

REPORT: *A SENSE OF BELONGING*
CALGARY REGIONAL VISIT
NOVEMBER 14th – 16th



Report

A Sense of Belonging aims to promote diversity and combat racism and discrimination in local communities across Canada through community outreach and public education. The United Nations Association in Canada's overall goal is to bridge gaps between distinct minority and "mainstream" groups to promote cross-cultural understanding and collective action and to promote fulsome and equal participation in Canadian society.

Objectives of the visit: The *A Sense of Belonging* (SB) project is in its second fiscal year, and, as such, there is a need to return to the nine communities to investigate whether the issues and concerns of the first round of regional planning meetings. Broadly the objectives of these regional visits can be outlined as follows:

- Re-introduce the project to key community stakeholders, including: UNA-Canada's mandate; project history; how *A Sense of Belonging* came to be; Objectives and Methodology; the Community action plan framework.
- Follow up to see how SB has made an impact in the community. Define modalities to evaluate the SB intermediate outcomes (effects) at the local level by the end of the project.
- To draw on expertise of local stakeholders, including:
 - What initiatives are currently underway in the community to address racism and discrimination? What is the SB project actual level of involvement?
 - Where might *A Sense of Belonging* be able to support some of these initiatives (i.e. instead of duplicating efforts)?
 - Where do gaps still remain where *A Sense of Belonging* might focus its resources?
 - Brainstorming for final legacy research product of SB
- Assess how *Sense of Belonging* will continue past March 2008.
- Check-in and reinvigorate Regional Coordinators.

Timeline: Media training, November 15th; Roundtable, November 16th.

Agenda: The agendas for the roundtable and the media training can be found in appendices C and D respectively.

Invitees: Appendix B has the full list of attendees for both the media training and the regional roundtable. Attendees included representatives from local NGOs, law enforcement, and the chamber of commerce.

Media Training



Figure 1 Media Training Presentation

The media training session, as was the case in other communities, was extremely popular in Calgary. Participants were keen on learning how best to engage the media, and there was a recognition that it was necessary to properly promote ones organization, especially for funders, and also to establish ones agency as an authority on a given subject. Of particular interest were the media tracking lessons. One participant was broadly interested in the *A Sense of Belonging* project and especially liked out definition of “diversity” (inclusiveness and integration). The media training was specifically aimed as non-profits, and participants acknowledged that NGOs often were in a unique situation: because they worked at the “ground-level”, they could present the situation of their given areas of expertise accurately. This evidence-based information gives non-profits workers a unique clout with the media. Unfortunately, non-profits do not make use of this. This is unfortunate, as countering misinformation and ensuring accuracy on vital social issues. Reporters prefer having a reliable source of information, and thus non-profits have to make use of this need on the media’s part.

Local media sources were the primary sources of information for local non-profit agencies. Participants gave examples of successes in responding to media coverage:

- One participant (Richelle Wiseman, Centre for Faith and Media) responded to general coverage of the Danish cartoon coverage itself with a specific opinion-editorial piece.
- Michelle Wickerson (Volunteer Calgary) responded to negative coverage over subsidized assistance via successful op-eds.
- Amrit Bharatwaj (Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter), introduced a new project with her coffee shop and pitched her own story to newspapers, thereby doubling her sales.



Figure 2 Project Officer Mara Brotman leading discussion

One participant did note that there is often a contrast between what one wants to say to the media and what one may be obliged to say. As Sarah Hoyles, communication officer with the UNA-Canada noted, one should not view the non-profit world and that of the media as two opposing entities. Realistically, the two can work together.

Roundtable Discussion

The discussion started off with a talk on some of our findings in our synthesis report. **Media** challenges were brought up. One large issue surrounding media coverage in Calgary was the lack of diversity in media imagery of the city. By watching television, or even reading print media, one only sees a “white Calgary” lacking the pluralism that certainly exists in the city. One participant commented that whenever their organization holds an event relating to diversity, it is only reported on if the event is held in Vancouver rather than Calgary. The implication, according to this participant, was that diversity was an issue “away from here” and not really relevant to the city. Negative coverage of newcomers was a concern. With regards to the future of media coverage, participants seemed hopeful that change is possible, albeit with a considerable degree of effort on the part of NGOs, activists, etc. The clichéd journalistic maxim of “if it bleeds, it leads” still holds true; as such, positive stories of diversity are sometimes excluded as uninteresting “fluff”. This “editorial exclusion” of stories presents the image of an exclusively white Calgary. Effort does pay off, however. One attendee mentioned how all her three efforts to engage the media with positive stories related to her work were met with a warm reception by journalists.

