

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK UNITED VOICES: IMMIGRANT YOUTH WELLNESS SUMMIT

Immigrant Services Calgary
Calgary, AB

Area of Practice:

- Strategies for Engagement with Non-Settlement Service Providers
- Coordination of Settlement Services in Communities with Multiple Service Providers

Video:

<https://youtu.be/3E0Ib3YRCv0>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



VOIES VERS LA
PROSPÉRITÉ
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM

Immigrant Services Calgary (ISC) is a non-profit agency based in Calgary, AB. Founded in 1977, it provides a wide range of settlement services to immigrants and refugees looking to begin a new chapter of their lives in Canada. ISC works collaboratively to ensure that clients have access to programs and services that can help them overcome the challenges that come with immigrating to a new country, thus setting them up to succeed in their new life in Canada.

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was organized in response to a local tragedy. In April 2019, a nine-year-old girl died by suicide after being bullied at school. Her family had settled in Calgary after fleeing Syria three years earlier. The incident shook up the community and prompted members to come together and take action to prevent a similar situation from happening again. What started as a collaboration between ISC and the Mental Health Commission of Canada turned into an inter-organizational partnership of 20 local organizations to explore solutions surrounding the intersections of mental health, language translation, anti-bullying, and supports for immigrant and refugee youth. This led to the organization of the United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit in October 2019.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit

Description:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was a full-day event that brought together over 200 immigrant and refugee youth from 41 different schools and 7 communities across Southern Alberta. The event included presentations by five guest speakers with lived experience, interactive breakout sessions, and a keynote presentation by the City of Edmonton's Poet Laureate Ahmed "Knowmadic" Ali. Participants learned new skills and became empowered to advocate for mental health and tackle the stigma of mental illness in their schools and communities.

Goal(s):

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit had three main goals: to create awareness about mental health, to create an anti-stigma initiative, and to give youth the tools needed to become mental health champions in their schools and communities.

Target Client Group(s):

Immigrant and refugee youth, aged 12 to 20 years, from diverse cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Delivery Partner(s):

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was co-organized with the following organizations: Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies, Alberta Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research, Boys and Girls Club of Calgary, Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary Immigrant Support Society, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Pakistani Support Group, Centre d'Accueil des Nouveaux Arrivants Francophones, Centre for Newcomers, Centre for Suicide Prevention, Distress Centre, Ethiocare, Foothills Community Immigrant Services, Mental Health Commission of Canada, Rotary Club of Calgary Fish Creek, The Immigrant Education Society, and University of Calgary.

Human Resource(s):

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was organized by a team of four staff, which included Immigrant Services Calgary's Youth Inclusive Program Coordinator, Youth Inclusive Program Director, Director of Settlement and Community Centre, and Settlement Manager.

Funding:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was organized by a group of 20 organizations, with input and support provided by Immigrant Services Calgary's Youth Advisory Council. The event was based on the Mental Health Commission of Canada's HEADSTRONG framework, a tried and tested model, but tailored to meet the unique needs of immigrant and refugee youth. The day included a combination of presentations and teamwork activities, as well as an opportunity for action planning so that youth participants could apply their learnings to effect change in their schools and communities.

Efficient:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit leveraged the strengths and expertise of 20 organizations, as well as ethno-cultural community and youth leaders, who worked together, rather than in siloes, to address the important issues of anti-stigma, and mental health and wellbeing in immigrant and refugee communities.

Relevant:

Mental health is an important topic, but is still considered taboo in many immigrant and refugee communities. There is a significant need to target the stigma surrounding mental illness, and promote mental health and wellbeing. The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit provided an opportunity for immigrant and refugee youth to learn about mental health and become champions within their communities.

Sustainable:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was the collaborative effort of 20 organizations and Immigrant Services Calgary's Youth Advisory Council. All members understand the importance of the initiative and have made a commitment to keep it going. Several additional activities have been organized, as well as ongoing communication, to maintain youth engagement. Another summit is being planned for 2020.

Transferable:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit could be replicated by other organizations across Canada, as it is an adaptation of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's HEADSTRONG program. Organizers, presenters, and facilitators should have the following background and/or skills: lived experience, cultural sensitivity, mental health, social work, community development, communications. A similar model could also be used to address other topics and/or serve other populations.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit provided an opportunity for immigrant and refugee youth to learn about and discuss mental health, as well as be supported to take the learnings back into their schools and communities. Youth were actively involved in all aspects of organization, from ideation to development to implementation and evaluation, and took ownership of the event.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

While other youth summits have been held across Canada, the United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was the first to focus on immigrant and refugee youth mental health in Canada and bring together 200+ youth from 41 different schools across 7 communities. The United Voices Committee also used an approach called stretch collaboration, leveraging the strengths of each organization while embracing discord, experimentation, and co-creation.

High Client Uptake:

The United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit exceeded its targets, with more than 200 youth attending the inaugural event. The event was promoted by United Voices Committee members, as well as youth and leaders of different ethno-cultural communities. Most recruitment was done through word of mouth.

High Client Retention:

The United Voices Committee has continued to engage with youth participants who attended the United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit. Additional "mini" summits have been organized, which consist of half-day learning or networking events. Emails are regularly sent to participants with information about upcoming programs / events and grant opportunities for implementing their action plans.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

An evaluation was conducted of the United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit to measure change in knowledge of participants. A total of 78 participants completed both the pre- and post-tests. The data showed significant increases in the proportion of participants who indicated that

they would feel comfortable seeking help for a mental illness and in the proportion of participants who indicated that they would know how to help a friend with mental health concerns. Their attitudes toward mental illness also shifted, with increases observed in the proportion of participants with positive perceptions of recovery from a mental illness and who would not feel ashamed if they had a mental illness themselves. Close to 90% of participants indicated that the summit inspired them to take a stand against stigma.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

An evaluation of the United Voices: Immigrant Youth Wellness Summit was conducted by an external evaluator who is involved in evaluating HEADSTRONG summits across Canada. The purpose of the evaluation was to measure the summit's impact and develop recommendations for quality improvement. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation survey at the beginning of the day (pre-test), and again immediately after the summit was completed (post-test), to measure change in knowledge throughout the day. In addition, a debrief meeting was conducted with United Voices Committee members, as well as two focus groups with youth attendees, to gather feedback on what worked well, what did not work well, and learnings from the day. The findings were compiled and organized into a report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Immigrant Services Calgary

<https://www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca>

Mental Health Commission of Canada – HEADSTRONG

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/resources/training/headstrong>