

YEAR
TWO
2022

Dignity in Employment and Education: Creating Opportunities So Newcomers Can Thrive

The State of Immigration
and Settlement Report - Year Two

Edmonton

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“I am, because you are...”

Land Acknowledgment and reflections by Sentsetsa Pilane, State of Immigration and Settlement Committee Member

“Land acknowledgements are a sacred space for centering ourselves, for being present and acknowledging our relationships, our connectedness and our interdependence as a people, and as a species, by bringing us into harmony with who we are, our identities, and our lived reality.

“For me, Land Acknowledgements bring forth a complex, multifaceted realization of my world view that includes some of the teachings from my ancestral upbringing, often captured in the word ‘Ubuntu.’

“The essence of ubuntu can be partially expressed in the saying ‘I am because you are.’ It is based on the recognition that we have a shared humanity: my humanity, my very existence, is dependent on your humanity, and likewise your humanity is dependent on mine. Our shared humanity has to expand, and I believe it is calling us to embrace, honour, cherish and include those who have been historically excluded.

“Therefore, a land acknowledgement, just like the recognition of September 30 as Truth and Reconciliation Day, is a small action and effort of holding space for those who have been historically excluded. It is an invitation for all of us to exist with and beside each other, as we reach out to learn and grow together. We acknowledge that not only did the Indigenous Peoples hold space, they also gave space to us as settlers.

“Thus, we have an obligation to live a life where we work together to protect and steward this shared humanity. In recognizing our reality here in Canada, we honour the Peoples, the traditions and teachings of those who were here before us.”

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we are here in Edmonton, Alberta, on the traditional territory represented by Treaty 6 and Métis Nation Region 4. This is the traditional gathering place for Indigenous, Inuit and Metis Peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Nakota Sioux, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Anishinaabe, Dene, Iroquois, and many others, whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant communities. We offer our gratitude to these Nations who were here first, for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relationships. May we honour the Peoples, and in reconciling our reality, live and embed the teachings that engender equity and dignity for all.

Acknowledgments



With sincere appreciation, we want to acknowledge and thank everyone involved in the creation of this report.

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Introduction: Towards Belonging

Each of us has a need to be part of a community. As humans, we are a social species, and we all have a deep need to feel rooted, connected, accepted; to know where we belong.

Some of us are Indigenous, and have roots in the Edmonton area that go back thousands of years. Others of us came in the waves of immigration and settlement that first brought people from far off lands to this winding river valley. And some of us are newer still, having arrived twenty years ago, ten years ago, two years ago, yesterday. Tomorrow.

Every one of us is as deserving of belonging in this community as the person next to us. Every one of us has tremendous value and strengths to offer, and dreams and hopes about what lies ahead for our future. We are more the same than we are different. And where we differ, there lies the opportunity for mutual learning and sharing and growth.

But the last few years have been difficult for many of us. As we explored in our first chapter of the State of Immigration and Settlement Report, 2020 brought hardship to many: the global pandemic, job losses, economic uncertainty and financial instability made life so much more challenging for Edmontonians, and for people around the world.

2021 and 2022 have brought even more trials to bear.

COVID-19 continues to disrupt lives and livelihoods. To date, nearly 5000 people have died in Alberta from the virus that has killed 6.5

million people worldwide. Significant vaccine uptake across Canada has helped bring some normalcy back to our lives, but responses to regulations designed to curb COVID brought political and social instability to the fore, bringing to light the many fissures in our fragile social peace.

Indeed, the Freedom Convoy to Ottawa and the resulting political crises show a Canadian people divided, and the divisions are felt strongly in Alberta, and in Edmonton. These divisions underscore an uncertain and unwelcoming environment for immigrants, women, and people of colour, as is evidenced by verbal and digital attacks on female politicians, including the UCP's Leela Aheer, Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek, and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, to name only a few. There have also been a number of attacks on Muslim women in Edmonton over the last year, and a growing number of hate crimes investigated by The Edmonton Police Service — a rising trend seen across Canada over the last five years.



BIG IDEA: Increased Immigration

The Federal government has recently updated its Immigration Levels Plan, and is set to welcome more than 430,000 new immigrants every year, through a variety of pathways. This is the highest level of immigration Canada has ever seen. <https://www.canadavisa.com/canada-immigration-levels-plans.html>

This is Our Story

Internationally, war in Ukraine, and continuing conflicts in Afghanistan and Syria, amongst other places, have disrupted the notion of a benign and peaceful world. And climate crises continue to drive global instability: from record flooding in Pakistan to heat waves across Europe and North America, to water shortages in China, to devastating wildfires in British Columbia, Australia and beyond, there are very few places on earth that aren't affected by our changing climate in some way.

These conflicts and crises drive immigration. Over the next two years, we will see a record number of immigrants coming to Canada's shores, prairies, mountains, and everywhere in between. The majority of newcomers will be racialized peoples, coming from the Global South through Family Class and Skilled Immigrant streams.

These newcomers will be landing in major cities across our country, including Edmonton, as will refugees and evacuees from Ukraine, Afghanistan and beyond (find out more about Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in our Refugee Snapshots, starting on page 6).

What kind of community will they find? One where they are met with opportunities, where they will find peace, safety, and belonging? Or one that is riven with discord, divisiveness, and violence?

We all have the power to build a community where everyone belongs. A community that exemplifies the Cree value of *tatawâw*: where there is room, space for everyone. And Edmonton City Council, who commissioned this annual report, has a responsibility to ensure this value is upheld. ■

This report is the second chapter in the story of all of us. Last year's report provided a snapshot on immigrants' healthcare, housing and civic participation. This year's report will look at the employment and education landscapes: two systems that deeply affect our wellbeing and opportunity for a stable life.

We will also explore a major outcome of last year's report: the review of Policy C529, the City of Edmonton's Settlement and Immigration Policy. This policy review represents a significant shift for the City of Edmonton, and is the result of interviews with nearly 60 City staff, and 181 community members. It demonstrates a growing need for co-creation, shared responsibility and shared power across our municipality. Please see page 45 for more information about this important work.

And like last year, this report is grounded in stories. The stories are fictional, but the experiences are not. They represent real people, real lives, and real emotions. Some of our characters will be familiar to you from last year's report, and you get to read the next chapter in their lives. Some of the characters are new, with new challenges and new dreams, like the newcomers they represent.

Within every person, lies a story, and stories have the power to change the world. We invite you to consider your own story as you read, digest, and discuss the findings in this year's report. *How can you help create a more welcoming city for every Edmontonian?* ■



BIG IDEA: Trauma of Colonization

Colonization has brought with it a legacy of displacement, trauma and pain for Indigenous Peoples. In many cases, immigrants have also been displaced from their countries of origin due to worldwide colonial expansion. It must be acknowledged that waves of immigration have profoundly impacted Indigenous Peoples across the globe, and continue to do so. We honour and respect the important contributions that Indigenous People in Canada have made to helping and welcoming newcomer communities. It is a privilege to share this land we all call home, and it is a core value of this report to do the work to strengthen relationships between migrant and Indigenous communities.

Look for the following icons throughout this report:



Gaps:
Some of the missing pieces and systemic blind spots that create problems for newcomers and migrants in Edmonton.



Systemic Barriers:
Current structures and policies that affect the experiences of real people.



Big Ideas:
Ideas that offer context and potential positive impacts for newcomers and migrants.



Pervasive Myths:
Ideas, stories and narratives about newcomers, refugees and immigrants that are untrue and harmful, but continue to be part of the social landscape.



Promising Practices:
Positive approaches to be explored further to enhance the lives of newcomers and migrants.



What We Heard:
Quotes from migrants about their personal lived experiences and perspectives.



Choose Your Own Settlement Adventures:
Put yourself in an immigrant's shoes. Read the set-up to their stories, choose an ending, and find out how systemic barriers actually affect people.

Refugee Snapshots

*“Human being is not a bird
That she might make her home on any shore she
flies to
A human has the destiny of a leaf
A leaf, when separated from the heights of its
branch,
Is trampled by pedestrians on the street.”
— Poem by Qanbar Ali Tabesh*

Refugees and evacuees face steep challenges as they take their first steps towards rebuilding their lives in Canada. They flee their countries with nothing much but the clothes on their backs, leaving behind families, friends, community, jobs and, in many cases, their personal identification documents. To ease the process of settlement, Government Assisted Refugees receive Federally-funded income support and settlement services for up to one year, while Private Sponsor Refugees (PSR) are dependent on their sponsor for support. Ukrainian evacuees fall into a separate category, receiving a small, one-time benefit, and some additional program supports when they arrive in Canada.

The process of starting a new life in Canada can be daunting. Potential barriers to social integration include:

- Finding affordable housing
- Language and cultural barriers
- Pre- and post-migration mental health needs, war trauma, health concerns
- The loss of community
- Complicated government processes and imperfect settlement processes
- Attaining employment – especially meaningful work, as employers are often wary of non-Canadian qualifications and experience.

We must step out of the old paradigm of seeing the process of supporting deep settlement and true integration in jurisdictional terms, with artificial time frames of ‘1 year, 3 years or 5 years.’ We need the collective efforts of all levels of government to provide relevant and much needed resources and support over time to ensure genuine social inclusion.



Afghan Context

When the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in August 2021, huge numbers of people fled (and are still trying to flee) their homes. Nearly 300,000 of these people are interpreters, translators and their families, many of whom worked for Western governments, including Canada. They are largely young, educated professionals: artists and musicians, activists, workers in non-profits, business owners, media personnel, cultural advisors, military and law enforcement personnel, and ethnic groups such as the Hazaras. Most of them are eligible for resettlement and migration, and are leaving due to fear of persecution and reprisals from the Taliban.

The Canadian government promised to bring 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada, including the most vulnerable — women, girls and members of Afghanistan’s LGBTQIA+ community — as well as those who worked with the Canadian Forces. To date, only 20,000 Afghan refugees have arrived in Canada. Many more are waiting for their cases to be processed, desperate to leave often over-stretched host countries.

Indeed, almost 6 million Afghans have been displaced since 1979. Approximately 3.5 million

people are internally displaced — that number has risen sharply in the last year, by nearly 800,000, since the conflict intensified in 2021. 2.3 million people already live in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran, and 58% of these refugees are children. Still more people are affected by severe drought and food shortages — nearly 20 million Afghans are suffering from hunger and poverty.

The impact of the conflict on women and girls has been particularly troubling. Secondary schools for girls are closed; many women have lost their jobs, while others lack the required male guardian to accompany them when they need to leave their homes. With many women no longer able to earn a living, families have become further impoverished.

As most of the refugees coming to Canada are young, educated and have big dreams, it would serve them — and all Edmontonians — to create relevant social, employment and business opportunities, alongside funding for education and training, to help them settle and contribute to our city.

An Afghan Refugee’s Story, by Razia Saramad

Afghanistan collapsed on the morning of a sunny and warm summer day on August 15, 2021. It took me weeks to accept the fact; the fact that darkness became more prominent, even when the sun was shining, the fact that coldness took over in midsummer, the fact that hopes were suddenly crushed, and the fact that once again humiliation, carnage, torture, deprivation of rights, and violence had prevailed upon humanity.

My family and I left Afghanistan on August 19, 2021. It seemed like a long way to go and find a new place to live in. It took up five days and nights to go across the border to Pakistan. The

journey was harsh and difficult. Border guards were unwelcoming and violent. There, we did not have a place to return to, nor a hope to be headed toward. It seemed like human rights was a concept unknown to that land and people, especially when it came to refugees from Afghanistan. The hope of finding a hearing ear or a caring hand seemed extremely distant. The guards and authorities on the border seemed to have the notion that we were expendable lives, because even our fellow citizens did not seem to care about each other. After all, we were judged as uneducated and wild people who shed blood among themselves. This prejudice stretches further when it is about women and girls.

For example, girls are almost every day facing criticism for the way they dress in Afghanistan. Even In Pakistan, for the few months I was there, I was scared of going out or being in public, I was afraid of talking to people because they believed girls and their clothing in Afghanistan, especially from Kabul city, are the reason extremist groups emerged and led to the collapse of the country.

Finally, home. Saying and hearing this word makes me feel the warmest. It gives a kind and honest appeal when hearing it from a friend who has a similar experience as me. Most people that I have met here say the word 'home' with a warm smile and hope, and it makes me feel that I finally have a place to call home, feel safe and can dream again.

Yes, this place is Edmonton, a beautiful city in Canada. A city that gave me hope, welcomed me with a big smile and the opportunity to have a life. Of course with all that, came some challenges. Settling and adjusting in a new place has many perks and challenges: languages, cultures, the law and legal systems, environment, weather, everyday life, shopping and...and... and. All are new and different, and it takes time to learn all of them. But I should not complain

about these challenges and difficulties that would even deprive me of my sleep at night. Because it is my chance and I strive to go forward stronger, not to forget where I came from and why I am here, in the face of these challenges.

Here, I have started from the very beginning. I am going to school to develop my capabilities, to learn and improve my new language, to know people with different cultures, perspectives and values, to integrate in the society, to be a part of the society, to dream and make plans for the best of myself and my new home and country. Step by step, I am going forward. I go to school, and work. Now I am a member of Catholic Social Services helping other newcomers adjust to their new home. Although I myself face challenges from time to time, I am learning every day and trying to be better than yesterday. I love the work I do despite all its challenges, difficulties and disappointments. Because I believe there is always a hope even in the most frustrating times, like creating hope by smiling at life here in Canada, and hoping for a peaceful Afghanistan. Who knows! Maybe one day girls in Afghanistan will go to school again, and find a hope for life inside Afghanistan.

Ukrainian Context

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, following ongoing conflict since 2014 in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, has resulted in more than 7 million Ukrainians fleeing their homes, seeking safety and protection in surrounding European countries. It has shattered families and communities already exhausted by years of conflict. It has erased infrastructure, and destroyed hard-won economic, political and social gains.

With limited formal supports, many people are turning to grassroots groups for their settlement needs. Overnight, Facebook groups formed to help evacuees find host families, who provide housing and basic settlement support, organize social events, and broadcast possible employment opportunities. While host families provide initial stability, without ongoing financial support, Ukrainian evacuees must quickly find employment to meet basic needs. Many evacuees are highly educated, however those with limited English struggle to find anything beyond survival employment. Difficulty accessing over-subscribed English-language classes only exacerbates the situation.



BIG IDEA: Ukrainian Evacuees – By the Numbers

As of September 22, 2022, approximately:

- 579,000 applications have been submitted, under the Federal government's fast-tracked Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program.
- 281,000 CUAET applications have been approved.
- 60,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada.
- 11,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Alberta.
- 3520 people have settled in Edmonton, so far.
- Each adult receives \$3000 upon arrival, and each child receives \$1500 from the Federal government. These one-time benefits are expected to help provide support for initial settlement needs.
- The majority of evacuees are women, who are often traveling with young children and their elderly parents, as men aged 18-60 have restricted mobility, as per martial law restrictions.

Community and settlement organizations have organized job fairs, sought corporate sponsorships, run summer camps for children, and created online and volunteer-led English language classes. Churches and community organizations have opened donation centres for food, clothing, household essentials and furniture. Neighbourhood schools and Ukrainian bilingual programs are creating welcoming environments for children.

The evacuees are strong and resilient, overcoming uncertainty and are looking to the future. They quickly reach out to help each other, sharing information and resources online. While some families are settling in well, finding work, employment and friends, others experience food insecurity, and are turning to food banks and community donation centres. Finally, for many, pre- and post-migration trauma resulting from conflict, displacement, and family separation can be ever-present challenges to family wellness.

