

40 YEARS



Mennonite  
new life  
centre



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Advancing Our Legacy of Newcomer Empowerment

In 2023, we celebrated our 40th anniversary, reflecting on the Centre's accomplishments over the years. We are proud of the progress so far, thanks to our team's hard work and dedication. We recently created a Settlement Resource Centre and two new bridging programs to support our clients in pursuing their goals toward a new life in Canada.

**Our job is to decrease and work to eliminate barriers that clients face in achieving their goals.** We provided diverse learning options for our clients including online, hybrid, and in-person classes. The many operational adjustments made during the pandemic have proven useful because they provide flexible options and make it easier for clients to access the services they need. Now, no longer restricted by distance, or physical occupancy capacity, we are supporting newcomers toward their goals.

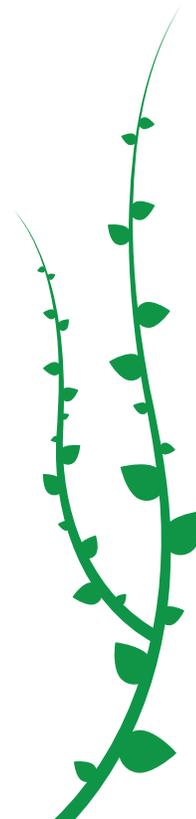
While we gradually return to the office, we continue to offer services in ways that meet clients' needs, keen on **sustaining and leveraging our achievements** in the last four decades, for better newcomer service. We are also embracing Artificial Intelligence to improve our internal and external services, looking to automate some of our daily tasks to allow the Information Technology department to focus on assisting clients and staff.

As a wise man once said to my team and I, **"We have more in common than we have differences."** I wholeheartedly agree, and as an immigrant myself, I know that we struggle similarly when we move to a new country. Our reasons for leaving our homelands differ, whether as a refugee fleeing instability, or simply seeking a better life. But we all had enough drive to make the move and adapt as best we could to the new circumstances awaiting us in our new home.

The Centre's next year will focus on this struggle and making an easier pathway for other immigrants to survive, cope, and thrive. With support from the community and hard work on fundraising, **we are committed to doing our part to alleviate homelessness** by providing transitional housing to some of our new immigrant families, while working with them to stay and thrive in Canada. We are excited about the future and its promising possibilities. We look forward to the next 40 years with hope, positivity and dedication to improved service for newcomers.



**Dwayne O'Connor**  
Executive Director  
of MNLCT



# MNLCT AT A GLANCE

As a community-based charity, the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto creates meaningful pathways for newcomers to contribute their skills, talents, and voices to their communities wherever they live, work, play, and learn.

Newcomers of all ages, genders, and cultural identities can access the tools and resources needed for social and economic integration into Canadian life. With our deep expertise – developed over 40 years of grassroots community support – we provide caring and professional support that addresses short- and long-term needs and aspirations of clients.

Services include settlement and immigration information and community connections; language training; community mental health counselling; employment, entrepreneurship, and career bridging supports; counter-human trafficking counselling, and now community health services too. Programs evolve to meet the needs of an ever-changing immigrant population.



*“I see a big difference between when I started and my situation today. It is much easier for me to read and speak English.”*

– Hanna,  
LINC Student, CLB 7

## OUR 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.

## OUR VISION

We envision a society in which all people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds participate fully in all aspects of Canadian life. We have modelled 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.

## OUR VALUES

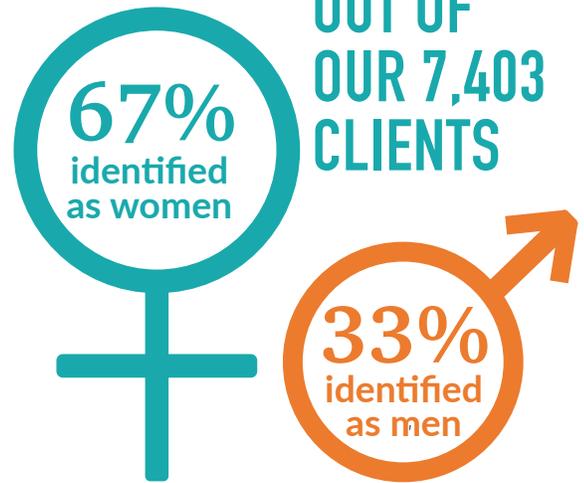
- Respect
- Community building
- Participation and voice
- Equity and integration
- Peace with social justice

# OUR CLIENTS



This was the first year we fully used the new Client Management System, Apricot. It allowed us to gather more accurate data.

OUT OF OUR 7,403 CLIENTS

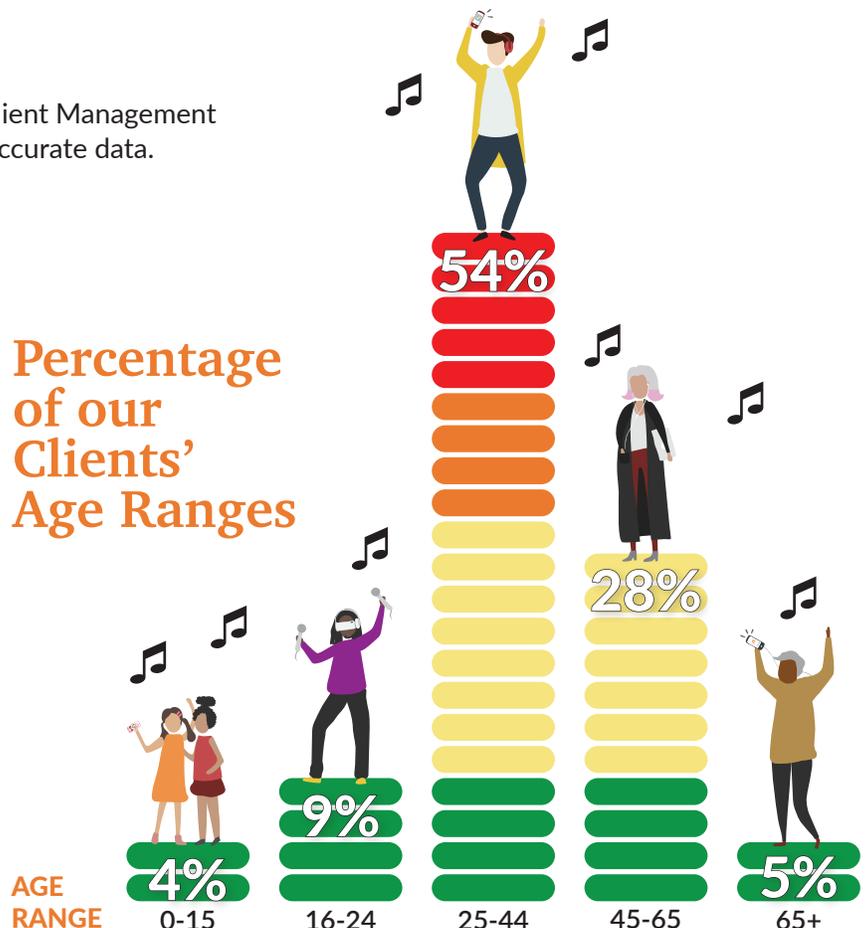


MNLCT has consistently had more women-identifying clients compared to other genders. We also served clients who chose not to disclose their gender. As an inclusive organization, we support individuals in their diversities.



