

**Notes of May 17th, 2011 Newcomer Advisory Group meeting
Prepared by Jason Stabler, Coordinator**

In attendance: *Sumin, Mina, Sheila, Arbera, Muhammed, Elizabeth, Jenn, Gameela, Leila, Chanda, Nuruddin, Jason, Maryam.*

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 PPCII was in attendance at this meeting in accordance with an invitation the NAG extended to have PPCII members attend NAG meetings.

Mina shared her story of immigrating to Canada. Mina was born in Afghanistan where she lived with her mother, father and two sisters. Her mom was well educated but left her education to take care of her family. Mina and her family left Afghanistan for Iran during the war with the Soviets. Her father was killed only four years after he married Mina's mother. Their trip to Afghanistan involved many mechanisms including camel and bus. When Mina was eight, her mother moved her and her sisters to Canada where she thought they would have better opportunities. The first difference for Mina was going from a world where she was constantly supervised by family and community members to one where there was very little supervision. Not speaking English also made the transition to Canada difficult. Growing up in Peterborough Mina and her sisters were bullied for being different. The New Canadians Centre community trips were a useful support for dealing with this, as they were not the only 'non-white' people on these trips. In spite of her difficulties, Mina graduated high school as the Valedictorian of her class. After graduation she moved to the Netherlands for awhile before moving back to Peterborough. Today she is happily married and has a lovely daughter.

The NAG identified the following barriers that newcomers face: bullying; different cultural practices (e.g. dating); lack of support in schools (e.g. ESL, and teacher training to deal with cultural difference); lack of Canadian work experience; stereotyping of newcomers as lazy; a lack of mental health services for newcomers; the stigma among some newcomers associated with asking for help; and, difficulty making friends (as a young newcomer). Opportunities for overcoming these barriers include: CMHA training on the interaction between migration and mental health; training newcomers with effective coping strategies; employment internships; training employers to overcome profiling of accents and country of origin during hiring process; expanding mentorship programs for

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professionals to all jobs; and, training to encourage elementary school teachers to help newcomer students to make friends and to better understand cultural differences (i.e. cultural competency).

Next meeting: Tuesday, July 12th, 5-7 pm, at the NCC Board Room

Please encourage newcomers you know to attend.