



Hamilton Urban Core
Community Health Centre

Neighbours, Friends and Families
Immigrant & Refugee Communities Campaign
Best Practices Report

October 2012



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Immigrant and Refugee Communities Campaign

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Acknowledgements

The Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) Immigrant and Refugee Communities Campaign project provided an excellent opportunity for community members, leaders and other stakeholders to come together and have important discussions about woman abuse. The project helped to give voice to communities who are not often invited to the conversation about ending domestic violence. These fruitful meetings and discussion led to the identification of best practices that may serve as a useful contribution to end domestic violence in Canada.

Hamilton Urban Core would like to acknowledge the project team, volunteers and committee members and thank those who contributed to the project's activities.

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The project team would like to thank the members of the Roma Community who participated in this project. We understand that the Roma Community met with a number of barriers and challenges especially given the political climate within Canada and abroad and we deeply appreciate you sharing your time, knowledge and experiences with us.

The project team would like to thank the Sudanese Community and The Sudanese League for the ongoing support and numerous contributions to the NFF Project.

In addition we also thank the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants for their leadership and the development of the NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities website which has provided an excellent tool that will allow the continuation of the work and the community of practice. Thank you also to the Provincial NFF campaign in particular Alfredo Marroquin whose leadership and support provided inspiration to see this campaign expanded in immigrant and refugee communities in Ontario.

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Executive Summary

“Woman abuse is a serious social problem in our community and we believe that everyone can play a role in preventing it.”

- Nadine Favics, NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities Hamilton Project Coordinator

Without a doubt woman abuse is a serious social problem that crosses all socio-demographic factors. The facts about woman abuse are alarming. Reports tell us that in Ontario 7% of women living in common-law or marital relationship reported experiencing physical and/or sexual assault by a spousal partner at least once during a five year period.

Neighbours, Friends and Families is a public education and awareness campaign that was officially launched in 2006. This initiative is a part of the Ontario government’s Action Plan on Domestic Violence and an initiative of the Ontario Women’s Directorate, through the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children. The purpose of the campaign is to raise the awareness of the warning signs and risk factors of woman abuse so that people close to the woman being abused or the abuser can be educated to make referrals to community resources which could help.

The NFF Campaign has been running well over many years in mainstream and Aboriginal communities in the province; however, it did not reach immigrant, racialized, culturally diverse or faith-based communities. With the support of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and the outstanding dedication of Alfredo Marroquin, NFF embarked on a new journey of inclusiveness giving birth to the NFF Diverse Communities Project.

Hamilton Urban Core believes woman abuse is a determinant of health, that it is a preventable health risk and that it is an issue where everyone in the community should and can play a role in preventing. As such, Hamilton Urban Core became involved in the NFF Diverse Communities Project with an interest in developing a campaign suitable to Hamilton’s local needs. In 2009 Hamilton Urban Core took a leadership role in implementing the NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities Hamilton Campaign with specific focus on reaching out to immigrant and refugee communities in culturally appropriate ways. A Committee consisting of local community agencies such as the Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton, the Women’s Centre Interval House, Catholic Children’s Aid Society, Immigrant Women’s Centre, Good Shepherd Women’s Services, Mission Services and various Community Leaders representing immigrant and refugee communities in Hamilton. All stakeholders came together to determine how the NFF campaign could work in Hamilton.

To promote the NFF campaign effectively, NFF staff worked collaboratively with community leaders who best understand their community’s needs. Each community has different experiences with woman abuse, and has its own unique features, risk factors and safety issues to be considered. Therefore the project approach was implemented with the understanding that women and their children face multiple barriers, in relation to their gender, culture, language, geographic location, class, ability, faith/spirituality, and immigration status when dealing with violence and accessing supports. The Campaign focused on the needs and assets of each community.

Some of the highlights of the NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities Hamilton Campaign include:

- The project staff was able to reach out to and connect with 1,715 community members throughout the project
- Community members engaged in group activities felt that the discussions were open and safe and that the message of Neighbours Friends and Families was very valuable to their community
- Sudanese community members identified The Sudanese Family Tea as groundbreaking, seeing it as an excellent opportunity for open discussion about tackling this issue of abuse in their community
- There was active participation of men from both the Sudanese and Roma communities who saw the value of the campaign and wanted to be involved and engaged.

