



# WORLD REFUGEE DAY

## YOUTH FORUM

# SUMMARY REPORT

Held in Partnership with:

**isans** | Immigrant Services  
Association of Nova Scotia



**HALIFAX**



**NOVA SCOTIA**

Funded by:



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) is a nationwide alliance of academics, community partners and government agencies working to promote the successful integration of refugee children, youth and their families. Our members conduct research, promote best practices and engage in knowledge mobilization to further the social integration, education, mental and physical wellbeing of refugee children and youth in Canada. For more information please visit our website at [cyrrc.org](http://cyrrc.org)

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Report produced by Simone Chia-Kangata  
Contributions by Emily Pelley, Summer Fox and Rena Vanstone  
Print design by Brandon Mott

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# Summary Report: World Refugee Day Youth Forum

On June 27th, 2019, the World Refugee Day Youth Forum brought together over fifty participants to discuss what supports are available to newcomer youth in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Participants included youth with lived experience, educators, service providers, government representatives, academics and community members. The forum took place at the Halifax Central Library and was made possible with funding from the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) and the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID). The event had three primary objectives:

1. Identify supports that exist for newcomer youth in Halifax
2. Identify challenges and barriers that youth face in accessing supports
3. Brainstorm how services can better reflect the needs/realities of newcomer youth

## Supports for newcomer youth in Halifax

Through small group discussions, participants identified close to 60 supports that exist for newcomer youth in Halifax. These ranged from formal supports offered by organizations and institutions to informal supports such as personal networks. A table summarizing the supports identified by participants is appended. Drawing on research by CERIS' Immigrant, Women, Youth and Seniors (IWYS) project, which looks at the specific settlement needs of these three immigrant groups, our table groups supports into the following categories: Education; Health and Mental Health; Economy and Employment; Social Participation and Belonging/Identity; Settlement; Language; and Legal/Criminal Justice.





# Challenges and barriers newcomer youth face in accessing services

The following challenges and barriers were identified by youth during group discussions.

## Language Barriers

Language barriers pose a challenge for newcomer youth in the classroom and can make it difficult to connect with other youth and their new communities. Newcomer youth found that teachers were not prepared to support them in their studies. In some cases, teachers treated newcomer youth differently than other students, creating a divide between students. Youth also expressed feeling that other students were unaware of how hard newcomer youth were working to learn their new country's language and culture. In some instances, this led to bullying. In general, language barriers created a sense of 'non-belonging' and for some, resulted in negative thinking about their own abilities (an "I can't do it" attitude). Educators confirmed that when a large cohort of Syrian refugees arrived in 2016/17, they were unprepared to handle the language and learning needs of these students. They often received very little notice about the newcomers' arrival and little, if any, training on how to support newcomer students.

Youth also stated that it is challenging when there is one dominating language (other than English) being spoken at youth groups. Encouraging youth group participants to speak English helps everyone grow and make connections with youth of different backgrounds.

## Scheduling Conflicts

Youth raised several challenges in relation to scheduling. One challenge is that organizations serving newcomer youth often schedule events/programs at the same times, forcing youth to choose between two events/programs. A second challenge was the scheduling of appointments for newcomer parents. Because youth often have more advanced English language skills than their parents, they are often expected to accompany their parents and act as interpreters at these appointments. Youth are not consulted about the timing of these appointments and as a result, must sometimes cancel their own plans to attend their parents' appointments. The youth felt that there was a lack of appreciation for their time and availability.

# Summary Report: World Refugee Day Youth Forum

## How/When Information is Shared

Youth recounted that when they were presented with a large volume of information immediately upon arrival, this amounted to information overload. When information about supports was shared with youth in the early hours/days of their arrival, the youth were unlikely to retain this information.

Newcomer youth also asked service providers to reconsider their assumption that all clients have the skills to access information on the internet. Some clients find it very challenging to look up information online and complete application forms online, especially if there are also language barriers.

## The label 'Refugee'

Some newcomer youth have indicated that constantly being referred to as 'refugees' has negative connotations. While they are aware that the legal status of 'refugee' can be important in terms of determining their access to services, they are challenging service providers to move beyond this label whenever possible.