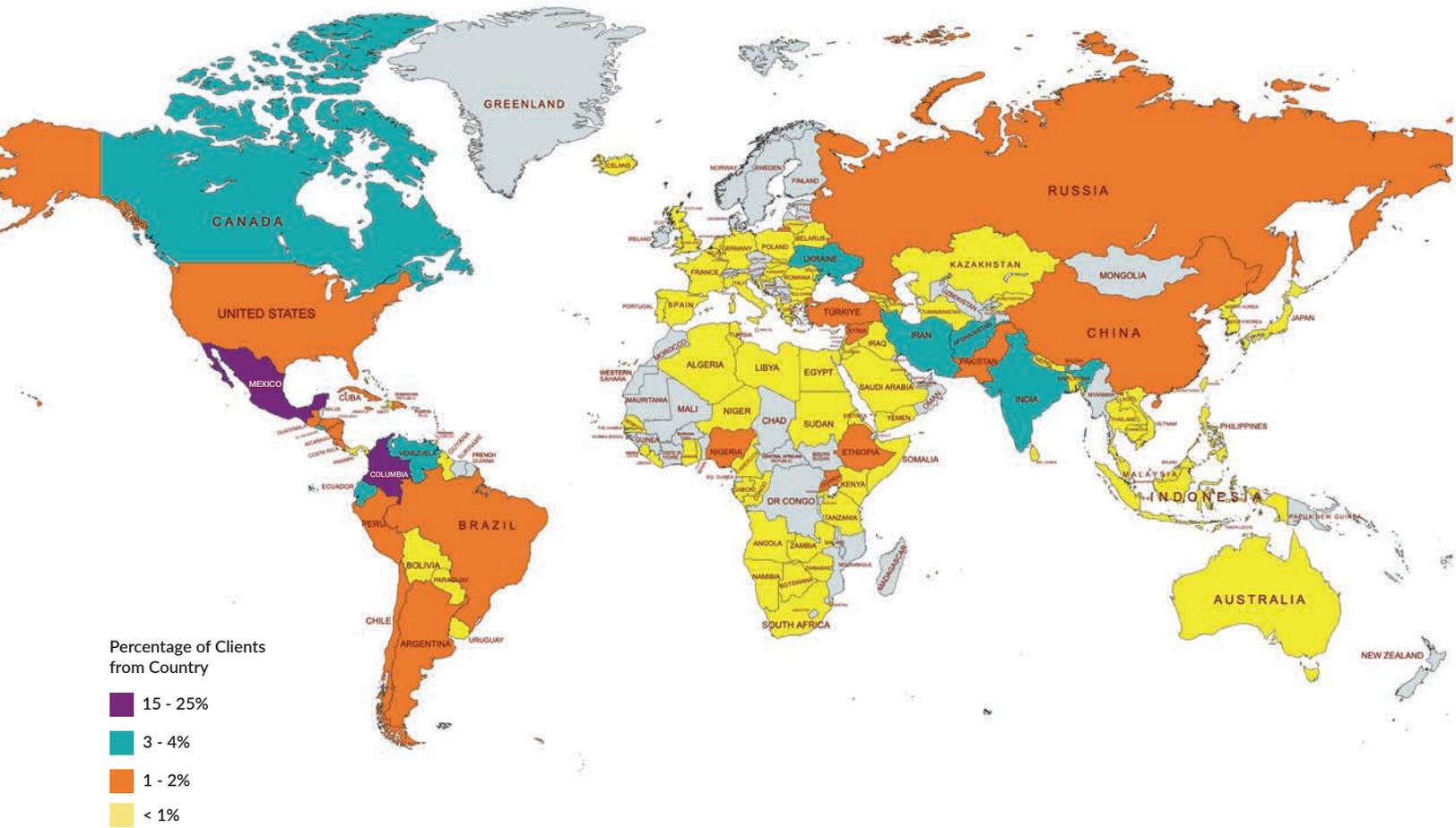
Total client visits (in-person & online)

## Percentage of our Clients' Age Ranges



## Top Countries of Origin

Our clients have diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and bring a wide range of education, skills, and talents to Canada. In 2023, we served almost 7,500 people from 127 countries around the world.



## We not only provided physical healthcare, but also mental health support, health education and advocacy: Sandra's story

By Youdon Tenzin



Sandra Tavares, a graduate at Humber College's accelerated nursing program, was one of the first students who participated in the Health for All Partnership (HAP) between the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) and Humber College – a nursing student-led, faculty supervised clinic at MNLCT's Finch office.

She was part of the first cohort, starting her placement from September to December 2023. Her cohort was mentored by Sue Ferri, an experienced nurse and Humber clinical teacher.

Sandra's days at the HAP clinic varied according to client needs. She elaborates, "We not only provided physical healthcare, but also mental health support, health education and advocacy."

The HAP clinic team also referred clients to supportive services, both within MNLCT and external resources. They navigated the healthcare system for their clients, connecting newcomers to free or affordable specialized care.

Although there are different health clinics in Toronto that accept individuals without health insurance, they often come with some restrictions. The HAP clinic, however, accepted everyone regardless of their status. The clients knew that the clinic was a safe space which allowed them to build strong bonds with the nurses.

*"I didn't know too much about community nursing, so this experience really opened my eyes to it and solidified the type of nursing I'd like to do in the future."*

Sandra has always known that the newcomer community in Toronto is underserved when it comes to healthcare but her time at the HAP clinic showed her the depths of this issue. It was eye-opening for her to see the struggles of finding healthcare that is accessible to newcomers. [Read Sandra's full story on our website.](#)



# OUR PROGRAMS

We are committed to designing programs and services to facilitate full participation of newcomers in all aspects of Canadian life.

## SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION

Caring and professional services tailored to each newcomer to assess and support their immediate needs and future goals. Includes information about living and working in Canada, access to government and community resources, and help building support networks and social connections.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

Counselling and group programs that help newcomers, including people who have been trafficked in Canada, to overcome stress or trauma and reinforce resilience, strength, and well-being at the individual and community level.

### Language Instruction Giving Hope to Trauma Survivors (LIGHTS)

Alternative English-language training paired with mental health supports for vulnerable newcomers who have trouble learning in traditional classroom settings.

### LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

English-language classes for adult learners from literacy to upper intermediate level to acquire the language skills and confidence they need to succeed in social, educational, and work situations.

The corresponding **Care for Newcomer Children (CNC)** service provides fun and educational activities for young children so parents can focus on their studies.

## LIFE & CAREER COACHING & TRAINING

### She-Covery Services

Services to help transition newcomer women from unemployment or underemployment conditions into job market opportunities.