Overview of Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre

Hamilton Urban Core is a thriving inner city health centre and a leader in Canada in the provision of high-quality primary health services and programs in more than 15 languages. The Centre's mission is to provide the highest level of primary health care, education and advocacy, especially with those individuals in the community who face barriers to improving their health and well-being.

As a trusted provider to thousands of registered clients and over 16 years of service, Hamilton Urban Core has worked with individuals, families and communities across a broad range of issues and needs. The Centre's client populations include immigrants and refugees, people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, individuals and families living in poverty, individuals with mental health issues or mental illness, isolated seniors and street involved youth. Hamilton Urban Core is unique in that the Centre balances needs and issues across populations and does not segment groups. In other words, the strength of the service delivery approach is in adjusting the way in which services are delivered to meet the needs of diverse populations while offering the same high quality of services to all populations.

Project Background

Intended to foster community organizing, the goal of the NFF Campaign is to provide culturally appropriate information and strategies for immigrant and refugee communities to know the warning signs of abuse, to support women who are impacted by abuse and to make the community a safe place for women.

The NFF Diverse (Immigrant and Refugee) Communities Hamilton is a community-based Project that involves the collaboration of community members, leaders and representatives from diverse communities and agencies serving women and their families in Hamilton. The approach is based on the knowledge that comprehensive, coordinated and culturally appropriate strategies are needed to reach out to and engage immigrant and refugee women, neighbours, friends and families, who are abused by their husbands or partners. The intended audience of the NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities is primarily the Minority Roma Czech and Hungarian, the Sudanese Communities and other immigrant and refugee community groups.

Together with the Project Coordinator, the Cultural Facilitators representing these communities work to expand the NFF Campaign to raise awareness of the warning signs of woman abuse.

To raise awareness of the warning signs of woman abuse the NFF Project Staff engaged communities in culturally specific events, knowledge exchanges and information sessions, and provided anti-racism and cultural competence education to strengthen the supports in the mainstream services that provide services to abused immigrant and refugee women and their families.

NFF Hamilton project activities include:

- Outreaching to community members
- Engaging Communities in Forums, Focus Groups, and Information Sessions
- Participating in the work driven by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Providing Anti-Racism and Cultural Competence education for NFF Committee members
- Reviewing NFF material such as brochures and videos to strengthen the effectiveness of the material in increasing the awareness of the warning signs of woman abuse
- Evaluation and documentation of best practices

In 2011 the NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities Campaign at Hamilton Urban Core was funded as a project by the Ontario Women's Directorate.

