

# Shaking the Movers Ottawa 2017

## Youth on the Move



## November and December 2017

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# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

## About Shaking the Movers

Shaking the Movers is an annual workshop that is made for youth by youth. The Landon Pearson Centre created these workshops which were generously supported by The Lawson Foundation. They create an opportunity for young people to exercise their right to share their perspectives and participate in discussions on issues that affect them with the assurance that their voices will be listened to and heard. It is designed for youth to have a space to share their own thoughts and experiences to inform and provide specific recommendations and input for policy makers, governments, academics and civil society on rights based issues affecting young people today.

For more information about Shaking the Movers and to view past reports, please visit [www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre](http://www.carleton.ca/landonpearsoncentre).

## Overview of Shaking the Movers Ottawa: Youth on the Move

On November 11<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017, the Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights and YouthNet/RéseauAdo conducted a full day workshop for youth in collaboration with the Vanier Social Pediatric Hub based at the Vanier Service Centre. Shaking the Movers is a platform for youth to share their perspectives and have their voice heard on topics that directly impact them and other newcomers. The workshop offers youth a safe space to connect with other youth, share their perspectives, ideas and opinions. Following the youth by youth model, no adults were present in the room during the activities and discussions themselves, with the exception of the beginning of the day. However, there was a clinical social worker in an adjacent room during both the English and French workshops in case a participant needed support throughout the day and to be connected with appropriate services. This is to ensure a comfortable open space for youth to connect and share openly with other youth and facilitators. This year's theme was Children on the Move, with a focus on newcomer and refugee youth. The specific goals of the conference workshops were to:

- ✓ Provide youth the opportunity for youth to have a platform to exercise their right to express their opinion and their perspectives and for them to be heard and valued by adults (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12).
- ✓ Provide the opportunity for youth to learn and understand their rights (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 42)
- ✓ To provide insight into the challenges and potential solutions faced by young newcomers through providing recommendations for policy makers.

This report will bring forth the challenges young people face as newcomers and recommendations to those problems from a rights based perspective. Engaging young people on issues that affect them helps policy makers make informed decisions. When you empower youth by giving them the space and opportunity to speak and make change, you inform those who have the power to make change for young people and improve the system and the lives of youth as well as adults. Ultimately, this report will focus on the change youth have expressed they hope to see for other newcomers young and old in their everyday lives.

*‘Youth can bring about change. There is creative and advocacy power that youth have that is frequently ignored by society.’*

## **Shaking the Movers: Youth on the Move 2017**

There were 2 workshops that were conducted: one in English and one in French. Both had nearly identical activities and were hosted by the Vanier Social Pediatric Hub based at the Vanier Service Centre and facilitated by a YouthNet/RéseauAdo<sup>1</sup> coordinator and facilitators. It was a youth driven and youth led event where the day’s activities were created and facilitated by young people through youth volunteers, facilitators and the coordinator. No adults were in the room with the exception of a clinical social worker on site to provide clinical support if needed. This allowed for open dialogue and interactions between youth and opportunity to connect without adult interruption.



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<sup>1</sup> YouthNet/RéseauAdo (YNRA) is a bilingual for youth by youth mental health promotion, intervention, and support organization through the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) for youth 13-20 years of age in Ottawa. We offer programs and presentations to teach mental health literacy, coping strategies and reduce stigma around mental health and mental illness.

« Je pense que les jeunes peuvent changer le monde. Ils ont la capacité pour la pensée créative. Il faut créer l'espace pour qu'on puisse exprimer nos idées. »

[I think that youth can change the world. We have the capacity to think creatively. There needs to be the creation of space for us to express our ideas.] French speaking youth.

## **Who We Are: Youth Participants and Facilitators.**

### **Youth Recruitment**

Youth were recruited from schools, organizations and agencies across Ottawa. The majority of youth decided to participate through a YouthNet staff advertising the event by going to youth groups and schools across Ottawa. Also, by being encouraged by people from organizations they felt comfortable with such as the Catholic Center for Immigrants. A smaller portion of participants found out about the workshop through friends, word of mouth or from social media outlets.

