

REPORT: *A SENSE OF BELONGING*
ST. JOHN'S REGIONAL VISIT
August 13 – 16, 2007



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:

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.
- Assess how *Sense of Belonging* will continue past March 2008.
- Check-in and reinvigorate Regional Coordinators.
- 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

Objectives Specific to St. John's:

- Strengthen relationship between RC, Project Officers, and Partner Organization
- Reestablish connections between community stakeholders
- Celebrate United Nations designated International Youth Day
- Refine search for second Regional Coordinator
- Conduct Media Training. Includes distributing the St. John's Media Directory and SB's legacy document *Understanding and Engaging the Media for NGOs*

Timeline: August 13 - 16th, 2007.

Agenda: August 13th meetings, tour of partner facilities, set up; August 14th Regional Roundtable 9 a.m. to 12:30, Media Training 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; August 15th Community Event for International Youth Day; August 16th meetings with provincial officials and stakeholders.

Invitees:

For media training and the Regional Roundtable, the focus was on inviting members of non-profit agencies dealing with immigration, ethno-cultural, and religious issues, along with members of local school boards, the Chamber of Commerce, local industries, and government representatives.

Attendance was higher than anticipated, as stakeholders took it upon themselves to promote the event. Both the Regional Roundtable / Media Training and International Youth Day event were well and diversely attended.

Regional Roundtable

Tuesday, August 14th, 9:00 - 12:30

The purpose of the roundtable was to follow-up on the 2006 Regional Planning Meeting held at the project's launch in St. John's. A list of attendees can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix C outlines the agenda of the roundtable. A summary of the *A Sense of Belonging* synthesis report, presented at the Metropolis conference in March 2007, was given to the participants who then provided their own input. Participants discussed how national trends applied to their own community, and where they differed in St. John's unique situation.

Profile of St. John's:

Newfoundland receives about 470 New Canadians and 155 government-assisted refugees per year. In addition, local churches and private organization sponsor a number of refugees. Memorial University of Newfoundland recruits international students; steps have recently been made by the provincial government to help these highly skilled students become Canadian citizens, should they choose.

Many participants agreed that issues in St. John's are different from the issues faced by immigrants in the rest of Canada. For a long time the federal government was not paying attention to St. John's needs, said a number of discussion groups. In the past, St. John's could not support multicultural programs because of the lack of federal funding

Demographics of Newfoundland compound the issue, for example, youth grow up and receive an education in the province, then subsequently emigrate for financial reasons. Mobility and emigration were cited by most participants as a significant problem; as people who start effective programs often leave and their work does not continue (i.e. with ethno-cultural groups).

Public acknowledgement / visibility of diversity: It was generally agreed that many people in Newfoundland believe that there is no racial discrimination in the province. This was cited as a barrier to inclusion and as a hurdle for immigrants and visible minorities to truly feel belonging.

Employment:

Over the past decade, employment statistics are improving in St. John's, said participants. However those benefiting the most are international students and immigrants with graduate degrees. Members of the **Women's Association** noted that their clients are finding the job market extremely limited.

The province has launched an Immigration and Refugee Strategy in October 2006. It allocated \$6 million over three years. Focussing on attraction and retention of immigrants, the Strategy also encourages successful integration of immigrants in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Difficulties in self-employment and entrepreneur experiences were discussed. Noted one participant, "Starting a business if you're not from Newfoundland - good luck! Nice people, but it's just the way it works. Your business will usually fail." One of the major problems for New Canadians starting businesses in St. John's is lack of exposure and lack of experience, said another participant.

Priority Areas

Discussion was then founded on the three priority areas for St. John's: Prejudice and Indifference; Civic Participation; and Media Portrayal and Stereotyping. These priority areas were set at the outset of *A Sense of Belonging*, and we continue to assess their value for the community. The following table gives a snapshot of responses obtained:

Prejudice and Indifference

Positive steps have been taken in the community, since A Sense of Belonging began in April 2006:

- In the past, groups such as the Francophone community were almost invisible. Now after engaging in outreach and increasing community visibility, the public is more sensitized and aware of diversity in St. John's.
- MUN organized a speaker series through the Department of Women's Studies to promote awareness of diversity. This got a very positive response from students and the public.
- Efforts are being made to bring together diverse groups in meeting like this Roundtable. "We really want to work together," exclaimed a number of participants.

However,

- Racial profiling exists in St. John's. A number of people have been pulled over by police and had racist things said to them by taxi drivers
- Institutionally there is a reluctance to acknowledge incidents as a hate crime. Police and municipal officials are reluctant to distinguish racially-motivated attacks from a random act of violence. There is a need to involve police and justice department and let them know how poor responses and actions effect minorities.