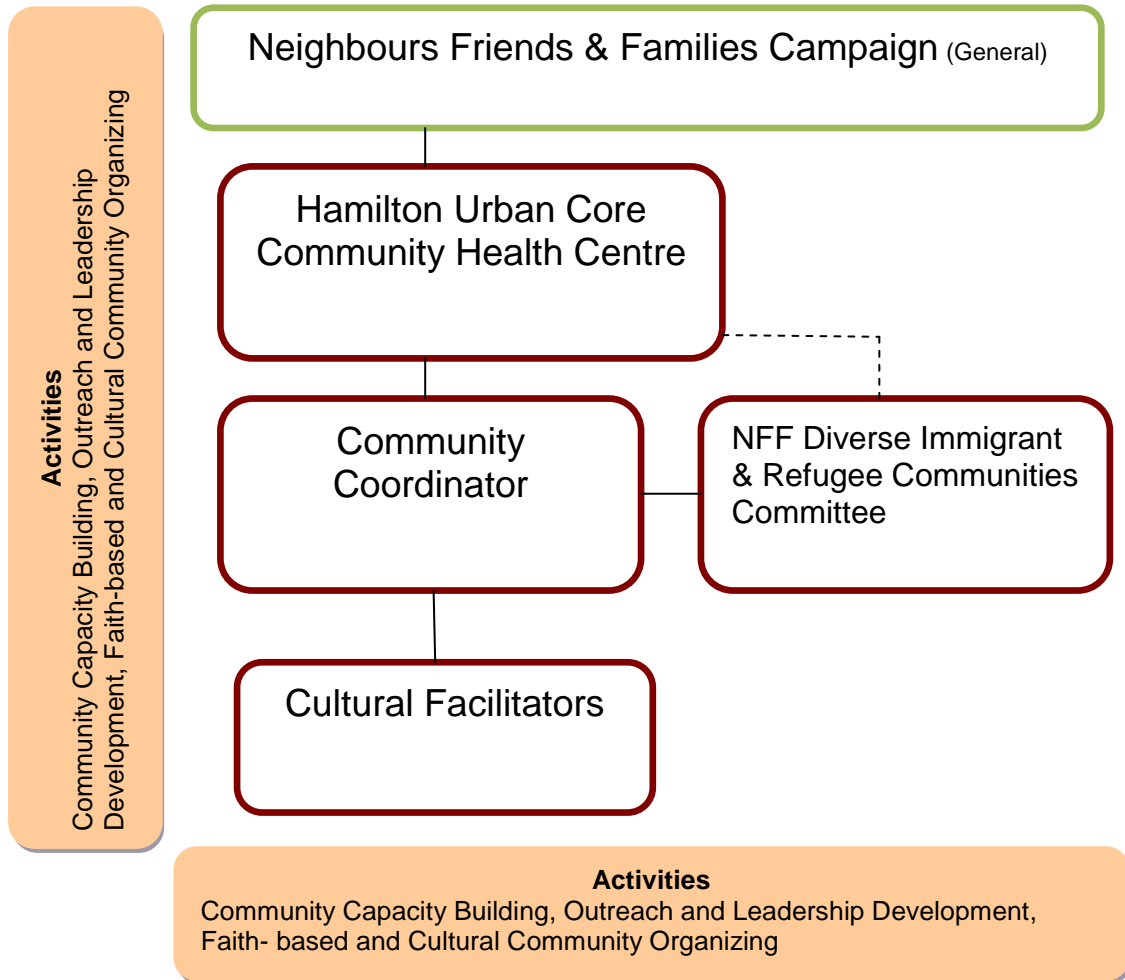
The Hamilton Urban Core Community Model

In developing a model of service that would be responsive to the specific needs of immigrant and refugee communities in Hamilton a few assumptions or factors were considered including the following:

- A significant majority of current initiatives and campaigns are based on the values and belief systems of mainstream Canadian culture and therefore do not reach out to or resonate with a wide range of diverse communities
- There may be less understanding in some communities of the law and the fact that woman abuse is a crime
- There may be less knowledge and understanding in some communities about the various forms of woman abuse and the effects of domestic violence on the victim of violence and their children / family
- There may be belief systems in some communities which dictate that woman abuse is a private matter and should be managed within the family without outside interference
- The Hamilton Model is based on asset based community development guidelines which recognize that the strength in any change effort is in the community

In expanding the NFF campaign to diverse communities, we recognized that diverse communities must be at the center of the campaign. Using established community development approaches the goal of bringing awareness of the signs of woman abuse to all community members was very attainable.

The Hamilton Urban Core Community Model
Neighbours Friends & Families Immigrant and Refugee Communities



Barriers and Challenges for Immigrant & Refugee Communities

Numerous studies have highlighted the many barriers and challenges faced by marginalized racialized immigrant and refugee communities finding supports around woman abuse. “Language is an obvious barrier for some however more important is the lack of cultural appropriate approaches to raising the awareness about woman abuse and responding. Most approaches are aimed at mainstream audiences and are successful in those communities however immigrant and refugee communities are not often affected or engaged by these approaches. Most of the research in this area points to the lack of language skills and or literacy, different cultural norms and beliefs, differences in communication styles, stigmatizing attitudes, and racism and discrimination often prevent members of ethno-cultural communities from getting involved in health promotion activities.”¹

Reports have also pointed to a number of factors that prevent individuals from immigrant and refugee communities from seeking assistance with woman abuse. These factors make Immigrant/Refugee women are uniquely vulnerable when faced by woman abuse as they are more than often isolated and without lanaguage or knoweldge of services and supports available to them. Some of those factors include but are not limited to fear of jeopardizing Canadian status; lack of information about Canadian laws and their rights as women; fear of being ostracized from their community; fear of retaliation against family members left back home; fear and distrust of police; experiences of prejudice, discrimination, or racism when they have interacted with various institutions etc.