A Ukrainian Evacuee Story

Anna never imagined she'd be forced to leave her home. At 38, she was happily married, living in a leafy Kyiv suburb, her young children attending a nearby school. Piano lessons and ballet recitals filled their days, and her own work as an economist was rewarding. And when she found out she was pregnant for the third time, her entire family was ecstatic.*

But on February 24, 2022, Anna woke to gunshots and air raid sirens. She and her children took shelter in their apartment stairwell, away from windows, and Ruslan, her husband, ventured out to buy supplies and gas up their car while he still could. She did everything she could to keep the children calm, but inside, she was panicking. What would happen to their home? Her baby?

After hours of trying, Anna finally reached her parents on the phone. They lived several hours to the east, in the Svitlodarsk area, and they didn't want to leave their home — indeed, they were proud they had been able to maintain their home since the conflict first began in 2014. But Anna knew in her heart it would only get worse. So she pleaded with them to meet her in Kyiv, and they'd all travel to safety in Lviv together. Her parents took some convincing, but two days later — the worst two days of Anna's life — they all left Kyiv for Lviv, amidst bombs and air raids and military checkpoints.

In Lviv, all six of them camped out in Ruslan's cousin's cramped apartment. And when bombs started to fall on Lviv, they made the anguished decision for Anna to evacuate to Poland with her girls and her parents, and for Ruslan to stay behind, as he was not allowed to cross the border. She'll never forget his hug goodbye. It was the tightest she's ever been held in her life.

As much as it hurt to leave Ukraine behind, she knew she couldn't stay in Poland for long. On Facebook, she made a connection with a family in Edmonton who was willing to host them for a couple of months. She quickly applied for the program that would fast-track Canadian residency, and soon, she and her family were on a plane to Edmonton.

Stepping off the plane in Edmonton was something she'd never forget. The host family made a sign to welcome them, and seeing the Cyrillic letters made her feel so desperately homesick and welcome at the same time. Conflicting emotions swirled inside of her for those first weeks: gratitude, relief, and joy. Joy and relief to see her girls run and play in a shady park. And gratitude to be welcoming a healthy baby into their family, who was born just two weeks after landing in Edmonton.

But there is also the deep pain of being separated from Ruslan. The constant worry about his

safety. Loneliness. And the gut-gnawing fear about how she will support her growing family in a new country. She has only very basic English skills, in spite of her university education, and the only work she can find is cleaning houses at minimum wage.

And yet, her family depends on her, and her alone, so she'll figure it out. She has no other choice. She's on the waitlist for two English language programs, and her first two months of rent are free. And she has friends — people from the same church her host family attends, and other Ukrainian evacuees — people who understand, who are walking in the same shoes. She doesn't know how she'd survive without them.

As for what's next? Anna honestly doesn't know. She can barely think past each day. When she's asked to describe how she and her family are coping, her only reply is: "We are safe."

**Anna is a composite character. Her story is the story of thousands of Ukrainian evacuees. Names, ages, and details may vary, but the common themes remain: families have been split up, people have left everything they own and they know, to come to a safe country where they must start over again.*

Implications for Edmontonians

Over the next few months, hundreds of thousands of refugees and evacuees will arrive in Canada, the majority of whom will be from Ukraine. Others will also be displaced due to other conflicts and crises. It is likely that large numbers of refugees and evacuees will arrive in Edmonton over the coming year.

Many people think that the responsibility for navigating immigration lies with the Federal government alone. However, every one of us — at the grassroots citizen level, community organizations, and all levels of government — has a role to play. We need to work together to make our communities more inclusive, so that these vulnerable newcomers are welcomed into a city that offers safety, acceptance, resources and support, in order to rebuild their lives.

Therefore, we call on Edmonton City Council, City of Edmonton administration, community organizations, employers, schools and individual Edmontonians to take the following actions, in order to prepare our city for this unprecedented influx of refugee and evacuee newcomers:

1. The City of Edmonton, and other essential public institutions, need to build authentic relationships with evacuee and refugee communities, in order to develop relevant resources to address challenges within these communities, as well as to build capacity by drawing on their strength and cultural wealth. Our institutions need to better understand, through these authentic relationships, the systemic barriers that prevent vulnerable newcomers from fully integrating and participating in our city, and to take urgent and direct action to remove these barriers.
2. Each of us, unless we're Indigenous, has a shared history of migration within our family roots. We have a deep need, as a community, to better share the stories and voices of refugees and evacuees, and to connect those stories to the migration stories of people who came here in earlier migration waves — in order to re-invigorate empathy and support for the migration experience. Therefore, stronger inclusive, strategic communication across the City of Edmonton and community/service providers is vital to tell these stories, and to influence minds, hearts, attitudes and behaviours, across the broader Edmonton community.
3. Edmonton is not unique in this context. Large cities all across Canada, and indeed, across the globe, have experience in welcoming, and co-creating resources and supports for refugees and evacuees. We are not alone, and therefore, we can draw on best practices and successes from other jurisdictions to support this work in Edmonton.
4. We owe it to these communities — and to the broader community of Edmonton itself — to ensure ethical responsibility and true accountability towards these communities. This goes beyond just a financial accounting of how funds are used, but towards a broader definition of the term accountability: a true sense of 'doing right' by these communities, by genuinely building relationships with the people within them, by listening, by being responsive to their needs, and by providing space and the mechanism for them to have a decision-making voice within our city. ■

Building On Our Knowledge: Models and Frameworks from Report #1

In our previous report, we outlined a number of mental models and frameworks that we use to look at both the challenges of settlement, as well as the best practices, philosophies and ways of thinking that can improve settlement for all newcomers, immigrants and refugees. These frameworks are still very relevant, and continue to inform our thinking about the state of immigration and settlement, as well as considering the ways in which we can continue to improve the settlement experience for new Edmontonians.

The Multidimensional Immigrant

Pathways to immigration often reduce a migrant to what they can offer Canada on an economic level: their training, the industry they work in, their economic assets. Instead, the Multidimensional Immigrant model considers the whole person — their numerous strengths and assets that they can harness to contribute to our society in meaningful ways.

People-Informed Policy

It is essential that the people who are most impacted by a policy must inform that policy. Good intentions and theory alone cannot avoid unintended consequences. If policy is developed without the direct involvement of those it will most affect, then systemic barriers, diverse cultural contexts, linguistic limitations and lack of familiarity with systems may not be taken into account, leaving the policy incapable of actually achieving its aims.

Interculturalism

Interculturalism emerged out of the need to have more active interaction between the different cultures that make up the Canadian population. Interculturalism looks at how those diverse experiences, perspectives, value sets and community wealth can intertwine in ways that acknowledge their individuality, while also building on each others' strengths. This approach has been adapted from the model developed by the United Church of Canada.

“Social structures and everyday interactions are defined by justice, mutualism, respect, equality, understanding, acceptance, freedom, diversity, peace-making, and celebration. Interculturalism is about mutual accommodation, reciprocity, and openness to transformation.” (2011, United Church of Canada).



MULTICULTURALISM



CROSS-CULTURALISM



INTERCULTURALISM

Social Inclusion

Drawing on the work of Ager and Strang (2008), social inclusion is strengthened by policies that create meaningful connections between people in order to reduce barriers and improve their well-being. We look at bonds, bridges and links as the three domains of inclusion.

Bonds

Bonds are the connections formed and fostered between members of a specific cultural community.

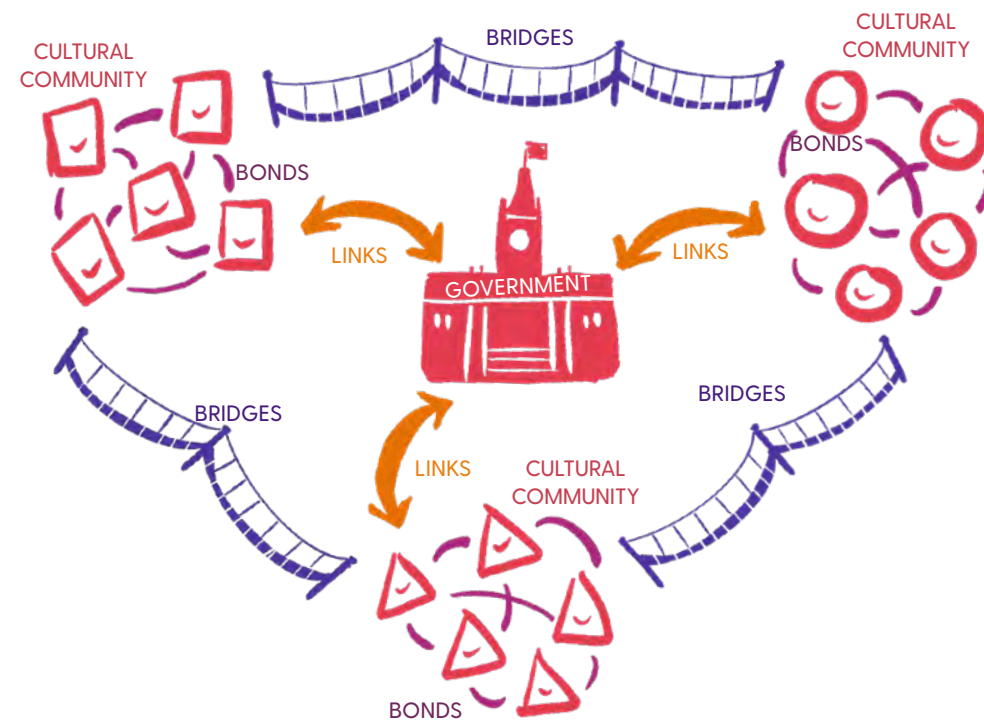
Bridges

Bridges are the connections between different cultural communities. These may be faith communities, community organizations, workplaces, schools and more.

Links

Links are the connections between specific cultural communities and systems of power.

Policy must be developed with an awareness of all three domains of inclusion.



BIG IDEA: Social Inclusion Framework

“A social inclusion framework focuses attention on the differential life experiences of all citizens within a community and in so doing, highlights the need to remove barriers to equal participation, free from discrimination. A socially inclusive society is thus one that develops the talents and capacities of all members, promotes inclusive participation in all walks of life, actively combats individual and systemic discrimination, and provides valued recognition to groups such as ethno-racial communities.” (Community Vitality: A Report of the Institute of Wellbeing, 2009; p. 29)



Cultural Wealth Model

We often tend to look at wealth from a strictly fiscal perspective. The cultural wealth model, instead, considers many different types of wealth; ways that individuals and communities can contribute to their society beyond simply economic means.

Cultural Wealth Model in Action — Employment

SOCIAL CAPITAL Many newcomers quickly connect to people with their own cultural heritage in the cities they move to. These community ties are very strong, and can be leveraged by employers to find both more employees and customers.

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL The pursuit of dreams in the face of adversity makes for a strong employee. Newcomers are willing to work hard to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families. If there are opportunities for advancement, newcomers will work tirelessly to rise to the occasion.

FAMILIAL CAPITAL Cultural family structures bring new and diverse perspectives to the process of working together. These different ways of thinking can be a great asset for an employer who is looking for workplace efficiencies, in terms of systems, hiring, management, merchandising, marketing and more.

NAVIGATIONAL CAPITAL Most newcomers have significant experience navigating complex systems that were not designed for simplicity. This experience can help employers who find themselves navigating difficult systems of their own.

RESISTANT CAPITAL A newcomer’s experience of settlement can often be an ongoing, uphill battle. Rather than giving up, newcomers learn to tap deep reserves of persistence and optimism in the face of consequential barriers. That level of tenacity is an asset that employers could truly benefit from.

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL Fluency in multiple languages extends to an ability to communicate effectively with different audiences on different levels. The necessity for newcomers to communicate in multiple linguistic ways generates a capacity for advanced communication skills.



Cultural Wealth Model in Action — Education

SOCIAL CAPITAL Newcomers are frequently hungry for connection. They are often very active in their pursuit to form social ties, and are especially keen to get involved in school and community endeavours. They also often bring strong ties from religious affiliations, as well as connections from cultural groups in the city.

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL Education is often a core value for newcomer families, who recognize and value education as a key opportunity for family members to meet their potential in their new home.

FAMILIAL CAPITAL Newcomer families are frequently larger than average, and family relationships are often highly prized and valued. Love of children is a common value.

NAVIGATIONAL CAPITAL Newcomer families have often had to navigate complex systems in order to arrive and thrive in Canada. This will-

ingness to learn how systems work, and to find creative solutions to systemic barriers speaks to newcomers' creativity, resilience and work ethic, all important skills for scholarly success.

RESISTANCE CAPITAL Many newcomers have experienced significant challenges and barriers — both in their home countries and in Canada. They bring with them perseverance, resilience, tenacity and determination, skills students need in order to succeed.

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL Newcomers frequently speak multiple languages. Not only can they be drawn on for interpretation services, but their linguistic skill is an element that enriches their understanding of the world and students' academic success. ■



Towards Meaningful Employment

Newcomers have a passionate desire to find a sense of belonging when they come to our city. And they know that finding gainful employment is a key part to both contributing to their new communities, and supporting themselves and their families. Many newcomers, especially those who come to Canada through the Skilled Worker immigration pathway, have specialized and advanced training.

However, too many employers determine their worth with limited, specific measures. How fluent are they in English? Have they already got Canadian work experience? Do they have Canadian accreditation for their education?

Instead, we encourage employers to consider the tremendous value that newcomers can offer the workplace. International experience is an asset, and the various forms of cultural wealth (especially navigational and resistance capital) can make for very strong, resilient and agile workers.



WHAT WE HEARD

“One of the advantages that comes in with a foreign worker or a foreign graduate is in order for them to reach this position or title or certificate, they probably will be doing double the effort or triple the effort of somebody that is a graduate or originally coming in not a foreign worker.”

Our Stories Merla



Merla sits at the computer in her cubicle, struggling to find the right words. She's never written an email like this one before, and she's erased as many words as she's typed.

Dear Mark, she writes. Dear sounds too, well, endearing for how she feels about her boss right now. She erases it.

Mark, she types. And stares at the blinking cursor.

She glances at the photo pinned to her cubicle wall. Aadi and her girls, the day they all went to the zoo. It was such a fun day. She remembers the summer breeze, how excited her girls were to see the tiger and the snow leopard. It was a weekend just after she had gotten this job, and she was filled with so much excitement. Her first Canadian job! It didn't matter that the pay wasn't great, or that it was far beneath her credentials. What mattered was that she had a job. She'd use her PhD in other ways. And she'd climb the ladder. Fast.

But this is now the second promotion she's applied for. And the second time she hasn't even gotten an interview, in spite of being more than qualified. And proving herself on a daily basis. The colleague who did get the job? He'd been with the organization for less time, and only had a college diploma, not even a degree. And he was often late in the mornings, and would leave early on Friday afternoons, when she often worked late to make sure her team's work was always covered.

She types: *Why did you hire Colin and not me?*

Of course she deletes those words. She could never actually say that to her boss. But it did feel good to type them.

Deborah, her Canadian friend, says she should just quit. "Merla, they clearly don't value you. You're too good for them. Quit, then get an even better job and rub their noses in it." But it took her almost two years to get this job, and she can't afford to be unemployed.

Aadi says she should just list her accomplishments. That she should be up front about what she wants. Ask, and she will receive. Which is easy for him to say, she thinks. He's a man, and she sees how much more men are listened to in her office. Just ask Colin.

Besides, what does she want? Respect, she thinks. Acknowledgment. Validation. But more than that, she wants to contribute. To use her hard-earned education and experience to make the world a better place.

She thinks of her father. A mathematics teacher who should have been a university professor, had he been in a position to continue his education. But he couldn't afford it, so he taught in a secondary school in Delhi. He taught past retirement age so that she and her sisters could study as long as they wanted. She remembers his tears on the day she received her PhD. The thought makes her throat tight and her eyes sting. And she remembers the day she told him she and Aadi and the girls were moving to Canada. He had tears that day too. "You will have a good life in Canada, *beti*," he said. "You make me very proud."

