

**OCASI 2011 Professional Development Conference**  
**June 20-22, 2011**  
**Westin Prince Hotel, Toronto, Ontario**

**Summary Report and Evaluation**

**1. Introduction**

The OCASI 2011 Professional Development (PD) Conference took place on June 20-22, 2011 at the Westin Prince Hotel, Toronto, Ontario. This annual conference represents an essential component of the continuous professional development of settlement workers needed for effective service delivery towards the settlement and integration of immigrant and refugees.

**2. Objectives**

The objectives of the Professional Development Conferences included:

- To enhance the professional competency and skills level of approximately 300 immigrant and refugee service workers, including front-line staff and managers.
- To facilitate the networking and sharing of information, innovative approaches and expertise among new and experienced workers
- Build relationships among professional colleagues to enhance referral and bridging functions
- Identify and prepare for emerging trends in the settlement service field
- Develop and enhance supportive regional networks among settlement service providers
- To offer a forum for discussion and consensus building on issues related to the development, professionalization and accountability of the settlement sector.

**3. Summary of Conference Program**

The Conference program consisted of an Opening Plenary that included greetings from Debbie Douglas, OCASI Executive Director and from Anton Suphal, Director of Settlement, Operations, Toronto and York, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and keynote speech presented by Antoine Derose, Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH); 33 half-day Workshops (including those repeated twice), 10 2-hour Information sessions, 6 evening Drop-In sessions, an orientation session about OCASI for new workers, a Resources Display room, networking opportunities, entertainment, and social / recreational activities.

Three workshops were presented in French and five workshops were presented in English and French (simultaneous interpretation). Other sessions with simultaneous interpretation included the opening plenary.

A total of 47 trainers were engaged to deliver training and information sessions. Trainers were consultants, academics and representatives from immigrant settlement organizations, other relevant non-profit organizations as well as government.

For a complete program please visit [www.ocasi.org/conference](http://www.ocasi.org/conference) and look for *Download 2011 Program Package*. A tag at the top of the main Conference page will allow obtaining the Program in the French language.

#### 4. Participants' Profile

The Conference was attended by 357 participants from 124 agencies from across the province. This number includes 29 participants from French-speaking service providers, 47 facilitators and speakers from the sector, related organizations or independent consultants, 13 representatives from government that attended as speakers, facilitators, participants and booth attendants and 297 participants from immigrant-service providers including frontline staff from OCASI members and other CIC ISAP funded agencies.

Seventy per cent indicated that they were front-line workers, 21 % indicated that they were program coordinators or managers and 9 % indicated other positions.

Asked how many times they have previously attended the OCASI Professional Development Conference, 48% indicated that this was their first time while 52% indicated that they attended 2 or more times.

#### 5. General Evaluation

Participants completed a PD Conference Evaluation Form at the end of the Conference. The Evaluation Form was also accessible online. All participants received the link for the Online Evaluation form. Several participants completed this form online after the Conference.

Participants also completed an Evaluation Form for each workshop and information session. Contact Paulina Maciulis, Conference Coordinator at [pmaciulis@ocasi.org](mailto:pmaciulis@ocasi.org) for results of evaluation of individual workshops.

The following is a summary of the information collected from the PD Conference Evaluation Forms. To obtain a copy of the complete compilation of evaluations please contact Paulina Maciulis at [pmaciulis@ocasi.org](mailto:pmaciulis@ocasi.org)

- **Rating quality of the activities**

Participants were asked to rate the quality of the activities. See below for the results:

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>N/A</b>
How do you rate the conference?/	<b>74.2%</b>	24.7%	1.0%	0.0%
Pre-conference communication	<b>67.4%</b>	31.6%	1.1%	0.0%
Online registration	<b>74.7%</b>	23.2%	2.0%	0.0%
Schedule of events	<b>62.8%</b>	34.0%	3.2%	0.0%
Conference materials	<b>60.0%</b>	35.0%	5.0%	0.0%
Westin Prince Hotel facilities	<b>65.6%</b>	28.1%	4.2%	2.1%
Meals & snacks	<b>54.1%</b>	30.6%	15.3%	0.0%
Opening Plenary	32.0%	<b>46.4%</b>	16.5%	5.2%
"Meet & Mingle" Reception	22.4%	30.6%	7.1%	<b>39.8%</b>
Entertainment (June 21 Flight 13)	<b>41.1%</b>	23.2%	6.3%	29.5%
Entertainment: DJ and Dance	30.9%	21.3%	4.3%	<b>43.6%</b>

### **Comments regarding logistics:**

Participants praised the choice of venue for the Conference, the onsite registration process and the continuous assistance available from OCASI staff and volunteers. They commended all the aspects of the pre-Conference communications, the online registration system and the support provided by OCASI staff. Most of participants indicated that it was a very well-organized conference and appreciated the opportunity to have single rooms.