### Employment Readiness Program

Individual support for developing career and employment plans. Group workshops to network and become employment ready in Canada.

### Helping Our Newcomers Prepare for Employment Success (HOPES)

Essential programming to help job seekers and those needing to enhance their career skills, via coaching support and mental health counselling in the context of resettlement stress.

## NEW 2023 SERVICES



With the Humber College Bachelor of Nursing Program, a healthcare clinic that runs on four core pillars; primary care, mental health care, patient education, and advocacy.

### RESOURCE CENTRE

Equipped with computers and tablets, the centre offers both print and electronic resources where newcomers can drop in and receive guidance by staff and volunteers to navigate systems and access resources.

### Entrepreneurial Excellence and Leadership (EXL)

Resources, coaching, peer support, and guidance for entrepreneurial newcomers to start and grow their business.

### BRIDGING PROGRAMS

Training and support for internationally trained professionals to help bridge their career experiences to the Canadian labour market.

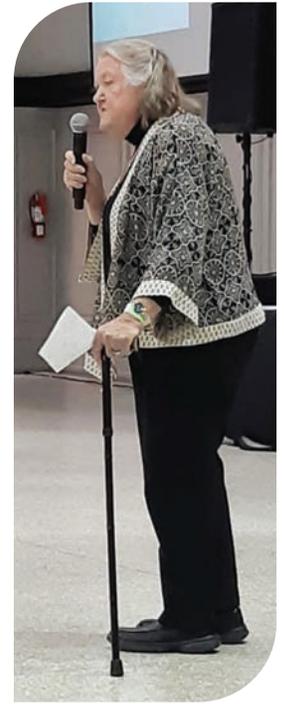
- **Bridge to Employment in Media and Communications (BEMC)**
- **Bridge to Employment in Services for Immigrant Populations (BESIP)**
- **Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health (BREM)**
- **Bridge for Immigrant Women Reskilling into IT Coding Professions (C-Women)**

# 40 YEARS

As we looked back at the last 40 years, we were humbled by how much positive impact we have had on newcomers' lives. 2023 was a time to consolidate what we have achieved in the past four decades. Our 40th anniversary celebration was filled with a series of activities, culminating in a grand community gathering on February 10, 2024, at LiUNA! Local 183. Here are some heartfelt reflections from our team members about the milestone, along with a few memorable highlights from the event.



Left to right: Board member Amy Kao, Former Board Chair Miriam Reesor, Board Member Edgardo Romero, and Board Chair Rochelle Fine



MNLCT Founder, Betty Puricelli



Mental Health team members pose for a photo



*"It's unheard of to see a company go this long, 40 years, and be so profitable in terms of helping people out and making a difference."*  
 ~ Dwayne O'Connor, Executive Director



Young spectators enjoying the show



Huairapungo entertaining guests with their traditional dance

*"It went by so fast; I can't believe it. I guess the common denominator was that our focus was always, is, and always will be, to support newcomers."*  
 ~ Jorge Silvestri, LINC Program Director



*"It was amazing. The response that we got from the community; I haven't seen that kind of response before."*  
 ~ Loida Lopez, Director of Administration



Kaleidoscope Chinese Performing Arts (KCPA) dancers after their performance

BOARD MEMBERS & BETTY PHOTOS: AMY KAO; DWAYNE'S PHOTO: MIRNA CHACIN



Attendees enjoying fun, family, and friends!



*"It was really a coming together of the community."*

~ Tracy Docheff,  
Bridging  
Program  
Director



"I remember at the beginning, the support that was provided was mostly for Spanish-speaking clients coming from the Latin American community. Now we have diversified the array of languages that we have within the organization, and I think at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary it was very clear that we are a diverse agency." ~ Martha Granados, Settlement Program Director



Salsa Y Sabor posing with a fan after performing



Tetiana Cherneta, Ukrainian musician and singer with her son, Denys



Staff volunteers after working hard at the event



*"It is a milestone, the Centre serving clients and newcomers because I see the patience of the employees, and directors working with programs and teams, I feel very proud to be part of the team."*

~ Nancy Sanchez, IT Director



"Compassion is something that is part of the values of our organization. Since the beginning of our organization there is this sense of belonging, a connection that all these staff have, this is something that we have been bringing during all these years."

~ Leticia Esquivel, Mental Health Program Director



## Our New Executive Director

The recruitment of Dwayne O'Connor, the new Executive Director (ED), in June last year marked another great milestone for the Centre. Only the 4th ED in 40 years, Dwayne's arrival was "truly energizing," according to LINC Program Director, Jorge Silvestri. Despite the challenges of operating without a director, the Executive team, comprised of program directors, ensured smooth operations, while simultaneously juggling their own responsibilities.

The new dawn meant new ways of doing things. Staff described it as a "breeze" and Dwayne as an exceptional and patient leader who unites people. Dwayne is grateful to the previous ED and predecessors for building a strong organization, which made his arrival much easier.

"It was not as difficult as one might think because the team was already built up and the organization was so structured," Dwayne said.

Under Dwayne's leadership, the Centre continues to positively transform to improve operations and better serve clients and newcomer communities. He values transparency and idea sharing, and encourages staff to lead projects aligning with their passions and strengths and the Centre's mission and vision.

*"In three years, I'm looking for us to be beyond the GTA, to be full and all over Ontario, then to move across Canada within five years. It's a very unique service if you look at the other services that are offered and compare them, there's nothing like MNLCT." ~ Dwayne O'Connor*

We welcome Dwayne and are looking forward to seeing his vision unfold for MNLCT. Rochelle Fine, MNLCT's Board Chair, confidently says of our new ED, "Dwayne's experience in fundraising and working closely with government and community members will not only ensure the continuation of the existing innovative services provided by MNLCT and the excellent staff but champion the continued growth of the Centre to support the urgent needs of the increasing newcomer community."



### About Dwayne O'Connor

Dwayne is experienced in leadership roles confronting the various social and economic inequities that give rise to poverty, homelessness, mental health and addictions, and other barriers that the Centre's vulnerable newcomer clients face.

He has been actively involved in anti-racism efforts through his work as:

- Chair of the Diversity Council at University Health Network
- Member of the Health Equity Tribunal
- Member of the Colour of Poverty Network

He is also active in the Indigenous community and is certified as a Feather Carrier, to help those in the community combat suicide and to celebrate life.