But she wasn't making him proud, stuck in this dead end job. She chokes back a sob just thinking about it. Covers it with a cough, and wipes her eyes. She peeks around the cubicle walls to see if anyone has noticed. Susan, the office manager, gives her a friendly smile. She smiles back, even though a smile is the farthest thing from her heart.

Mark, she writes. *I'd like to address some issues I'm having in this job, and in this organization.*

Words flow out of her fingers. When she's finished, she sits back and reads. Breathes.

Then hits 'Send' before she can think too much more about what she's written. She gathers her purse and leaves. Five minutes early on a Friday afternoon.

She's dreading Monday morning, and what Mark might say to her. But it's the only way that she can think of to make some change in her life. ■



BIG IDEA: Return on Investment

Employers have reported that hiring immigrants is a good return on investment, as they generally tend to have higher rates of productivity, longer retention and lower absenteeism.



WHAT WE HEARD

"I applied at least five times and got to the interview stage only one time. I applied for summer student jobs and I never got a position. While my friends, [who are] mostly white, always have summer jobs with the City. I do not understand why. I have asked my Somali fellow student and they have the same experience. Our community feels that the City hires only certain ethnic groups [white people and other ethnic groups], but not visible minorities."



GAP: Immigrants with Disabilities

Immigrants living with a disability are disproportionately disadvantaged because many of the employment opportunities most readily available to newcomers are physical in nature, such as cleaning, labour-intensive manufacturing and construction, personal care, childcare and driving. There is a significant employment gap for immigrants with disabilities, and there needs to be intentional effort to close this gap by acknowledging the many things they can do, rather than focusing on the things they can't.



BIG IDEA: Newcomers Present Workplace Opportunities

Most newcomers are in the process of building new lives. They want to make their new situation work. Therefore, they tend to be hard working, loyal and grateful. They are determined to prove their worth. They tend to have lower absenteeism, and are more resilient in the face of job challenges. Most can speak multiple languages, which means they already approach everyday life by thinking about the same thing in multiple ways. Their cultural and employment backgrounds provide a diversity of perspectives and ways of working. These are all tremendous assets to any employer, and hiring newcomers can be a way to bring these assets to your workforce.

Our Stories Mark



I hope you will give some thought to my words. I look forward to speaking with you on Monday.

Sincerely,

Merla

Mark puts his phone down and takes a deep breath. It's what he gets for checking his email after five on a Friday. Oh Merla. There goes his free and easy weekend.

"Hey! I'm home. Want to help me with these?" His wife, Lisa, bustles grocery bags into the kitchen, and starts unpacking. "What's with your face?"

He grimaces. "Ugh. Just an email from work." He pushes the chair back from the kitchen table. Joins his wife at the counter to help put the groceries away.

Lisa hands him a box of pasta to put on the high shelf. "What's going on?"

He takes the pasta from her, puts it into its place. "It's just one of my team members. She's not happy."

Lisa raises her eyebrow. "Oh really? Who is it?"

"Merla." He unpacks a bag full of cereal. Then grabs a bottle of wine from the fridge and opens it. Pours himself a large glass.

"I don't think you've mentioned her before. What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing's the matter with her. Merla's great, actually. She's one of the strongest members of my team."

"Then why isn't she happy?" Lisa folds up a recyclable shopping bag and puts it in the cupboard.

Mark leans against the counter, wine glass in hand. "She thinks I deliberately passed her over for a promotion."

Lisa pauses in front of the fridge, holding a jar of peanut butter in her hand. "Did you?" She asks.

Mark's breath catches. "No! Of course I didn't."

"Then why does she think you did?" Lisa puts the peanut butter away, and looks at him in that way of hers.

"I don't know." He shrugs. He feels like he's under a spotlight.

"Who did you hire?"

"Colin McAllister. Remember? I told you he joined my team."

Lisa just shakes her head. "Oh, Mark," she says.

"What? Colin's great!"

"Mark, just because you play hockey with the guy—" Lisa looks him in the eye. "Listen, all I'm saying is, this Merla might have a point. Tell me about her."

Mark shrugs. "There's not much to say. She's super smart, she's nice. She's good to work with. She's got, like, a PhD from India, or something. Or is it Pakistan? I'm not sure."

"Sounds like you haven't really gotten to know her."

Mark looks at the tile floor. "I guess not."

"What did she say in her email?"

He takes a sip of his wine. "Just that she's capable of doing more than she's doing right now. And that we should have some policies in place so that 'people like her'" he puts the words in air quotes, "whatever that means—"

"It means that racialized people aren't feeling included in your office. That's what she means."

"Oh jeez." Mark covers his face with his hands.

Lisa pulls his hands away from his eyes and holds



BIG IDEA: Creating an Inclusive Workplace

An inclusive workplace means a workplace culture where everyone feels safe to show up as themselves, speak up, share opinions and knowledge, and where everyone can showcase their excellence and be rewarded by fair and equitable pay. In order to create this workplace culture, there are a number of actions that both staff and leadership can take, including:

- Identify, challenge and change discriminatory systems, policies, structures and practices within the organization.
- Make culture visible, and encourage and recognize diverse ways of knowing, being and doing.
- Educate staff and leadership about each other's differences, and approach differences as strengths, and with warmth and curiosity.
- Recognize and respect a broad spectrum of cultural practices, celebrations, religious holidays etc. within the workplace
- Live the values of a strong EDI policy on a daily basis.
- Challenge identity-based assumptions, and respectfully encourage diverse expressions of identity, in many forms.
- Actively seek out diversity throughout hiring and advancement processes.



GAP: Meaningful EDI Policies

Few private employers have EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) policies, and fewer still ensure those policies are having an impact on daily decisions. A solid EDI policy helps newcomer employees know their rights, and to feel safe about reporting concerns. It helps employers set expectations across the company, and provides guidance for what to do when problematic situations occur. Like any company policy, it can be an instrument for positive change, but only if it is actively and intentionally used. As an employer, developing and sharing these policies, as well as demonstrating how they shape the workplace, can have significant impacts for newcomer employees, by making them feel recognized, safe, and valued. This in turn makes for happier, more productive employees. Everyone wins.

them. “Look, she’s not calling you a racist—“

“But that’s the implication, isn’t it?” Mark feels his breath coming faster.

“Look, sweetie, I think you need to think about why you felt more comfortable promoting Colin McAllister, who should be universally acknowledged as, well – not your brightest bulb.”

“Whoa. Whoa, whoa, whoa.” Mark breaks out of his wife’s grasp. Crosses the room to the kitchen table. He needs some space, some distance, to think.

“Look, Mark, I’m not calling you a racist either.”

“I think you just did.” He sits. Cradling his head in his hands.

Lisa sits at the kitchen table with him and takes his hands in hers. “I think it’s worthy of some examination as to why being called a racist seems worse than living in a racist reality, don’t you think?”

Mark lets his wife’s words sink in.

“And it’s also worth talking to Merla, and finding

out more about what she wants to do. She sounds awesome, like she could be a really great asset to your team.”

He can’t meet Lisa’s eyes. But she keeps talking.

“And her idea about having some policies in place so that it’s clear that she’s welcome and included, well that’s something concrete that you could do that could really make a difference. To her. And to the rest of your staff.”

He finally looks at Lisa. Her brow is crinkled and she’s looking at him with the intensity that made him fall in love with her on their first date. She smiles at him, squeezes his hands. And he knows what he has to do.

“I’ll talk to Merla on Monday. See what more we can do for her.”

“And—“

“And I’ll give the policy thing some thought. More than some thought—“ he says, after checking Lisa’s raised eyebrows.

“Good,” Lisa says. “Now, pour me a glass of that wine.” ■



1 CHOOSE YOUR OWN SETTLEMENT ADVENTURE: The Trap

It’s been a difficult search, but you have finally found an apartment for your family. It’s a little too small, but it’s a good start for your first home in Canada. Unfortunately, the small amount of money you were able to set aside to get settled is almost gone. You have excellent qualifications from your home country that make you a very desirable employee, but your English needs some work. Your friend tells you about an English course that could help you improve your language skills, but it runs during the day for the next month. There is also an entry-level, low-wage job offer to be a stock person in a warehouse. You need to make money somehow, and soon.



If you decide to sign up for the English class, turn to page 29.



If you decide to take the warehouse job, turn to page 47.



WHAT WE HEARD

“People coming from different cultures, different schools and education systems, they can inject a different way of thinking...Because simply, we all understand the same thing. Because we came from the same school, we drink from the same hose or the fountain. But when you bring someone else, they have a different exposure and keep wondering why and how.”

“I really hate that whole idea of Canadian experience over the experience of others, because honestly... living through war times, and through, you know, all these other adversities that people experienced, and what they learn from that. I think those are big oversights in our processes and how we operate in our businesses.”

“There’s some key traits that have nothing to do with education. It has to do with how you look at the world, who you are. So, are you resilient? Are you flexible? Do you have emotional intelligence? Do you have an understanding of different peoples? Have you overcome difficult times? How do you work with others? There’s all these intangibles that are important to a job that people from other countries bring.”

Equitable Hiring and Retention

Finding your first job in a new homeland can be both an exciting time and an intimidating challenge. Employers often don't see the profound barriers embedded in hiring processes.

A Tale of Two Postings

What follows is an example of two postings for the same job. The first job posting is pretty common, and may pose no challenges for someone who has spent their entire life in Canada, but for newcomers, it includes a number of significant barriers. The second job posting shows how the same job application may be crafted to be more friendly to newcomers, thereby increasing the number of qualified applicants for the position.

Front-line supervisor

Buildit Inc. is a manufacturer and supplier of widgets for builders, architects, and contractors. We require a Front-Line Supervisor to join our team.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Reporting to the General Manager, the front-line supervisor's responsibilities include overseeing all aspects of the line. His duties may contain such duties as:

- Maintaining a safe & secure work environment
- Fostering compliance with all OH&S regulations;
- Coordinating & assisting the activities of production and operation workers. Monitors production, quality, lean manufacturing & waste targets;
- Minimizing production downtime by monitoring equipment, reporting machine breakdowns, and ensuring equipment maintenance is up to date;
- Monitor inventory of materials, and place internal material orders
- Track key production metrics
- Assist with production as required
- Participate in weekly production meetings
- Participate in continuous improvement events

TYPICAL JOB POSTING

This job title is too general. It doesn't specify sector.

Using gendered language may keep people of other genders from applying.

This job description is unclear, and depends heavily on people being familiar with Canadian job description norms and assumptions. This excludes people without this familiarity.

Acronyms rely on high familiarity with language and local context.

- Training new employees on the line, cross training existing employees and providing coverage as required on the line; dealing with interpersonal issues as they arise;
- Scheduling work, allocating resources and monitoring outputs to achieve optimal production output.
- Able to lift 40-50 lbs

Qualifications include:

- Applicant must have completed at least 2 years post-secondary level studies
- 1 - 2 years in a Canadian manufacturing setting, preferably in a leadership role
- A good understanding of lean manufacturing
- Excellent communication skills are required
- Flexibility and availability for OT is required
- Proven track record of leadership
- Superior team work and organizational skills

Other skills and qualifications:

- Work experience in the widget industry
- Ability to analyze problems, identify root cause and be able to implement change
- Experience with formal continuous improvement methods

Job Type: Full-time

Required experience: 1-2 years experience

Remuneration: \$15.00-\$16.00 per hour+ Extended health care benefits

Schedule: 5 x 8 hour shift; 40 hours a week; overtime may be required

How to Apply: Interested candidates are asked to apply with a cover letter and resume, using our online application system at (www.builditapply.com)

It is unclear why this level of education is required. The posting also does not express an allowance for equivalencies.

This role does not need Canadian-specific job experience, and thus the posting excludes people who may have relevant, transferable experience.

Industry jargon can be exclusionary to applicants who actually have the qualifications, but not familiarity with the language-specific terms.

Again, acronyms rely on an assumption of common language.

This heading does not clearly state whether these are required, or simply desirable.

Low pay for a job that has specific requirements and experience demands.

There are no expectations laid out about the contents of a cover letter. Newcomers may not know what is expected.

There is no contact information available for people who may have questions about the position. An online application portal may also be difficult to navigate for a newcomer.

There is no expression of a commitment to equity-based hiring.

There is no statement explicitly encouraging newcomers or immigrants to apply.

Front-line supervisor for Manufacturing Company ✓

REVISED JOB POSTING

Buildit Inc. is a manufacturer and supplier of widgets for builders, architects, and contractors. We require a Front-Line Supervisor to join our team.

✓ We are a fun and diverse workplace with employees from more than 15 countries. We strive to create a safe, inclusive and supportive workplace for all our employees.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

Reporting to the General Manager, the front-line supervisor will be responsible for:

- Maintaining a safe & secure work environment by ensuring employees follow all safety regulations.
- Coordinating production and operation workers and helping them when needed.
- Monitoring how much we produce, the quality of our product, minimizing waste in the production process and meeting our waste targets.
- Minimizing production downtime by monitoring equipment, reporting machine breakdowns to the manager, and ensuring equipment maintenance is up to date.
- Monitor inventory of materials, and place internal material orders.
- Participate in weekly meetings and occasional events to discuss ideas for production
- Training employees
- Helping employees to resolve interpersonal issues as they arise
- Scheduling work, allocating resources and monitoring outputs to achieve optimal production output.

Required qualifications include: ✓

- 1 - 2 years experience supervising employees (including international experience)
- Knowledge of strategies to minimize waste in production
- Good communication skills for communicating with team members, other supervisors, writing short reports and completing forms

• This title is very specific.

• This shows that the employer welcomes newcomers and immigrants.

• A clear description of duties and expectations.

• Only required qualifications are listed, and the expectation of formal education is reduced.

• Explicit statement showing that non-Canadian experience will be considered.

• Clear description of the level of communication skills and how they will be important to the job. This also gives an indication of the level of language proficiency required.

- Flexibility and availability to work overtime
- Superior team work and organizational skills
- Ability to lift 40-50 lbs

The following qualifications are not required but would be assets:

- The ability to speak multiple languages
- Work experience in the widget industry
- Ability to analyze problems, identify root causes and implement change
- Experience with formal continuous improvement methods

We are committed to building a diverse and inclusive organization and we are most interested in finding the best candidate for the job. Applicants from equity groups and immigrants are strongly encouraged to apply. We would strongly encourage you to apply, even if you don't believe you meet every one of the qualifications described.

Job Type: Full-time

Required experience: 1-2 years experience ✓

Remuneration: \$22.00-\$26.00 per hour + Extended health care benefits ✓

Schedule: 5 x 8 hour shift; 40 hours a week; overtime may be required

How to Apply: To apply, submit the following documents using our online application system at (www.builditapply.com) or by email at bob.buildit.com by [date]. ✓

- A cover letter that describes your work experience, key accomplishments, and why you want to work as a front-line supervisor ✓
- A resume that provides the names of companies you worked for, dates of employment, key duties and key accomplishments. ✓

Only applicants asked to have an interview will be contacted. All applicants can check our website at buildit.com/front-line for an update on the hiring process and to see when the job has been filled. ✓

• Pay rate better matches the expected qualifications, experience and duties.

• Ensuring more ways to apply for the position removes barriers and enables more potential, qualified candidates to apply.

• There is an opportunity here to make sure that the cover letter is not an intimidating proposition, especially for those who have limited English skills.

• Clear outline of what the cover letter should contain.

• Many newcomers apply for jobs and never hear back. There is an opportunity here to offer responses to all applicants, and feedback on their interviews and applications.

Advertising Positions

GETTING THE WORD OUT Casting a wider net means a better chance of finding excellent employees. Job postings should also be shared through immigration networks and immigrant-serving organizations and agencies. Employers should also consider sharing hard-copy versions of the postings, so that technology isn't a barrier to finding and applying for jobs. For employers with larger staffing needs, hosting job fairs in immigrant communities can reveal opportunities for both employees and employers that would otherwise be missed.

BEING CLEAR It benefits everyone — especially English language learners — when job postings are written in plain, simple language, without acronyms, jargon or catch-phrases. Being very clear about the expectations for an application and cover letter can help potential employees give employers exactly what they need.

ENCOURAGE APPLICATIONS FOR SENIOR ROLES Far too often, only entry-level positions are offered to newcomers, even though many of them come to Canada with years of education and experience in their fields, or in compatible industries.

Effort should be made to ensure that newcomers are aware of supervisory and management positions, and are encouraged to apply. Transferable experience should be considered for these roles, and the applications should make that clear.

Interviewing Candidates

SETTING EXPECTATIONS Potential employees should receive detailed information about the process to ensure they come to an interview with as much preparation as possible. Once selected for an interview, they should be given very clear guidelines of what to expect in the interview process. They should also know about EDI policies that guide the organization, and be offered accommodations if needed, before they come in for an interview.

INCLUSIVE PROCESS There may be many barriers that a newcomer faces during an interview, such as technological access (with so many interviews now occurring online), not being able to converse in their first language and different cultural expectations of the workplace. The interview questions should avoid the use of slang or jargon. They should be open-ended, and delivered with a conversational approach. Interviewees should be encouraged to ask questions, and be made to feel safe while doing so. Finally, interviewers should not be trying to see how similar the interviewees are to the team that already exists, but recognize the differences in perspective and approach that they bring, which can strengthen teams.

ASSEMBLING THE BEST HIRING TEAM It's vital to mitigate biases that might be present in the hiring team. Ensure that the team is as diverse as possible, and if there isn't a lot of diversity already present, engage the services of a third party HR company that can provide a diversity lens. Applications can be anonymized, so that unfamiliar names don't prejudice the selection process. Finally, ensuring that there is diversity in the room during the interview

can go a long way towards making the potential employee feel comfortable.

CHOOSING WISELY AND CLOSING THE LOOP

As mentioned above, looking at job candidates through the Cultural Wealth framework shows how much newcomers have to offer beyond the traditional expectations of the workplace. An employer who is on the lookout for transferable skills, and different perspectives, means a wider swath of potential employees, and the possibility of greatly strengthening the company's staff. Of course, there will always be candidates that are not a fit, but while you may solve your problem by selecting someone else, their problem of being unemployed still exists. Making it possible for them to find out why they weren't selected allows them to improve their skills, helping them learn how to find a better fit for their next interview.

On-boarding Employees

PREPARE PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS Newcomers may have expectations of workplace culture that do not line up with Canadian practices. Any on-boarding process should take these differences into account, and accommodate for the time to process different methodologies and approaches, and welcome different ways of knowing and being. All employees should be informed about their rights, so that they feel safe and empowered in their new environment.

SUPPORT TO CLOSE THE GAPS Newcomers experience realities and barriers that Canadian-born folks often don't face, and must overcome them to be on the same footing. An employer has the perfect opportunity to assist with this process, ensuring success for the employee, and a reciprocal positive relationship with the employer. Employers can connect newcomers with language-learning support, by providing internal resources, or by facilitating external connections and making time available. The same sort of support can be provided or resourced



1 The Trap: The English Class

You turn down the warehouse job and start the English course. The fee uses up the last of your savings. The course is going well, but one day your landlord sends you a letter. Your son translates it, and you see that your rent is going up 25%, effective immediately. You don't know if this is legal or not, and even if you knew who to contact to appeal it, you still don't speak English well enough to make your case in your new language. You are about to lose your home, and without current employment, no landlord will accept your rent application for a new apartment.

Turn back to The Trap on page 23 and make a different choice.



WHAT WE HEARD

“Connections are needed for anyone to get positions, 99 per cent of the people who work where I work got there with connections, whether or not they're competent for the job. If you do not know a lot of people, it's hard to navigate resources, and to inform you of jobs, and to [find people to] speak to their managers and supervisors for you. It just makes it easier if you know people.”



WHAT WE HEARD

How can employers better support the hiring of newcomers? “Provide work experience specific for newcomers so they can get experience and get a job. Also, create programs for internships and apprenticeships, hire co-op students, [develop] internship programs for recently graduated students.”



GAP: Employment Scams

Individuals experiencing the process of finding work for the first time in Canada may not be aware of the standards and expectations of hiring practices. This, coupled with the high priority and stress of finding a job can make them easy prey for employment scams. Representatives of a company may ask newcomers for a fee in exchange for “finding them work” and then disappear. “You have to pay so that you could be employed? How come, like, you have to first pay so that you could be employed?”

for housing and child-care. Newcomers may also need individualized training, so workplace mentorship can provide a significant return on investment.

Retaining Employees

EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION When equity is taken for granted, there are often areas where it falls short. This is why an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy becomes essential, and must be directly lived and referenced on a daily basis. This policy should ensure that unique perspectives are valued and encouraged. All employees need to feel safe to speak up, with ideas or concerns. Pay needs to be fair, and based on job requirements and industry standards. It’s only by being deliberate and intentional about supporting EDI that employers can unlock the full benefits of a diverse workforce.

EMBRACING AND CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

Diversity becomes even more of an asset when it is acknowledged and celebrated. This can be done by recognizing different cultural celebrations in the workplace, and by making accommodations for cultural and religious practices and family needs. Also, ensure that there is training and support for all staff around eliminating bias, racism, and discrimination, so that the recognition of diversity is genuine, and not just lip-service.



2 A Dirty Job: Team Player

You put your back into it, and do an excellent job. Your boss is thrilled, and says he is so impressed that you are willing to do the difficult tasks. The next day, he assigns you another unpleasant task. And another one. After a month of this, you’re ready. You ask for a promotion, because you have shown you are willing to work so hard. You’ve earned it. He replies, “But then, who else will do all these unpleasant tasks?” He denies your promotion, because you are too valuable where you are.

Turn back to The Trap on page 37 and make a different choice.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE A company’s greatest asset is its people, so investing in people is investing in the success of the organization. Like all employees, newcomers require specific and individualized training and support to maximize their personal experience and the benefit they provide to an employer. Many people come to Canada with training and certification that is not recognized here, without some form of upgrading or re-certification. Supporting this re-certification as an employer strengthens the workforce, and generates increased loyalty. Finally, providing opportunities for skills training, or other education that can prepare employees for advancement allows companies to build from within, and to continue capitalizing on the strengths that newcomers offer. ■

Systems Change

It’s said that history is written by the victors. So, too, are policies. The policies that govern many of our systems are designed and developed by people with power and privilege, as influenced by the historical legacy of colonialism. Their needs are frequently different from those of people from equity-seeking communities, and too often, there are policy blind spots that create negative consequences. These consequences frequently take the form of systemic barriers, which can have profound effects that stop people from moving forward in their lives.

All of our institutions, large and small, are governed by policies, processes and regulations. These regulations are, ostensibly, intended to work well for large numbers of people, but often lack agility to meet individual needs. They are frequently inherited from administrations past, and their original purposes may no longer be relevant, or are socially outdated. And too often, policies, processes and regulations are responsive to the needs of administrators, rather than the people that they affect.

It’s our belief that people, especially those from underserved communities, represent profound opportunities, and that our systems need to positively evolve to better serve everyone. Regularly reviewing policies, processes and regulations with an eye on equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression, naming communities affected by the policy and building relationships with them, and prioritizing people and relationships over administrative efficiencies will transform our systems to be more inclusive, equitable and functional for everyone.

We no longer live in a society that expects and respects only top-down authorities. Indeed, we need to make space for more distributed power across communities, to ensure that we all, especially people from equity-deserving groups, have a voice, are



PROMISING PRACTICES: Policy Review

The review of City of Edmonton Policy C529, as requested by Edmonton City Council in 2021, reflects the beginning of the journey to revisit and update the City’s commitment to its role around immigration, settlement and inclusion. This change calls for greater collaboration and co-creation of solutions with community members, and if implemented broadly, will lead to positive power-sharing, and greater participation for newcomers in our social, cultural, economic and political systems.

GBA+ Adoption at the City of Edmonton

In 2019, Edmonton City Council mandated the use of GBA+, an equity tool that uses a gender lens, as well as additional lenses that consider other aspects of a person’s identity, in the analysis of programs, policies and services, to better serve all Edmontonians. There has been broad uptake of GBA+, and an organizational commitment to promote it. However, as with any new framework, there are gaps and inconsistencies in how it is used. Continued training, promotion and commitment is necessary to ensure GBA+ remains a powerful equity tool that creates genuine inclusion at the City.

included in decision-making, and have a sense of control over our own destinies.

Some of us already have this agency. Transforming our systems will ensure that this right is extended to everyone in our society. System change is the lever by which we can revolutionize how our institutions work for the people, rather than the other way around. Ultimately, changing systems means changing lives, and opening doors to possibilities and opportunities for people who, until recently, had very few. ■



GAP: Diversity and Inclusion Policies at the City of Edmonton

While the City is making strides in building a positive and inclusive workplace culture, particularly through the adoption of its Anti-Racism Strategy and GBA+ implementations across the organization, it is still perceived as a space that is unfriendly to diverse employment. We heard the following sentiment from community members repeatedly: “Diversity and inclusion at the City of Edmonton is just lip service, not a truly meaningful action.” System change, accountability, and transparency are required to change this perception.



WHAT WE HEARD

“I feel like you’re an immigrant, you get paid lesser. And then well, to top it off, you’re a woman, you get paid lesser. So in my field, yeah, I know that’s happening. You don’t say much because you need a job.”



2 A Dirty Job: Equal Treatment

You refuse. Your boss stares at you for a moment, and then says that he is very disappointed in you, as he thought you were such a hard worker. A week later, on the day before your probation period is over, he fires you, because “you aren’t very dedicated to the company.”

Turn back to The Trap on page 37 and make a different choice.



4 Up In The Air: Accreditation

You were trained as an engineer, and that’s what you want to be. You start the accreditation process, and use every spare moment you are not at work to do your courses. You never see your kids, and the only time you spend with your spouse is to discuss the details of running your household. You feel yourself drifting away from your family.

Finally you get your accreditation. The labour job you had has downsized, and you were one of the first ones let go. No problem, you’ll find another entry-level job while you are applying for engineering opportunities.

However, every job you apply for sees that you are an engineer, and denies your application because you are over-qualified. There are no jobs in your field, and you can no longer get hired for entry-level positions. Your relationship with your spouse and children is worse than it’s ever been, and now you have no way to make money.

Turn back to Up In The Air on page 49 and make a different choice.



WHAT WE HEARD

“You are told that you’re going to a free country, and the sky is your limit with the profession you study. And you come here and you end up as a taxi driver, or you end up in a warehouse, and they are told you don’t speak English. Go back to school...it’s very frustrating.”

Our Stories Marina



Marina sits at the edge of her bed, trying to summon the energy to get up. She hasn't showered in days and it's been weeks since she's had an appetite. Yet everyday she tries to get up and leave the house. Somedays she's successful, and other days she just lays on her makeshift single bed, hiding under the covers, praying to wake up from this nightmare.

She longs for her old island home. Sometimes, this grim, cold city feels unbearable. She thought coming to Canada as a temporary foreign worker would be the answer to her family's problems – a chance for better opportunities, financial freedom, and a happier life. Instead, here she is, stranded with no job, no work permit, and no healthcare.

She could go home, but the shame is too much. How could she admit she failed? The weight of her family's dreams are on her shoulders, and she can't face the thought of them finding out that she is undocumented. Her mother's health is already fragile since she came out of the hospital, this news could end up killing her. She is supposed to get her citizenship and sponsor her mom, sister and nephew to come to Canada. How can she tell them that might not be possible? Instead, she fakes laughter on the calls with her family, pretending her life in Edmonton is perfect.

She musters every ounce of willpower, and gets out of bed. Today is a new day, she tells herself. Maybe today will be the day a miracle will happen.

It's been more than eight weeks since she walked into her old job's HR office, filing a complaint against her abusive manager. The HR manager listened and seemed sympathetic. She said she would launch an investigation to find out if the manager was, in fact, mistreating employees. This left Marina hopeful and proud that she stood up for herself.

But the next morning, when she showed up to work, she was told she was fired. That's when her world crumbled. She didn't hear the words

“Because work permits are centralized, it makes it very hard to get them, having to wait three months or more. Let them be decentralized. If I live in Edmonton, I should get my work permit from Edmonton without having to wait.”

— Refugee Claimant

the HR manager said, something about how they weren't happy with the quality of her work, that she wasn't a team player, that she was lazy. She knew this wasn't true, but she had no idea how to fight these claims, so she left the office in tears, accepting her fate.

Brushing her hair, she can't help but thank God for her friend Emilio. He was the only person she could call when she lost her job. “Don't worry Marina, we will find a solution,” he said. Thanks to Emilio, she is now living in a two bedroom house in North Edmonton with eight other undocumented migrants.

Putting on a brave face, she walks out of her makeshift room, a section of the living room draped off by bedsheets, meant to give the illusion of privacy. In the kitchen, Roberto is boiling water on the stove for tea and ramen, his daily meal.

“Good morning Marina,” he says, his face serious. “It's nice to see that you're up today, we missed you at the meeting last night. We received sad news.”

Marina feels her stomach contract – she's not sure if it's out of hunger or fear.

Roberto smiles sadly at her. “Sofia Rosales decided to leave and return home to the Philippines. She accepted the ticket from the government, her flight is this morning.”

Marina's heart sinks. Sofia had been undocumented for almost a year now, working under the table as a cleaner, a cook and sometimes, a caregiver for \$7 per hour. Like Marina, Sofia had no choice but to accept any money she could, even though she was working for less than half of the minimum wage. Marina recalled her last conversation with Sofia – she had worked more

PERVASIVE MYTH: Expectations vs. Reality

Canada is often presented as a land of opportunity, and many newcomers arrive with high hopes that this is where they will be able to make their dreams come true. Unfortunately, because of employers' unrealistic expectations of local work experience, the delays and costs of getting their past certifications accredited, and other language, cultural and systemic barriers, these promises are often impossible to fulfill. This leaves many newcomers rightfully feeling that they were given empty promises, and betrayed by their new homeland.

BIG IDEA: Information Hubs

It can be very difficult, as a newcomer, to know where to go to find answers, information and resources to help with the settlement process. Some form of multilingual, accessible welcome portal, or information hub, that connects newcomers to a plethora of resources, would go a long way towards activating the resources that already exist. This hub could be physical, digital or both. To fulfill its goals, this hub would need to be promoted within ethnocultural communities, and be made available to newcomers through the many first points of contact they experience upon entering our city, such as airports, refugee-serving organizations, immigration agencies and the City of Edmonton.

Similarly, for organizations supporting settlement, including the City of Edmonton, there needs to be a centralized internal resource hub so that staff know where to find information and resources as they support newcomers through their daily work.

A resource hub for employers could be very useful as well.



PERVASIVE MYTH: Putting Up With It

Newcomers are often subject to heightened discrimination and harassment, but are afraid to speak out against it, for fear of losing their jobs. This is even more evident with Temporary Foreign Workers, as their ability to earn money is even more precarious and their immigration status is dependent on their employer.

than 60 hours last week and her employer refused to pay her.

“So she did go to the police, then?” Marina recalls how frightened Sofia had been, but she didn’t know any other way of getting the money she was owed.

Roberto nods. “They found out she didn’t have any papers, and served her with a deportation notice.”

Marina looks away, and stares at the pockmarked linoleum. She knows too well that she could be next.

She takes a deep breath. “Any update on how to apply for the work permit?” she asks. She had heard that there may be a way for temporary foreign workers who had experienced abuse from their employers to apply for an open work permit, allowing them to stay in Canada and regain their legal status in the country. This is Marina’s only hope.

“No, I haven’t heard anything, but you can try asking Anthony from church? He’s a lawyer, he knows these things.” Roberto says.

“I don’t have \$5000 to pay for Anthony to give me immigration advice! He has refused to help any of us without full payment!”

Tears welling up, Marina recalls the hell the last eight weeks have been. Her pastor at church advised her to visit a Christian non-profit organization, but it was located at the opposite end of the city. She tried to take the bus there, and after an hour and a half traveling in the cold, they told her they

didn’t offer immigration services. They advised her to try another nonprofit agency, and it was the same thing. She visited six organizations this way across different areas in the city. Few were able to understand her broken English, and when they did, they were unable to help because she didn’t have papers.

Unable to understand the Canadian accent and government websites, Marina had to rely on word of mouth advice from other undocumented migrants, which led to a lot of misinformation spreading and frustrating dead ends. She wanted to go to a government office to ask for help, but she was scared they would deport her like her friend Sofia and so many others.

“I did not know about these programs until some people informed me. The City does have excellent programs, what the City needs to do is get newcomers’ attention. I suggest the City pay attention to the connection with newcomers.”

— Community Member

Marina is brought back from her thoughts by the sound of a text message on her phone. It’s Emilio. “Good morning Marina,” it reads. “I received word about a volunteer group that helps refugees and undocumented migrants. They provide immigration advice, medical assistance and food hampers, no ID required. I’m on my way to pick you up to take you there.”

Marina’s heart skips a beat. This is promising news. Seeing Emilio pull up, she says a prayer under her breath and hopes this group can actually help.

On the twenty-minute drive to the inner city, Marina is nauseous from a lack of food – and nerves. What if this isn’t real? What if she gets arrested and deported? The thought of sitting in

a cold cell, in handcuffs, makes her want to jump out of the car and run and hide in her makeshift single bed. But she thinks of her sister and mother, and knows she has to find a solution.

Standing beside Emilio in the reception area lit by fluorescent light, a pamphlet catches her eye. “Resources for All Newcomers in Edmonton,” it reads. Is this the place Marina has been praying for all these weeks? Taking a deep breath, Emilio at her side, she follows a lady into the office, who invites her to sit down and tell her story.

Today is a new day, she tells herself, maybe today will be the day a miracle will happen. ■



WHAT WE HEARD

“Staff told me to bring an interpreter, instead of calling someone who speaks my language. I needed an interpreter and [one] was not available. The City should hire people from our community who can help them.”

“Make workshops and information available about how the City works. Seminars on how to adjust to living in Edmonton, such as winter living, navigating transit... Even online seminars would be very helpful and accessible.”



2 CHOOSE YOUR OWN SETTLEMENT ADVENTURE: A Dirty Job

As you sweep up the last bits of plaster and nails, you stretch out and consider the last month. You have been working in demolition for a construction company. It’s hard work and it doesn’t pay very well, but the company promises to offer many opportunities for advancement. You have been working very hard in order to convince your employer that you have an excellent work ethic, learn fast, and are deserving of a promotion.

Your boss walks up to you, a serious look on his face. You wonder for a moment if you are in trouble. Then he tells you that there is a very unpleasant clean-up job to do, involving a broken septic tank. Every other employee has flat out refused to do it. Your boss asks you if you would be willing to take it on.



If you decide to do the task to impress your employer, turn to page 30.



If you decide to refuse the task, to show that you are worthy of the same respect as your co-workers, turn to page 32.



WHAT WE HEARD

“When we are at work, sometimes you find out you were given the worst assignment, like the hard one, and have to do that... Even if you work for two, three years, or five years more than the new employee, the new employee who is white, this white person is going to get the raise over you. [But you] will stay and put up with discrimination in order to pay the bills.”

Power, Privilege and Oppression

Power, privilege and oppression are factors that influence how we navigate the world. They often represent aspects of our identity that are ‘accidents of birth,’ beyond our control, and yet have a huge impact on how others perceive us, and how we maneuver in our communities.

In Alberta, as in other places across Canada, the United States, and other Western-influenced countries, our history has been disproportionately influenced and defined by the result of colonialism – a European patriarchal social structure. As communities across our province and our country are experiencing social shifts, for many, this older social structure still defines many of our norms. For newcomers, especially racialized newcomers from the global south, this means confronting different social norms than they are accustomed to, and as a



result the impact on them is that they are frequently disadvantaged.

When we talk about privileges and oppressions, we’re truly talking about power and agency. Privileges are the ways that we hold power and agency (or freedom) in our lives, and oppressions are ways that we don’t hold power, and where our freedoms may be limited. Typically, the closer our lives mirror the social norms held by the majority culture,

the more privileges — or power — we hold. And the more we diverge from those social norms, the less power we hold. Factors like our race, gender, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability or disability status all impact how we hold power, which of course, shapes how we navigate our world, and how the world, in turn, responds to us.

Intersectionality

The important thing to remember about privileges and oppressions is that you may hold power in some places (for example, in whiteness, or maleness), but you may lack power in others (for example, in socio-economic status, or in a disability). Too often, privilege is invisible to those who hold it. Intersectionality is an approach that makes privileges and oppressions easier to see.

Drawing on the work of Black and Indigenous women, especially that of Kimberlé Crenshaw who coined the term, Intersectionality can be applied as a way to understand how power is unequally distributed within our Western-centric patriarchal society. It holistically considers a person’s numerous identities, and examines how those identities work together to position them within systems of power.

It helps to reveal how people’s experiences are shaped by multiple factors, like race, Indigeneity, gender, age, and sexual orientation (amongst other factors), and demonstrates how these factors work together to create privilege or exclusion, in relation to the context of patriarchal and colonialist systems.

Intersectionality examines systems like patriarchy, racialization, colonialism, ableism, classism, pover-



PROMISING PRACTICE: City of Edmonton Anti-Racism Strategy

In February 2022, the Edmonton City Council approved an Anti-Racism Strategy, designed to address racism within the organization and beyond. The strategy has three major, immediate priorities:

1. Establish an independent anti-racism body (a community driven, equitably-resourced body independent from City, police and school boards) that can challenge systemic racism.
2. Create a high-level anti-racism organization within the administration of City of Edmonton to develop anti-racism culture.
3. Provide core operations funding for community-led BIPOC groups.

Council has committed \$3.2 million dollars in funding for anti-racism activities in 2022.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Anti-Black Racism Action Plan

As part of the City of Edmonton’s Anti-Racism Strategy, the City has acknowledged the need for a specific plan to address anti-Black racism and violence, especially in light of an increase in violence against Black Muslim women in our city. By using an Africentric lens, and drawing on the strengths of Edmonton’s Black communities, the action plan will centre African voices and help build a safer city with more opportunities and equity for Black citizens.



BIG IDEA: Accessibility

Accessibility in all forms is essential for a truly equitable city. We need to make sure our physical infrastructure is accessible for everybody, but we also need to make sure we’re accessible in other ways too — technologically, culturally, in our communication practices and beyond. There is a deep need to include immigrants with disabilities in discussions about accessibility needs. Their perspectives offer valuable, intersectional insights about how to build a better city.



BIG IDEA: Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

Being anti-racist and anti-oppressive means you’re actively identifying, changing and eliminating systems that perpetuate racist and oppressive ideas and actions. It is not effective to just passively support equality: to truly be anti-racist and anti-oppressive requires ongoing, intentional actions that challenge the status quo, and that drive for greater equity for everyone, across race, gender, ability, religion, sexual identity and more.

ty and others, and shows how these systems interact to exclude or include people, based on how far from or how close your identities are to the identities most valued in a patriarchal, Western-centric society.

Anti-Oppression and Institutions

Oppressions like racism and sexism are reinforced by our institutions and systems. Institutions are reflective of the times in which they were developed, and most institutions evolve slowly. Which means that without an intentional push to make significant changes at the policy level, it takes a long time for institutions to catch up as our society changes. And therefore, the rules and policies that govern them are more likely to be reflective of the past.

As we discussed earlier, policies and strategies are the life-blood of institutions. They set direction, and shape the rules that govern our society. Intentionally, or unintentionally, they reveal the values, and in some cases, the biases, that are present in our social order. Therefore, if we want to make sure the values that we currently hold dear are reflected in our organizations, we need to make intentional and concerted efforts to make sure our policies reflect our current thinking. ■



BIG IDEA: How Employers Can Support Anti-Oppression in the Workplace

Leadership comes from above, so one of the most important things that employers can do is support anti-oppression in the workplace. Simple recognition of different cultural traditions and holidays can be very effective, especially if allowances are made for the celebration of those traditions, but inclusion means going beyond celebration of diversity. Employers should involve diverse staff in meetings, committees, and decision-making processes, to show a dedication to considering diverse points of view. Tasks should be allocated equitably to give everyone opportunities for learning and growth. Anti-bias and anti-discrimination workshops should be held for all staff, and management needs to participate. And finally, commitment. When an EDI guideline is breached, employers need to take action — as guided by a concrete EDI policy — to prove that inclusion and equity are core values that will not be compromised.



WHAT WE HEARD

Racialized newcomers experience high levels of racism and violence. These are just some of their experiences:

- “Racism exists — sometimes it is not very apparent, but it does, making it difficult for us to navigate social lives and personal lives.”
- “My parents were verbally abused by a passing vehicle, they threw garbage at them and cursed them in bad words. I feel sad and shocked.”
- “As a Muslim women and visible minority, I have been attacked in broad daylight.”
- “I was on the bus one day and a man spat at the bus screaming at me and my friends for being immigrants.”
- “My neighbor talked to my father and said do not bring drug dealers to the neighborhood.”
- “I have been told to go back to my country; someone threw tomatoes on our doors.”

Our Stories Rose



The alarm goes off at 6am, the uplifting sounds of recorded birds chirping filling the otherwise quiet room. Thank heavens it's Friday, Rose thinks as she begrudgingly rolls out of bed. She looks back at her partner, Whitney, sleeping peacefully on her side of the bed. A freelance writer, Whitney had the flexibility of making her own hours, oftentimes working late into the night and sleeping until the early afternoon. Must be nice, Rose thinks, not having to deal with the anxiety of commuting to work, the office politics, the annoying coworkers. She makes a mental note to add remote work to her vision board.

Rose reminds herself to be grateful she has a job, and one in her field of engineering. The process of getting to Canada from Uganda was arduous and traumatic, but now that she's here, she's struggling to settle into life as an Edmontonian. She can't help but miss the warm air, the bustle and organized chaos of life in Kampala. This longing confuses her — she left her life behind because she wasn't safe, so why would she still miss it?

The culture at work is also taking some time to get used to. She knows what it's like to work in a male-dominated field, there weren't that many female mechanical engineers in Uganda after all. But she didn't expect how bad the all-boys club would be in Canada. She's felt like an outsider ever since her first day in the office. She's the only Black woman in her department, and only one of a handful of women. And she's definitely the only queer woman, that's for sure.

People had been friendly and curious when she got hired, asking her questions about Uganda. There were some interactions that upset her, like the genuine surprise Jane from accounting had that she spoke 'good English,' and the numerous times strangers in the elevator tried to touch her hair. She wishes there was someone at work she could talk to about these things, but she doesn't want to be the person who runs to the HR department every other week. And even though



BIG IDEA: Making it Safe

EDI policies do nothing to improve the workplace for newcomers if they are not apparent and backed up by employers. Clear communication and execution of EDI in a workplace lets newcomers know that they will be safe, that their jobs are secure, and that they can be authentic about themselves in the workplace.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Naming Populations

Too often, EDI policies simply list “everyone.” This can isolate newcomers, as it isn't always clear that policies address their concerns. Also, newcomers with intersectional identities have no way of knowing if their identity is explicitly protected with such a policy. EDI initiatives should name the populations that they aim to support and protect.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Employee Affinity Networks

The City of Edmonton has created various employee networks based upon various markers of identity. These affinity groups create environments where members and allies can get together to support each other, discuss common issues of concern and spearhead initiatives important in and across communities.



GAP: Missing Out

When EDI policies and values aren't evident in a workplace, people from equity-seeking groups may not feel welcomed, or even safe, to participate fully. This creates barriers to social and cultural integration, and can eventually become unresolved stressors in the workplace.

she's heard that people in Canada are open to members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, she hasn't felt like she can be open about who she really is.

Which maybe isn't fair or accurate. "Canada is different," Whitney said when she convinced Rose to come to Edmonton. "We won't have to live in fear and hide anymore."

But Rose just can't shake her past in Kampala, and she hasn't seen much evidence that things are different here.

Rose met Whitney at an underground club in Kampala two years ago and it was love at first sight. They danced and laughed all night, and have been inseparable since. Their life became hard when people found out they were a couple – they lost their housing, Rose was fired from her job, and they were forced to live with friends, moving from house to house for fear of getting arrested by the police. Whitney urged Rose to apply for a tourist visa to come to Edmonton, her home city, and then seek asylum as a refugee. The thought of leaving her homeland was terrifying, but Rose knew she had no choice. She read in the news that Canada was progressive, that it stood up against homophobia and racism, and she could proudly express herself as a Queer, Black, African immigrant.

Rose recalls the night this hope changed. She and Whitney were taking the LRT home after a concert downtown. It was a warm summer night, and still high on the energy of the concert, she put her arms around Whitney and whispered that she loved her. Showing public displays of affection was rare for Rose, it was something she was too scared to do in Uganda.

A group of men sitting on the other end of the train saw this and started jeering at them, calling them names. Two of the men followed them for a few blocks after they got off at their train stop. This experience shook her, and left Rose terrified to leave the house for days. Visibly shaken as well, Whitney tried to reassure her that experiences like this were few and far between. "We can go to the police, we can go to the media. We have rights here." Rose shut down the idea of taking action, she didn't want to draw unwanted attention to herself. She wasn't sure how people at work would react when they found out she was queer.

At lunch, Rose walks into the break room at work to heat up her leftovers. Two of her colleagues are chatting over Christmas cookies. They look up and smile at her.

"Hey Rose, you coming to the Christmas party this weekend? We haven't received your RSVP yet!" Shelly, the office secretary, points a long, manicured finger nail in her direction. "Jane and I were just chatting about what we're going to wear. I just love formal events – don't you? I've got the perfect red velvet dress to wear!"

Rose's heart sinks. She has been dreading this office party. Spouses of staff have been invited, but she doesn't know what people would think if they find out she has a girlfriend. She also doesn't want to go alone – the thought of making small talk or standing alone in the corner gives her anxiety. But walking into the hotel ballroom with Whitney – without knowing whether they'd be accepted, or stared at, or worse – well, that raises her blood pressure just thinking about it.

Whitney's sister told her about her workplace, where they had set up Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion policies, where training was mandatory, and resources were available, so that all staff felt welcome and safe, no matter their race, background or sexual orientation. If only that existed at her firm, then Rose wouldn't feel like

she had to hide who she was. If that existed, maybe her colleagues would understand the meaning of microaggressions, and she wouldn't feel so othered.

"Uhm, I'm not sure. I may have to go out of town this weekend." A vague excuse, enough to leave her options open.

"Oh, well, we hope you can make it! It would be lovely to see you and meet your husband!" Shelly says, smiling, waving a cookie in the air.

Rose feels like she's wearing cement shoes as she walks back to her desk. She knows it was a harmless assumption from Shelly, but this doesn't help but make her feel more wary of attending. Her therapist told her that her hesitations are a result of her experiences back in Uganda, and then more recently, the homophobic attacks on the LRT. She can't help but feel that maybe if the firm offered EDI training, she might not be in this position. From what she heard, the office doesn't celebrate Pride or Black History Month, either.

At her desk, she picks up her cell phone and calls Whitney. "Hey babe, I've been thinking, let's go away to Calgary this weekend instead of the office Christmas party. It doesn't look like it will be that much fun anyway." ■



PROMISING PRACTICE: Rainbow Refuge

Refugees who identify as LGBTQIA+ frequently face unique barriers and challenges when they come to Edmonton. They often have experienced significant trauma in their home countries, due to their sexual or gender identities, and many are uncertain about how to navigate Canadian cultural expectations around sexual and gender minorities. They may face systemic barriers around housing and work, and it can be challenging to know when it's safe to be open about their identities. The Rainbow Refuge is a program at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers that helps LGBTQIA+ refugees with many aspects of settlement, from submitting a claim, to finding a lawyer, housing, and work, to forming essential social connections. "These services are saving lives," says Sara Buczynski, a settlement worker who specializes in LGBTQIA+ outreach. "This is an essential service."



3 CHOOSE YOUR OWN SETTLEMENT ADVENTURE: Mind the Gap

After settling your family into your new home in Edmonton, you were ready to prove your skills as an excellent employee. However, you've been looking for work for weeks, and you keep seeing the same line in every job description. "You must have Canadian work experience." You do get a few interviews, but that's always one of the first questions, and you are never offered the job. You are beginning to lose hope of ever being employed. One day, you see a job opening that offers a number of different entry-level opportunities, and is advertised as an excellent way to gain some first-time work experience.



If you decide to apply for the job, turn to page 65.



If you decide not to apply for the job, turn to page 57.



WHAT WE HEARD

"Employers ask an immigrant coming from my country, Uganda, with a BA, a Masters, experience — for Canadian experience; they can't compete. While working at low income jobs, I started computer training. I had a first interview for a job with a company, then at the second interview they said I had no Canadian work experience in the field, but I had related experience from home; then I was discouraged to go for similar work."

The Role of the City: Policy C529 Review

Many people think settlement and immigration is the purview of the Federal government. And in terms of jurisdiction, it certainly is. Most high-level decisions are made at the Federal level, and Federal policies directly affect how many newcomers are accepted into our country, and what kinds of supports they'll receive when they arrive.

But cities, and other municipalities, are where newcomers live. Where they make their homes. Where they become neighbours, and community members. Citizens.

And as such, cities have a vital role in ensuring that newcomers are included, that they feel welcome, and are effectively integrated into our communities. Cities present newcomers with employment, housing and educational opportunities, and municipal governments can have a lot of influence in how our systems help — or hinder — newcomers to settle into their communities, and their new lives.

One action that came out of last year's report was the review of the City of Edmonton's Immigration and Settlement Policy C529. The policy was written in 2007, and an update is needed to reflect present contexts and realities, like the settlement of thousands of Afghan and Syrian refugees, and Ukrainian evacuees, as well as current social values around inclusion and belonging.

The policy review involved significant community outreach, including conversations with 181 community members, and 58 City of Edmonton staff. Community members came from 10 different migrant communities, and reflected diverse ages, genders, sexual identities, migration status, length of residence in Edmonton, and geographic distribution

across the city. Much care was taken to ensure the community members represented a wide variety of lived experiences — from both privileged and precarious circumstances. The community discussions also involved members from community advocacy organizations, including Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE), City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC), Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership (ELIP) and EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE). The City of Edmonton staff came from seven departments, and represented 42 different City Initiatives.

To guide and focus the conversations with City staff, the reviewers developed a practical, conversation-based equity tool to deconstruct policy, grounding it in a conversation of the everyday and



WHAT WE HEARD: Community

Decent and suitable employment remains the singular, persistent, and most elusive aspiration for many newcomers: "We want freedom from barriers of race and language in looking for work."



WHAT WE HEARD: City Staff

"We hope that instead of using language that is focused on deficits and needs, we can include more language that acknowledges the gifts and resilience of those living rough. Vulnerability is a shared human condition and the people who need help also have a lot to give."



WHAT WE HEARD: Community

“Immigration and welcoming newcomers need to be a City priority. The City of Edmonton can play a role in inclusion by not only stating it on the policy documents, but ensuring that [it is] are reflected in new and existing municipal services. [For example] the way cities are built, the design of programs, naming of facilities, artwork we show, street names, etc. We are missing the ACT of inclusion.”



WHAT WE HEARD: City Staff

“As a new employee whose job reflects the explicit acknowledgement of the need for more deliberate and intentional equity-informed and equity-seeking work, I’m excited to see the city taking intersectional issues seriously.”

how newcomers may experience and be impacted by the various City initiatives they explored.

The purpose of Policy C529 is “to attract newcomers and provide support to enable immigrants to develop a sense of identity, belonging and full participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life in Edmonton.”

With this goal in mind, a number of key collective insights surfaced during the community outreach. First, there was the acknowledgement that the City plays a significant and central role in welcoming newcomers, and there is a desire from community members for a close and collaborative relationship with City staff, so that they can co-create solutions

and participate in city-building together. Indeed, community members also saw a vital role for themselves in identifying systemic barriers that they experience, and working with the City to address those barriers. This form of collaboration draws on the cultural wealth and strengths of newcomers, and invites them to participate in system change — which often takes more than top down direction to integrate and coordinate at the community level.

Ultimately, community members are calling for a shift towards power-sharing: where each person has access to information, resources, support and decision-makers; which leads to migrants having a voice; which contributes to them having agency, control over their own destiny, and a share of the power. This is people-centred policy in action, and indeed, this model represents a new way of thinking about leadership. Rather than an old, colonial model of top-down leadership, this new way of thinking reflects a distributed power model, and responsive, community-driven leadership, where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and be heard.

A revised policy C529 will provide a foundation for City initiatives that create conditions for migrants to thrive in Edmonton. To ensure this, the policy needs to articulate and envision a stewardship model that reflects not only the whole of the City corporation, but that intentionally centres newcomer voices and wisdom so essential to an equity approach.

Drawing on the wisdom of the community, as well as City staff, the following five guiding principles for the Policy C529 update have emerged:

1. **INTENTIONALITY** Identifying specific populations impacted by the policy, barriers being addressed, and who benefits from the policy, and how.



WHAT WE HEARD: Community

Equitable and inclusive innovation starts with the people most impacted. There is a wealth of potential and promising ideas for actions to improve migrants’ lives — just ask them! “Great ideas come from people with lived experience.”

2. **SHARING POWER** Ensuring participation of the populations impacted in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the policy.
3. **EQUITY FRAMING** Collect disaggregated data to reveal inequities and monitor how inequities are reduced over time.
4. **CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP** Reduce barriers and support efforts for newcomers to engage in intercultural and equitable ways.
5. **ACKNOWLEDGE THE CULTURAL WEALTH OF MIGRANTS** Value newcomers’ social and cultural wealth in enriching the city, and support shifts in City practice to draw on migrants’ various forms of cultural wealth.

The final report on the policy review, An Equity Approach to Policy Change, with recommendations for policy change and possible key policy directions, will be presented to Edmonton City Council Committee in November 2022, along with detailed summaries of Community and City staff input that shaped the policy review. ■



1 The Trap: The Warehouse Job

You choose not to take the English class and accept the warehouse job. The work is exhausting, and the pay is very low. You start accepting overtime to try to get ahead, but then your landlord decides to raise your rent. A co-worker knows of another place that is hiring part-time work, but it’s across the city. You apply for the additional job and are accepted, but now you have to spend money on transit, and it takes almost an hour each way to get to your second job. You are now making just enough money to pay your bills, but you are putting in over 60 hours a week to do it, not including travel time. You never see your kids, and you haven’t been getting enough sleep. You can’t get a promotion, or apply for better paying jobs though, because your English skills are not strong enough, and you don’t have time to take an English course.

Turn back to The Trap on page 23 and make a different choice.

Building an Inclusive Economy

The larger the number of people in a community that are meaningfully participating in and contributing to the local economy, the healthier that economy becomes. Unfortunately, many newcomers encounter barriers to full economic participation, which hurts everyone.

An inclusive economy — where everyone participates and benefits — depends upon proactively identifying and removing those barriers. This requires a combination of political will, buy-in from business owners, and deliberate actions, all of which must be informed by the community members who face those barriers. Some of the barriers that newcomers face include:

- An over-representation in minimum wage jobs, where the minimum wage is lower than the living wage.

- Language barriers, especially when the employer had language requirements that are higher than the position demands.
- Complex systems that are difficult for newcomers to navigate.
- Lack of diverse representation in decision-making.
- Procurement processes which unfairly disadvantage newcomer and immigrant-owned businesses.

An inclusive economy depends on economic participation and decision-making power in the hands of newcomers, immigrants and refugees. This does not happen organically, so deliberate, intentional action is necessary. ■



PROMISING PRACTICE: EndPovertyEdmonton

EndPovertyEdmonton has been working as a connection between businesses and organizations, to champion and facilitate opportunities for social procurement with some of Edmonton's largest employers. Social procurement encourages businesses to consider how their procurement and hiring processes affect and include equity-seeking communities. It is a core aspect of developing an inclusive economy.



4 CHOOSE YOUR OWN SETTLEMENT ADVENTURE: Up In The Air

Sitting in the settlement office, you are worried that your new life in Canada may be harder to embrace than you thought. You were very proud to show your settlement worker your qualifications as an engineer, until they mentioned that those qualifications are not recognized in Canada. You can recertify, through an accreditation process, but it is long and slow, it costs money, and you would have to find the time to do the course work. You are currently working at an entry-level job, not making very much money, and so you are already taking on extra shifts and overtime, and barely have any time left for your family.



If you decide to go for accreditation, turn to page 33.



If you decide to avoid accreditation for now, and focus on making money for your family, turn to page 63.



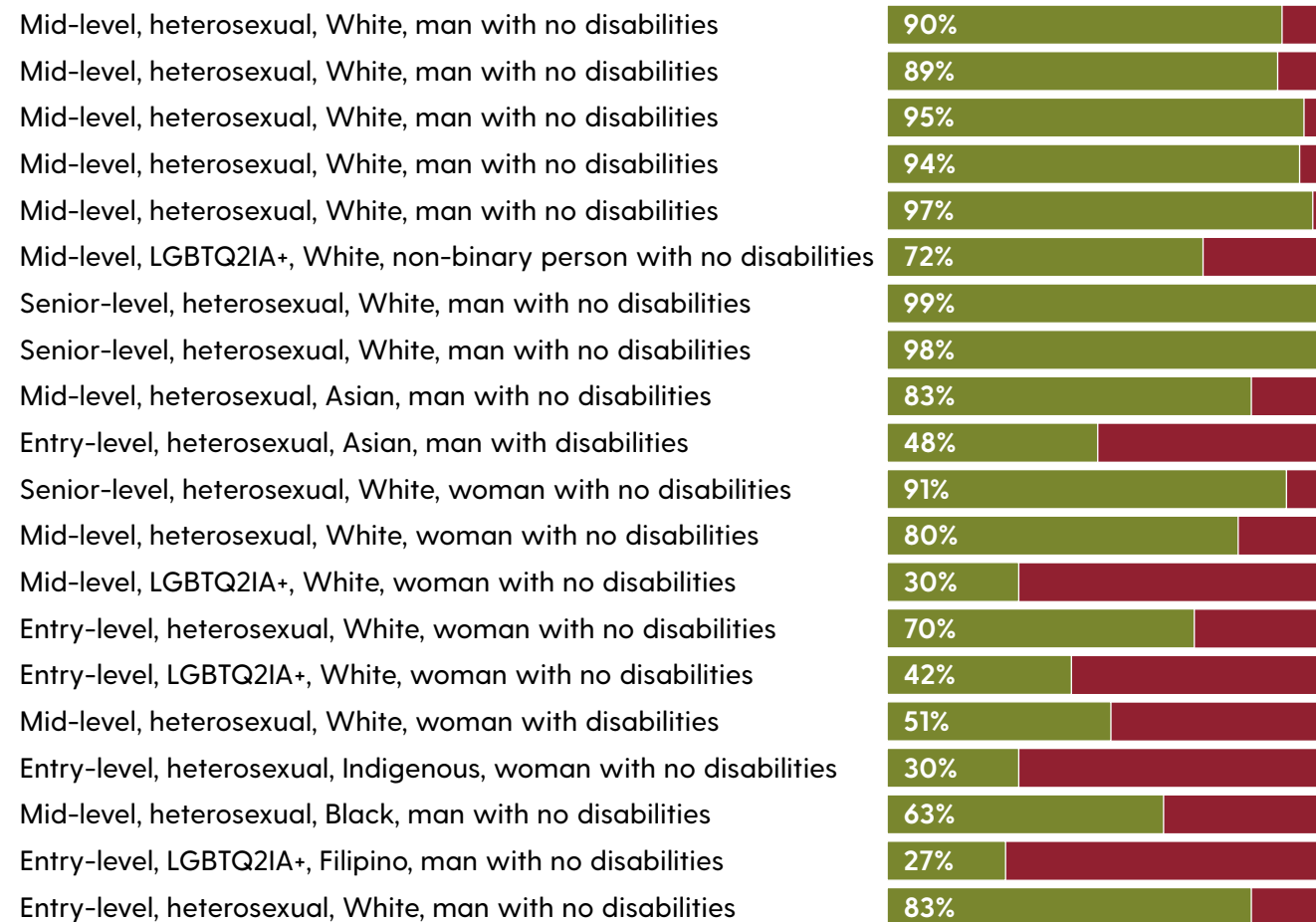
Inclusive Data and Research Practices

The aggregation of data has been standard procedure for a long time, in order to develop meaningful statistics that protect privacy and avoid singling out specific populations, especially those from equity-seeking communities. Ironically, this attempt to protect equity-seeking populations does a disservice to them at the same time. Indeed, data, once you deaggregate it, can reveal very different stories.

A fictional company with 20 employees was given the following survey.

Survey Question: *Out of 100, how fairly do you feel you are treated?*

RESULTS:



AGGREGATED RESULTS:



Insight: The organization is doing well, in general, but there is room to improve. Perhaps some morale-building activities for the whole staff.

DISAGGREGATED RESULTS:

Sorted by Gender:



Insight: There is a significant gender gap in how people are treated.

Sorted by Race:



Insight: There is a significant difference in how people are treated based on their race.

Sorted by Orientation:



Insight: There is discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Sorted by Age / Career Experience:



Insight: Fairness in work environment seems to be based on seniority, and is not equitable throughout the workplace.

DISAGGREGATED INTERSECTIONAL RESULTS:



Insight: The workplace culture likely has significant discrimination for queer people of colour.



Insight: People in entry-level positions are not feeling that they are treated fairly in the workplace, and it is more pronounced amongst women.



Insight: The criteria for workplace fairness are significantly skewed towards the senior-level, heterosexual staff.



PROMISING PRACTICE: Looking at Data Differently

Frequently, evaluation is viewed as quantitative statistics, in reports to City Council, senior management, and annual reports. However, some organizations and City departments are exploring ways to collect and use data differently. Some programs that work with newcomers are exploring developmental evaluation that uses personal narratives and stories to deepen qualitative understanding. This innovative work also considers data segmentation through different lenses, such as motivation, rather than identity. It is important to note that this approach to data brings its own challenges around data ethics, the primary concern being who owns the story as data. This process of gathering narratives for insight needs to be grounded in relationships, not seen as a hard transaction that extracts story data. Consent is vital, as is the issue of how data is used once collected.

Pulling apart all of the various identifying factors for any population always results in more insightful data which can provide a fuller analysis into what is really going on. Though disaggregation of data must be done with an eye for security and protecting privacy, the more granular it is, the more valuable it is, and the more insights that can be gleaned from it.

To better understand the challenges and barriers that newcomers face, and to measure the success of any actions that are taken to overcome those challenges, research efforts must meet the following criteria:

- **RESEARCH** The research on employment that informed this report found very few examples of employers that conduct research or analysis into the effectiveness of their own EDI efforts. Several employers had policies, but none of them could say conclusively if those policies were having any effect.



