wrap up	5 min

Session 5



Objectives of the session

- To encourage the participants to start applying their strengths in life situations
- To allow members to acknowledge the value of their strengths

1. Welcoming & feedback on session 4

The facilitators start the session welcoming and asking the group members if they have afterthoughts from last week's session. Their feedback is used in planning the coming sessions.

2. Presentation & discussion of the agenda of the day

The agenda is written on a flipchart where everybody can read it. It is presented to the members for discussion, and any suggestions that contribute to improve the dynamic of the group are incorporated.

3. Warm-up exercise: My struggles

Purpose: To help the participants apply their strengths to real life situations

Time: 40 min

Materials: paper, pen, and a shoe-box

Suggested process:

- Tell the group members that we all have struggles in our lives that represent difficult moments we have gone through. We all have moments filled with feelings of frustration, anger, sadness.
- Invite them to write one (1) of those struggles on a piece of paper. Ask them not to write their names.
- The facilitator passes around a box where all members put their folded pieces of papers.
- Invite the group to sit in a large circle.
- The facilitator starts passing the box and asks one group member to choose a piece of paper, to read it aloud and answer the following question: How would you have approached the same situation and what strength would you have used in this case? Use appendix 5 (My strengths in action) to guide you.
- The exercise continues with each member choosing a piece of paper and answering the same question. Nobody else talks. Everyone listens.
- At the end of the exercise, the facilitator asks a volunteer to summarize what they learned from this exercise.

4. Topic: Facilitation styles & facilitation skills (Handout)

See handout at the end of this session. Make photocopies of this handout for each member of the group. Present the information and discuss together.



5. Break

6. Exercise: Circle of Strengths

Purpose: To establish the gifts (strengths) of each person and the resources of the group

Time: 30 min

Materials: scarves with different colors

Suggested process:

- Place a pile of scarves of different colors in the centre of the circle.
- Ask group members to quietly reflect on the strengths that they have brought to this group
- Ask them each in turn to choose a scarf and to lay it out around the edge of the circle, saying their name and strength, creating a circle of strengths.



7. Wrap-up

The facilitator gives closure to session 5, expressing thanks to group members for their participation and reminding them that next week is the last session.

Facilitation styles & facilitation skills

- Facilitation Styles

Active vs. passive:

Active facilitators take the initiative more often in the discussion and share their views more readily. Passive facilitators will tend to wait more for the group to raise topics for discussion. They may prefer to initiate discussion only if the group fails to do so.

Intense vs. light:

Some facilitators use humour to make the discussion more accessible whereas others may feel that a light-hearted approach detracts from the discussion.

Direct vs. Indirect:

This refers to the manner in which facilitators confront participants of the group. Some facilitators prefer to address participants directly while others would rather make general statements to the group.

High vs. Quiet Energy:

A person with high energy is usually loud and tends to gesture frequently. This type of facilitator is stimulating but may drain the group of energy. A quiet energy facilitator is soft spoken. This low-key energy may allow participants to focus on material for longer periods of time but may result in participants feeling bored.

All these facilitation styles are extremes and most people will fall somewhere in the middle. Co-facilitators can complement each other provided that they respect each other's way of interacting with a group.

- Facilitation skills:

Paraphrasing:

The facilitator repeats portions of what the person has said, conveying understanding, interest, and empathy. Paraphrasing also checks for accuracy, clarifies misunderstandings, and lets the other person know that he or she is being heard. Good lead-ins are: "So you are saying that . . ." or "I have heard you say that . . ."

Open and closed questions:

Open questions are ones where the facilitator is not directive over how and what the person should reply. They can hardly ever be answered with a one word. Such questions will begin with openings like How, Why, What? Closed questions are directive in limiting the type of response. For example, questions which elicits a yes or no answer. Did you see Bill this morning?

Active listening:

Be genuinely interested in other people's thoughts and feelings. Listen intently. Make eye contact.

Modeling:

Practice behaviour that you want reflected back to you. Try to be non-judgmental. Watch your nonverbal messages.

Focusing attention and pacing:

Keep the group on topic and focused, using care to limit or reduce repetition. This is one of the facilitator's primary responsibilities. Stay on track.

Observing:

Nurture full participation from the group. Watch nonverbal cues in the form of body movement, facial expression, and gesture (may indicate loss of attention, confusion, or discontent). Take a break, change the pace or the topic.

Taking turns:

When several persons want to speak, the facilitator lets them take turns. This prevents the competition for air time. The facilitator could ask "who would like to speak first?"

Agenda Session 6

1 Welcome & questions about Session 5	10 min
2 Presentation & discussion of the agenda	10 min
3 Warm up exercise: Your strength is... ..	35 min
4 Topic: Challenges in Facilitation	10 min
5 Break	10 min
6 Exercises: Community Mural or Letter from the future	30 min
7 Wrap up	15 min

Session 6



Objectives of the session

- To help participants put together their learning from the group experience
- To help participants give closure to their group experience

1. Welcome & feedback on session 5

The facilitators start the session welcoming and reminding participants that this is the last session.