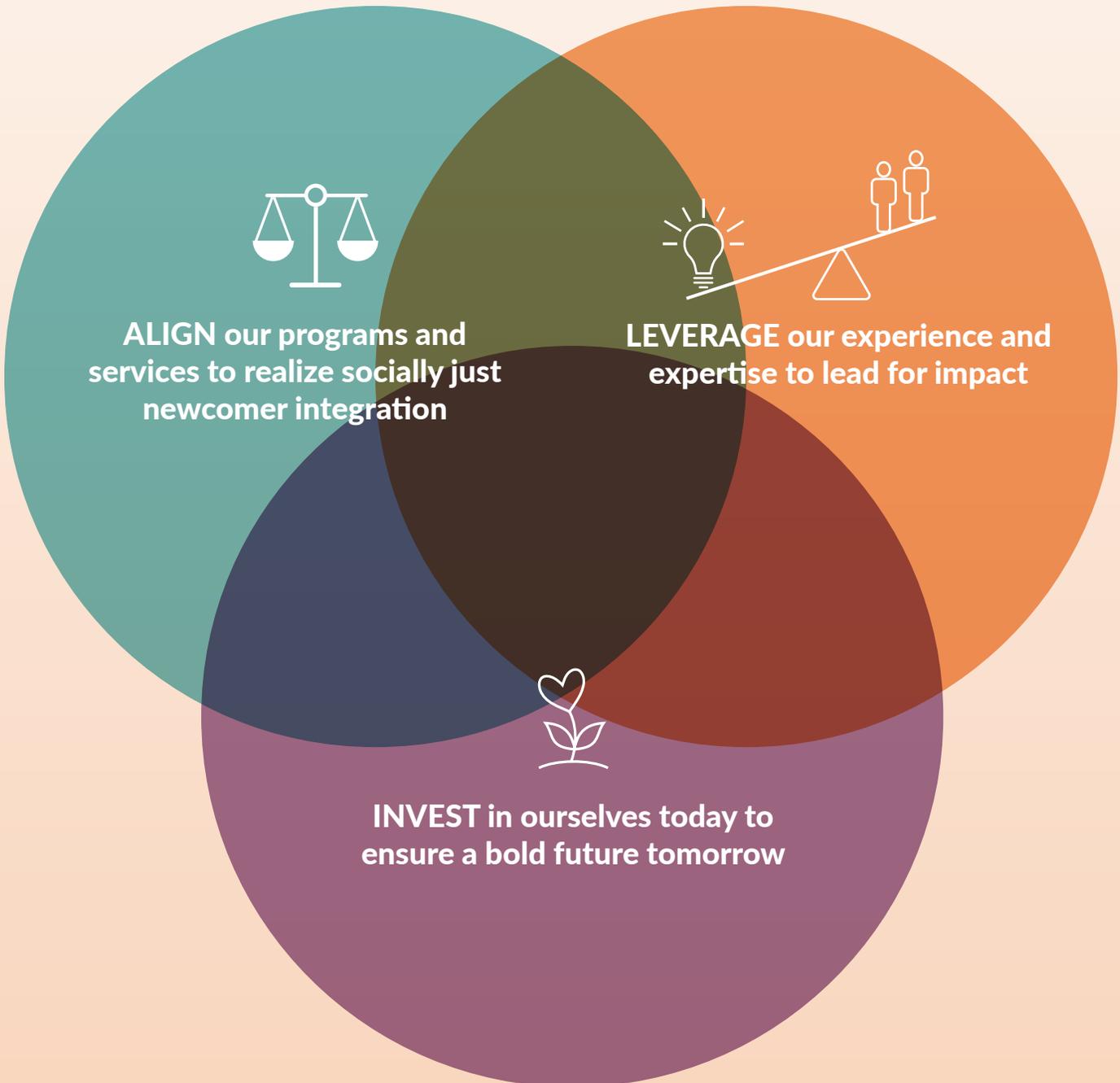


Dwayne getting to know staff at internal events and at the office.



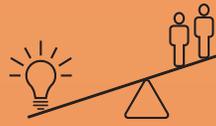
# STRATEGIC GOALS AND IMPACT

As we celebrated our 40th anniversary, we remained dedicated to our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, to **Align, Leverage and Invest**, ensuring that the Centre strengthened its achievements and steadily moved towards the future.





**ALIGN** our programs and services to realize socially just newcomer integration



**LEVERAGE** our experience and expertise to lead for impact



**INVEST** in ourselves today to ensure a bold future tomorrow

**GOALS**

Adopt a clear and actionable approach to advocacy within a social justice and anti-poverty framework.

Strengthen capacity for individual/group leadership and civic engagement, to support community development and advocacy, with a focus on anti-poverty work.

Offer innovation in language learning that reaches the most marginalized communities.

Deepen our education, training, bridging, and social enterprise work.

Embed improved mental health as a key social determinant of health into all the work we do.

Build on our tech-forward approach to innovate on service delivery in a hybrid space.

**GOALS**

Promote our expertise at cross-sectoral programming, funding, and policy tables, particularly in the areas of mental health, adult education, leadership, social justice, and community-building.

Build strategic partnerships with research and evaluation groups to contribute to the body of evidence-based practices in newcomer integration.

Develop and implement a leading-edge marketing, communication, and brand strategy grounded in the voices of newcomers that showcases our work across sectors and audiences.

Leverage our story and our impact to strengthen work in resource development and building cases of support.

**GOALS**

Strengthen our commitment to social justice and anti-oppression at all levels of our organization.

Create a talent management plan that addresses the evolving realities of non-profit work.

Invest in our staff with continuous training and development so as to allow the realization of high-quality hybrid service delivery models.

Deepen our development of tech-forward infrastructure, systems, and processes to support new models of service delivery.





## **ALIGN our programs and services to realize socially just newcomer integration**

### **GOAL: Adopt a clear and actionable approach to advocacy within a social justice and anti-poverty framework.**

In 2023, many newcomers struggled to secure proper housing, a key priority, due to barriers such as insufficient income, low credit score, and a lack of references. Despite not offering direct housing support, we stepped in.

Martha Granados, the Settlement Program Director, emphasized the need for housing case management, leading the Centre to partner with organizations that provide direct housing support. The organizations conduct monthly housing and legal services training to our settlement workers. We assess clients' needs through our central intake and refer them to suitable partners. "Those with housing needs don't have to wait for eight weeks to see us," Martha explained.

Executive Director Dwayne O'Connor equally prioritized housing for clients, disclosing that, "We have started looking at providing housing, or at least transitional housing for immigrants in desperate need, at the edge of the incredibly expensive process of getting housing and providing them services while they are in there."

These initiatives are promising.

### **GOAL: Strengthen capacity for individual/group leadership and civic engagement, to support community development**



Clients in the Resource Centre use the computers to complete their immigration documents online and write their resumes.

### **and advocacy, with a focus on anti-poverty work.**

Recognizing the immense contribution of volunteers and placement students, our Centre provided opportunities for individuals to give their time, skills and resources in newcomer service, especially where we experienced high demand for services. Leticia Esquivel, the Mental Health Program Director, notes most of our mental health counsellors are newcomers trying to build their careers in Canada. Her team hosted Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health (BREM) students, who developed and facilitated a six-week program, Emotional Intelligence for Families, to teach children about their emotions, and parents about understanding and support their children's emotions.

### **THE RESOURCE CENTRE**

In the Settlement Program, Bridge to Employment in Services for Immigrant Populations (BESIP) students supported both staff and clients.