Women also report experiencing some difficulties living within a shelter environment. For example:

- Experiences of racism and discrimination
- Food issues
- Differences about what is socially accepted behaviour
- Child care/parenting issues
- Feels like another prison or refugee camp and therefore reliving trauma

One of the assumptions of the NFF Project team was that these barriers and challenges may also prevent members from racialized and marginalized communities from becoming involved in the activities of the Neighbours, Friends and Families Project. It is with this understanding that the team sought to develop and implement strategies that were cultural competent and sensitive to the experiences of participants to ensure access to the services and supports needed to support women experiencing abuse and their families. These strategies were also dependent upon engaging in best practices and adapting generic best practices to be responsive to the needs of the communities served.

¹

Culture Counts: Best Practices in Community Education in Mental Health and Addiction with Ethno-racial/Ethno-cultural Communities, Canadian Mental Health Association October 21, 2004 Submitted by Branka Agic

NFF Immigrant and Refugee Communities Hamilton Campaign Best Practices

A best practice may be described as a method or technique that, through experience and research has consistently shown results to lead to results that are better than those achieved with other means, that relates information that can be used for similar purposes and that may be useful in benchmarking.

The Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) Project used best practices in two ways. First, the NFF Project shared best practices information with the project participants at various points throughout the project. This included information related to healthy relationships, stress management, the warning signs of woman abuse and so on. Secondly, the project team underscored best practices related to the approaches and outcomes in information sharing, community engagement, raising the awareness, strengthening the support, services and access for marginalized immigrant and refugee communities experiencing violence and abuse.

In this regard best practices provide a gauge against which the project activities and outcomes could be measured as well as an opportunity to provide new perspectives on best practices specifically related to the community of participants.

Identifying Best Practices

Best practices related to the Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) Project are framed by Hamilton Urban Core's approaches and competencies including the CHC Model of Care and the Centre's Core Competencies and each best practice should have an organization connection to both the model of care and to one or more of the core competencies.

The CHC Model of Care is a comprehensive service model that focuses on five areas, those being:

- Primary Care
- Illness Preventions
- Health Promotion
- Community Capacity Building
- Service Integration

Core Competencies are statements describing behaviours that health care providers / staff members believe are important for providing safe, effective and ethical care. They are the best practices of Hamilton Urban Core and the foundation upon which its philosophy and services are built. Hamilton Urban Core has six core competencies, those being:

- Team Building and Development
- Cultural Competence
- Skills and Abilities
- Community Capacity Building & Empowerment
- Health Promotion
- Client-Centred

In this project there were three best practice focus areas evident throughout the course of the project; those being:

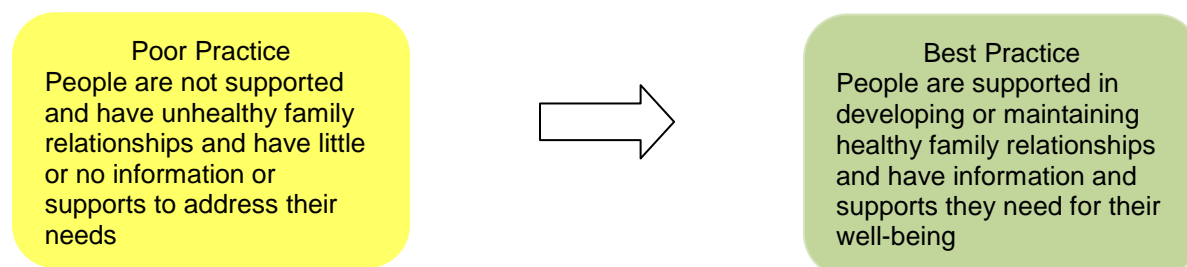
- Health Promotion
- Cultural Competence
- Community Engagement

Best Practices Focus Area: Health Promotion

Health promotion involves a range of services, strategies and processes directed toward helping people improve their overall health and the health of the community. Health promotion and illness prevention are interlinked with the determinants of health and effective health promotion strategies work to not only address the presenting health issue but to understand health from a holistic perspective. Hamilton Urban Core views violence in general and woman abuse in particular, as a determinant of health.