Many participants felt, however, that **employment** superseded the media as the largest barrier towards integration. Many government agencies exist to train organizations in diversity, but few of those organizations actively put that training into practice by accepting diversity in their workplace. Much of what appears to be diversity training is more of a “band-aid fix” to minor problems, making organizations complacent and more unwilling to enter long-term institutional change. Some participants felt there

is room to be cautiously optimistic, as there are intergovernmental initiatives around the integration of foreign-born workers. Others felt that the policies are not there yet, and there is actually a disconnect between the different levels of government around the issue. Goodwill may be there, but the policies are not quite in existence. Exploitation of foreign, unskilled workers is a concern. Diversity education in itself is not sufficient; usually this education is directed towards managers and not to those in the upper-echelons of the corporation. Change can come if the corporate culture acknowledges the benefits of hiring newcomers to the “bottom line”.

For some participants, **systemic discrimination** and subtle racism are secondary issues in comparison to the existence of visible hate groups. The specific example given was that of the “Aryan Guard”, which demonstrated on the steps of city hall day before elections. As one participant noted

“I think what I perceive in the city over the last year is a hardening of attitudes”.

This **open racism** is tied to the job market. Rhetoric around immigrants taking over local jobs is not uncommon. One participant gave an anecdote based on something told to him by a recruiter from an oil company that there are certain countries where they simply do not hire from, despite the high demand for foreign engineers.

Aboriginal realities were brought up as an issue. One participant described the situation in the city:

“I’m from Winnipeg and there are some problems there, but in Calgary it is just blatant racism.”

The following is a summary of the discussion on Calgary’s **priority areas**:

<i>MEDIA PORTRAYAL AND STEREOTYPING</i>	
Do local media outlets frame stories with greater sensitivity with regards to cultural and religious diversity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is progress in the local media however negative coverage is balanced by “fluffy”, superficial stories (i.e. reducing minorities to cultural dances, etc) -Inappropriate language is a challenge. Examples given include use (and overuse) of terms like “labour dispute” over “management dispute”, “Asian gang”, “Muslim extremist”, etc. -Tokenism is still a concern; there is a relative dearth of minorities covering stories -Training is necessary for journalists; beyond that it is necessary to encourage minorities to participate in “unpopular” fields such as journalism, amongst others.
Has positive coverage of stories relating to diversity with local community members increased?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There is a moderate increase; however, these positive news stories of minorities tend to be “alloted” to special sections -There is thus a division between pieces involving “minorities” and general Canadian stories

FORMAL AND PUBLIC EDUCATION	
Have schools changed their curriculum to include issues of diversity?	<p><i>(Participants prefaced their presentation by stating that they were not experts on the formal education system, and, as such, they answered the questions in a more general manner.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the prevailing provincial attitude poses challenges to anti-racial education -education has to happen in multiple ways in a variety of venues -complacency can persist -some groups are being trained and other are not -there are few incentives for organizations to address these issues -there are few consequences for racism, discrimination, bigotry and other social injustices -labour shortage could produce an enormous learning opportunity for everyone -diversity education has to be for everybody
Do teachers engage in professional diversity training?	
Has the general public engaged in debates about these issues?	
CIVIC PARTICIPATION	
Are people from “minority” communities more involved in community activities?	-Yes but within “own” community; there is no mechanism or activity to bridge communities
Do we see greater participation from these communities in civic activities (ex: elections, community events, etc)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participation in wider community activities exists but still not representative of the population -No invitation/encouragement to participate -Lack of time a barrier to engagement -Lack of “sense of belonging” to community and therefore lack of relating to community activity -Lack of community voice at the table -Racism is a huge barrier -City of Calgary has no “sense of self”, in other words, no self-understanding that other communities have -What Calgary is “defined” as, isn’t representative of “our” Calgary -“When the Calgary Community has no valid identity, how do people find a way to fit into it?”



Figure 3 Project Officer Saad Omar Khan explaining the *A Sense of Belonging* project

The discussion on **community collaboration** yielded some interesting information about the state of non-profit organizations in Calgary. Calgary NGOs are in quite a critical state at this time, as funding mechanisms are slowing dissipating, so are salaries and job opportunities. As such, speaking about future collaboration is a bit difficult in a very uncertain time. Funders often do not see collaboration with other NGOs as “real work”. As well, the strain in the non-profit sector is accentuated by the perception that the government is “unloading its work” on NGOs by not supporting the social infrastructure. Ultimately, the idea of collaboration is welcome; it is only the dearth of resources, present or future, that inhibits it.