To build our clients' capacity, we opened the Resource Centre on July 1, 2023, at our recently expanded Keele office. It is equipped with computers and tablets, offering both print and electronic resources for clients. There, clients – especially the non-tech savvy – are guided by staff and volunteers to navigate systems and access resources. This initiative was aimed at shortening long waitlists – that averaged about 8 weeks – to serve more clients.

"We could do it only because we had some help from our BESIP students. They were instrumental in developing the concept and everything in the Resource Centre and actually starting the pilot to create that space for our clients," explained Martha.

Since the Resource Centre opened, the waitlists have drastically reduced, enabling counsellors to serve more clients. The facility is open twice a week and receives at least 25 unique clients a day, some who bring a person or two with them, making an average

of 50-60 visitors a day. If they were one-on-one appointments, a counsellor could only assist a maximum of five clients a day.

Tracy Docheff, the Bridging Programs Director said, “The Resource Centre is a great place to drop in, receive services without waiting for appointments,” emphasizing that it was a timely addition as the Centre started seeing more clients in-person since the pandemic. At the facility, clients develop a community through valuable in-person interactions.

### CITIZENSHIP TRIP TO OTTAWA

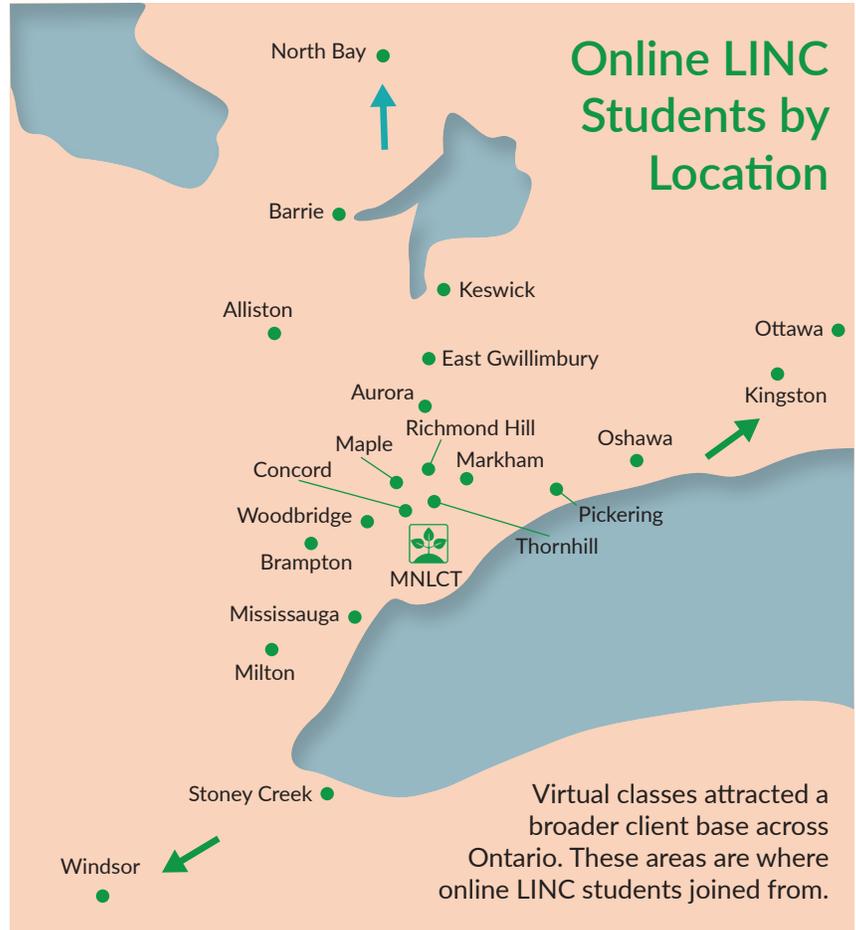
Last year a group of 25 clients visited Ottawa for a civic engagement activity. The new graduates from our Citizenship classes collaborated and raised resources on their own for the trip. They wanted to learn more about the Canadian political process and see the nation’s capital. The group visited Parliament and saw firsthand the questions they would have to answer in their citizenship test. Martha highlighted the importance of this experience stating, “Seeing the place where the decisions about the lives of all of us who live in this country are made, was a really good experience for them.” [Read more about their trip on our website.](#)



Citizenship students and staff pose in front of Parliament Hill

### GOAL: Offer innovation in language learning that reaches the most marginalized communities.

We continued to help newcomers learn and improve their English through our programs,



Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and Language Instruction Giving Hope to Trauma Survivors (LIGHTS).

LINC classes continued to operate under ‘normal circumstances’ since the pandemic. However, as physical classes – and the corresponding Care for Newcomer Children service – fully resumed at our Keele site, we continued to offer classes online. When asked, most higher level students said they preferred the online classes while most lower level students preferred to meet and learn in person. Offering both modalities means newcomers can access services in a way that meets their needs. See above map to see the areas from where online students join LINC classes.

In 2023, a significant number of Ukrainian students joined our higher level online evening classes. These classes focus less on functional daily communication and more on language skills that lead to better integration through community connections, volunteering, civic engagement, and job-related activities. We also continued to support a diverse student population with first languages of Dari/Pashto, Mandarin, Persian/Farsi, Spanish, and Turkish, among others, among others. Jorge Silvestri, the LINC Program Director, commended the teachers’ exceptional work, especially with non-tech-savvy virtual students.

Despite continued challenges delivering online classes with a method originally designed for in-person instruction, there has been an increase in graduation from one level to another since the pandemic. 130 of the total enrolment of 379 unique clients, or 34%, moved levels. Students enter the program at different levels and may drop out due to various personal reasons and barriers in their settlement journey, so the good graduation rates mean many students are able to stay long enough and make progress.

### LINC ANNUAL SURVEY

The annual LINC survey showed that students are appreciative too, with 93% of survey respondents scoring the quality of instruction as 'Excellent to Very Good'. Regarding whether the course content helped them integrate more easily, 81% thought it helped them 'Very Much to Fairly'. For students who still had levels to complete, 88% showed an interest in continuing with LINC in 2024.

### GOAL: Deepen our education, training, bridging, and social enterprise work.

Funding for Bridging Programs was extended, enabling us to run additional cohorts in September 2024. Tracy Docheff was appointed the new Bridging Programs Director in December 2023, months after the resignation of the former director.

Tracy's first task was to harmonize and streamline the four programs, which had been a challenge for the team without a leader. The



Our C-Women cohort met at the beach for a potluck and day of fun

team implemented a structure with specific staff responsible for each of the four programs.

The team introduced specialized meetings for each program instead of one meeting for all. Clients had reported trouble reaching out to the programs, so this personalized approach would improve coordination and enable better oversight, ensuring that clients received the necessary support. The Bridging team began increasing their in-office days, providing availability to the growing number of clients demanding in-person services. Regular monthly in-person and hybrid info sessions are planned to begin in 2024.

