



North Bay & District
Multicultural Centre
Immigrant Settlement Services

Timmins & District
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ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Thank you to our funders

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre and the Timmins & District Multicultural Centre wish to gratefully acknowledge operational funding from Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Skills and Trade Development.

Additional funding from the City of North Bay, the Timmins Economic Development Corporation, NOHFC, North Bay and Area Community Foundation and Ontario Trillium Foundation is much appreciated.

We also thank those who chose to make charitable donations to us in the past year.

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Julie Van Berkel - *North Bay Local Immigration Partnership*

Timmins

Jaspreet Kaur - *Outreach Coordinator*

Ifeoma Kasimanwuna - *Timmins Local Immigration Partnership*

Message from our Board chair

At the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre, we are committed to building the momentum necessary to allow our organization to readily meet and support the settlement needs of newcomers to Canada and the districts that we serve.

Maintaining this momentum requires a strategic focus, investment and commitment which is represented in the variety of resources and services provided to ensure the full, equal and valued participation of newcomers in all aspects of community life.

The Board of Directors of the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre wish to acknowledge and thank our Executive Director, Deborah Robertson, and committed staff in North Bay, Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Temiskaming Shores, and Parry Sound for their hard work and dedication over the past year. We are eager for what the coming years have in store for our clients, communities, and organization.

I am pleased to present this annual report to you as we acknowledge the wonderful work being done at the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre. Within the pages of this report, you will learn more about the ways in which we respect and embrace diversity in the provision of inclusive services to meet the individualized needs of clients.

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre will continue to provide sector-leading programs and services designed to meet the needs of newcomers to Canada and positioned to benefit all who call the North their home.

Warmest regards and thanks for your support,

Dean Lessard

Chair, North Bay & District Multicultural Center Board of Directors

Message from our Executive Director

You're not obligated to win. You're obligated to keep trying to do the best you can every day.

- Marian Wright Edelman

In 2023, the North Bay & District Multicultural celebrated 15 years of serving our community. This represented a significant milestone that allowed us to reflect on past achievements and success. And there are no signs of slowing down. The past 12 months have seen a rapid expansion of our current services and have provided tremendous opportunities to strengthen our foundations and prepare for continued growth.

On an organizational level, work began on a strategic planning exercise that will result in a revised strategic plan covering the next three years. An external consultant was hired to take us through the process involving staff, Board and community partners. Another key organizational update involved revising our HR Policies manual, to ensure continued compliance with relevant legislation.

We are in the early stages of expanding our in-person services to Parry Sound, Temiskaming Shores and Kirkland Lake via the Library Settlement Partnership (LSP) program. This is a very exciting development that will allow us to provide settlement services to immigrants in partnership with local libraries. We are very much looking forward increasing our capacity to serve across our region.

Given our continued increase in programming and number of clients served, it became apparent we need a robust Client Management System to support data collection and the creation of required reports. We began the transfer over to OCMS early in the year and thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of staff, the change has been a very positive one!

This year saw the start of an exciting partnership with Canadore College and COSTI Immigration Services. We now deliver presentations to international students on key settlement issues i.e. childcare, transit and consumer rights via the International Student Connect (ISC) program.

My gratitude as ever goes to staff, who serve our communities with commitment, passion and expertise. I would also like to thank our Board who provide invaluable support and guidance throughout the year.

And of course my sincere thanks and appreciation to our funders, whose support remains central to all we do.

Deborah Robertson

Message from our Program Coordinator

I must start this report by giving recognition and expressing sincere gratitude to all settlement staff for their infinite compassion, empathy, care and concern for all our clients. Settlement staff continue to go above and beyond to meet the needs of clients on a day to day basis in a timely, professional and effective manner, for that I am eternally grateful.

The amazing work of the settlement team has once again resulted in us being able to surpass all of our funder's targets for that period.

Last year we welcomed all settlement staff back into our offices on a fulltime basis, bringing an end to the work from home policy. This was welcomed by our settlement staff who embraced the opportunity to be more available for clients who might be walking in.

With the increasing number of Ukrainian clients we also took the opportunity to bring on board a fulltime Ukrainian staff member on a temporary basis of one year. This was an amazing experience for staff and clients alike as staff had the opportunity to learn more about Ukrainian culture while Ukrainian clients had the opportunity to have services delivered in their native language.