### **Youth Participants**



Participants were between the ages of 15-24 and most were newcomer youth from multiple countries of origins such as Syria, Taiwan, Rome, Canada, Iraq, Congo, Kenya and Lebanon. All participants had a passion for youth rights and improving policy for newcomers. All participants themselves had, or had someone in their life, who had cross border experiences. The majority of participants were youth whom belonged to ethnic, religious, and official language minorities and came from diverse sociocultural and economic backgrounds. A number of older youth also participated as facilitators and recorders in the workshop. Following the for youth by youth model, the facilitators were youth themselves in their early 20's.

To expand on the needs expressed by French speaking youth on the barriers of accessing mental health services, smaller workshops were conducted across Ottawa. Youth were engaged

outside of the French workshop day on November 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss the obstacles and solutions to accessing mental health services for French speaking youth across Ottawa in 3 after school programs of *Franc Succès* (a group for French speaking newcomer youth), CAS (Société de l'Aide à l'Enfance d'Ottawa), and *l'École Publique Alternative* (please refer to p.20-23 for more details).

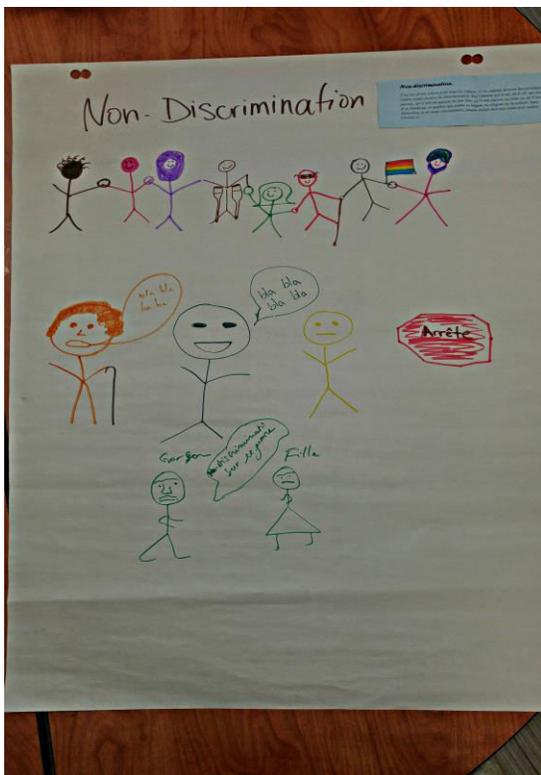
*“No one has asked me these questions before. It makes me think about problems and what can we do? It’s really hard [coming to Canada alone], change must come!”*

## Order of the Day

### Learning about our rights: 1<sup>st</sup> Half of the day

The first half of the day was dedicated to learning and understanding what children rights are. We began with a Myth or fact game created by one of our youth volunteers to learn what and how the articles impact our daily lives as youth. The goal was to understand that across the world, every child has rights (Article 1 and Article 2), that in Canada and in the whole world, from birth to 18 years of age, each child has rights. These rights are designed so you have what you need to survive, flourish and realize your full potential. Each right is incredibly important and interdependent. Each human being has rights from birth and no one can take them away. Many participants were openly surprised about how little they knew about rights in general, and what their rights were. One youth explained:

*“One of the top 3 things I learnt today was how much people don't understand child rights.”*



In both the French and English group, all participants agreed that rights should be taught in all schools and were very important and empowering to know. For a lot of them, this was the first time they had even learnt about their rights. Followed was a short video, where youth then broke out into 4 different groups to creatively present the 4 main articles on what they meant to them through drawing, dance, rap, poems, etc. Afterwards, they presented to the rest of the group. The English group was highly engaged and found the activities and topics highly meaningful for them.