## Making services more reflective of the needs/realities of newcomer youth

The World Refugee Day Youth Forum created an important opportunity for youth, service providers, educators and others to exchange ideas about how to make supports more responsive to the needs and realities of newcomer youth. The following suggestions emerged from the discussions:

### Cultural Awareness

- Understand the differences between cultures and what is deemed an okay interaction (e.g. in some cultures, it is not appropriate for men and women to shake hands)
- Be aware of different oppressions the newcomer youth could have faced
- Understand that many newcomer youth have caregiver/adult roles in their homes

### Language

- Ensure that there is funding to hire interpreters
- Have youth help youth as they have shared experiences and can use their own language
- More free services to help learn English



**We miss out on a lot when we don't offer our support for [the voices of youth].**

**- Ryan (Youth Art Connection)**



# Summary Report: World Refugee Day Youth Forum

## Coordination within the Sector

- Have more forums
- Have forums where parents or guardians are present so they can participate in the conversation, but ensure that their voices do not dominate
- Organizations should coordinate their program scheduling so youth can attend more of what they need/want to attend

## Capacity Building

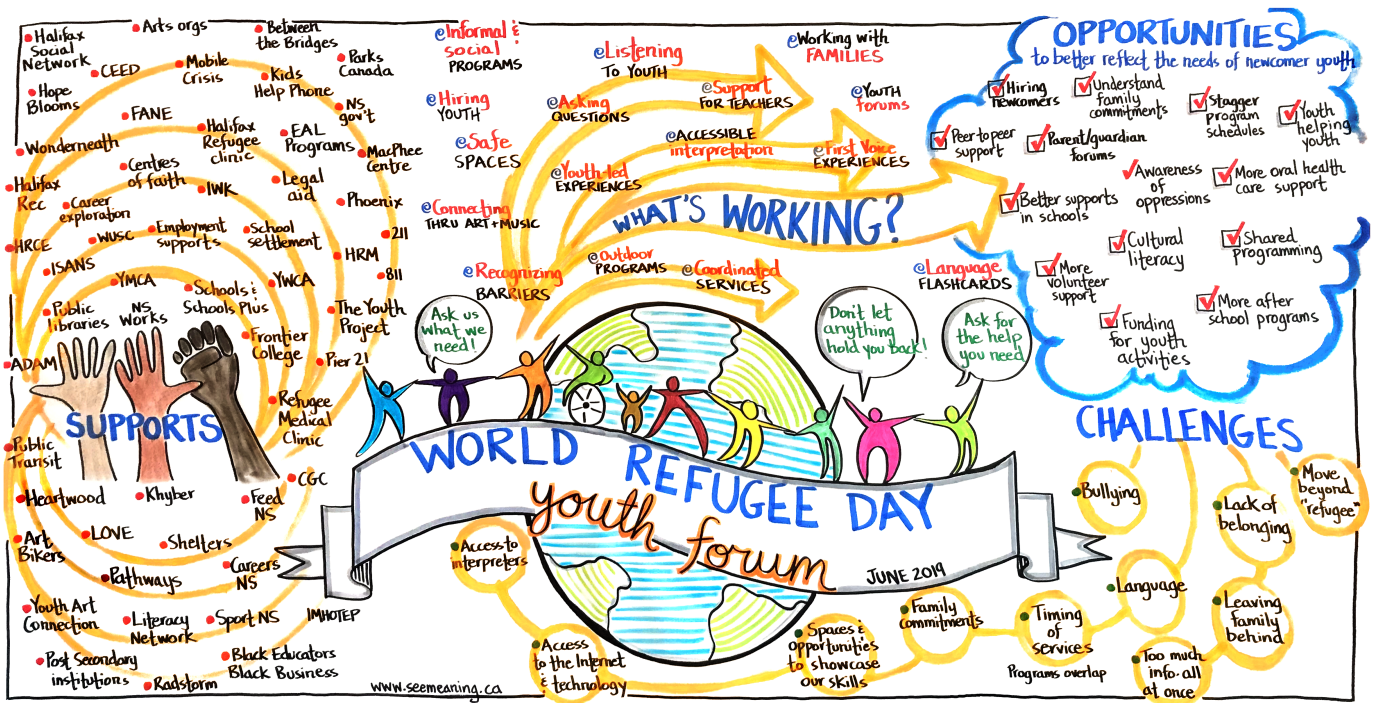
- Give newcomer youth the opportunity to take on different roles
- Older newcomer youth (ages 19+) to provide peer support to younger newcomer youth who are new to the school system
- Hire newcomers so they can gain experience
- Have youth help youth as they have shared experiences and can communicate in their own language
- Engage older youths as interpreters/facilitators in youth programming

## Programming

- Have resources throughout the HRM, not just in Halifax
- More volunteers to create a larger network
- Have childcare for younger siblings available at programming for older youth
- More supports in school systems
- Collaborate with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union to enhance school-based supports
- Access to mental health services
- Access to recreation services
- More oral health care support
- More opportunities for art and free expression
- Have shared meals in safe spaces

## Conclusion

Through the forum, participants gained a deeper insight into each other's experiences, opportunities and challenges. Adults heard from youth about the successes and challenges that youth face and it was eye-opening for youth to hear about the challenges that educators had experienced in trying to support them. Service providers had the opportunity to ask questions and share resources with each other. The event brought to the fore the value of improving communication and collaboration between the newcomer-serving and youth-serving sectors and reaffirmed the importance of listening to youth voice on the services and programs that affect them.