### **Recommendations regarding logistics and Conference scheduling include:**

- Have a PD Conference at least twice a year
- Have 2-hour workshops so more workshops can be provided, or more of them repeated
- More social activities and entertainment after workshops hours to facilitate networking
- Plus d'ateliers en français ainsi que des divertissements en français.

### **Recommendation re: Conference site, travel and accommodation include:**

- More variety of food, especially for vegetarians
- Provide accommodation for Toronto participants, so they are able to engage in networking and entertainment events in the evening
- Provide accommodation one day before the Conference for out-of-town participants, so they can be more relaxed the first day of the Conference
- Provide free internet access in individual rooms

## **6. Outcomes**

### **Objective # 1: *To enhance the professional competency and skills level of approximately 300.***

#### **Outcomes in this area:**

297 immigrant and refugee service workers, including front-line staff and managers attended the Conference.

Most of the participants indicated that the Conference enhanced their skills and knowledge. They praised the variety and choice of workshops as well as the knowledge and high level of expertise of the presenters. They highlighted that they learnt new skills, techniques and useful strategies on how to serve their clientele better

Relevant comments in this area included:

*These are important professional development and networking opportunities for front line staff. It is also an important source of lifelong learning to find out what is happening in our field to effectively assist our clients.*

*I liked that there were workshops topics for self-improvement - stress, visioning, dialogue- as well as client-related ones.*

#### **Recommendations:**

The following workshops were underscored as the best ones in enhancing participants' skills and knowledge, and providing important and timely information. Participants recommended that these sessions be repeated at future conferences. This information complements the individual workshops evaluation. Summary of results of individual workshop evaluation is available in a separate report.

- Case Management and the Modernized Approach to Settlement Services. facilitated by Yolanda Charles
- The Outcome Based Management Workshop, facilitated by Sarah Delicate
- Process Drama: An Ingenious Assistant to Integration, facilitated by Cassandra Richardson and Chris Rabideau, Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women/
- Retention and the Solution Focused Approach, facilitated by Sarah Delicate
- Ontario's Human Rights System and Legal Support, facilitated Karen McNeilly and Kate Sellar, by representatives from the Human Rights Legal Support Centre
- Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA): Port of Entry Process, facilitated by Khalida Jelani and Ana Fedel, both of them Senior Officers Trade Compliance at Canada Border Services Agency.
- Cross Cultural Counselling: Competencies and Practice, facilitated by Deborah G. Headley of Network for Therapeutic Alliance.
- Policy Changes and Refugee Reform, Overview and Updates of Canada's Immigration Programs, facilitated by Francisco Rico Martinez, from the FCJ Refugee Centre.
- *"Boundaries and Ethical Case Management for Client-Centered Services: this workshops should be mandatory for all!"*

Participants also recommended the following topics for future professional development conferences:

#### **Settlement Service Delivery**

- Art of Facilitation, Boundaries and Ethical Case Management for Client-Centered Services and Case Management: Advance level workshops
- More practical workshops, i.e. How to end an assessment? How to exit an interview?
- Sessions that provide front-line workers with better understanding and knowledge about the modernized approach by CIC. More on CIC updates and programs
- Q & A session with CIC re: regulations/policy/legislation. More workshops focused on Immigration (changes, new programs), Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) Immigration and Refugee Board
- Évaluation des besoins et gestion de cas (ça a déjà eu lieu), mais ça reste quand même une priorité pour les intervenants de première ligne
- Explanation of social welfare system - OW and ODSP
- Dealing with difficult and angry clients, clients under the influence of drugs or alcohol: Advance level. Mental Health awareness
- Legal Aid services: process, access.
- Housing

#### **Employment**

- Atelier pratique proposant un canevas détaillé pour les animateurs d'ateliers à la recherche d'emploi
- Employment focus and options - trends, licencing, regulated professionals, bridging, internships for internationally trained professionals, skilled workers
- Integration of settlement with employment
- Entrepreneurship

#### **Working with specific groups**

- More topics on youth programs
- More topics related to SWIS workers.