Health promotion was used to guide the work of the Neighbours, Friends, and Families Immigrant and Refugee Communities project. The project team focused on promoting individual and family wellness and reducing illness and injury. This was incorporated using a variety of approaches that anticipated and respected the diverse values, belief and cultures in the community and with the understanding that community health must be achieved through respect of the rights of individuals and groups within the community

The NFF Project team also considered health promotion strategies in planning and implementation of the project, setting priorities and making decisions. The goal was to enable participants and communities to have increased control over their overall wellbeing and the determinants of health impacting their lives.



NFF Best Practices Strategies

a) Fostering Healthy Relationships

Having discussions about healthy relationships was one health promotion strategies utilized in the NFF Project to raise awareness of the warning signs of woman abuse. The goal of these sessions was to reduce the risk of abuse for participants through building skills and knowledge related to developing and maintaining healthy relationships with attention to the many factors influencing the lives of immigrant and refugee families in Canada.

Participants were given a simple presentation of the components of a healthy relationship; warning signs of abuse and resources in the community. They were engaged in discussions as

experts of their own lives and lived experiences. This expertise and knowledge was shared in a trusting environment where participants felt comfortable to share problem solving tactics and ask questions without fear of judgment or reprisal for saying “the wrong thing”.

Indicators of Achievement

- People are provided with information and services
- A client-centered, people centered approach is used
- People are able to make decisions based on informed choice

Participant Feedback related to Healthy Relationships Strategies

Evaluation tools were used to gather participants’ feedback and compare evaluation findings to NFF Campaign indicators. Highlights of the evaluation include:

Indicator: People are provided with information and services

- ✓ 98 % of participants attending the **Healthy Relationships** workshop agreed that this was something they could use in their own lives
- ✓ 94% of participants agreed that the information was easy to understand
- ✓ 44% went to the workshop with a friend

Indicator: A client-centered, people centered approach was used

- ✓ 91.7% of participants agreed that they were able to participate in the workshop; for example to ask questions and to get the answers they needed
- ✓ 100% agreed that the timing of the workshop and the room and location were suitable
- ✓ 100% agreed that the handouts they received were useful and easy to understand

Indicator: People are able to make decisions based on informed choice

- ✓ 60.5% of participants would like to learn more about **Healthy Relationships**
- ✓ 86% of participants agreed that they have a better understanding about Healthy Relationships than they did before this workshop
- ✓ 89% of participants said that they plan to make changes in things they normally do as a result of something they learned or talked about in the session

b) Mental Health and Well-being Focus

The World Health Organization describes mental health as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his own community. Stress, poor self image and poor mental health are exacerbated when there is violence including woman abuse.

For immigrant and refugee community members, factors that may impact mental health include migration, racial discrimination, the immigration process trauma, language barriers, social isolation or exclusion and so on. Health promotion strategies that seek to reduce social isolation and exclusion and strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of community members.

EID Away from Home, Healthy Ramadan, Feeling Good Inside and Sudanese Tea were developed/organized as strategies to outreach to people in the community during a time when many face a great deal of isolation and stress and where the incidence or trauma of violence may be greater. The project team also felt that this was a great trust building opportunity and engaged people at a time that is very important to them.