## Engaging in our Rights: 2<sup>nd</sup> Half of the Day

The second half of the day was dedicated to discussing the challenges that young newcomers may face when coming to Canada and solutions to those challenges. The English workshop was separated into smaller groups with a facilitator and youth leader to breakdown down the challenges on a rights based level. The French workshop was kept as one group since we had a smaller group of youth. The discussion began with a “snowball fight” where all participants wrote down their ideas, balled them up, and threw them around the circle. Then, each one opened an idea which sparked a discussion. Questions were divided on 3 levels:



Personal level (family, identity, etc.), Environment (Family, School, etc.) and Community (Organizations, Society, Government, etc.). Personal included challenges they experienced on an internal level, daily or on a frequent basis. Environment included things outside of themselves that they may or may not experience daily, such as school, sports, access to help, etc. Community included things that are part of a larger system, such as organizations, government, society, etc. All three could and often did overlap, but served as a helpful tool to get participants to think of solutions that could impact them on

different levels of experience. At each level, questions were asked if there were any challenges that impacted their rights such as rights to food, shelter, basic needs being met, opportunities to develop, education, being heard, nondiscrimination, etc.

As we began to determine the challenges, recommendations and solutions were brainstormed by the participants. Certain participants had different perspectives than others, and had experienced certain challenges more than others depending on their circumstances. For example, language ability was a huge challenge and youth and families who spoke English less fluently expressed experiencing much larger barriers to getting a job and learning where to get help which were expressed as big challenges for the majority of newcomer youth and their

families. Also, youth that came to Canada alone from being separated from family expressed a greater degree of challenges that were specific to them compared to youth who had family support. However, all challenges were common to both the English and the French workshops, with the exception of higher difficulty for the French newcomers to access mental health services in French (see p.19-23). To finish the day after the discussion groups, each one presented the challenges and solutions to the rest of the group. Evaluations were given for feedback and to determine what they learnt and took away from the day and a yarn knot game to finish the day.

### **Articles Addressed During *Shaking the Movers: Youth on the Move***

There were 4 main articles that served as the foundation for the second half of the day as youth discussed the issues facing young newcomer youth and solutions to those problems. Although there were many more addressed during the day, the following four served as a foundation for discussion: Articles 2 (Non-discrimination), Article 3 (Best interests of the Child), Article 6 (Survival and Development) and Article 12 (Opinion of the Child). Below are articles addressed in further detail.

**Article 2 (Non-discrimination):** The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

**Article 3 (Best interests of the child):** The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and law makers.

**Article 4 (Protection of Rights):** The government has the responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family to protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.

**Article 6 (Survival and Development):** You have the right to be alive. Governments should ensure that children and youth survive and develop healthily.

**Article 9 (Separation from parents):** Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

**Article 10 (Family reunification):** Families whose members live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

**Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child):** When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making -- not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognizes that the level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form

and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions.

**Article 18 (Parental responsibilities; state assistance):** Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance to their children – the Convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to governments. It places a responsibility on governments to provide support services to parents, especially if both parents work outside the home.

**Article 20 (Children deprived of family environment):** Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.

**Article 22 (Refugee children):** Children have the right to special protection and help if they are refugees (if they have been forced to leave their home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

**Article 26 (Social security):** Children – either through their guardians or directly – have the right to help from the government if they are poor or in need.

**Article 27 (Adequate standard of living):** Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

**Article 28: (Right to education):** All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Discipline in schools should respect children's dignity. For children to benefit from education, schools must be run in an orderly way – without the use of violence. Any form of school discipline should take into account the child's human dignity. Therefore, governments must ensure that school administrators review their discipline policies and eliminate any discipline practices involving physical or mental violence, abuse or neglect. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.

**Article 29 (Goals of education):** Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a particular responsibility to respect the rights their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents. The Convention does not address such issues as school uniforms, dress codes, the singing of the national anthem or prayer in schools. It is up to governments and school officials in each country to determine whether, in the context of their society and existing laws, such matters infringe upon other rights protected by the Convention

**Article 30 (Children of minorities/indigenous groups):** Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. The right to practice one's own culture, language and religion applies to everyone; the Convention here highlights this right in instances where the practices are not shared by the majority of people in the country.

**Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture):** Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

**Article 42 (Knowledge of rights):** Governments should make the Convention known to adults and children. Adults should help children learn about their rights, too. (See also article 4).

