

**Notes of July 12, 2011 Newcomer Advisory Group meeting
Prepared by Jason Stabler, Coordinator**

In attendance: Jason, Nuruddin, Sevde, Mythili, Debbie, Zainab, Sheila, Sumin, Arbera, Mina, Lakshmi, Gameela, Sumin, Mina

The PPCII Coordinator gave a brief overview of the PPCII, how the Newcomer Advisory Group (NAG) fit into the structure of the PPCII, and of the importance of NAG input to the work that PPCII does.

The Chair of the Integration Strategy Committee (ISC) was in attendance at this meeting in accordance with an invitation the NAG extended to have PPCII members attend NAG meetings.

Sumin shared her story of immigrating to Canada. Sumin was born in China. She was a good student and early in her life was very happy. She was advised during University to go to Canada but at that time did not understand why she would do this. As an adult she began to have doubts about China and began to understand this advice more clearly. When she was pregnant for the first time, controversy arose at her work place as to whether she should be allowed to stay. Eventually she moved to a government run company and things remained OK for awhile. To immigrate to Canada required getting to Hong Kong to file paperwork and this proved a difficult task. She eventually made it to Hong Kong, filed the appropriate paperwork and arrived in Canada in 2001. It was difficult for her to adjust at first without friends or family. She first worked at a restaurant but was unhappy as she was not using her education and skills. In 2004 she took courses at Fleming which helped her to get a job at Savage Arms where she still works and where she utilizes many of the skills she learned through her education and work experience in China. She appreciates the protection that workers in Canada have, including for workers over 30 who are not well protected in China. She also spoke highly of the services she received from the New Canadians Centre in helping her to adjust to life in Canada and in Peterborough.

Jason shared his story of growing up in Canada. He was born in Peterborough and grew up in East City, which he jokingly described as the best part of Peterborough to live in. For Jason, Peterborough was a really great city to grow up in. When he graduated high school, he moved to Guelph where he studied biochemistry at the University of Guelph. It was here, during his first time living away from home that Jason began to really appreciate his hometown of Peterborough. Going to University also influenced Jason in terms of being exposed to new ideas, and new peoples and cultures. After graduating from

Guelph Jason travelled to Europe and the east coast of Canada where according to Jason, the friendliest people in the country live. After working as a chemist for awhile Jason decided to go back to school and study law. He did this at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg Manitoba. Jason described Winnipeg as a very diverse city and told the group about the history of Winnipeg, which was originally a meeting place for Indigenous peoples, then had a large French population and eventually successive waves of immigration from the United Kingdom, Iceland, the Ukraine, Northern African and many other places. Just before moving to Winnipeg, Jason travelled to Guyana which is a very unique county in South America. It is the only English speaking country in South America and has a population that is about half (East) Indian and half African. Jason obtained his love for Roti here, and described a humorous experience of learning to make Roti from the women in the village he stayed in (because men do not traditionally cook in Guyana). During law school, Jason also traveled to Nunavut for 6 weeks. Jason met his current wife while in school in Winnipeg, and after they both graduated they moved to Victoria BC where he worked for the BC provincial government and eventually went back to school to pursue a Master's degree. In 2009, Jason and his wife moved to Toronto where they worked for a year and then they found their way to Peterborough. Jason is extremely happy to be back in his home community and is excited to contribute to making it a better place.

The NAG identified the following barriers that newcomers face: language; financial literacy; cost of living; and, the restrictions placed on training opportunities by the size of the NCC boardroom. Language is a barrier not only from the perspective of newcomers understanding but also from the perspective of newcomers being understood as well. Suggested solutions to these barriers included: focusing on communication training for employers (and not only for employees); a financial literacy seminar; extended language training opportunities (i.e. beyond LINC's limited hours and eligibility). Skype was suggested as a possible model for this. Mentorships between newcomers and other newcomers and between newcomers and existing community members were also suggested. Watching Canadian TV and listening to Canadian radio was also suggested as a way to improve language skills. Language/communication training for employers and expanding the space available at NCC for language and other classes were also suggested as ways to improve language training for newcomers. Financial literacy training was also suggested.

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 13th, Time and Location to Be Determined

Please encourage newcomers you know to attend