Next Steps

- More interaction is needed between New Canadians and the local community to promote understanding of the effects of it. More education awareness and opportunities to promote cultural exchanges
- Community work placements and job shadowing would be a great thing to start to help people expand horizons and get experience and see things in a different way (particularly youth - high school students)
- Important to incorporate young people at meetings like this and make the effort to bring them in. For example, one organization is sponsoring an upcoming workshop that involves the youth - youth are there for 4 days and reps are only there for the last 2 days - gives the youth an opportunity to get involved and learn leadership skills.
- Cultural sensitivity training for police forces must be established.
- School curriculum needs to incorporate diversity
- "We have to link new immigrants with the community - why not trying to link newcomers with the francophone or aboriginal community?"
- Promotion is needed in the larger community to represent the true diversity of St. John's. "When walking down street people don't see diversity. There is a big misunderstanding that there is no diversity here."

Civic Participation

One gap in Civic Participation which A Sense of Belonging can respond to is the engagement of young people:

Institutional succession and knowledge transfer was cited as an important trend. Many stakeholders "need to think about next generation succession plan - people are retiring soon and we have got to replace them."

An opportunity exists to invite new people as well as the older generations to help bridge the gap between generations (including in the local business and industry sectors).

Over the past five years more people are coming from outside Canada and wanting to invest in Newfoundland.

Success stories include:

- Multicultural Fairs - food was agreed to be an effective cultural bridge.
- Listservs to invite stakeholders and the public to various cultural events put on throughout St. John's.
- MUN has moved from model of having separate orientation for international students to having one orientation for all students - to prevent segregation.

Next Steps

- Participants agreed that the Welcome Wagon used to be a great program in St. John's (little basket that came with coupons to businesses, etc.). This program was effective at increasing communication and giving New Canadians a feeling of belonging. The program should be reinstated.
- More networking must be encouraged amongst organizations in St. John's - no need to reinvent the wheel.

Media Portrayal and Stereotyping

Success stories since inception of A Sense of Belonging:

In St. John's there are more diverse and multicultural audio and video programs. Diversity has been integrated into regular programming but a distinction should be made for minorities (i.e. not to whitewash cultural differences). One group of participants appreciated that efforts are being made in the national television media (CBC and CTV) to show a broader range of hosts and newsreaders.

Writing to the local press, in the form of editorials and Op-Eds, has been encouraged within the ethno-cultural communities.

Encouragingly, there has been a change in press attitudes in Newfoundland. Local newspapers are focusing more strongly on very local issues and leaving international news to larger newspapers. This presents an opportunity for diversity outreach, though some participants worried that local news was becoming too myopic.

However, many participants noted that there is very little portrayal of visible minorities in the media (local and national). Worse, there is stereotypical and negative representation of certain ethnic groups.

Next Steps

- Networking and collaboration between multicultural groups to address media portrayal and stereotyping. Groups must have continuous and creative engagement of the media. This includes individual contact with media representatives (directors, editors, producers).
- Using UNA-Canada's Media Guide for NGOs as a basis for more effective press releases and media engagement.
- Invite local media to organization's planning meetings, i.e. involve the media in all aspects of multicultural partnerships. "Sometimes I feel that local media may be reluctant to approach diversity groups in fear of offending," stated one participant.
- Conduct sensitivity training for the media on SB target area issues
- In St. John's it's a great idea to incorporate arts (dance etc.) to engage the media - has been successful in the past
- "We could start a local media campaign to promote diversity in Newfoundland and Labrador"

Media Training

A Media Training session was conducted from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. for members of St. John's non-profit/NGO community. The training, led by communications officer Rebecca Cohn, was based on the UNA-Canada produced *Understanding and Engaging the Media for NGOs*. In addition, a directory of media sources produced by Ms. Cohn was distributed alongside the guide to participants.

In attendance were 35 representatives from variety of local non-profit organizations, as well as representatives from the education sector (MUN and local high schools). The event was

generally seen as extremely useful for participants, many of whom were recently assigned communications tasks in their respective job descriptions and saw the media training session as a way of supplementing their skill sets.

Communications and Media Training has been extremely popular throughout the target communities of A Sense of Belonging. This demonstrates a significant area in which the project can fulfill the needs of the community with practical training in media engagement.

Media Hits

We had two media hits for the International Youth Day event:

1. VOXM Radio - (see below) they interviewed Remzi Cej our liaison with the Association for New Canadians, SB's partner in St. John's.