## What Youth Are Telling Us: Problems by Theme

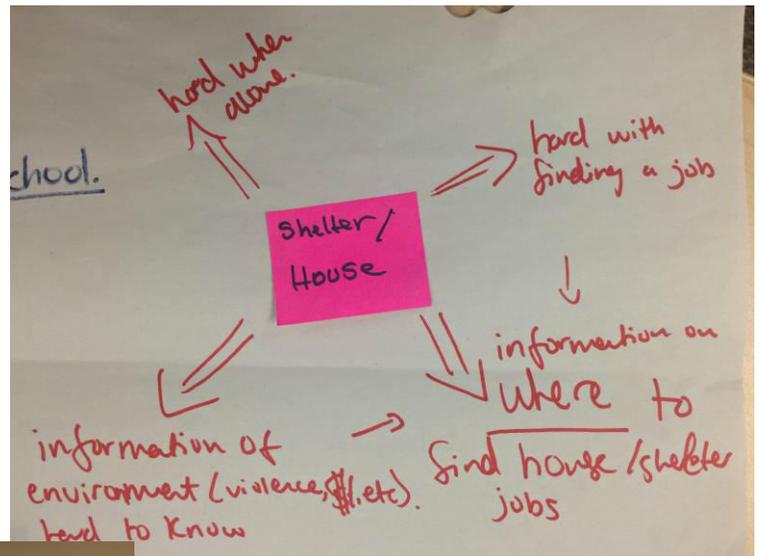
### BASIC NEEDS: SAFETY AND SHELTER

It is difficult to find a place to live and survive where more affordable housing is often in unsafe neighborhoods. Most places to live are expensive, and there is a lack of affordable housing which is in high demand, particularly by newcomers who come alone, refugees and newcomer families with low income.

*“When you come to country alone, you don’t know where to go. You try to find house, but it is very expensive and you are forced to live with people you do not want to live with. It is hard to survive.”*

*“Landlords think we are violent and bad, see us as poor even when we can afford to pay for house”.*

*« On doit augmenter les nombres d’abris. Avoir plus de centres communautaires près des abris. »*



*“There should be some kind of system that can tell you where the safe neighborhoods and houses are. When we come here, we don’t know, and most of the cheap houses are in dangerous neighborhoods.”*

*“We need to be safe.”*

*« Moi je suis venue seule. C’est très difficile à trouver une maison pour vivre et à survivre en général. Je n’ai personne pour m’aider. »*

*“I feel unsafe. But we can’t move, it was so hard to find a place. We can’t afford a better neighborhood.”*

## **Solutions**

- A network to better understand the neighborhoods (safe vs. unsafe).
- More affordable housing for newcomers and youth, particularly newcomers coming in alone and refugees.
- Better financial support to young newcomers coming and living alone for basic needs to survive and development.
- Mentorship program for newcomers to understand how to survive, development opportunities and where to find safe and affordable housing.
- Increase the number of shelters in Ottawa. Have more community centers near those shelters to make it easier to access to services for those who need it most.



## WEATHER

A lot of the issues that have and will be mentioned were expressed by youth as worse in the winter. All participants struggled and continue to struggle, with winter. Most didn't know what they needed, what it would be like and how to dress. They expressed this as a large issue that affects their ability to survive and develop in the winter since it often stopped them from leaving their homes and affects their health.

- Struggled financially to buy equipment for what they needed to survive the winter.

## Solutions

- Programs/government support for clothes.
- Information session/mentor on how to prepare for winter (what you need for clothes, coat, boots, etc.)
- Tips to survive and enjoy winter.

## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Not speaking English fluently was a big barrier for young newcomers in both workshops. There is huge difficulty in finding the help they need because of it, particularly for French newcomers.

*“When you don't speak the language well, it is hard to survive and better yourself.”*

*“It is hard to get job with accent. They think you can't do job well.”*

*“Getting job is hard when you don't speak English. Often we speak better than our parents so we get the responsibility.”  
They need and want more opportunities to practice their English.*

*“We need to get job to help our family,*



*and look after our brothers and sisters if our parents are working. If they're not working, we need to get job. So I miss school because I have to help. But I want to go to school! This is normal for a lot of people new to here."*

*"Get a job and support yourself and your family when don't know the language."*

*"You have to help your family back home."*

*"There are only 2 ESL classes and they are too far for me to go to. We need more accessible classes to learn the language."*

Often young newcomers will come to Canada and have to support their family in their home country. The majority of participants expressed how hard it was for them and their families to find a job because they didn't speak English well. It makes it hard to support themselves with their basic needs and to access most kinds of services



when they need them. Often when a young person speaks better English than their parents, the responsibility is put on them to find a job and support the family. The large financial and caregiving responsibilities placed on them make it difficult for youth to develop and go to school. Many expressed they will miss school days because they need to stay home or work, and that this is normal for a lot of young newcomers and families.

