

## **Transcript – becoming a trusted source of information for newcomer clients**

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People are engaged in their communities in faith-based groups, in schools, in sporting teams, in their family, family networks and these places are very very important in terms of imparting and sharing information and acting upon information. So they play quite a crucial role in enabling people to become informed and aware and learn about the Canadian system and the opportunities that it might create for them. It also allows them to build the cultural capital that is necessary for them to have access to particular resources or negotiate a particular setting, for example, pursue formal education or make the most of training training settings and so on.

So these everyday spaces are very rich sites that settlement sector workers probably have already familiar ways already kind of embedded in. But I would really suggest that that embeddedness, that partnership with the communities, with everyday spaces for learning, are very very critical. So that's the first thing.

The other thing is I think that settlement workers should really think about the work they do, in addition to providing timely and an adequate access to information in multiple languages in the format that is appropriate which is of course obvious, is to think a little bit more broadly and holistically about the relationship that they have with newcomers and the communities in which they are embedded. And in particular maybe thinking about their work as also being about facilitating new kinds of knowledge. And I think what I find is newcomers really come with ideas, with skills, with expertise, they are content haters potentially, and going beyond just thinking about the work we do as informing the other, but also as involving them, and that informing-involving dichotomy is a very very key one.

Because we know that people love sharing stories. We know that people love sharing experiences. There is a cathartic aspect to it that is really really important to the self-esteem of newcomers. People like to feel valued and like to share and to contribute their experiences often to to impart their knowledge so that others may not fall in the same traps and they were. So that is quite quite important.

So maybe having a more holistic view of the information environment of newcomers as was mentioned earlier.

And maybe the last point will be to develop what we call a diversity mindset, which settlement workers already have. But what is meant by that is this idea that, often especially in you know in the information professions, but we tend to see ourselves as neutral, as objective, as kind of detached a bit from from the lived experiences of newcomers. And the idea here is that I think we need to build on the linguistic and cultural assets and even the social assets of settlement workers so that they can really not necessarily blur the boundary between objective and subjective but really just view what they bring to the relationship as something that is often unique and and valued from both end.

So this is more a call for employers, I would say, to really kind of encourage settlement workers to manifest more explicitly their own their own assets - the social, linguistic, cultural assets - and put that into work in the relationship which i think is quite important.

And again the last bit is about social media, going back to social media. We, collectively, need to do a better job at harnessing social media more effectively. I think that it's starting. I know IRCC, for example, is working on that. COSTI and other agencies are working on apps for newcomers to help them.

We need to be more risk takers and I think we need to be more daring and maybe partner with educational institutions or even the private sector to think about how do people use social media? How

do newcomers use new social media? And what's the lifecycle of this social media? How does it change and how does it kind of transform over time. And by being plugged into the networks and the systems that people use I think we can probably provide them with information in a more reliable way. So being plugged into the online forums for example that community creates is a good starting point. But perhaps changing our thinking about friending people on WhatsApp, on Facebook.

Up to this point is got a line where you don't really friend individual people but I think we need to think about whether in this day and age this line needs to remain and what it would mean to negotiate a relationship that is also virtual.

So I think it's really kind, this new age of information & communication technologies really forces us to rethink about how we go about doing the work we do and I think there are exciting opportunities ahead.