5 Meeting of Minds: Skip School

You skip the parent-teacher night, because you cannot afford to lose your job. You have a phone call with your daughter's teacher, but without an interpreter, or seeing the teacher face to face, it's difficult to understand her. Your daughter's experience at school gets worse. Her marks start to fall, she gets more depressed, and has been getting into fights. When her next report card comes home, it looks like she might fail and have to repeat this year of schooling.

Turn back to Meeting of Minds on page 60 and make a different choice.

- **DISAGGREGATION** Disaggregated data refers to the separation of data points to allow for more insights to be uncovered. It is an effective means of uncovering previously hidden trends and contexts.
- **ANALYSIS** The best data in the world is useless without proactive efforts to analyze it and seek out insights. An employer that is continually improving their practices needs to analyze the data they gather, in order to uncover both shortfalls and opportunities.
- **TRANSPARENCY** Sharing the results of research not only helps build relationships with employees — who may have identified concerns that weren't addressed until the data revealed them — but can also contribute to a community of best practice, showing other employers the kinds of actionable information that can be gleaned if they start conducting their own research. ■



Towards Inclusive Education

One thing that every culture shares is love for our children. It is a common human value, something that connects us as people from across the globe.

Our primary and secondary education system is central to the value we place on the next generation. It is the space where our kids learn how to be, how to know, how to do, and how to live together. As such, it is essential that we design a system that works for all children, regardless of culture, language, background or ability. Our education system needs to be agile, flexible, and supportive of individual and community needs.

Edmonton schools are remarkably diverse. Currently, one in four of us is a newcomer. In 30 years, that number will be closer to one in two. Therefore, in order to ensure that all children will thrive in our schools, we need to develop an inclusive system where cultures are visible, where diverse ways of knowing and being are respected, where newcomer kids' unique and complex needs are centred, where all kids, regardless of background, race, ability and identity are safe, respected and cherished.

All students need to be empowered to achieve their full potential, and a system-change approach is required to ensure all students, especially those from newcomer families, are set up for success.

Our Stories Neo



PROMISING PRACTICE: Professional Practice Standards for Teachers and Principals

In 2019, Alberta Education updated the Teaching Quality Standards, and created a policy around Leadership Quality Standards. Each teacher and administrator is expected to live this policy statement in their work: “Quality teaching occurs when the teacher’s ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher’s decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning for all students.” Optimum learning for all students requires teachers to establish an inclusive learning environment, a space where newcomer students feel as at home and able to learn as their established counterparts.

Sitting outside the principal’s office, his hands shaking and heart racing, Neo still hasn’t calmed down from what happened on his lunch break. He looks at the clock. 1:25 p.m. Replaying the events on the basketball court, he can’t help but get angry again. So angry, he begins to shake uncontrollably. He takes deep breaths just like his basketball coach taught him.

His mom always taught him to be the bigger person, not to let people get to him. “People will say horrible things because they are unhappy,” she would tell him, “Just focus on yourself.” Easier said than done. How can you walk away when taunts are thrown at you? He is surprised at himself that he threw the first punch, but he was left with no choice.

It’s his final year of high school, and his journey has not been easy. He immigrated to Edmonton four years ago, when he was thirteen, and had to learn English, navigate a new school, a new city, a new life, and make new friends. Now he is focused on getting into college – his marks are solid, and university is a real possibility. His coach says that if he keeps playing as well as he is now, there might be a chance to get into college on a full basketball scholarship.

And now this has happened. It could ruin everything he’s worked for, he thinks, bending his head in shame. “I could get kicked off the team, I will never be able to go to college...” What will his life be then?

He looks at the clock again, it’s 1:33 pm. This is the first time he has ever been to the principal’s office. It isn’t the first time he has been harassed though. He has faced racism in and out of school, but those instances are becoming more common the older he gets, becoming harder to shrug off and walk away from.

As Neo waits, Diric strolls into the office. Diric is a university student from Neo’s community and volunteers at the school as a mentor. Neo has

always admired Diric and seizes the opportunity. “Diric, would you have a few minutes to help me? I’m afraid I’ve made a terrible mistake. Could you come with me into the principal’s office?”

Sensing his distress, Diric agrees. Neo quickly tells him what happened, and they wait, together.

The principal’s door opens, and he feels dread in the pit of his stomach. Coach Sam sticks his head out. “Come on in, Neo, we’re ready to see you. Oh Diric, you’re here too.”

“Coach Sam, Principal Phillips, could I please be part of the conversation to support Neo? His mother is working and can’t get away.”

They look at each other and nod. “That seems reasonable. Diric, we’re glad you’re here.”

Neo stands up and walks slowly into the office, followed by Diric, and takes a seat facing Principal Phillips. Her kind eyes meet his, and she smiles gently, though her tone is firm.

“Hello Neo. Thank you for your patience, I know you were waiting outside for a while.

“You see, I was having a conversation with Coach Sam about you. He was saying that you’re a very talented basketball player, and looking over your academic records, I see that you’re also a bright student. Which is why I’m disappointed to hear you got into a fight with Mike and Eric today. Would you care to explain what happened?”

Neo feels tears welling up, but he forces them down. He can’t cry and show how hurt he is.

“I– I couldn’t help it. I was so–“ He takes a deep breath and before he knows it, words flow out of his mouth.

He explains how Mike and Eric mutter racist slurs under their breath whenever he walks by, how they make fun of his afro and dark skin. He tells them how these experiences aren’t new,



PROMISING PRACTICE: Anti-Racism Commitments in Edmonton Schools

Both Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic School Division have published anti-racism action plans, recognizing the genuine and urgent need to address EDI in schools. The EPSB has prioritized three key areas: support for schools and enhancing school capacity; a focus on human resource practices and the engagement of all staff; and the development of a model to support the collection of extended student demographic data. Edmonton Catholic Schools is highlighting the following areas in their Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Strategic Plan: growing equitable educational addressing discrimination and building accountability; and ensuring representation and celebrating inclusion.

he’s faced them regularly since he came to high school, but he didn’t know where to turn for help.

“I didn’t know what else to do,” he says, ashamed, wiping away tears before they fall. “I couldn’t take it anymore. I’m sorry.”

Principal Phillips and Coach Sam are both quiet. They look at each other. Then at their hands. Then at Neo. Principal Phillips hands him a Kleenex.

Coach Sam speaks first.

“Neo, thank you for sharing your experience with us, and we are so very sorry that you have gone through this. We didn’t know this has been your experience at school, or we would have addressed this sooner.”

Neo looks pointedly at Coach Sam. “But what can you actually do about it?”

Principal Phillips sighs, long and deep. “We have our work cut out for us, don’t we, Neo. Like Coach Sam, I want to apologize to you. I’m sorry you’ve been going through this. And I’m sure there are other students who have had similar experiences. But we can’t ignore that you acted inappropriately. Physical violence is not the way to resolve conflicts of this nature.”

“If I may,” Diric interjects, “We can all see what a strong student Neo is, and how hard he has worked to get where he is. This incident was totally out of character for him. This is not a regular pattern of behavior. Is there a way to approach this that keeps Neo in the community and supports learning for him and the whole team?”

Principal Phillips steepled her fingers and thinks. “I have often thought that zero tolerance policies which lead to suspensions are perhaps impacting the wrong students and don’t change anything. I’m open to suggestions.”

Coach Sam puts his hand on his shoulder. “Neo – we’re here for you. We need to know when things like this happen before it leads to physical violence. How can we support you?”



GAP: Inconsistent Supports and Resources

Supports, programs and resources are essential to help newcomer students to arrive and thrive. However, there is no system-wide approach to providing these supports, and they are left to individual teachers and principals to implement as they are able. Some schools have tremendous resources in place, because of dedicated, committed and aware school leadership. Other schools don’t yet. This kind of inconsistency does not make for system-wide experiences of inclusion and belonging for newcomer students.

“Right now, I’m feeling anxious about facing the team and playing with Eric and Mike again.”

Diric jumps in, “On my university team, whenever there is conflict, we process it as a team. Coach

“I was one of very few Black kids at my school. There was a lack of respect from teachers. I corrected my teacher and said that I did not like the nickname she gave me, and she kept calling me that anyway.”

— Community Member

believes that we need to be in good relationship to play well on the court. If you’d like, I could be part of the conversation to help build understanding amongst players. We need everyone, including Mike and Eric, to understand how their words and actions affect Neo, and other people from diverse backgrounds.”

Neo feels the knot in the back of his throat start to loosen. He thinks of his team, and says, “I probably need to say something to them, don’t I? Find a way to make it right with the team. This won’t happen again, you have my word. Diric, can you help me figure out what to say?”

“Of course,” Diric smiles, as they bump fists.

“You’ll need to sit out a game or two, Neo as a result of your actions. For now, you can practice with the team. We will figure out the rest.” Coach Sam nods at Neo and Diric.

Principal Phillips smiles, “I like it, I will consider the situation then as an internal team dispute.” She continues, “I’m going to invite interested staff members led by Coach Sam to establish an anti-racism group, so they can help us build our skills to address problems like this, and to change the culture in our school so that this doesn’t happen again.”

She stands up and leans against the front of her desk. “Budget cuts have meant we haven’t engaged much in anti-racism activities, but we can’t use that as an excuse. We don’t have a lot of resources, Neo, but we’re going to work with what we do have, and try to make it better. We have community partners who are eager to support this work alongside us. Would you like to be part of those conversations?”

Neo nods. As they talk, Neo can feel embers of hope stirring around his heart. But the familiar weight in his gut hasn’t left him yet. Can he trust them? These two white people? They haven’t got a clue what it’s actually like, even if they seem nice and well-meaning.

“But still – what about Mike and Eric?” He asks. He imagines them waiting for him, outside of school, and he pushes away a shudder, he has to just hope that Coach Sam will address it.

“Oh, we’ll be working through this with them as well. There will be consequences. It’s so important that they understand the impact of their words and actions. This cannot continue.”

Leaving Principal Phillips’ office, Neo is relieved that his teachers took his problem seriously. He’s so happy that Diric came along when he did. It made all the difference to have someone in his corner, advocating for him. Yet he can’t help but feel worried about what could come from Mike and Eric. What if they decide to call their older cousins and beat him up on his way home from work, like they threatened to do? What will it be like playing basketball with them again?



3 Mind the Gap: Job Hunt

You don’t find employment and miss a rent payment. Your landlord evicts you.

Turn back to Mind The Gap on page 44 and make a different choice.

But then Neo remembers that Diric will be there. That he doesn’t have to face Mike and Eric alone.

As Neo grabs his gym bag from his locker, he thinks about what Principal Phillips has said. About how she’s going to take steps to make the school a better, safer place for him and other students of colour. The thought gets him excited. Makes him feel like maybe he really does have a voice. That he can be part of changing things, making them better.

“Keep your eye on the prize,” he tells himself. It all feels possible again. Basketball, college. A nice car. Changing the world.

He walks to the gym with his head held high. ■



BIG IDEA: Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Training

Culturally-safe, trauma-informed practice should be the standard in all classrooms. Therefore, training in anti-racism and anti-oppression needs to be a key part of teacher training, and it needs to be reinforced by school administration. Ongoing training for everyone — all non-academic and academic staff, and students — needs to be integrated and refreshed on an annual basis, in order to support positive culture shifts towards inclusion and belonging in our schools.

Integrative Learning Model

Traditionally, education has been focused on imparting skills and knowledge, flowing in one direction, from teachers to students. Like all our systems, it has been profoundly influenced by colonial, patriarchal and hierarchical thinking — with men in power deciding what children need to know to maintain the status quo and be productive workers in a capitalist society. It has been assumed that children of the same age will learn standardized curriculum at the same rate, in the same manner, with students’ futures determined largely by their achievement on test scores. This approach to education is outdated, and does not reflect our diverse society, nor does it prepare students to thrive in a Twenty-first-century global economy, where critical inquiry and creative thinking are required skills. After three school years disrupted by the pandemic, we can no longer pretend that all students are in the same place. Differentiated support and learning resources are required for all students to thrive.

Despite the evidence of promising practices in some schools, many newcomers continue to face

isolation, misunderstanding, and a lack of skillful support to help them learn English, connect with peers, and achieve academic excellence. The school system feels rigid, requiring them to figure out what is required, and penalizing them when they fail to meet unclear expectations. It is especially difficult for newcomer youth arriving in their teens to learn the language, build academic background knowledge and complete requirements for a high school diploma before aging out at 20 years old. The cost of lost potential and opportunities is significant for individuals, and for our society. And it is avoidable.

There is an alternative. To meet the needs of a fast-changing world, some educators have embraced an Integrative Learning Model that encompasses a far broader world view, and that encourages multi-dimensional learning within a people-centred model.

Developed by UNESCO in 1996, the Integrative Learning Model is grounded in four pillars: Learning to Be, Learning to Know, Learning to Do, and Learning to Live Together.

Learning to know and learning to do have been at the centre of our system for some time. How would our education system look different with the purposeful incorporation of learning to be and learning to live together?

Using this framework, principals and teachers would not hold the burden of a one-way provision of service and information. They would approach their students with humility and curiosity, eager to learn with and from the ethno-cultural groups in their school community. There would be more conversations with people holding diverse skills, strengths, and perspectives at the table. Community development could thrive, drawing from the strengths and aspirations of all community members. Culture would be made visible and celebrated as a source of strength and learning. Parents, elders, cultural brokers, community navigators and partners would be vital members of the school community. New possibilities would be realized in learning to live together.

In such a model, learning is expansive, dynamic and iterative, and rooted in relationships, rather than isolated, standardized, and repetitive, as per traditional systems. Learning in this way empowers students — and teachers — to respond to changing needs and contexts, and co-create solutions that support mutual thriving. Learning like this is not confined to schools, but is applicable across society, inviting everyone to contribute, and to be open to changing perspectives. Such learning is at the heart of developing intercultural capacity. It goes beyond just accepting diverse cultures, to engaging in mutual learning that embraces diversity and the many ways of knowing and being. ■



PROMISING PRACTICES: Community Partnerships

Engaging with community groups allows schools to draw on the strengths of the broader community to enhance student learning. Working with cultural agencies provides an enriched and culturally-visible and sensitive space for students to learn in. A great example of a community partnership is the Sinkunia Collective Garden, which brings together families, children and youth, largely from the African diaspora, to tend the garden. By working on the garden together, the participants gain social connections, confidence and access to the other vital services that Sinkunia offers.

Micro-grants

Grants, like the neighbourhood-based micro-grants offered by the City of Edmonton, help to support important school and community partnerships to enrich student learning, and to help students to feel more connected to their communities. In this era of budget cuts within the education system, these micro-grants are that much more of an important source of funds, essential to keep these partnerships alive and thriving.

PEOPLE-CENTRED MODEL FOR THRIVING



LEARNING TO KNOW
Engaged learning by integrating multiple perspectives, ways of knowing, and modes of inquiry.



LEARNING TO DO
Developing broader intellectual competencies that are adaptive and transferable.



LEARNING TO BE
Cultivating authentic presence through ongoing reflection, assessment and adjustment of choices to strengthen identity and integrity.



LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER
Fostering interdependence through dialogue, collaboration, and stewarding resources for the common good.



PROMISING PRACTICES: City of Learners

The Edmonton Public Library led an initiative from 2018-2020 that worked collaboratively and creatively with community partners to incubate, pilot and engage in learning activity for all Edmontonians. Partnerships with formal and informal learning organizations were established to activate inclusive learning opportunities for all Edmontonians. We'd love to see how this initiative might be amplified with schools as active partners.

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

Edmonton was recently selected as the first Canadian city to be accepted into the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. Brought about by an Edmonton coalition of school boards, and post-secondary institutions, Edmonton joins an international network of cities committed to fostering a culture of life-long learning to enhance social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity.