Conversations on building inclusive and healthy spaces for all community members continued locally and regionally as the demand for presentations and workshops continue to climb. Our goal is to one day live in a community that truly has the capacity to serve the needs of all cultural groups in a manner that authentically gives everyone equal access to services and sets the tone for equality of outcomes.

We are committed to working towards being the instrument of change in our communities.

Vindra Sahadeo

Anti-Racism and Equity Facilitator

Message from our Settlement Worker

"To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity"

- Nelson Mandela

This past year has been an eventful one for us, as we worked through the on-going challenges of continuing to provide services. The crisis unleashed by COVID-19 is still affecting every aspect of our lives, from health, jobs and education, to financial security, social relations and trust. It has also put a spotlight on equity challenges that existed well before the pandemic.

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre offers services to newcomers including Canadian citizens, permanent residents, visitors, refugee claimants, international students and temporary foreign workers. Clients access our service at any stage of their settlement journey and are encouraged to engage in all aspects of life – socially, economically, and politically – to fully participate and contribute to their community. Newcomers need a lot of information on how things work and what resources are available to them after they arrive in Canada and we are their connection to the information and resources they need to start a successful life.

Through a variety of group activities, newcomer individuals, and families practice English and French in Conversation Circles, learn about their community, share stories and experiences, participate in informative workshops, develop social networks, make new friends, and connect with settled community members.

Services are still oversubscribed, reflecting the continuing increase in the flow of newcomers to our area. While supporting new immigrants to participate in the various aspects of Canadian society, we continue to engage with government, businesses and the community-at-large to develop more inclusive processes that better support our clients. Our role includes evaluating the impact of immigration and citizenship policies on settlement services. We guide our clients navigating through legal and bureaucratic processes, help them access essential services like healthcare and education, and offer language training and obtain immigration/government documents. In 2023 we had an influx of clients seeking our help to apply for permanent residence under RNIP.

As we move forward, we prepare to rise to new challenges, and to play an instrumental role in serving immigrants who will be calling North Bay and area their home. Looking ahead, we will remain committed to expanding our footprint in our communities. I am so excited for the years ahead as we build on what we've learned, start new programming to meet the needs of our diverse population of clients; focus on more work in the community to raise awareness on the needs of newcomers, and build strong partnerships that will be the catalyst in working towards becoming a community that truly values and welcomes diversity and inclusion.

Taslima Ahmed

Message from our Settlement Worker

2023 a été une année avec beaucoup d'espoir et d'attentes pour de nombreux immigrants. En effet le programme pour les communautés rurales et du nord qui donnait un accès direct à la résidence permanente, a suscité beaucoup d'intérêt et nous avons eu de nombreux clients en demande d'appui lors de leur application. Ce programme a permis à un nombre croissant de nouveaux arrivants de s'installer dans la communauté de North Bay et de ses environs et le Centre multiculturel a continué d'accompagner ces immigrants dans les défis rencontrés lors de leur établissement. Et ces défis ont été nombreux et en partie toujours les mêmes: trouver un logement et l'augmentation des loyers, trouver un médecin de famille et un accès facile aux soins de santé et faire face au coût de la vie. Malgré toutes ces difficultés, le nombre de nouveaux arrivants n'a cessé de croître dans notre communauté, concernant des immigrants déjà établis à North Bay et d'autres venant des autres régions de l'Ontario. Cette année 2023 a été une année marquante pour la diversité de notre communauté qui définitivement est en train d'entrer dans une ère de changement.

Maryline Pillet

Message from our SWIS Worker

The year 2023 was marked by a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian families that arrived under CUAET program and international students arriving in North Bay. Another factor was temporary residents participating in the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP). This demographic shift presented both opportunities and challenges for settlement services in the region.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), international students enrolled in a Designated Learning Institution (DLI) have the option to bring their spouses and children with them for the duration of their studies. Spouses are eligible for open work permits, while dependent children typically receive either a visitor permit or a study permit, depending on their age. In general, children under the age of 4 are issued visitor permits, while those over the age of 4 are eligible for study permits as they begin attending school.

A key aspect of our support to international students and their families was helping them navigate the school registration process and securing child care. With many parents either studying or working, access to affordable and reliable child care became a crucial need.

Two major challenges faced by many of our clients in 2023 were the lack of available housing and the limited capacity of child care services. The high demand for rental properties led to increased rental prices, making housing unaffordable for some families. Simultaneously, the local child care infrastructure struggled to meet the growing demand. The waitlists for child care, in the centralized waiting portal, were long, leading to uncertainty for families who needed immediate solutions. Many of our clients frequently sought assistance in navigating these challenges, particularly in securing child care spots for their children.