## **Solutions:**

- More ESL classes (youth knew of only 2 classes being offered: 1 in Kanata and 1 downtown, both far for her).
- More opportunities (like Shaking the Movers) to practice their English.
- Supporting newcomer parents to find jobs to support their families.
- Online site to learn of opportunities and classes.
- Mentorship program for newcomers.

- To offer language programs like Explore and Katimavik for youth to learn and practice a new language, but for Newcomer youth.
- Discussion groups to practice their English in schools and community centers.

## WORK AND FINANCES

There is heavy financial burden for most newcomer youth and families that make it difficult for youth to survive, develop, go to school and have a childhood as a lot of them need to assume adult responsibilities at a young age. Newcomer families experience a lot of financial stress, working hard days, paying bills and supporting families back home whose lives are much harder than theirs in Canada. Almost all participants spoke of that stress being placed on them, or helping support

their families through finding jobs, or staying at home to look after other siblings.

This is particularly true for youth who support their family in Canada and/or back in their home country. The fact that education from other universities and colleges from other countries are often considered non legitimate make it even more difficult for youth and their families to find employment, where the stress of providing for the family is put on young newcomers.



*“I speak better English than my parents, so I need to find job. They have problems finding one, so I get one. It makes it difficult to go to school and learn when there is so much [financial] stress put on us to help support our families either here or back home.”*

*“I don’t know how to get a job or where to learn how to get one, it’s overwhelming!”*

## Solutions

- Workshops on how to create and write a resume and how to get a job.
- Directory/site on information and opportunities.
- Events to practice English.
- Mentorship program.
- Internships
- Education achieved outside of Canada is recognized as legitimate. Can be recognized by Universities, Colleges, and employers as legitimate.
- More ESL classes across Ottawa.
- Resume building opportunities.



## EDUCATION SYSTEM

A huge challenge for youth and families was integrating in a new school system and their education being discounted from previous schools outside of Canada. Because the parent's education or skills are not transferable from their country to Canada are not considered valid most of the time once in Canada, they have difficulty getting jobs in their field or in general. This places extra expectation on their children to provide financially for sometimes the whole family there and/or back home, often while also taking care of other siblings. There is huge financial and emotional stress on young newcomers who need to support their families in Canada or in their home country.

*“I want to be nurse, and take years of schooling to be one. Now I am here and they counted for nothing, and I have to do it all over again. It makes it difficult for newcomers to get jobs and contribute [to society] when nothing counts. It is very hard and discouraging.”*



*« C’est difficile de comprendre les coutumes à l’école, comment avoir des bonnes notes, et de recevoir une éducation. C’est tellement différent, on a besoin plus d’aides comme nouveaux arrivants. »*

*“Why are we not learning about our rights? This should be taught in schools!”*

*“Help and support learning new sports for school! Sports are important for us [boys], and where we go to be.” - Sports were emphasized as important for development, growth and acceptance in a community.*

*“Teachers need to ease up on assignment expectation. Teachers don’t understand how different it is, and difficult, how there is a lot of expectations and responsibilities at home.”*

## **Solutions**

- Education achieved outside of Canada is recognized as legitimate and transferable to Canadian institutions. Can be recognized by Universities, Colleges, and employers as legitimate.
- Homework clubs for newcomer youth.

- Sports program(s) for newcomers (e.g. soccer, basket-ball). Ideally free or cheap, sports and equipment are expensive (needs to be accessible to youth).
- Mentorship program to help navigate and better understand the school system and curriculum (what is expected of them), and where/who to ask for help.
- Children rights being taught in schools.
- In schools, have a program that pairs newcomer youth with other newcomer youth ideally from their home country, to help them understand the school system, support, who to ask for help and help them feel less alone.
- Curriculum change in schools: Learning about different cultures in schools to increase awareness and acceptance of different cultures.
- Teacher training on newcomer needs and challenges.

## DISCRIMINATION

*“People can judge without knowing the whole story.”*

*“Landlords stereotype newcomer teenagers to violent and bad characters, see us as poor even when we can afford to pay for house.”(SHELTER)*

*«Dans les medias on entend souvent des mensonges et/ou des exagérations. Ca serait mieux si les nouvelles sont plus réalistes, responsables et factuelles. »*

*“[There is a lot of] of discrimination against Muslims in media, airports, from police officers where they see us as unfriendly, terrorist and violent.”*

*“Newcomers are often put in lower levels regardless of their ability.”  
(EDUCATION)*



*“I have a friend who was put in a lower class even though she is fluent in English and very smart. That can happen a lot where you are put behind in school or in language classes regardless of ability because of accents or because someone is not from here.”*

*“Teachers discriminate against new black kids.”*

*“Students don’t want to be my friend.”*

## **Solutions**

- Provide more social events to help people who come alone.
- More factual, realistic and responsible depiction of Muslims and people of color in the media.
- Curriculum change in schools: Learning about different cultures in schools to increase awareness and acceptance of different cultures.
- Programs, clubs and cultural events in schools that celebrates different cultures.



## **MENTAL HEALTH AND ACCESS TO SERVICES**

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Many participants struggled with balancing all of their responsibilities, stressors and issues described above. For example, not feeling safe with where they live, parents who are struggling financially and otherwise, discrimination, family stress and living on social assistance. There were also specific cultural differences: When in need of mental health support, young newcomers expressed a fear of what their parents might think because it is something they do not understand and is stigmatized in their country. There is high stigma around mental illness that leads youth to not want to be “Crazy” or they don’t want to add to the stressors their parents face. This depended on the country of origin and family beliefs, but all youth spoke of the stigma around mental health due to cultural differences and also in Canadian culture in general.

*“There aren’t enough programs and access to resources, and awareness too. Newcomers are largely left on their own to figure things out.”*



*“You can’t sleep when your parents have so many problems.”*

*“When your family is feeling down...you will be.”*

*“I don’t know where to go.”*

*“Mental health is not something we talk about.”*

### **FRENCH FOCUS GROUPS:**

There were significant barriers that inhibited Francophone and French speaking youth from accessing mental

health services. There were 3 main barriers described in the French *Shaking the Movers* workshop and across the Ottawa region in various focus groups across Ottawa.<sup>2</sup>

Youth were engaged outside of the workshop day on November 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss the obstacles and solutions to accessing French mental health services across Ottawa in 3 after school programs of *Franc Succès* (a group for French speaking newcomer youth), *CAS (Société de l’Aide à l’Enfance d’Ottawa)*, and *l’École*



<sup>2</sup> Focus groups were conducted due to the higher difficulty and barriers in recruiting for the French STM workshop. Also, to further understand the barriers to accessing mental health care expressed by French speaking youth. Although participants expressed difficulties around accessing services across both languages, there were language based challenges that inhibited French speaking youth from accessing services in French or at all.

*Publique Alternative*. The majority of youth were newcomers whom belonged to ethnic, religious, and official language minorities.

1) **Stigma:** a fear of being judged, stereotypes, etc. Also, a perception that French services are inferior to English ones that lead youth to not access at all, or access English services.

2) **Accessibility of services and Diversity:** There are culturally different dialects of French (African, Parisian, Québec, and Ontarian). When asking for help, it is very important for youth to speak with someone who they feel understands them that speak French fluently, that they can trust and ask for help in their language and can understand their culture.

3) **Lack of Knowledge:** Not knowing where to go, and how and who and when to ask for help.