2. Presentation of the agenda of the day

The agenda is written on a flipchart where everybody can read it. It is presented to the members for discussion, and any suggestions that they have for today are considered.

3. Warm-up exercise: Your strength is....

Purpose: To allow group members the opportunity to give feedback to each other

Time: 35 min

Materials: paper and pencils

Suggested process:

- Ask group members to go off by themselves with paper and pencil. At the top of the page, they are to write the sentence: "This has been the perfect group for my learning", and then list each group member. After each name, ask them to write one strength they see in that person.
- Bring the group back together. Each person is to meet with each other participant, telling them their strength. Begin with "You helped me learn because (identify a strength you saw in the other person)..... Thank you". The partner does not make comments only answers "Thank you".
- To finish return to the large group and ask group members to reflect on the exercise

4. Topic: Challenges in facilitation (Handout)

See handout at the end of this session. Make photocopies of this handout for each member of the group. Present the information and discuss together.



5. Break

6. Exercise A: Community mural

Purpose: To represent in a mural the experience of this group

Time: 30 min

Materials: A large piece of paper, markers in different colours

Suggested process:

- Invite the participants to create a “community mural” that represents the different strengths they identify in themselves and the group during these 6 sessions.
- When they have finished it, the facilitator asks a volunteer to explain the themes & ideas represented and express the feelings of the group while working together.

Or

Exercise B: Letter from the future

Purpose: To help members see themselves applying what they have learned in this group

Time: 30 min

Materials: paper and pen

Suggested process:

- Write a letter from your future self to your current self
- From 6 months, 1 year or 5 years (or whatever time period you sense is appropriate) from now
- Describe where you are, what you are doing, what you have gone through to get there and so on
- Tell yourself the crucial things you realized or did to get there
- Give yourself some compassionate advice from the future
- The facilitator invites whoever wants to share with the group his/her letter and how it feels to see himself/herself in the future.



7. Wrap-up

The facilitators close the group telling the participants how much they enjoyed working with them and wishing them well in their lives. They fill out the final evaluation form and the expression of interest form. The last one contains information about their interest in running a group in their community. Members who express interest in carrying on a group in their community are invited to participate in a second stage (follow-up) of this project where they will receive guidance in designing, promoting, and replicating the group in the community during a period of six weeks.

Challenges in facilitation

- **Cues.** Various verbal and non-verbal cues tip you off as to how group members are reacting. Some cues to watch for are: restlessness; silence; postures; eye contact. None of these cues can tell you absolutely what is going on. You must be aware of the situation in which they are given.
- **Challenging situations/people.** When interacting with challenging or difficult people, a tactful approach that maintains individual self esteem wins greater respect and results. To maintain the self esteem of each individual (and yourself), don't allow an attack on any individual or yourself. Emotional conflict shifts a person's concern from problem solving to defending their position. As the facilitator, you need to shift the focus back to the issue the group is working on. This reflects what is acceptable, workable, and meets the needs of the group, not the needs of a single individual.
- **Challenging behaviours.** Individuals play a variety of different roles within groups. It is important to recognize that all roles can have a negative or positive impact on group dynamics.

Some of the challenging roles are:

- 1. Monopoliser:** This is the person who takes control of each discussion, not allowing others to contribute.
 - Remind participants of the "Ground Rules."
 - Use body language, put up your hand, and say "Roberto, we are moving on to allow others to have an opportunity to speak. Let's hear from someone who has not had a chance to contribute." Take a break and talk to the person, asking them for help to get others' ideas in the mix.
 - Usually they will rally and want to "help you." It gives them a good sense of control.
- 2. The Interrupter and Talker:** This is the person who interrupts by talking to another person or constantly interrupting whoever is speaking.
 - Start by saying: "Many of you may have ideas to add to what others are saying. I will give you an opportunity after they are finished, so please wait until I ask for additional comments. Then we will ask for permission to add your comment to theirs on the flip chart."
 - Say "Excellent comment, Roberto. We will deal with that in a few minutes. Hold your thought and you will be the first one up when Sarah has finished her needs statement."
 - Setting limits: "I will answer those questions later at break".
- 3. Silent, Shy, Quiet:** These are the people who have good ideas, but may have trouble expressing them or are embarrassed to talk about them aloud. Because we want to include the ideas of all, you will want to draw them out and encourage participation.