Indicators of Achievement

- People are provided with information and services
- A client-centered, people centered approach is used
- People are able to make decisions based on informed choice

Participant Feedback Related to Mental Health and Well-being Strategies

Evaluation tools were used to gather participants' feedback and compare evaluation findings to NFF Campaign indicators. Highlights of the evaluation include:

Indicator: People are provided with information and services:

- ✓ 100% of participants agreed they felt better prepared to identify warning signs and risk factors of women abuse/domestic violence
- ✓ 99% agreed that the handouts they received were useful and easy to understand

Indicator: A client-centered, people centered approach is used:

- ✓ 99% agreed that the facilitators were interested, approachable and sincere
- ✓ 99% agreed that the timing of the workshop and the room and location were suitable

Indicator: People are able to make decisions based on informed choice:

- ✓ 100% of participants agreed they felt better prepared to respond to a friend or family member that I know or suspect is experiencing women abuse/domestic violence

- ✓ 100% of participants felt better prepared to provide referrals and support to a friend or family member experiencing women abuse/domestic violence
- ✓ 93% of participants agreed they see the value in having the NFF information provided to their community

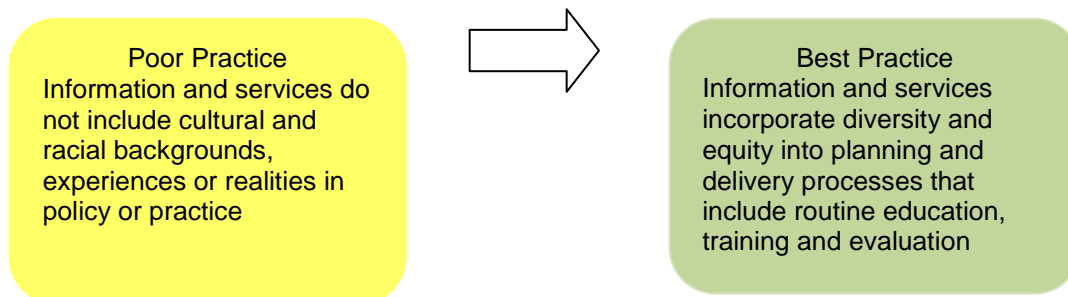
Best Practices Focus Area: Cultural Competence

Cultural competence refers to the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values cultural differences and similarities and the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. *(Adapted from Seattle King County Dept of Public Health, 1994)*

Cultural Competence requires that organizations have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally. It also requires organizations to have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve and incorporate these elements in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, and service delivery. *(National Centre for Cultural Competence)*

The NFF Project was focused on enhancing cultural competence to respond to violence against women. From the very early stages of the project the Committee felt that it was important to prepare local service providing agencies to respond to the information and service needs of immigrant and refugee women in the most culturally competent ways and to address the barriers that prevent immigrant and refugee women and their families from accessing the supports they require when experiencing domestic violence.

Many organizations have developed anti-racism or diversity policies but have either not implemented their policies or require assistance in making the organizational change needed to turn policy into practice. The NFF Project engaged strategies to provide learning / educational opportunities for service providers, organizations, leaders and the NFF Committee to expand their understanding and knowledge of anti-racism and equity as important component parts of an overall cultural competence plan. The project also used strategies to promote equitable access to information, materials, services and supports for immigrant and refugee women experiencing abuse.



NFF Best Practices Strategies

a) Anti-Racism Training

The NFF Diverse Immigrant and Refugee Communities Committee hosted three anti-racism education training events. These events were open to management and frontline staff from local community agencies and immigrant and community members who may provide support to women and families experiencing abuse. The purpose of the training was to help participants develop a deeper understanding of immigrant and refugee communities and in particular the realities of women experiencing abuse; to discuss the importance of services being delivered in a barrier-free and non-oppressive manner and to identify ways to make that happen; and to provide information and tools for developing a process to ensure cultural competence in services in the community related to immigrant and refugee women and woman abuse. Participants developed a personal plan to take back to their respective organizations or communities.

Indicators of Achievement

- People receive information that can be applied to their area of responsibility
- People have a better understanding of cultural competence

Participant Feedback Related to Cultural Competence

Evaluation tools were used to gather participants' feedback and compare evaluation findings to NFF Campaign indicators. Highlights of the evaluation include:

Indicator: People receive information that can be applied to their area of responsibility

- ✓ 88% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something in the training session that could be applied in their work, or in their community or organization

Indicator: People have a better understanding of cultural competence

- ✓ 73% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of anti-racism and cultural competence after participating in the training

b) Cultural Interpretation and Translation

Cultural interpretation facilitates communication between service providers and clients to break through language and cultural barriers by relaying beliefs, customs, cultural norms and values. Translation is a written communication in a second language that has the same meaning as the written communication in a first language.