5 CHOOSE YOUR OWN SETTLEMENT ADVENTURE: Meeting of Minds

It's been a tough couple months. At first, your daughter was eagerly anticipating going to a new school in a new country. The possibility of meeting new friends and learning about her new home was exciting for both of you. But a couple months into the school year, and she's not doing well. She's struggling in her classes, and comes home from school depressed.

There is a parent-teacher night coming up, and your daughter's teacher has personally reached out to invite you, hoping you can work together to address the challenges she's facing. She has even arranged for an interpreter to be there that night. Unfortunately, you work that night. You work every night. You work more than 60 hours per week, and your main focus is making enough money to keep a roof over your family's head. One of your co-workers has offered to switch shifts with you, but that is against company policy.



If you decide to take the chance and switch shifts, so that you can meet your daughter's teacher, turn to page 64.



If you decide to miss the parent-teacher night, because the risk of losing your job is too high, turn to page 52.

Our Stories Hassan



Hassan sits with his mother outside the closed classroom door. He can barely contain his excitement. His feet dance with anticipation, under the wooden chair.

"Sit still, Hassan," Amira, Hassan's mother, whispers in Arabic, through closed teeth. She shifts Yara, his little sister, into a more comfortable position on her lap, but the little girl wants to explore. She whines and pulls away from her mother.

"Here, I can take her." Hassan leads Yara by the hand, showing her brightly coloured pictures on the hallway wall. She toddles along, and stops in front of a drawing of a bright sun. Pointing with three fingers, she says, "Lellow."

"Yes, that's right," Hassan says to her in accented English. "Yellow."

He glances back to his mother, to see if she's heard his sister's English word. But she looks like she's a million miles away, smoothing her hijab with a careful hand. He thinks of the time they were waiting for the bus, and an angry man tried to pull it off her head. "Go back where you came from," the man shouted at them. Ever since, she's been nervous about being out in public without his father.

"Umm?"

Now Amira looks at him, her arms crossed. In Arabic, she says, "What did you do, Hassan? I told you not to misbehave. Every morning before school, I tell you."

"I didn't do anything, Umm."

"Then why does your teacher want to see me? Hassan, have you been speaking too loud in class? Not paying attention? What have you done?"

"Nothing, Umm. I promise. This is a good thing. Really."

Before his mother can respond, the classroom door opens. Amira stands quickly, pulling Yara



PROMISING PRACTICE: Circle Conversations

Too often, conversations are driven by difficult power dynamics: hierarchical power differentials are emphasized, powerful voices can drown out quieter voices, and group think can limit differing perspectives. Circle Conversations, however, draw on the strengths of other ways of communicating (i.e., Indigenous and African cultures). In circle conversations, everyone's voice is included, space is created for differing perspectives, and parameters can be established to allow for equal participation. Circle conversations can be especially effective in school settings, particularly in resolving conflict between students, discussing issues fueled by a lot of emotion (like grief or anger), and when determining a new direction with the help of community input.



BIG IDEAS: Schools as Community Hubs

Schools have the potential to reach far beyond just students. Parents, extended family members and community members have the opportunity to engage in a school setting, and by embracing people with warmth and curiosity, it is possible to draw on the strengths of the community to support the needs of students, and vice versa. Schools are well-positioned to provide information and resources for newcomer parents and kids, and to help foster community connections and networks.

Translation and Interpretation Resources

By 2050, nearly 50% of Albertans will be recent immigrants. This means that translation and interpretation services, within schools and communities, are becoming essential. Edmonton schools are already remarkably diverse, with untapped resources in community and parent partnerships. Many newcomer parents speak multiple languages, and could be well-positioned to provide translation and interpretation services within schools, and in the broader community. A brief training program could be offered, equipping multilingual people with employment options, and providing a valuable service for the community.

to her. She dips her eyes as Mrs. McHenry smiles widely at her.

“Hello! You must be Hassan’s mother!” Mrs. McHenry’s voice is light and sweet. To Hassan, it sounds like birdsong and wind chimes, and her wavy blond hair looks like a wheat field on a windy day. She places one hand over her heart

and bows her head, just like Hassan showed her.

One quick look at his mother. Her shoulders are hunched over Yara, her mouth a straight line. But Mrs. McHenry will make her smile. He knows she will.

Mrs. McHenry leads Amira and Hassan into the classroom. It’s Amira’s first time in the school, and Hassan watches with pride as she takes in the colourful artwork on the walls, the desks in tidy rows, the Welcome To Grade Seven sign above the classroom door.

“So sorry we’re late! Someone forgot his book bag in the library!” A woman in a hijab and bright pink lipstick breezes into the room, followed by Faisal, Hassan’s best friend. Faisal gives Hassan a friendly wave.

Hassan still can’t believe his good luck at being paired with Faisal on his first day of school. Faisal with his cool haircut and perfect English. His encyclopedic knowledge of comic books and superheroes. Faisal also came from Syria, but he’s been in Canada for much longer, for more than half his life. Faisal knows where to buy the best candy at the convenience store, and usually has spare change to share with Hassan. And together, they’re writing their own comic book. Hassan draws the pictures, and Faisal writes the words. They’re going to publish it and turn it into a movie when they’re older.

“Ah, Badia, there you are.” Mrs. McHenry gives Faisal’s mother a quick hug hello, and fist bumps with Faisal.

Hassan watches his mother take in Faisal’s mother’s appearance. She’s wearing a hijab, just like Amira, but the two women couldn’t be more different. Faisal’s mother wears a shirt with a subtle sparkle, and blue jeans. Blue jeans! She looks just as cool as Faisal. Hassan glances at his own mother’s modest dark dress, and for a moment, wishes she would wear blue jeans

and a sparkly top too. But then he feels disloyal thinking it, and shoves it out of his mind.

“As-salam alaikum,” Faisal’s mother says, reaching out to kiss Amira on both cheeks. Hassan sees his mother relax slightly at the Arabic greeting. She responds in suit: “Wa-Alaikum-Salaam.”

Mrs. McHenry invites the mothers to sit down. “So, I wanted to talk to both of you, because your boys—”

“I hope Hassan no trouble,” Amira says in careful English, her brows knit with worry.

“Oh, Amira, no. Hassan is wonderful.” Mrs. McHenry’s voice is warm and Hassan glows under his teacher’s praise. “He’s a very kind boy, so helpful. I only wish he would speak up more in class.”

Amira glances at Hassan, worry replaced by surprise. “Speak... more?”

Mrs. McHenry nods and smiles. “Both your boys are really wonderful kids. And they came to me with a great idea.” She leans forward in her chair. Hassan can tell she’s excited too.

“In social studies, we’re talking about how food is such an important part of culture. The boys had the idea that they would like to share some traditional Syrian food with their classmates, so the class can learn about where they come from.”

“What a great idea!” Faisal’s mother hugs him to her, her face warm with pride.

Hassan looks to his own mother. She’s sitting, statue still, a perplexed look on her face. She attempts a small smile, but it doesn’t meet her eyes. Hassan realizes she probably didn’t understand all of Mrs. McHenry’s words. He quickly translates for her. He’s used to translating now. He translates everything from TV shows to the phone bill.



4 Up In The Air: Work Now

You decide to focus on making money and spending as much time with your family as possible. This leaves absolutely no time for accreditation, or re-training of any sort, so you work a string of entry-level and gig-economy jobs. Whenever there is any sort of turmoil or downsizing with your employer, you are always the first to be let go.

The money you make is barely enough to keep your family afloat, and every time there is a bump in prices due to inflation, or supply chain issues, it makes your budget even tighter. You can no longer afford the time or money to get accreditation as an engineer. Maybe when your kids are old enough to move out, but by then, even if you do recertify, you will re-enter the engineering job market competing against people much younger than you. You realize that you will likely never be an engineer again.

Turn back to Up In The Air on page 49 of and make a different choice.



5 Meeting of Minds: Switch Shifts

Coming home from the parent-teacher night, you feel elated. Your daughter's teacher was very friendly, and after discussing your family history and the kind of educational environment you came from, she agreed to come up with a plan to help your daughter fit in.

When you get home, your spouse has a message for you. Your boss went by your workplace and found out that you had switched shifts. He was very angry, and decided that you aren't dedicated to the company. You have been fired.

Turn back to Meeting of Minds on page 60 and make a different choice.

"Ah," Amira says. "Ok." Hassan knows it's her best English phrase. But she still looks unsure.

Mrs. McHenry continues. "The reason I wanted to talk to you is the boys thought it would be a good idea for you two to do the menu planning and the cooking. Hassan tells me that you make a kind of pistachio cookie—"

"Barazek, Umm!" Hassan can feel his mouth water at the thought of his mother's baking.

"Oh, yes, Barazek." Faisal's mother grins. "So delicious. I make them too. A family recipe."

"Yes, Barazek, and maybe some other kinds of Syrian foods. Baba ganoush maybe, or falafel?" Mrs. McHenry smiles at Amira, encouragingly.

Hassan looks to his mother. Instead of getting excited, she looks tired. She shifts Yara onto her other knee. "How many?" She says, hunching her shoulders.

"Well, there are 29 kids in the class—"

Hassan quickly translates. His mother's eyebrows nearly reach her hijab. Her eyes fill with tears. No! This was not the response he wanted from her.

"Umm, what's the matter?"

"We cannot afford to cook for 29 people, Hassan." Her words are quiet, in Arabic. She stares at the floor.

Hassan feels a sudden shock of shame in the back of his throat. He hadn't thought of the expense. His only thought was sharing Barazek with Faisal and his other friends. And Ashley, the pretty dark-haired girl who sits in front of him in class. He's spent more time than he cares to admit imagining her smiling at him, eating the Barazek he's given her.

Faisal's mother quietly clears her throat. "I think Amira might be worried about the cost of the supplies, not to mention the work of all that cooking. I can see she's got her hands full." She nods towards Amira and a sleeping Yara.

"Oh, gosh! Yes, of course." Mrs. McHenry's eyes crease with concern. "We certainly don't expect you to pay for the groceries, Amira! I'll talk to the principal to see if the parent council can pay for it. And we can ask the other parents who are part of the Newcomers' Circle to help. We can use the Home Economics kitchen. We just need you to teach us how to make it!"

Hassan feels hope returning. He translates for his mother, and a slow smile spreads across her face. "Ah," she says. "Ok." Her favourite word again. She nods at the teacher.

Then Amira surprises him. "New-newcomer's Circle?" She asks, the words unfamiliar on her tongue.



3 Mind the Gap: Job Hunt

You apply for the job, and are turned down because you don't have enough Canadian work experience.

Turn back to Mind The Gap on page 44 and make a different choice.

Mrs. McHenry grins. "Yes! I also wanted to ask if you would like to join the group. It's a parents' advisory council that helps the school understand what newcomer kids need, and how we can support them. We meet once a month, and we provide translation and interpretation services, and childcare. And it's a chance for you to meet other parents – like Badia."

Faisal's mother nods, and says in Arabic, "I love being a part of the group. I know what it's like to be in your shoes, believe me. And the other parents understand too. It helps the kids, and it helps us too."

Mrs. McHenry looks at both women, and smiles. "What do you say, Amira? Would you like to join us?"

Now it's Amira's turn to grin. "Ah," she says. "Ok." It's been a long time since Hassan has seen his mother smile like that. Maybe the first time since coming to Canada.

She stands and shifts Yara to her other hip. "You are a very good boy, Hassan," she says, pronouncing each English word with care.

Hassan beams at his mother. She's the best mother in the world, he thinks. He's so lucky to



GAP: English Language Learning

Learning English is an essential step for all newcomers, whether they be children within the school system, or adults, seeking English language-learning in post-secondary environments. These classes are oversubscribed, and there are long waitlists to access this training. Within schools, students who don't get the necessary English-language supports can easily fall behind and struggle in all academic subjects, eventually become unresolved stressors in the workplace.



BIG IDEA: Making Culture Visible

By making diverse cultures visible in schools, students learn vital lessons about our world, and how to get along in it. Promoting culture teaches empathy, enriches intercultural understanding, and combats racism and xenophobia. It helps students to feel welcome, included, visible and understood. And it also helps students to understand a broad worldview, essential learning in our global and diverse society.

have her, and the best teacher, and the best friend.

"Can we make Barazek tonight? You know, to practice?" ■

Conclusion

Immigration is essential for our city — for the economy, and for our culture. Newcomers enrich our city with their expertise, their strength and their cultural wealth. They broaden our city’s horizons through their network and connections across the globe. Their hard work contributes significantly to our local tax base. They are valuable employees, entrepreneurs, leaders and learners, and we all benefit when newcomers are positively included and integrated into city life — economically, socially, and culturally.

And yet, currently, as a city, the investment in helping newcomers settle into the community is low.

With the potential of thousands of new immigrants coming to Edmonton from Ukraine, Afghanistan, the global south, and beyond, now is the time to create the much-needed systemic change so that we’re prepared to welcome new citizens, and to help them connect and know that they belong in our city.

There is a continuum of inclusion, from access to resources, information and decision-makers, to having a voice, to having power, agency and control over one’s own destiny. Until every Edmontonian has access and a voice, and until we equitably share power, we cannot call ourselves a fully inclusive city.

So, we have much work to do to co-create a city where everyone can flourish, where dignity in employment and education is expected and achievable for everyone.

These four big ideas are our calls to action. We believe it is possible to build a brighter future for newcomers, and these calls are a place for us to start — within our governments, our workplaces, our schools and our communities — to make change together.



BIG IDEA #1: We need to be intentional about building equity into our systems. This means reviewing and revising policies in all of our institutions, using an equity lens, to eliminate racism and other oppressions at the organizational and institutional level. The people who are affected the most need to be included in this work.



BIG IDEA #2: We need to build capacity for how to apply equity tools within our organizations. Too often, we talk about “building awareness.” Awareness is an important first step, but without the understanding, knowledge and capacity to apply equity tools (like GBA+, for example), and to bring policy to life in our organizations, we’re not doing enough to create real and lasting change.



BIG IDEA #3: We need to build genuine, reciprocal relationships with newcomer communities, share power with them, and co-create solutions to systemic barriers together. We need to go beyond ‘engagement’ and ‘consultation,’ to true partnerships where we listen, learn and co-create together.



BIG IDEA #4: Immigrants and refugees need a stronger voice. As a city, we need to hear their stories, learn from and value their expertise, understand their barriers, and build empathy for their experiences. We need to change the narrative to focus on immigrant strengths and cultural wealth, and with a stronger voice, make space at the decision-making table for their valuable perspectives and experience.

So, what can you do to help make Edmonton a more inclusive, welcoming city?

Here are four ways you can make a difference in your own circle:

1. **Share this report with your colleagues, family, and organizations that you support, and encourage them to read and discuss it.**
2. **In your workplace, work with your employer to develop an EDI policy. If one is already in place, find even more ways to bring it to life, and in doing so, be sure to include and involve the people in your organization that it affects the most.**
3. **In your schools, consider starting a Newcomer Circle to provide a welcoming, safe place for school committees, staff and parents to hear from newcomer families to help everyone to feel that they belong. Plan it at times that work for newcomer families, centring their needs.**
4. **In your municipality, please reach out to your City Councillor and talk to them about how they’re supporting equity, inclusion and building a welcoming city. Let them know that genuine inclusion is important to you.**

It’s in each of us to make Edmonton a city where everyone belongs. All it takes is empathy, intentionality, will, and action — to build a brighter city that everyone can proudly call home. ■

“Inclusion does not happen accidentally; it takes intention, it takes resolution and it takes leadership. Leadership to realize that a city that works for everyone must include everyone.”

**— Sen. Ratna Omidvar,
Building Inclusive Cities**

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This report and supporting documents can
be found at edmonton.ca/newcomers