- Let participants know that you do not expect perfection in the way they make their statements and that no one person is more “right” than another person. Encourage the atmosphere to be a “safe place” where everyone can express themselves.
- Call on others to volunteer by saying: “I want to hear from those of you who have not had a chance to tell us your ideas. All of your ideas are good and I know many of you have written down some good ones that you would like us to hear.” Make eye contact with those and ask “Do you have something you would like to add?”
- Be patient with those having trouble getting ideas up on the wall and encourage them. Don’t talk over them or try to finish their statements.
- Go around asking each person to respond briefly or pass

4. Hostile Challenger: This is the person who doesn’t like the process, thinks it won’t work and wants to change the process while you are facilitating. Here are some suggestions for handling that possibility:

- Start by saying “I know that there have been questions about the process we are using today and many of you have expressed your opinions about it. You are right in that there are different ways we could be identifying your office’s needs. This is a good process and we are asking you to: “Trust the process, believe in the people and support tonight’s agenda.....”
- Start by saying “No perfect process. Has worked for other groups. Give it a try”
- Identify privately some who may have strong opinions and talk to them ahead of the meeting. Answer their questions, giving them time to talk it through.

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Appendices

Appendix 1	Final Group Evaluation Form
Appendix 2	Evaluation Form of Each Session
Appendix 3	Sample Flyer
Appendix 4	My strengths in action

Final Group Evaluation

We appreciate your cooperation in trying to improve the group in which you have participated. Please, answer the following questionnaire drawing a circle next to the number (from 1 to 5) that represents your answer to each question. Thank you.

- 5- Strongly agree
- 4- Agree
- 3- Neutral
- 2- Disagree
- 1- Strongly disagree

Questions

1. The objectives of the group (developing a social support network and gaining basic knowledge about facilitation) were clearly presented by the facilitators

5 4 3 2 1

2. The amount of information received was appropriate for the 2 hour weekly sessions

5 4 3 2 1

3. The facilitators presented the topics in an organized and clear way

5 4 3 2 1

4. The facilitators answered questions in a clear manner

5 4 3 2 1

5. The handouts were useful

5 4 3 2 1

6. My goals for this group were accomplished

5 4 3 2 1

7. The facilitators showed respect and support towards the participants

5 4 3 2 1

8. I would recommend this group to other people

5 4 3 2 1

9. What was the most beneficial aspect of the group for you?

10. In your opinion, how could this group be improved?

11. How did you learn about this group?

- Newspaper Radio Flyer
- Board in a Community Centre Friend Other
- At the Mennonite New Life Centre
- Professionals/Staff gave you the information

12. Comments (anything you want to express related to any aspect of the group)

Evaluation Form for Each Session (to be completed by facilitators)

Group	Hermandad Project. Group Sessions
Place	Mennonite New Life Centre

Session #		Date	
-----------	--	------	--

Facilitators	
Participants	
Themes	
Agenda	
Materials	
Topics discussed	

Actions to follow	
Comments	
Notes	



Mennonite New Life Centre

Hermandad Project
Reflection Circle

Join other Latin Americans meeting in a safe and respectful environment to share experiences of the migration and integration process in Canada

Sharing

You will find:

- An opportunity for reflection on barriers and challenges you faced in adjusting to Canada.
- Assistance with identifying the personal and cultural strengths that can help you integrate successfully while maintaining your identity.
- An opportunity to build friendships and a social support network with other immigrants.
- New knowledge of facilitation techniques to help you become a leader for change in your community.

Acting

Place and date:
Mennonite New Life Centre.
1774 Queen St. East.
Program begins January 17,
10-12pm, and continues for
six Saturdays .

To register or ask for more information call
Mennonite New Life Centre at 416-699-4527

We offer:

- A small group with opportunity for individual participation.
- Two group facilitators
- TTC tokens
- Coffee/Snacks
- Participation Certificate

Strengthening

How flags are born

Until now our flags are like this.
Our people embroidered them with their
tenderness,
Stitched the fabric with their suffering.
Nailed the star with their ardent hands.
And cut from their shirts or the sky,
Blue for the star of our homeland..
The red grew, drop by drop.

Pablo Neruda

My Strengths in Action

Classification of strengths	Strengths included in each group	Examples of activities to develop your strengths
Cognitive strengths (Acquisition & use of knowledge)	Love of Learning → Open-mindedness Curiosity → Creativity Wisdom	Attend functions in your area of interest Try things that challenge your existing knowledge and skills
Emotional strengths (Involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal)	Bravery → Persistence Honesty Vitality →	Speak up for an unpopular idea in a group Socialize with friends who like to laugh heartily
Interpersonal strengths (Tending and befriending others)	Capacity to love & be loved Kindness → Social intelligence →	Visit someone in a nursing home or hospice Listen to others without judgment
Civic strengths (Healthy community life)	Teamwork → Fairness → Leadership	Volunteer weekly for a community project Self-monitor to see whether you treat people of other ethnicities & cultures stereotypically
Strengths that protect against excess	Forgiveness & Mercy Modesty & Humility → Prudence Self-regulation →	Use environmental resources modestly Start a regular workout routine and make sure you stick to it
Transcendence (Forging connections to the larger universe and providing meaning)	Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence → Gratitude Hope Humour → Spirituality & Religiousness →	Think of something that contains beauty, love, connection at least once a day Cheer up a gloomy friend Connect with people & organizations that enhance your strengths

