

Western Canada Conference – Gender, Immigration and Integration: Exploring Innovative and Best Practice

Examples of Innovations in Programming for Newcomer Women

**Indoor Soccer and Newcomer Women** – Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto (March 2015)

The project addressed access barriers for newcomer women with children to integrate through sport. Specifically the barriers of lack of childcare, settlement stress, and language barriers which prevent women from participating in indoor sports during the winter season. Newcomer women were provided with a gift certificate to buy a pair of soccer shoes, and in a full-day event were provided drills and skills instruction, followed by a tournament.

**Outcomes:** Following the event, 87% of women signed up with local indoor soccer league *Toronto Sports and Social*. The project also promoted secondary health promotion outcomes as a concrete way to cope with issues of depression and settlement stress, while reducing social isolation. The project also addressed gender roles and cultural/age stereotypes. One participant gave positive feedback of the event but wrote she was surprised at her enjoyment as “women do not play football in my country”. Finally, there was an increase in relationships between newcomer and Canadian-born women through participating in the tournament.

**Digital Skills for Beginners Program-** Ladies Learning Code (Toronto-March 2016)

The objective of this project was to make digital skills training more accessible to newcomer women. This pilot project provided the opportunity to understand what barriers newcomer women may face, and how future programming or initiatives could respond better to the needs of newcomer women. This project provided learning opportunities to new immigrants to Canada to feel confident with technology and learn practical 21st century skills that would allow them to thrive in the Canadian job market.

**Outcomes:** Women who attend the sessions walked away with:

- a greater sense of confidence with technology;
- a better understanding of the tool or language they were learning;
- an interest in pursuing their learning further; and
- a connection to their local community

The majority of the participants in both phases of this project felt more confident and wanted to keep learning digital skills.

**Good Food, Good Friends:** Association for New Canadians (ANC) (St. John’s, Newfoundland-March 2016)

The Good Food, Good Friends pilot project connected Syrian women, who were predominately homemakers in Syria, with women from a local church group. The project was designed to utilize Syrian women’s existing knowledge in order to support their integration into their community. The project included testing two, three hour basic language instruction sessions related to preparing and cooking food as an innovative approach to English as a Second Language (ESL) delivery, as language instruction was conducted informally at different venues (i.e., in a local grocery store, community kitchen etc.). Not only did this allow for hands-on learning, but it also introduced the Syrian women participants to grocery and specialized food stores in which to purchase healthy and nutritious food. The Syrian participants, in collaboration with female volunteers from a local church, participated in a meal planning meeting in order to identify dishes to be prepared at cross-cultural cooking event. Furthermore, by participating in food preparation related activities over a period of two weeks, individuals had the opportunity to share cross-cultural practices, while learning about North American cooking processes.

**Outcomes:** The project outcomes included:

- increased efficiency and accessibility of information or services that are available;
- enriched social connections at the local and community level, improved ability to communicate in French or English;
- increased social networking opportunities with other community members, and
- increased knowledge and awareness of community supports and services offered to Syrian refugees for both Syrian refugees and community members.

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