Last fall, the C-Women program curriculum was changed to refocus and strengthen it. BREM and BEMC curriculums were also updated. BREM continues to be recognized by the College of Registered Psychotherapist of Ontario (CRPO) who appreciate the strength of the program and refer students to us when applicable. BREM program participants who successfully graduate from all components of stream R are ready to apply directly to CRPO to enter the next stage of their career.

The BEMC program thrived amidst challenges of connecting students to the job market, given the changing landscape of the media business, with media houses merging, closing and laying people off. We are happy to report that one of our graduates, Lidiia Karpenko wrote for the Globe and Mail! See her story on p21.

### GOAL: Embed improved mental health as a key social determinant of health into all the work we do.

We strengthened our mental health programming throughout the year, by diversifying services to include new communities. In addition to English, Spanish and limited Farsi offerings, we expanded to include Arabic, Ukrainian, Russian, and Portuguese, to help clients



Percentage of Centre clients who progress through CLB levels on an annual basis

overcome language barriers. In response to the increasing number of Ukrainians seeking our services, we identified a growing demand for mental health support. We established a dedicated mental health group, among other services, to tend to the specific needs of the Ukrainian community.

Moreover, our commitment to inclusivity remained unwavering as we offered mental health groups tailored to the needs of various ethnicities including the new Arabic Women’s Group, as well as ongoing Spanish and Farsi-speaking groups.

### Staff Mental Health Support

We introduced the Compassion in the Workplace project to cater to staff mental health needs. Employees attended workshops tailored to individual needs. The settlement program staff participated in a de-escalation training facilitated by a BREM placement student.

Similarly, BREM and BESIP students also received workshops in diversity and inclusion, and offering mental health embedded settlement services, respectively. The mental health team participated in various psycho education trainings to deepen their expertise.



Staff participating in the Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) Mental Wellness Day



## LEVERAGE our experience and expertise to lead for impact

**GOAL: Promote our expertise at cross-sectoral programming, funding, and policy tables, particularly in the areas of mental health, adult education, leadership, social justice, and community-building.**

We spoke at events and established more partnerships promoting the Centre’s programs and services across the sector. We participated in the Mental Health and Employment event organized by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), mental health sessions in the Parkdale Community and at the West Neighborhood House, among others. Through the Helping Our Newcomers Prepare for Employment Success (HOPES) program, the team conducted workshops with students in the ‘Building Up Entrepreneurs’ offered by the Labour Education Organization and offered another workshop at YMCA. The LIGHTS team was invited to participate in TUTELA, an online community focusing on adult language training across Canada. The team being invited by TUTELA showed that their work was being recognized within the adult language training sector.

In partnership with the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, a mental health services provider for victims of gender-based violence, BREM placement students, guided by one of our mental health counsellors, facilitated a successful mental health initiative – the Revive and Thrive Peer Support Group – for women and gender-diverse people. The group ran six sessions for two separate groups.

We connected more employers and community members to job seekers at our annual hiring event, the Job Connect Cafe. The



two-hour virtual employer-employee connection event was on November 20, 2023, with 208 registrants that included job seekers, career changers, and professionals looking to network and gain insights into the current job market. It was a stepping stone for many in their career journeys, providing them with the tools, knowledge, and connections needed to succeed.

**GOAL: Build strategic partnerships with research and evaluation groups to contribute to the body of evidence-based practices in newcomer integration.**

Our partnership with the Humber College Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program was strengthened through a collaborative research grant awarded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).

The Health for All Partnership (HAP) clinic was launched in September with one lead student nurse and 3 part-time student nurses supervised by a Humber clinical teacher and experienced nurse. It operated three days a week at our Finch location and welcomed clients regardless of immigration status or health insurance. Over 33 days in the fall term from September to December, 74 clients received primary health care, social support and education, and mental health support from the clinic; 80% of them were uninsured.

We received referrals from several organizations to the clinic and connected Ontario Health Teams that support healthcare in the region. The clinic runs on four core pillars; primary care, mental health care, patient education, and advocacy. See p6 to read more about Sandra, a Humber nursing student who completed her pre-graduation placement at the clinic.

**GOAL: Develop and implement a leading-edge marketing, communication, and brand strategy grounded in the voices of newcomers that showcases our work across sectors and audiences.**

We enriched our branding to reflect the Centre's 40th Anniversary. We created a 40th anniversary logo, incorporated a historical timeline of the Centre on the website, and told stories of the Centre in visual and text mode.

The Communications team onboarded a Digital Content Creation Specialist who helped curate content to promote the anniversary.

"We conducted video interviews with our founders, previous board members, current board members, partners, staff, clients, and former clients." Nicole Chung, Communications team lead, explained.

In honour of the anniversary, we ran the Better Together Campaign, a fundraising initiative, where dedicated donors pledged to match four times the individual donations we received from March to May 2023. **We raised almost \$20,000 from the campaign.**

Additionally, we updated our client-centered website to include an events calendar to easily inform our communities of events within the Centre.

While many of our programs were at capacity, we worked to outreach for new programs and services. The Communications team also supported the internal promotional needs of programs, including the Health for All Partnership clinic with Humber College. Before the clinic's opening, the team participated in consensus meetings to develop a model for it and conducted a client survey to determine the kinds of services the clinic could offer. We then developed signage, business cards, and sent out eblasts and social media communication about the different activities at the clinic.

The Communications team also supported the successful onboarding of the new Executive Director. We organized a series of Meet & Greets with Dwayne for him to interact with the staff and external stakeholders. In our quarterly newsletters, we incorporated the ED corner, a slot dedicated to the ED's communication with our stakeholders and clients. **Read more about Dwayne on p10.**

*"I really hope that I can get to a point where the parents of my clients can see a psychotherapist as I do. My role can be the safe space that they can come to and just talk without any judgement."*



– Maryam, Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health (BREM) graduate

**GOAL: Leverage our story and our impact to strengthen work in resource development and building cases of support.**

The demand for our services remained high amidst funding challenges. Most of our budget was funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the municipality, and came with restrictions to serve only clients with immigration status. We welcomed and served non-status clients like refugee claimants and others without permanent status from the Centre’s core budgets.

“We were unable to expand the team to the required ratio to support the growing number of clients due to limited funding,” Loida Lopez, the Director of Administration said, commenting on the Centre’s continued need for volunteers.

Last year, we had only one settlement worker supporting refugee claimants and trained more volunteers to help with the load. Despite the challenges, the Centre provided essential services to more clients.

This kind of support echoed the Executive Director’s focus on maintaining efficiencies in the organization, strengthening teams

and considering possibilities of expansion of services to serve the most vulnerable populations.