Graphic Recording by Corrie Melanson  
(See Meaning: Graphic Facilitation)

“

**We're from a lot of different places  
and we learn from each other.**

**- Ahmad (YMCA Youth Action Leadship Team)**

## Appendix A: List of Supports Identified by Participants

| Education  | Description  |
|--|--|
| Black Educators Association                      | A grassroots organization that provides programs for youth and adults to develop an equitable education system.        |
| English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs |  |
| Extra help (e.g. at school, tutoring)            |  |
| Frontier College                                 | A literacy organization with programs for children, youth, and adults.   |
| Halifax Libraries                                |  |
| Post-Secondary Institutions                      |  |
| Schools Plus                                     | A collaborative interagency group that supports youth and their family using school as the center of service delivery. |
| Schools  |  |
| Teachers   |  |
| World University Service of Canada (WUSC)        | A global development organization that aims to provide education, employment, and empowerment opportunities to youth.  |
| YMCA - School Settlement                         | An organization that provides school settlement programs in 34 schools in the Halifax area.                            |
| Health and Mental Health                         | Description  |
| Canada Games Centre                              | A community recreation centre that aims to increase physical literacy.   |
| Friends and Family                               |  |
| Health Institutions                              |  |



| IWK - Community Health Team                           | A division of the IWK Health Centre, the Community Health Team provides various programs for parents and youth aimed at physical and mental health.                           |
|---|---|
| Kids Help Phone                                       | Canada's national, 24/7 support service, offering professional counselling, information, and referrals.   |
| Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team (MHMCT)              | A group of mental health professionals available through the Mobile Crisis Telephone line to help youth and adults manage a mental health crisis.                             |
| N.S. Soccer - Youth Division                          |   |
| Newcomer Health Clinic                                | A clinic that provides preventative health and primary medical services to government assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, and refugee claimants.                 |
| YMCA - Health and Fitness                             | An organization that provides health and fitness programs and facilities to help the community.   |
| Economy and Employment Description                    |   |
| Black Business Initiative                             | An initiative to help Black owned businesses and companies to grow the Black presence in a diverse range of business sectors in Nova Scotia.                                  |
| Careers Nova Scotia                                   | A provincial government website with job information and postings.  |
| CEED  | An organization that helps entrepreneurs with financing, education, and business growth; offers programs aimed at youth entrepreneurs.  |
| Common Good Solutions                                 | A consulting agency that works with business to enrich its local community and make a social impact.  |
| Graduate to Opportunity                               | An incentive offered by the Government of Nova Scotia to cover a portion of the salary of recent graduates so as to retain young people in NS and build a stronger workforce. |
| Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) | A local organization that provides employment programs and services to support newcomers in their job search.   |

## Appendix A: List of Supports Identified by Participants

| Labour and Advanced Education Nova Scotia            | The Department of Labour and Advanced Education works to provide information about employment rights, health and safety, and the Labour Standards Division, as well as education and training.  |
|--|---|
| NS Works   | Employment service centres across N.S. that help people understand, prepare for, and fill the needs of the province's job market.   |
| YMCA - Employment Services                           | An organization that provides employment assistance and employment skill workshops.   |
| Social Participation and Belonging/ Identity         |   |
| African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM) | A cultural organization that provides support and community events to members of the African Diaspora   |
| Art Bikers   | A mobile community program that builds community by making art with children, youth, and families throughout Halifax.   |
| Between the Bridges                                  | A partnership between the community of Dartmouth North, the United Way, the Province of NS, and a number of community organizations, government departments, and businesses, aimed at supporting the diverse neighbourhoods and residents of Dartmouth North. |
| Bus Stop Theatre                                     | A multi-use performance venue on Gottingen Street.  |
| Centres of Faith                                     |   |
| Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE)    | A non-profit organization that promotes the growth and development of the Acadian and Francophone community of Nova Scotia.   |
| Halifax Libraries                                    | The libraries offer a variety of programs for youth throughout the year.  |
| Halifax Recreation                                   |   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Halifax Social Network                                  | A diverse group that brings people together to discuss community-building through networking events.  |
| HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development        | A charitable organization whose mission is youth engagement for positive community change.  |
| Hope Blooms   | A community garden group and salad dressing business that encourages youth leadership in North End Halifax to positively impact their community.                  |
| Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)   | A local organization that provides opportunities for newcomer youth to become involved with the community.  |
| Radstorm  | An all-ages music and art community space.  |
| Rising Youth  | Community service grants given to youth with project ideas to support their community.  |
| Sporting events   |   |
| The Youth Project                                       | A non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing support and services to youth, 25 and under, around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. |
| Volunteer Programs                                      |   |
| Welcoming Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) community |   |
| Wonder'neath  | An independent artist studio.   |
| YMCA  | An organization that provides many programs and facilities to help the community.   |
| Youth Art Connection                                    | An organization that works with diverse artists under 30 to help them grow businesses and access careers and resources.   |