*« On manque de confiance. Et si on a la confiance, nous ne savons pas où aller. »*



*« Si je demande pour de l'aide à une place qui est bilingue, ou à quelqu'un qui 'parle le français', il ne parle pas bien. Alors, pourquoi utiliser les services en français s'ils ne sont pas français? On a besoin des services réellement français qu'on peut se fier. »*

*« Certaines cultures n'acceptent pas que les jeunes aient des problèmes mentaux. »*

*« Parler peut aider. »*

*« Les 3 problèmes principaux sont :*

- 1. La stigmatisation (tous les stéréotypes et préjugés sur les gens qui ont des maladies mentales. Ça donne un mauvais jugement venant de l'extérieur, ce qui les discrimine d'avantages).*

2. *Les manques de connaissances (manque de ressources et ne savent pas où aller pour de l'aide).*
3. *Accès culturelle (les barrières qui empêchent une personne à aller demander de l'aide. »*

*« On a besoin plus de services en français en générale où les pourvoyeurs de soins viennent de diverses cultures, qui peuvent comprendre notre culture. »*

### **Solutions (French and English Speaking Youth)**

- Mental health education for newcomer youth and parents (needs to be sensitive to cultural differences).
- Mental health literacy presentations to better understand what mental health is, when and how to ask for help in Canada.
- Teaching newcomers about existent resources and services for physical and mental health in schools and programs.
- Creation of youth advisory committee(s) consisting of youth from diverse ethno cultural backgrounds and newcomer youth on informing those in power of systemic issues and solutions. This is to inform service providers, civil society, academics and professionals to improve the health system.



## French Focus Group Solutions: For Service Providers

- Having staff working at mental health services that are sensitive to cultural differences and come from diverse backgrounds.
- Cultural sensitivity training for service providers.
- Having fully French mental health services with fluent speaking staff.

*[Have services offered fully in the language of our choice from the beginning to the end of the service.]*

## Access to Health Care

- *“Why is help is expensive? And such long wait times! I cannot afford to pay to avoid them, so I don’t get the help I need. We want help and we can’t get it.”*
- *“Going to hospital and help is far: financial support or free transportation would help lots.”*
- *“It’s already so hard to ask for help. Going to where we [youth] and our family lives and being more accessible would help us go get the help we need.”*



## Summary of Youth Recommendations

The majority of young newcomers spoke of a lack of information on all topics: not knowing where to go, who to ask, to navigate the system for jobs, shelter, language, etc. Participants who had learnt how to find jobs, develop etc. spoke of meeting someone that had helped them and pointed them to the right direction. But without that person and luck in finding that person to help, it is extremely difficult and overwhelming for young newcomers to survive and develop, particularly on their own and/or as refugees.

### Solutions Expressed for all of the Challenges Above

- Mentorship program for newcomers in and out of schools.
- More accessible classes, support, events and programs to learn the English language.
- An online site/hub that young newcomers can go to find opportunities, classes, information useful to someone coming to a new country.
- Creation of youth advisory committee consisting of youth from diverse ethno cultural backgrounds and newcomer youth on issues and solutions on a consistent basis. This is to inform service providers, civil society, academics and professionals on diverse issues.



## Youth Thoughts and Reflections 2017: What I learnt

Through these workshops, youth were able to voice the challenges young newcomers face and the recommendations and solutions for policy makers, government officials, academics and civil society to make effective change. Participants were committed, willing to share and cared for what others had to say. They also expressed how this was, for many of them, the first time they had been asked their opinion and how deeply empowering these workshops were for them. After the workshop, an evaluation was given to participants to comment and give feedback on the day's activities on what they learned, what they liked, what could be improved. As the day ended, participants asked how they could keep going with the momentum that was created and wanted to keep going and keep contributing to strive to improve society. It is crucial to engage youth on issues that affect them because they are the ones who understand the problems and the solutions. Once youth are given a space to share and be heard, they are a force to be reckoned with.

*“We need more workshops like this and to talk to the government!”*

*« J'ai appris que j'ai le pouvoir de me faire écouter. »*

*“There is still so much work we need to do.”*

*« Vous devrez faire beaucoup*

*d'ateliers pour que le monde puisse avoir ces connaissances. »*

*“Participants were really grateful even though it was harder for them here than in their home country. We have this assumption that coming here is full of opportunities. It is true, but not at first.” Kim, Facilitator*