### **General Interest - Broad Sectoral Issues**

- Using social media. More sessions on the new wiki for Settlement.org and other possible usage of social networks
- Teamwork
- Cultural Competencies
- Question and Answer Board/box i.e. I might submit questions like "In my agency we're struggling I have questions about ... " Answers could be posted on line or alternatively a workshop to discuss with other workers led by a facilitator.
- Sécurité d'emploi, la santé et la sécurité pour les travailleurs de l'établissement.
- Provide workshops at a more advanced level / advance topics. Have more case examples in workshop sessions

### **Objectives # 2, 3 and 4:**

- ***To facilitate the networking and sharing of information, innovative approaches and expertise among new and experienced workers***
- ***Build relationships among professional colleagues to enhance referral and bridging functions***
- ***Develop and enhance supportive regional networks among settlement service providers***

### **Outcomes in this area:**

Many participants indicated that networking and sharing of information were some of the best features of the Conference. They appreciated the opportunity to meet people working in the same field and the exchange of information and experiences among participants with different levels of expertise and from diverse areas of the province. Some expressed that the great atmosphere and the camaraderie that were established during networking will benefit future referrals and partnership in the field and that the atmosphere was friendly and helpful thus creating a good learning environment.

Participants also highlighted the importance of having many information and display tables with reading material, flyers, pamphlets and brochures from a diverse range of community organizations and the different levels of government.

### **Recommendations:**

- How to build Welcoming Communities, examples from other jurisdictions/countries showing successful work done with existing local communities in educating and encouraging welcoming attitudes towards newcomers.
- Topics addressing the need to work better as a team, learning to collaborate better, learning to be less territorial within specific programs and understand how leveraging knowledge and learning allows you to do more with your resources, particularly in these times of severe cuts.
- Creating and developing community partnerships
- Bringing LIPS into the conference, since the work that LIPS are doing is extremely relevant to the work that settlement agencies do.
- More social activities after workshops hours.

#### **Objective # 4: Identify and prepare for emerging trends in the settlement service field**

##### **Outcomes in this area:**

Many participants indicated that some of the workshops, such as Outcome Based Management and the Case Management and the Modernized Approach to Settlement Services were very helpful to prepare for new trends in the settlement service field. They also expressed that many other sessions were applicable for the changing services delivery system and others brought in information on new trends or legislation.

#### **7. Some of participants' comments**

The following remarks summarize participants' additional observations when asked to comment on the Best feature of the Conference / Meilleurs caractéristiques du Colloque:

*Le grand choix des ateliers, ainsi que le professionnalisme de certains facilitateurs*

*Je pense personnellement que tous les aspects du colloque ont été meilleurs.*

*Meeting old and new friends. The warmth and genuine positive feeling of the organizers.  
Great accommodation.*

*Interactive workshops, networking and meeting new people, gaining knowledge, the food, services, rooms, everything in general was amazing and appreciated.*

*Everything. You guys seem to impress me even when I think that nothing needs to be improved. However, this hotel was a great choice. I have not seen the customer service standards offered here anywhere in Canada in the last eight years I have been in Canada.*

*The topics were amazing.*

*Les dialogues ouverts et les discussions ouvertes*

*Qualité des ateliers, bilinguisme accessible, endroit et organisation.*

*The workshops I attended were great, presenters were excellent, gave lots of information and knowledge to take back to my team. Exceeded my expectations.*

*J'ai passé des meilleurs moment et j'ai appris aussi beaucoup de choses en si peu de temps. Pour une première fois, j'ai aimé.*

*So worthwhile. I learned a lot and will take a lot of info/skills back to my organization. Excellent conference! There was a variance in quality of the workshops, but the ones that were great were SO GREAT! Very well organized conference, professional, would definitely recommend it and very much want to come again. Loved that the hotel had wooded trails/beautiful outdoor area.*