

**Notes of Sept 13th, 2011 Newcomer Advisory Group meeting
Prepared by Jason Stabler, Coordinator**

In attendance: *Safo, Arbera, Andreas, Chanda, Jason, Yan, Zainab, Sumin.*

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 NAG heard the story of Safo. Safo decided not to tell her story in the usual way. She began hers story by asking what ‘identity’ means. The NAG answered that “it makes you who you are”. Safo illustrated that answering the question “Who am I” leads to an understanding that identity can be multi-faceted. For example your identity can be defined in a legal way, a philosophical way, or a personal way. Safo then delivered a series of slides describing her conception of her own identity. One particular example of the complexities of identity arose for Safo at an airport in Albania where she had to decide which line-up to line up in (i.e. Albanian or non-Albanian). Safo described her differing connections to the various communities that she has called home including, Berat, Tirana, Philadelphia, Pristina, Riga and Windsor. As she has only been in Peterborough a very short time, she did not include Peterborough in her presentation but she anticipates adding in after she has been here long enough to get a better sense of the community. She then described the moments that shaped her life including the fall of communism in Albania, civil unrest in Albania in 1997, being in the U.S.A during the September 11, 2011 attacks, the 2008 declaration of independence by Kosovo, and her son’s birth. Since her son was born in Canada, she now has a permanent link to Canada. Her fears about identity are that she has none (i.e. she belongs nowhere), and that she will be unable to communicate to her son as he becomes more Canadian.

The NAG discussed Safo’s presentation including what it was like living through the transition from communism to capitalism. The NAG identified--differences in family structure, leaving family and social connections behind, questioning whether what you have left behind is outweighed by what you have gained, and having an accent—as barriers that they have faced to integrating in Canada. Child care that allows two parents to attend programs, using sports as a way to get newcomer men involved, and educating the population on the benefits of speaking multiple languages were identified as possible solutions to barriers.

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 15th, Time and Location to Be Determined

Together we prosper



Please encourage newcomers you know to attend