**INVEST in ourselves today to ensure a bold future tomorrow**

**GOAL: Create a talent management plan that addresses the evolving realities of non-profit work.**

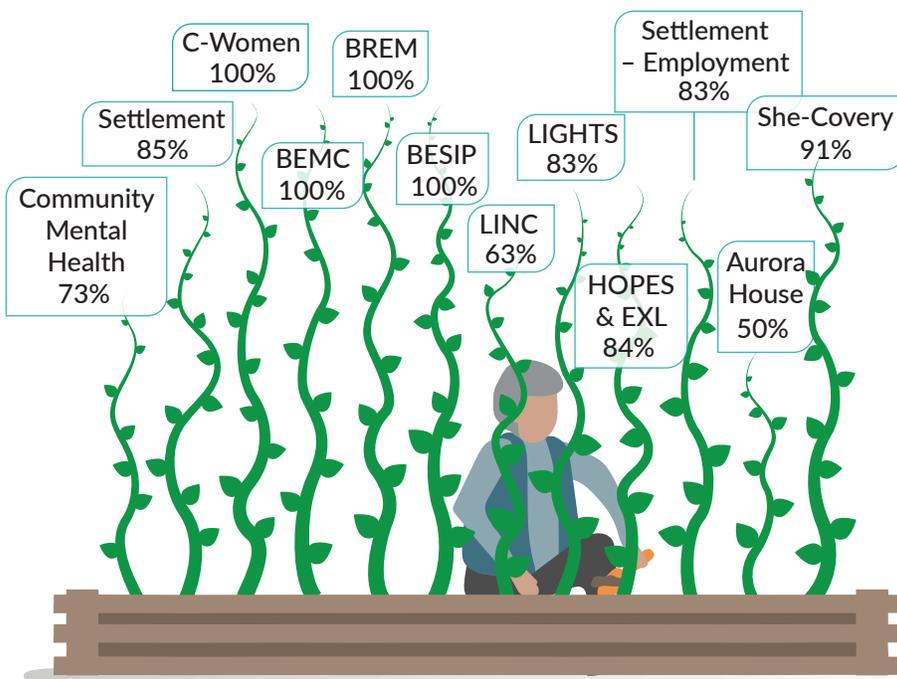
We introduced new Human Resource systems and revamped some existing ones to organize and strategize for easier recruitment. Jwaalini Muralidharan, the HR Administrator explained that, “The candidate pool, the interviews process, and interaction of the whole system really helped the HR team to hire the right candidates and manage the volumes of applications.”

We eliminated separate systems for staff performance management and applicant tracking and upgraded existing systems to include these processes for greater efficiency. The new Payworks tool also enabled the Finance team to make quicker payments as it replaced two different methods previously used for payroll.

We recruited staff to fill vacant positions and introduced a volunteer recruitment process to manage and track the contribution of volunteers to our team. Implementing new systems involved training employees to use them. It required a lot of patience to switch and get everyone on board but as usual, staff were positive, open-minded and steadily adapted well to the changes.

Since last year, HR has been working on securing better benefit plans for employees. Finance ensured timely staff payroll and sending financial reports to funders in time.

**Newcomers are aware of the benefits of holistic settlement services, and access them**



**Percentage of clients who received at least two different services and/or referrals that met their various needs**

\* With our new Client Management System in full operation, we are able to collect client data in areas of general settlement and settlement related to employment support.

“This is important because this is the way that we get the money back and this is the way that we can keep the cash flow very healthy in the organization,” Loida Lopez,

*“I am grateful for the varied path that has led me to this exciting [psychologist] profession that has allowed me to fulfill not only my childhood dreams, but also my true calling – making a difference in people’s lives.”*



– Tanya, She-Covery, LINC, and EXL participant

the Director of Administration explained. Last year, we received more funding from IRCC, and we operated within our \$5 million budget for the year (see Summary of Financial Statements on p23).

**GOAL: Invest in our staff with continuous training and development so as to allow the realization of high-quality hybrid service delivery models.**

We conducted a job satisfaction survey, asking employees about what they wanted improved and their expectations from the management. **Over 78% of our employees were very satisfied with their jobs and the organization.**

“Many of the employees participated and this gave us a pretty good view of what was going on in the Centre and what the needs of the employees are,” Dwayne O’Connor, the Executive Director, said.

Based on the feedback, we implemented Professional Development Courses through LinkedIn Learning, to improve employee skills and professional growth. We also introduced a new performance review platform to respond to employee performance challenges. We opened anonymous feedback lines which improved communication between the Executive team and staff.

Staff continued using our Learning Management System (LMS) to improve their skills and offer services in a hybrid model. Some departments found challenges allocating time for staff training during work hours due to busy schedules, but all understand the importance of strong online learning and teaching skills.

**GOAL: Deepen our development of tech-forward infrastructure, systems, and processes to support new models of service delivery.**

Our innovative IT department excelled at adapting evolving technology for seamless service delivery. The team collaborated with all programs to offer tech improvements across the Centre. “We hear

what’s working and what is not working,” Nancy Sanchez, the IT Director, said, adding that monthly meetings with departments provided feedback for improvement.

We introduced online payment capabilities for specific transactions which saved administrative time for both staff and clients. Core services remained free for clients. Translation services were also automated, enabling clients to upload and receive completed documents electronically.

The automation of services strengthened the use of the Learning Management System (LMS) for staff and clients. With improved processes, HOPES clients for example can join the program and participate at their own pace, as well as access other programs, courses, and workshops in the system.

We upgraded the central intake system for better internal and external client referrals. Thanks to the Central Intake team, we implemented a self-registration process for clients and developed a needs assessment form, an information orientation form customized for all programs to track and provide specific data for our ourselves and our funders.

The configuration of Apricot, our Client Management System, eliminated manual data tracking making data tracking easier.



Our IT team on a well-deserved team outing

*“In this lengthy immigration process, what one must do is identify what he/she truly desires and begin working on it gradually; here is where the assistance of MNLCT comes in helpful.”*



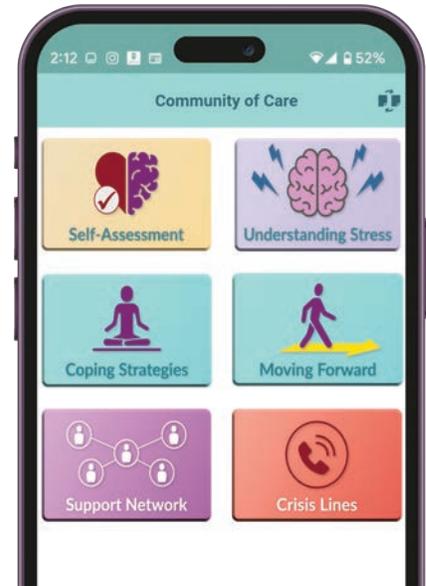
– Patricia, Employment Readiness and Citizenship Class participant (and new citizen!)

We can now download data reports in seconds. These upgrades helped us serve more clients. Meanwhile, a contact form was added to the website to ensure clients reach the specific programs they need.

We continued offering exceptional, timely and convenient services to our clients through a hybrid model. We maintained the 3 days in, 2 days at home arrangement, and were flexible according to our clients’ needs. According to the ED, “It was very productive.” Dwayne said there was a notable increase in staff productivity.