In addition to international students, we provided support to Ukrainian families who arrived in Canada under the CUAET program. Language barriers were a significant challenge for these families, and we assisted by accompanying them to appointments and referring them to relevant community partners. On multiple occasions, I visited local schools and Employment Centres in Parry Sound to help Ukrainian families register their children for school and connect with available services.

Child care subsidy remained a critical need for families with young children. Throughout 2023, I referred many families to the District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) for child care subsidies. One notable relief was that DNSSAB accepts applicants from all immigration statuses, which was particularly beneficial for international students and temporary residents who were looking to secure subsidized child care for their children.

Throughout the year, we continued to engage with the community by organizing seasonal events aimed at fostering integration and connection. Our winter Skates and Sled Lending Program was especially popular among newcomers, allowing families, particularly those new to Canada, to explore winter activities. The program was also beneficial for children who rapidly outgrow their winter gear, as families could borrow equipment each season.

Additionally, we organized several community outings, including trips to the Maple Syrup Festival in Powassan, strawberry picking at Leisure Farms in Sturgeon Falls, and a museum visit.

We also hosted a Halloween gathering and a holiday get-together, offering opportunities for families to connect with others and build a sense of community.

In January 2023, we began a partnership with COSTI Immigrant Services and Canadore College to deliver the International Student Connect program. This initiative aimed to provide monthly information sessions to international students and their families, focusing on settlement services and resources available to them in the region. The sessions covered a variety of topics tailored to the unique needs of international students and their families as they adjusted to life in Canada.

2023 was a year of both growth and challenge for our settlement services. The influx of international students and Ukrainian families highlighted the increasing demand for housing, child care, and support services in North Bay. While challenges remain, our ongoing efforts to provide practical support and connect families with the resources they need have helped ease the transition for many newcomers. We will continue to build on these successes in the coming year, focusing on further collaboration with community partners and expanding our programs to meet the evolving needs of our diverse clientele.

Sujala Niroula

Message from our North Bay LIP coordinator

The North Bay and Area Local Immigration Partnership (NBLIP) is a community-driven initiative aimed at strengthening the integration of immigrants and newcomers in the North Bay region. By collaborating with community organizations, service providers, and local businesses, the LIP works to create a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment for newcomers. In 2023, met our mission and vision for NBLIP by working collaboratively within the community and establishing new partnerships to support the retention and integration of newcomers to the North Bay region.

In 2023 we continued with important partnerships and projects like the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD). As well in 2023, NBLIP developed new projects and partnerships, including an awareness workshop for landlords renting to newcomers as well as our first inaugural “Welcome to North Bay” event. The event hosted in September at Memorial Gardens was a success and allowed over 45 not-for-profit organizations to connect and share information with the newcomer community. We look forward to continuing to grow this event as an important resource for our community.

As we reflect on 2023, we are proud of the progress we've made in fostering a more inclusive and welcoming community for newcomers in North Bay. The efforts of the North Bay and Area Local Immigration Partnership (NBLIP) are only possible because of the strong partnerships we've built with local organizations, service providers, and community members. These collaborations have been crucial in creating opportunities for newcomers to thrive in their new home. Looking ahead to 2024, we remain committed to our mission and vision, continuously working to improve services, expand partnerships, and develop innovative solutions that will strengthen the integration and retention of immigrants in the region. Together, we are building a vibrant, diverse community that benefits all who call North Bay home.

Julie Van Berkel

Message from our Timmins LIP coordinator

The Timmins Local Immigration Partnership continued to build on priorities identified in the 2022-2025 TLIP Strategic plan and to further strengthen the partnership through meaningful community engagement and strategic partnerships as identified in the 2023 TLIP Work plan.

We began the year with our anti-racism/anti-discrimination learning event with the theme "Anti-discrimination: From Awareness to Action". The event took place on the 21st of March in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD) and was well attended by partners and community members. This event was facilitated by the TLIP collaboratively with the Timmins Together Committee to engage the community through education with the aim of addressing all forms of antiracism, anti-discrimination and oppression, and celebrating leadership in antiracism, human rights and anti-oppression. We had one community member inducted to the Human Rights Wall of Fame. School aged children were not left out as a book reading was held by the schools boards in partnership with the Timmins Public Library and Zoomed to schools within the region. There were two readings of the book "All Are Welcome" by Alexandra Penfold, first in French, read by Mayor Michelle Boileau and then in English by Holly Buffalo Rodrique from one of the school boards, who also shared stories about ribbon skirts, drumming, and dancing in Ojibwe culture.