Cultural interpretation and translation were essential components of the project in order to facilitate full participation of immigrant and refugee women and communities and to effectively connect community members with services and information. When discussing sensitive subjects such as woman abuse, it is important for people to be able to express themselves in

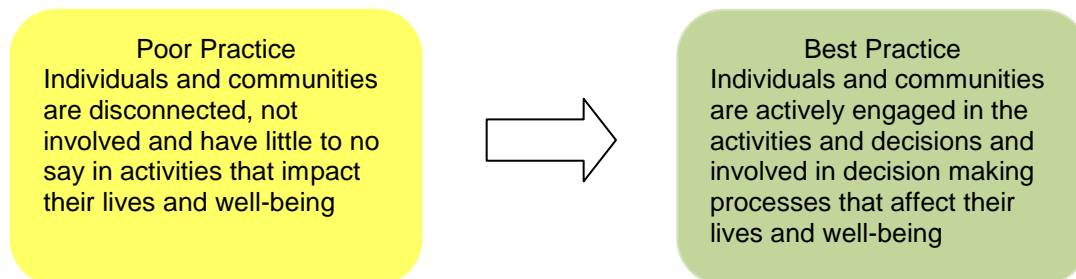
their own language or the language of their choice and to receive information that they are able to read and understand. Facilitating language access also provided the cultural context that enabled the initiative to move forward with the confidence of those involved.

The Project staff ensured that project-related information such as meeting notices, flyers, handout materials, and presentations were translated and that cultural interpreters were available during meetings or at workshops as strategies intended to facilitate access in a culturally competent manner.

Best Practices Focus Area: Community Engagement

Community engagement refers to the process by which community organizations, groups and/or individuals build relationships for the purpose of working towards the realization of a collective goal or vision for the benefit of a particular group or community or the community as a whole. While community organizing involves the process of building a grassroots movement involving communities, community engagement primarily deals with the practice of moving communities towards change. *(Adapted from Wikipedia)*

Community engagement can take many forms and over the last two decades, all sectors have increasingly employed community engagement as an important approach in addressing community needs and trends. However, community engagement can be interpreted quite differently dependent upon the organization, agency, business or community and may range in practice from brief consultation sessions to arrangements in which decisions and power are shared. This could include several places along the community engagement continuum from attending a focus group and providing an opinion through to serving as the head of a non-profit corporation and so on.



a) Community Organizing

Community organizing is a strategy for building and mobilizing communities to pursue a shared interest. Community organizing is a long-term, relationship-building and capacity-building process that attempts to identify, include, and build upon a range of key resources, both internal and external to the community based on principles of empowerment and active participation.

The Project staff embraced community organizing with immigrant and refugee communities to ensure that the activities and decision making was driven by community members and more specifically that the voices of women who may be experiencing abuse were included. Strategies to support the community organizing process included identifying key local resources, gathering of about the community context and experiences, meeting with local

leaders to garner support and encourage participation, developing partnerships and strengthening of the network of the various interests both internal and external to a community.

b) Faith-Based and Cultural Community Organizing

Faith-based and cultural community organizing are not new concepts and in some instances groundbreaking social change has resulted from it. For example a congregation near Chicago worked with other faith based groups to shut down a gun supplier in their neighbourhood. Community organizing works to empower people to change and hold accountable those institutions and systems.

The NFF Project Team's Cultural Facilitator met with the Imam of a local mosque as part of the faith-based community organizing for the NFF Project. Early on in the project Cultural Facilitators conducted outreach at the Mosque and had the opportunity to hear this particular Imam call the congregation to action to end domestic violence. Viewing this as common ground the project team engaged the leader and explained the concepts of the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign. With an interest in raising awareness and addressing the issue of woman abuse the project team and community leader were able to prepare a foundation upon which further strategies could be implemented. These were the initial steps towards a broader faith-based and cultural community organizing effort that unfortunately were not implemented during the short project period.