### Community of Care App

We added a Resume Builder to the MNLCT Newcomer Support App, with templates to assist clients to easily create resumes. We also launched the Community of Care App, in partnership with iCent developers. Our teams – Mental Health, IT and Communications – collaboratively developed the design, data, and content for the app. The idea emerged from the Spanish-speaking Men’s Group who suggested an app where they could communicate and support one another during the pandemic. The app was developed to provide mental health coping strategies and create community by allowing users to chat with each other through the app.



The Community of Care app offers mental health tools like self-assessment tracking, coping strategies, and a chat function with other users.

### Embracing new technology

Our Centre remained in constant learning, keeping an eye on evolving technology, like Artificial Intelligence. “We have identified the trends, where are we going, how does the system we have support us to expand, we need the right technology to achieve all these,” said Nancy. We are committed to embracing technology as it evolves, to serve our clients better.



## The Future

After 40 years of walking with newcomers, we are, more than ever, committed to our vision and mission, facing the future with unrelenting ambition to serve newcomers even better. Under the guidance of our new Executive Director, we dare to expand our locations beyond the GTA, to include new service areas targeting vulnerable populations like youth, to contribute to managing the housing crisis in Canada, and to adapt to emerging technological trends to meet the needs of our clients in the realities and landscape of our work.

## I was attracted to the opportunity to study and understand the media landscape of Canada: Lidiia's Story

By Youdon Tenzin



Lidiia Karpenko, an experienced journalist from Ukraine, immigrated to Canada in 2022 during the Russian invasion of her country. She was a live radio host, conducting interviews and creating podcasts. Her work extended to the television industry, where she crafted plots, current affairs, and program scripts.

Lidiia's first encounter with the Bridge to Employment in Media and Communications (BEMC) program was when a settlement consultant told her to look into bridging programs.

"I was attracted to the opportunity to study and understand the media landscape of Canada, the rules by which the media work here and the code of journalists," says Lidiia. She also found that the program helped her in networking as she didn't have any contacts in the Canadian media industry.

Lidiia remembers how over the months of studying, she bonded with her classmates. She learned how to create portfolio websites, update her resume, and maintain her LinkedIn page. The theoretical knowledge she acquired through the program was put to practice, something that was great for honing her skills.

*"Thanks to the program, I became more confident. I know how to present myself, communicate at interviews and create resumes, depending on the position."*

She enjoyed the activities that were organized by her instructors and fondly remembers the field trip to CityTV, which reminded her of her work back in Ukraine.

Since graduating, she has written for The Globe and Mail. Lidiia's advice for future BEMC students is this, "Even with a lot of experience behind you, remember that you always need to learn and improve your knowledge and skills. Be open to new things and take advantage of all opportunities for professional growth." [Read Lidiia's full story on our website.](#)

# OUR PEOPLE

The number of employees at the Centre increased again, and again it was not about hiring more people to do the same thing, rather, recruiting new talent and skills for creative problem solving, digital aptitude, and improved service delivery.

## Board of Directors

**Board Chair**  
Rochelle Fine

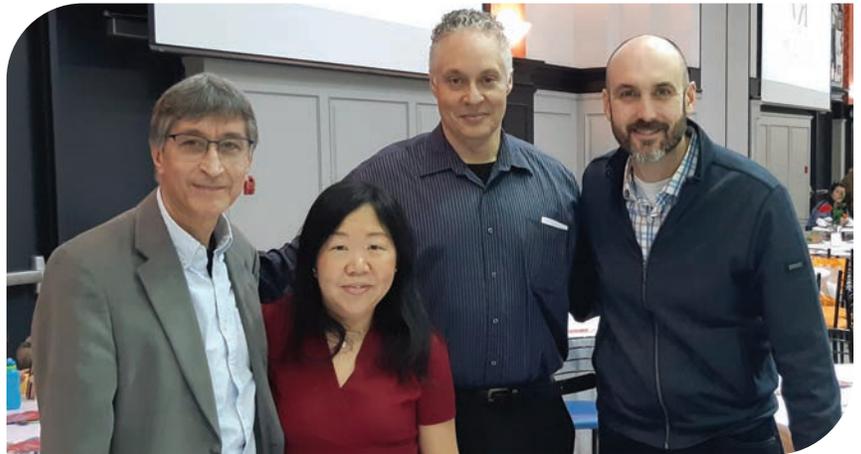
**Vice Chair**  
Edgardo Romero

**Treasurer**  
Kathy Luan

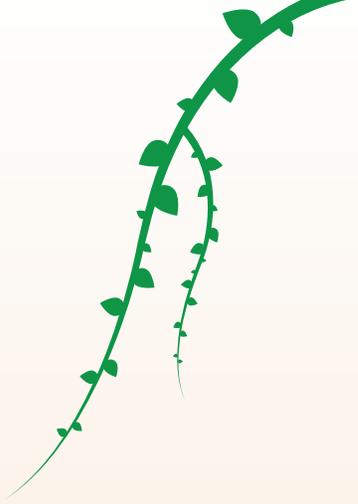
**Secretary**  
Maria Martinez

## Board Members

Amy Kao  
Brad Lepp  
Wendy Martin  
Maria McCormick



# SUMMARY OF AUDITED FINANCIALS



MNLCT received **\$5,065,035** in revenues, an increase of approximately **6.7%** over **2022** levels. In addition, MNLCT saw continued support from donors and foundations for our 40th anniversary that helped fund important settlement resources and healthcare projects throughout the year. Expenses were managed to budget.

REVENUE	2022	2023	2024 Estimate
Government	4,663,849	4,947,931	5,213,005
Foundations + Other	45,874	77,706	122,934
Donations (Individuals + Churches)	37,109	39,398	57,336
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,746,832</b>	<b>5,065,035</b>	<b>5,393,275</b>

EXPENSES	2022	2023	2024 Estimate
Staff	3,480,308	3,819,278	4,164,766
Building	495,495	509,482	549,381
Program	550,157	554,970	493,319
Office + Other	184,819	168,823	185,019
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,710,779</b>	<b>5,052,553</b>	<b>5,392,485</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses	<u><b>\$36,053</b></u>	<u><b>\$12,482</b></u>	<u><b>\$790</b></u>

# FUNDING PARTNERS & DONORS

We would like to thank our clients, staff, volunteers, placement students, donors, funders, community partners, and other supporters for engaging with us during this past year and celebrating our 40th anniversary with us. Your generosity of time, talent, passion, and resources make our communities stronger and for that we are so appreciative. We look forward to our continued work together in building responsive programs and meaningful partnerships that bring about greater community impact and social change.



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada



This year we offer a special

**“THANK YOU!”**

to our matching donors and all of you who contributed to our 40th anniversary campaigns! Thanks to you, our newcomer neighbours, friends, and colleagues will not feel alone in Canada; they’ll know that someone cares. You are joining an amazing group of community builders and your contributions – whether large or small – actively shape a Canadian landscape that values diversity and growth.



Mennonite  
**new life**  
centre

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