Welcome to Timmins Night made a return to its traditional venue and date after hosting it outdoors for two years. The 30th edition of the WTTN took place at the McIntyre Curling Club on Sept 6 (the Wednesday after Labour Day). We had 93 exhibitors registered and 102 booths, with over 500 attendees. We also enjoyed the continued support of our Passport draw sponsors, Agnico Eagle Mines. The post event survey showed that exhibitors were very satisfied with the return to old venue and date.

The Peace Park project was a major highlight of the year. First was the Peace Park Celebration which took place on July 29th. It was held to celebrate the expansion of the Peace Park project to include the installation of 12 newly. Event which had over 200 community members and leaders in attendance was held to celebrate the unveiling of 12 newly decorated Peace poles and national flags at the SIPP pavilion. The Park was expanded to include new Peace poles, a big heart, and National flags of 31 indigenous and multicultural groups represented in the Timmins-Porcupine area. Schumacher International Peace Park (SIPP) is a collaborative project by led the Timmins Local Immigration Partnership, Schumacher Lions Club, Schumacher Arts Cultural and Historical Association and support from the Timmins Multicultural Society. The SIPP consists of a Peace Garden, surrounded by 31 Peace Poles creatively decorated by indigenous and multicultural groups with the peace prayer message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" written in various languages spoken in the Timmins-Porcupine area, along with the installation of Peace Benches, and a Monument Plaque.

On September 21st, we celebrated the United Nations International Day of Peace at the Schumacher Lions Club Den. An exciting aspect of that event was the “Actions for Peace” photo challenge that invited community members to submit a photo of themselves at the SIP Park and share a note on what Peace means to them. The response was indeed overwhelming.

TLIP also actively participated in several committees such as the RNIP Steering and Selection Committee, Employer’s Council, City of Timmins’s Shared Safety and Well-Being Committee, “Taste of Timmins” Community Cookbook Committee, and the TADH Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Social, Accountability, Antiracism (DEISA-A) Committee.

The LIP engaged with the TLIP Executive and Advisory and has identified establishing regular and consistent meetings in the New Year while actively expanding our small initiative working groups. We worked closely with the Northern LIPs and RIF and supported the North Bay LIP with tools and best practices to help them organize the first Welcome to North Bay event.

Timmins LIP participated in various conferences and events nationally and regionally such as the P2P Conference and National LIP summit in Montreal. It was a great opportunity to learn, connect and network with other LIPs, RIF and stakeholders in the immigration sector across the country. We participated alongside Northern LIPs and RIF at the Magnetic North conference and the Provincial Conference in Sudbury. The LIP also virtually participated at the Small Centre’s conference.

Overall, it was a busy and super engaging year for the TLIP. A major challenge we identified is the lack of capacity to meet the growing demand for the LIP within the community. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that efforts to meet this need will be successful.

We look forward to continuing this great work in our community to make Timmins a welcoming community for newcomers/immigrants who choose to make it their home.

Ifeoma Kasimanwuna

Message from our Outreach Coordinator

I have seen a consistent rise in the number of newcomers seeking assistance with immigration applications, housing, employment, and educational opportunities. Our team continued providing personalized support, ensuring clients could navigate these processes confidently and efficiently. We collaborated with local service providers to expand our referral network, providing more robust support for newcomers.

To foster integration and community spirit, we hosted several community events throughout the year. These events were essential not only for welcoming newcomers but also for bridging cultural gaps and increasing awareness of the resources available within Timmins.

The English Conversation Circles proved valuable for language learning, cultural exchange, and social connection. Attendance has grown steadily, and the circles now serve as a hub for building friendships and practicing language skills in a supportive environment.

Our annual planting event, hosted in collaboration with the Timmins Horticulture Society, was held in mid-May, thanks to ideal weather conditions. Volunteers from the Horticulture Society guided newcomers in planting native plants, fostering a sense of community and environmental stewardship. This event was highly successful, drawing diverse participants and helping establish a sense of belonging for newcomers.

While 2023 was productive, the accomplishments of 2023 would not have been possible without the dedication of our team, volunteers, and partners, as well as the resilience and enthusiasm of the newcomers we serve. Together, we are making Timmins a more vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming community for all.

Jaspreet Kaur