Some suggestions were given with regards to the **future of the project** after its official end in March 2008:

- If working with the **private sector**, one has to be careful in using “business language” in order to ensure their support.
- Early childhood education is key for encouraging the values of a project like *A Sense of Belonging*.
- The UNA-Canada should support over-stretched Calgary NGOs or at least use its clout to bring attention to the situation.
- A useful **final resource** would be a “how-to” guide for anti-racism projects or workers (i.e. how to file a complaint, etc).
- The UNA-Canada might be useful as a coordinator for “lobbyists” on anti-racism initiatives.

Media coverage: Project officer Saad Omar Khan was interviewed by Radio Canada, CBC Calgary, and Global News Calgary during the roundtable. The television interview were broadcast on their respective stations at 6:00 pm, Friday, November 16, 2007.

Meetings

On November 15, 2007, 2:00 PM, a short meeting was held with Julie Ball, Executive Director of the Talent Pool initiative. This project, a subdivision of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, is designed to aid Calgarian businesses make the best use of the talent available within the city given the current labor shortage. The meeting yielded some insights as per the role of newcomers to the Calgarian labor market. While the lack of credential and degree recognition is of issue, perhaps one of the biggest issues is simply linguistic. In Ms. Ball's words the "workplace [in Calgary] has little patience with any lack of language skills". This is not to say that international workers are not needed. Direct recruitment for skilled workers from foreign countries (China, India, the Philippines being amongst the top countries of origin) is common. Unfortunately, this recruitment does not extend to utilizing immigrant talent that may already be present in the city. Aside from the demand for professionals for the energy industry, unskilled workers are needed for other sectors including the hospitality industry and logistics (for example warehousing, companies like WalMart, etc).

Promoting diversity in the private sector is certainly a worthy ideal; however, it must be a term used in a corporate sense. A diverse workforce must not only include members of "minority" communities but also those with varying life-experiences, socio-economic backgrounds, etc. Calgary is undergoing many rapid changes, including the level of acceptance of difference. One can see the level of acceptance in any given community through a four-tiered continuum: exclusion, assimilation, tolerance, acceptance. According to Ms. Ball, Calgary is at the third stage (tolerance). Positive change is happening, although at a slow pace. "Diversity" is still a weak and stale term in many businesses. Any diversity training has to use business language in order to be successful, and should avoid language such as "sensitivity training". Explaining the importance of newcomers in business should be done through the lens of a company's "bottom-line".

Conclusion

The extent of the participation for the media training and the roundtable gives one the indication that Calgary is a city eager to tackle the challenges of integrating members into society. As in other communities where media training took place, one senses a gap between the concerns of non-profit organizations and the media. The Calgary session not only brought to light the importance of approaching the media correctly, but (with the contributions of Sarah Hoyles and regional coordinator Falice Chin) also encourage local non-profit organizations to avoid thinking of the media in monolithic terms. It is possible for organizations and individuals interested in social change to use the media to further their own ideals, rather than constantly retroactively responding to what is perceived as negative coverage of an issue. Like the media training workshop, the roundtable was very well-attended and exposed what issues exist in Calgary with regards to discrimination. The sense from the roundtable was that, while racism may not be any more than many other communities, there is a culture of acceptability that makes open racism more visible. As in other communities, media portrayal and the lack of adequate employment for qualified newcomers *already living in the city* are topics of concern. The political climate in Alberta has led many stakeholders to be less than optimistic with regards to the effectiveness of collaboration on this issue for the future. However, the

sheer presence of concerned organizations and interest in the topic, seen particularly with the amount of media exposure the roundtable received, gives reason to be hopeful. Calgary's economic dynamism has provided an impetus for social change as the profile of the city increases. Some change has been seen in the media and especially with initiatives like Talent Pool.

Appendix A: Action Plan Items for Calgary

1 Community Facts Sheet

3 School Workshops

5 Articles/Op-Eds

1 Media Training for Champions

1 Media Outreach/Advocacy Kit for Community
Groups

1 Media List/Directory of Local, Provincial and
National Media

3 Community Events/Youth Forums

1 Directory of Community Leaders/Anti-
Racism/Diversity Committee

1 Supporting Organization for In-Kind Contributions
and Local Support

Appendix B: Attendance Information

Roundtable

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
Carolyn Kremer	Paramedic Field Trainer	Emergency Medical Services	Carolyn.L.Kremer@calgary.ca
Jasvir Chatha-Bains	Marketing and promotions coordination	Alberta Human Rights Commission	Jasvir.Chatha-Bains@gov.ab.ca
Cst. Kevin Zeh	Constable	Calgary Police Service	Pol3674@calgarypolice.ca
Daniel Shapiro	Research Associate	Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership	dshapiro@chumirethicsfoundation.ca
Wendy Fehr	Project and Resource Developer	Calgary Immigrant Aid Society	wendyf@calgaryimmigrantaid.ca
Sandra Fortozo	Program Coordinator	Child and youth friendly Calgary	sandra@cyfc.ca
Gordon Christie	Exec. Secretary organizer	Calgary and District Labour Council	cclc@telusplanet.net
Debra Hartley	Social planner	City of Calgary	debra.hartley@calgary.ca
Valerie Pruegger	Research social planner	City of Calgary	vpruegger@calgary.ca
Derek Cook	Research social planner	City of Calgary	dcook@calgary.ca
Leanne Hildebrand	Community Liaison	Calgary Immigrant Aid Society	leanneh@calgaryimmigrantaid.ca
Kai Xu	Graduate student	University of Calgary	kxu@ucalgary.ca
Richelle Wiseman	Executive Director	Centre for Faith and Media	info@faithandmedia.org
Afroza Najji			
Salima Ebrahim			salimaebrahim@gmail.com
Djaka Blais	Program Officer	Canadian Heritage	Djaka_Blais@pch.gc.ca
Lori De Luca	Junior Program Officer	Ghost River Rediscovery	ldeluca@ghostriverdiscovery.com
Grisell Amaro	Manager, Arts Learning	EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts	gamaro@epcorcentre.org

Media Training

NAME	TITLE	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL
Tracy Thomson	Special Events Associate	Calgary Immigrant Aid Society	tracyt@calgaryimmigrantaid.ca
Richelle Wiseman	Exec. Director	Centre for Faith and Media	inscape@telusplanet.net
Geoff Pradella	VP, Public & Government Affairs	Calgary Chamber of Commerce	ggradella@calgarychamber.com
Elizabeth Leitch	Communications manager	Calgary Chamber of Commerce	
Tom Pallak	Policy & Communications Strategist	Calgary Chamber of Commerce	
Francis Boakye	Diversity and inclusiveness specialist	United Way, Calgary	Francis.Boakye@calgaryunitedway.org
Catherine Halkett		Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association	hsca_exec@msn.com
Jackolynn Coughline		Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association	
Gwendolyn Cham			gdcham@gmail.com
Donelda Snyder		Kerby Centre	Doneldas@kerbycentre.com
Amber Hyde	Resource Developer	Calgary Immigrant Women's Association	Amberh@ciwa-online.com
Sinela Dzhurkova	Resource Centre Coordinator	Calgary Multicultural Centre	cmcres@calgarymulti.com
Carmen Wyatt	Communications Coordinator	Canadian Mental Health Association - Calgary Region	carmen.wyatt@cmha.calgary.ab.ca
Bob Lang		CMCS	RVLang@aol.com
Amrit Bharatwaj	Communications specialist	Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter	amritb@cwes.ca
Mark Laycock	CEO Programs	Metis Calgary Family Services Society	mark@mcfs.ca
Michelle Wickerson		Volunteer Calgary	
Karen Hurley	Administrator	Confederation Park Senior Citizens Centre	hurleyk@shaw.ca

Kathy Urquhart
Monican Morrison
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Appendix C: Roundtable Agenda



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies



Agenda: Community Roundtable

(November 16, 2007)

9:00-9:15 am	Introduction to the <i>A Sense of Belonging</i> project
9:15-9:45 am	Introduction of participants
9:45-10:00 am	Presentation of synthesis report
10:00-10:15 am	Discussion of report findings
10:15-10:45	Aboriginal realities and Ethnocultural issues
10:45-11:00 am	Break
11:00-11:45 am	Group discussion on priority areas
11:45-12:00 pm	Reconvening on group discussion
12:00-12:30 pm	Brainstorming: community collaboration
12:30 am -12:45 pm	Brainstorming: future of Calgary
12:45 – 1:00 pm	Conclusion

Appendix D: Media Training Agenda

Media Training for NGOs
Calgary: Thursday, November 15th, 2007
AGENDA



9:00 – 9:20	Introductions
9:20 – 9:35	Session 1: How the Canadian Media works <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why engage the media?
9:35 – 10:15	Session 2: Media Monitoring & Responding to coverage
10:15 – 10:45	Session 3: Activity – Successfully responding to the media
10:45 – 11:00	BREAK
11:00 – 11:20	Session 4: Strategic Communications
11:20 – 11:45	Session 5: Getting your story covered <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What makes something newsworthy○ Speakers include: Sarah Hoyles, Communications Officer, United Nations Association in Canada
11:45 – 12:15	Session 6: Activity - Pitching your story <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How to deal with editors, reporters○ Speaker: Falice Chin, CBC
12:15 – 12:30	Session 7: Media Directories and Evaluation
12:30 – 1:00	Conclusion and Q & A