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OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Foundations of Settlement Work in Ontario

What *Foundations of Settlement Work in Ontario* is

- An **introduction to settlement work** and its context in Ontario
- A **two-part online course**, available in English and French in facilitated and self-directed versions
- A **printed reference book** adapted from the course content

Why it is unique

- Provides historical, political, and legal **context and background** for immigration, the immigrant and refugee-serving sector, and settlement work in Ontario
- Stresses the importance of building respectful **relationships with Indigenous peoples** and honouring responsibilities under treaties
- Distinguishes between **settler colonialism and immigration**, and traces how Canada's founding as a settler-colonial state has shaped its often racist and discriminatory immigration policies
- Explains the **structures and institutions** in place for admitting and supporting newcomers to Canada
- Explores how **systemic and structural oppressions** can affect newcomers from marginalized communities
- Places settlement work within **frameworks of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and human rights**, asking practitioners to consider their own social locations and biases, and work to understand the **intersectional barriers** that service seekers face
- Offers practical, concrete **advice and resources** for settlement workers to support service seekers facing a variety of structural and interpersonal challenges, including barriers unique to LGBTQIA+ newcomers, newcomers with disabilities, survivors of trauma and gender-based violence, and people without legal status in Canada
- Contains links to **comprehensive resources**

How it was developed

- Established firmly within frameworks of anti-racism, anti-oppression, and human rights
- Developed in consultation with an advisory committee of representatives, primarily front-line workers, from OCASI member agencies across Ontario
- Researched and written by a content coordinator with experience in professional writing and adult education, as well as direct and indirect practice in the immigrant and refugee-serving sector
- Reviewed by representatives from the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, and the Ontario Human Rights Commission
- Funded in 2017 by IRCC as a replacement for OCASI's printed resource *Immigrant Settlement Counselling: A Training Guide*, published 1990, revised 2000

What we learned

- There is great demand for this material

 **400+**
certificates of completion issued in English

 **500+**
printed copies distributed to settlement workers across Ontario

30+
in French

- Settlement workers want to know more about Indigenous cultures, issues, and history on this land
- Resources for front-line workers should be developed in collaboration with them
- Workers are eager to exchange information and learn from each other—*Foundations of Settlement Work in Ontario* can be a starting place for discussions that continue on OCASI's new SettleNet.org, a national community of practice for those in the immigrant and refugee-serving sector

Quotes

Feedback from *Foundations of Settlement Work in Ontario*, Level 2, offered as a facilitated course in September 2019:

I now have a much broader view and appreciation for the work of a settlement specialist, how to help newcomers with the challenges they are facing, and where to get assistance.

This course is very well organized with enormous amount of useful information and resources. Now I have [a] much clear[er] view of settlement work and challenges newcomers are facing, especially refugees.

This course opens my eyes on a lot of challenges and barriers that refugees have to face that I did not know before. Now I am more confident to understand many of their experiences and being more sensitive to give out advices. The materials provide many helpful links for me to read and serve the clients better.

Though I don't work on the front lines as a settlement worker, this course in particular has given me better insight on what my staff do on a day-to-day basis, the situations and intersectionalities that they see and help with every day, and the actions and behaviours that I can take to better support my staff to support those that they serve. The information presented was very helpful and the links to the additional resources were relevant and much appreciated.

I have [...] developed a greater appreciation and understanding of the challenges and barriers potentially being experienced by those who come to us for help. No two cases are quite alike and a cookie cutter approach will not work to help our newcomers meet their needs and address their challenges to experience a successful settlement experience.

...the supports, programs and resources that we offer as an immigrant serving organization must be as unique and individualized as possible as the people who are seeking our help.

...as someone new to the field, this course really helped me understand more about the expectations of ourselves, the clients, and how to help clients receive the services we provide.

I learned that each immigrant experience is unique and individualized and have to be treated with care and attention, though there may be similarities in each case but there is no single fixed solution to it. I also learned that an immigrant may have barriers that intersect and have compounded effects; therefore it is important that as a settlement worker get familiar with the resources that are available in order to provide the right information and resources to service seeker and give the right support.

The information I got from this course will take me very far in the field.

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