<http://www.voxm.com/news-info.asp?id=22751>

2. Rogers Television - sent a film crew to the International Youth Day Events to capture the cultural performance. The interview with Rebecca Cohn and Remzi Cej was broadcast every half hour all week.

* Both interviews discussed UNA-Canada and the SB project.

International Youth Day - August 15th, 2007

The celebration of International Youth Day involved youth engagement and cultural interaction around the topics of integration and diversity, and expressing oneself through art. Attendance was approximately 40 people, ages 4 - 60. The majority of attendees were local university students. The event was held in the INCO Innovation Building at Memorial University from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Events kicked off with a performance by local Newfoundland hip hop artists the East Rock Crew. This group engaged in a breakdancing show which included musical instruments and audience participation. After dancing, the East Rock Crew engaged the crowd in discussions of how to start a youth group and how artistic collaboration can break down ethnic and cultural barriers.

The main event for International Youth Day involved a screening of films from Reel Youth with workshop facilitator Mike Sheehan, flown in from Vancouver, BC. Reel Youth (RY) is a not-for-profit, media bending program helping youth create their own films about their vision for a better world, and the issues that concern them most.

Reel Youth facilitates stop motion animation and video making programs to create messages young people most want to share with their community and world. These messages are shared in community screenings, over the internet, and select films are showcased as part of The Reel Youth Film Festival. The RYFF collected films from across Canada, the US and abroad to put together an incredible afternoon of some of the best youth filmmaking today.

After the screening, Sheehan engaged the youth in discussions about personal empowerment and expression. After the show, a number of participants were encouraged to make connections between their organizations. This type of informal networking highlights the goals of A Sense of Belonging in increasing community collaboration.

Meetings

Regional Coordinator Dr. Cho, Remzi Cej, and Project Officer Mara Brotman met with provincial officials to lay the groundwork for further actions for SB. Dr. Joshi has just been appointed as head of the Newfoundland government's new Multiculturalism policy which they will begin crafting this year.

Dr. Joshi, the former Manager of Curriculum and Learning Resources at the Department of Education in Newfoundland, has agreed to include A Sense of Belonging in on the consultations and to explore our heading of a government steering group for integration. This would be an exciting initiative for A Sense of Belonging to be involved in.



Presenting UNA-Canada
Project Officer Mara Brotman and Roundtable Participants



Media Training



Remzi Cej, ANC partner and Dr. C. W. Cho, RC



East Rock Crew



Appendix A: Action Plan Items for St. John's

Community Facts Sheet

1 youth challenge

2 presentations in schools

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 Community Participation Sheet

1 directory of community leaders/anti-racism/diversity committee

1 supporting organization for in-kind contributions and local support

Appendix B: Attendance Information, August 14st Roundtable

| Name | Organization | Contact |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Richard Martin | HUVO Inc. | richard@huvo.ca |
| Florentina Stroia | HUVO Inc. | florentina@huvo.ca |
| David Rendell | Baha'i Community | chr@nf.sympatico.ca |
| Telisha Harrison | Baha'I community | telisha@onepower.ca |
| Elaine Wychreschuk | Advisory Council on Status of Women | elainewychreschuk@pacsuv.ca |
| Allison Ivany | Association for New Canadians | aivany@nfld.net |
| Remzi Cej | Association for New Canadians | host@nfld.net |
| Sonja Knutson | Memorial University | sknutson@mun.ca |
| Mahmoud Haddara | Muslim Association | mh2000ca@yahoo.ca |
| Stella M. Evans | Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador | Stellaevans2000@hotmail.com |
| Thaddeus Dreher | Newfoundland Multicultural Council | secretary@nlmfac.ca |
| Yamuna Kutty | MWONL | ymkutty@nl.rogers.com |
| Adriana Castano | MWONL | adricase@gmail.com |
| Veeresa Gadag | Hindu Temple, St. John's | vgadag@mun.ca |
| Sabreen Morldii | Association for New Canadians | Swis_holyheart@yahoo.ca |
| Rebecca Law | Newfoundland Health in Pluralistic Society | rlaw@mun.ca |

Appendix C: Roundtable Agenda



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies



Agenda: Community Roundtable
(August 14, 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 am | Group discussion on priority areas |
| 10:45-11:00 am | Break |
| 11:00-11:15 am | Reconvening on group discussion |
| 11:15-11:45 am | Brainstorming: community collaboration |
| 11:45 am -12:00 pm | Brainstorming: future of project |
| 12:00 – 12:15 pm | Conclusion |