## Appendix A: List of Supports Identified by Participants

| Settlement  | Description  |
|---|--|
| Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) | A local organization that provides multiple services and programs to newcomers.                                  |
| Phoenix Centre for Youth                              | A walk-in centre that helps youth in their day-to-day lives by providing confidential, non-judgemental services. |
| Shelters  |  |
| Language  | Description  |
| English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs      |  |
| Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) | A local organization that provides many different English classes to newcomers.                                  |
| Legal / Criminal Justice                              | Description  |
| Halifax Refugee Clinic                                | An organization that provides legal representation for those claiming refugee status in Nova Scotia.             |
| Legal Aid   |  |

## Appendix B: List of Attendees

| Name                      | Group            | Association   |
|---------------------------|------------------|---|
| Adrienne Lucas-Sehatzadeh | Community Member | FFRD  |
| Sura Hadad                | Community Member | Dentist   |
| Karan Whiteman            | Community Member | not stated  |
| Alison Brown              | Community Member | MSVU/ Dalhousie   |
| Emily Pelley              | Community Member | Dalhousie   |
| Brandon Mott              | Community Member | RRC   |
| Simone Chia-Kangata       | Community Member | CYRRC   |
| Teik Moyinamod            | Community Member | YMCA  |
| Veronica Gutieme          | Community Member |   |
| Summer Fox                | Community Member | Dalhousie   |
| Shannon Aikenhead-Bain    | Educator         | HRCE- Clayton Park Jr High                                      |
| Cowenda Willows           | Educator         | HRCE  |
| Nik                       | Educator         | Youth Project   |
| Merle                     | Educator         | Youth Project   |
| Paul Wozney               | Educator         | Nova Scotia Teachers Union                                      |
| Tatjana Samardric         | Service Provider | Halifax Public Libraries  |
| Sascha H. Miller          | Service Provider | Communities, Culture & Heritage- Community sport and recreation |
| Suzy Teubner              | Service Provider | 211 Nova Scotia   |
| Fadi Hamdan               | Service Provider | YMCA  |
| Amy Legate                | Service Provider | Newcomer Health Clinic  |
| Mohammad Al Masolma       | Service Provider | ISANS   |
| Brianna Miller            | Service Provider | YMCA  |
| Ute Fiedler               | Service Provider | ISANS   |
| Roberto Montiel           | Service Provider | Halifax Local Immigration Partnership                           |
| Adam Sigrist              | Service Provider | Macphee Centre  |
| Wenche Gausdal            | Service Provider | ISANS   |
| Iman                      | Service Provider | YMCA  |
| Younai                    | Service Provider |   |
| Erin Morice               | Service Provider | Halifax Public Libraries  |
| Zahra Dhuba               | Service Provider | YMCA  |

## Appendix B: List of Attendees

| Name             | Group            | Association                                    |
|------------------|------------------|--|
| Marlon Solis     | Service Provider | YMCA   |
| Madeleine Stobbe | Service Provider | Psychologist (private practice)                |
| Lily Abateman    | Service Provider | Heartwood                                      |
| Sarah Gillis     | Service Provider | NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education |
| Amy Belanger     | Service Provider | YMCA   |
| Joelle Alphonse  | Service Provider |  |
| Nenyo Kwasitsu   | Service Provider | Parks and Recreation                           |
| Ayesha Naqvi     | Service Provider | YMCA   |
| Laura Swane      | Youth            | Heartwood                                      |
| Ayah Alelaiwi    | Youth            | YMCA/ ISANS                                    |
| Oday Saad        | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Ahmad Alhewani   | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Mwamini          | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Roda Obany       | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Ajulu            | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Praise           | Youth            | ISANS  |
| Osama            | Youth            | ISANS  |
| Aya Ali          | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Hana Saied       | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Mohahm Ute       | Youth            |  |
| Ahmad Alzouli    | Youth            | YMCA   |
| Ahmad            | Youth            | ISANS  |



## Thank You to Our Partners



## FUNDED BY:

