

**Equitable Treatment of Immigrant / Visible Minority Women
as Employees and Volunteers
In the Alberta Voluntary Sector ©**

A Research Project of:



Funded by



November 2006

**Equitable Treatment of Immigrant / Visible Minority Women as Employees and Volunteers in
the Alberta Voluntary Sector©**

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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
Acknowledgements.....	4
Alberta Network of Immigrant Women	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	6
ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT.....	8
PART ONE: INTRODUCTION	9
Chapter One: Background and Introduction	9
BACKGROUND	9
INTRODUCTION	9
<i>Objectives of the Study</i>	<i>10</i>
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	11
RESEARCH APPROACH	11
RESEARCH METHODS.....	11
<i>Study Participants.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Immigrant / Visible Minority Women</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Non-Minority Women.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Executive Directors</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Research Supports.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Literature Review</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Privacy Protection</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Data Analysis</i>	<i>15</i>
CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS.....	15
PART TWO: ISSUES AND BARRIERS.....	16
CHAPTER THREE: SYSTEMIC ISSUES	16
INTRODUCTION	16
RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION.....	16
<i>The Impact of Racism and Discrimination.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Indicators of Racism.....</i>	<i>19</i>
RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS	20
<i>Issues and Barriers in Credentials and Work Experience.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Recognition of Foreign Credentials and Underemployment.....</i>	<i>22</i>
LANGUAGE BARRIERS.....	24
<i>Issues Resulting from Language Barriers</i>	<i>24</i>

CHAPTER FOUR: FUNDING ISSUES	27
ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES AND BARRIERS.....	27
DISPARITY BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS	28
PERSONNEL ISSUES	29
GROWING WORKLOADS	31
STAFF MANAGEMENT	31
CHAPTER FIVE: WORKPLACE ISSUES AND BARRIERS.....	31
THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK.....	32
WORKPLACE STRESS	33
MISUSE OF VOLUNTEERS	35
RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE.....	36
ISSUES IN STAFF - MANAGEMENT RELATIONS	36
THE ABUSE OF POWER IN WORKPLACES	38
BOARD GOVERNANCE	39
LIMITED CAPACITY OF IMMIGRANT / VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN.....	40
PART THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES.....	43
Chapter Six: Conclusions.....	43
VARIATION IN RESPONSES.....	43
<i>Similarities and Differences amongst All Participants</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Similarities and Differences amongst Focus Group Participants</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Similarities and Differences amongst Executive Directors.....</i>	<i>45</i>
WOMEN IN THE NON PROFIT SECTOR: A DIALOGUE TO BUILD BRIDGES, CAPACITIES AND ALLIANCES	46
<i>Discussion Group Topics.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Forum Evaluation Summary.....</i>	<i>47</i>
CHAPTER SEVEN: RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES.....	48
PART FOUR: APPENDICES	51
Appendix One: Data Collection Matrix	52
Appendix Two: Focus Group Material.....	54
FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE AND GUIDE	56
Consent to Participate Form.....	57
FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK FORM.....	58
SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP CONTACT LETTER.....	60
APPENDIX THREE: PROTOCOLS	60
VOLUNTARY SECTOR WORKPLACE QUESTIONNAIRE	63
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS CONTACT LETTER.....	64
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTERVIEW GUIDE	66
APPENDIX FOUR: BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

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Cindy Tong
ANIW President

Alberta Network of Immigrant Women

The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW) is a provincially-based collective of immigrant women's organizations and individual members from the community. ANIW provides a forum for members to explore and resolve issues affecting immigrant and visible minority women. Incorporated as an umbrella organization under the Alberta Society's Act, ANIW has served Albertans since 1986.

ANIW's mission is to support initiatives among member organizations and other community groups which, "foster equality, justice and learning for immigrant women through full participation in the social, economic and political life in Alberta and in Canada." True to its mission statement, ANIW provides a venue for Albertan immigrant women, and organizations supporting immigrant women, to share information and address issues of common concern.

The organization's work includes conducting research / needs assessments and organizing presentations, symposiums and round table dialogues. A wide range of topics examined in their research include settlement issues, mental health, foreign qualifications, access to licensure for international medical graduates, internationally trained nurses and to the criminal justice system. The present report adds to this body of work by investigating the treatment of immigrant / visible minority women as employees and volunteers in the Alberta voluntary sector. As a result of their research and community involvement, ANIW has become an active and respected voice for immigrant women in Alberta.

As it celebrates its 20th anniversary this year (2006), ANIW salutes and expresses its gratitude to the many women who have shared their experiences, time and commitment with the organization and its projects. For more information about the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women please visit www.aniw.ca.

Executive Summary

This study examined workplace issues experienced by immigrant / visible minority women working and volunteering in the human services sub-sector of the voluntary or non-profit sector in Alberta.

This project follows a pilot project conducted by the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women in partnership with the, Diversity Institute, and the Gender Institute for Research at the University of Calgary. The pilot project entitled immigrant and visible minority women in the non profit as volunteers and paid workers, involved interviewing immigrant / visible minority women in Calgary who worked and volunteered in the human services sub-sector of the non-profit sector. Volunteer coordinators and executive directors in this sub-sector were also interviewed. Results of the pilot project indicated that immigrant / visible minority women experienced barriers to equitable treatment in their workplaces. Results also suggested that the managers and directors did not see racism and discrimination against immigrant / visible minority women in their own organizations.

To better understand the results of the pilot project, ANIW undertook further investigation to see if barriers exist in Alberta workplaces and if so, to identify these barriers and develop strategies for overcoming them.

The current study focuses on:

- The workplace experience of immigrant / visible minority women working and volunteering in the human service sub-sector of the voluntary sector.
- Key issues and barriers to fair and equitable treatment of immigrant / visible minority women.
- Strategies to reduce barriers improve working conditions and empower organizations and the immigrant / visible minority women within them to make positive changes.

Focus groups and individual interviews were used to gather information. Issues were first identified by immigrant / visible minority women and then compared to those identified by others working in the sector. In all, 109 people participated in the study including:

- Forty-seven immigrant / visible minority women in five focus group discussions held in Lethbridge, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Edmonton.
- Twenty-five Canadian-born, non-minority women in two focus groups and telephone interviews held in Calgary.
- Thirty-seven executive directors in interviews held in Calgary and Edmonton.
- Thirteen employees of government, education, and non-profit organizations in interviews held across the province.

All participants reported a sincere belief in the value of the non-profit sector to the community as a whole. Employees in the non-profit sector enjoyed serving the community, working with their clients and co-workers and appreciated the opportunity to make a difference. However, in discussions there emerged three types of issues and barriers that prevent the development of fair and equitable experiences for immigrant / visible minority women in the sector.

1. **Systemic Issues and Barriers:** Success for immigrant / visible minority women is impeded by racism and discrimination, lack of recognition for foreign credentials and a lack of fluency in English. Because of these barriers, the women reported difficulty in securing well-paying, full-time jobs in their chosen fields. Many had to return to school to upgrade their skills and / or accept jobs with much lower salaries.

2. **Funding Issues and Barriers:** Executive directors spoke candidly about inadequate human resources as the major barrier they face. They described the strain on human resources in the sector caused by limited funding, the difficulty in paying qualified staff competitive wages and benefits, and the need to devote inordinate amounts of time and energy to secure the funds necessary to cover operational costs. Funding problems stress all employees of non-profit organizations. To the directors, this meant an increase in responsibilities and difficulties for employees to complete the work assigned, to meet the needs of clients and to keep the organization operating smoothly.

3. **Workplace Issues and Barriers:** The negative impact of working with limited resources was raised by both immigrant and non-minority participants. Though the relevance of this issue was similar to the two groups, the reported reaction to the issue was different. Immigrant / visible minority women explained that they felt more vulnerable than non-minority women to problems in the workplace. The non-minority participants were less willing to tolerate a negative working environment and felt confident that if they resigned, other better jobs could be found. Immigrant / visible minority women were reluctant to leave their jobs for fear that finding future employment would be too difficult. Specific issues that were raised about the workplace were stress, racism and discrimination, bullying, difficulty with management styles, and the perceived role of women.

Strategies and recommendations for optimizing workplace experiences of immigrant / visible minority women and reducing the barriers to fair and equitable treatment for all were explored in detail in the course of this study. They were also addressed on September 22, 2006 in Calgary, Alberta, at the discussion entitled "**Women in the Non Profit Sector: A Dialogue to Build Bridges, Capacities and Alliances.**" The strategies, conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter Six and Seven of this report.

Organization of the Report

This report is presented in four parts:

Part One: Introduction: Chapter One introduces the background of the project. Chapter Two contains the study's research methodology including the research approach, methods, limitations, additional data collection methods, and research supports.

Part Two: Issues and Barriers: Focus group participants were asked to identify key barriers they faced working or volunteering in the human services, non-profit sector in Alberta. A range of issues was discussed regarding the successful integration of this population into Alberta workplaces. The issues and barriers are presented in three chapters. In Chapter Three, systemic issues – racism and discrimination, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and language barriers - are presented. In Chapter Four, funding issues are presented, including those leading to organizational and personnel problems. Chapter Five discusses such workplace issues as the changing nature of work, stress, volunteering, racism and discrimination, management styles, workplace aggression, board governance and the lack of opportunities for immigrant / visible minority women.

Part Three: Conclusions and Recommended Strategies: Chapter Six and Seven present the conclusions and strategies to reduce the issues and barriers identified in the study. The chapter also includes, the discussion of September 22, 2006 entitled “*Women in the Non Profit Sector: A Dialogue to Build Bridges, Capacities and Alliances.*”

Part Four: Appendices: The final section of the report includes the documents used in the study, as well as the bibliography.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter One: Background and Introduction

Background

In the late 1990's Statistics Canada¹ reported that nearly 20 per cent of women living in Canada were newcomers to the country. On average, immigrant women are more highly educated and more likely to hold a graduate degree than Canadian-born women. They are, however, less successful in the workplace than their Canadian counterparts. In the late 1990's approximately 3 in 10 immigrant women survived on a low income. Alberta has a growing number of educated, immigrant women, yet their labour market success has lagged behind that of other Albertans. This suggests there are barriers that prevent the successful participation of immigrant / visible minority women in the workplace.

The voluntary sector employs a significant number of immigrant / visible minority women. The size, role, influence and capacity of the voluntary sector as an employer increased in the last decade. The 19,000-plus non-profit and voluntary organizations in Alberta include sports and recreation, arts, religious, cultural, educational and human services organizations. The non-profit sector in this province generates revenues of \$9.6 billion dollars a year and employs more than 175,000 people¹. Despite its increasing social influence and undeniable impact on local communities, this sector is under pressure in Alberta. Reductions in core funding throughout the 1990's combined with increased client demands, intensified workloads and a greater reliance on government service contracts, have all affected the sector and the women who form a large portion of the volunteers and staff within it.²

Introduction

This study examined the human services sub-sector of the voluntary sector³ in Alberta. Issues preventing fair and equitable workplace experiences were explored from the perspective of immigrant / visible minority women working and volunteering in this sub-sector. The study grew from a pilot project entitled *Immigrant and Visible Minority Women in the Non-Profit Sector as Volunteers and Paid Workers* (2004).⁴

1. Imagine Canada, 2006. NSNVO, Alberta Regional Fact Sheet.

2. Government of Canada, Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002. Building a Stronger Voluntary Sector.

3. For the purpose of this study the terms voluntary sector and non-profit sector are used interchangeably.

4. Funders and in-kind supporters included: United Way of Calgary and Area, Alberta Human Rights, Citizen and Multiculturalism Education Fund, Calgary Lottery Board, Canadian Heritage, and the University of Calgary Workplace Learning Research Unit, University of Calgary Institute for Gender Research, Alberta Network of Immigrant Women and the Diversity Learning Institute, Arctic Institute of North America.

The pilot project:

- Documented the experiences of immigrant / visible minority women working and volunteering as front-line workers, in human services, non-profit organizations in Calgary.
- Interviewed volunteer coordinators and executive directors working in these organizations.
- Reported that the immigrant / visible minority women participating in the study confirmed that barriers existed to fair and equitable treatment in their workplaces.
- Identified significant variations between the responses of the front-line workers and volunteers and the responses of the managers and executive directors of the organizations interviewed for the study.

ANIW concluded that the results of the pilot project warranted further investigation. Specifically, ANIW hoped to learn if results of that study were considered relevant in other towns and cities in Alberta, and if the study could be used to discover solutions and strategies for improving working conditions for immigrant / visible minority women.

In addition, a review of the literature revealed that there exists little in-depth information about the Albertan human services sector and the role played by immigrant / visible minority women within it. Studies emerging through such agencies as the Voluntary Sector Initiative described only the general state of the sector, including funding issues, but did not address workplace conditions. As increasing numbers of immigrants move to Alberta to take part in its robust economy, understanding the barriers that prevent them from succeeding in the workplace is crucial to build both the capacity of the sector, and to support the provincial economy as a whole.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to build upon the results of the pilot project, and enhance our understanding of the workplace barriers which immigrant / visible minority women⁵ face when working and volunteering in Alberta's non-profit sector.

The key objectives of the study were to:

- Acquire an account of the workplace experience of immigrant / visible minority women in the human services.
- Identify the key issues and barriers to fair and equitable treatment for immigrant / visible minority women in the sector.
- Develop strategies to reduce these barriers, improve working conditions and build capacities for making positive change.
- Build a collaborative process in which immigrant / visible minority women offer recommendations for workplace policy, practice and procedure.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the working experiences of women in this sector.

5. The Visible Minority Population according to the Employment Equity Act in Canada includes "persons" other than aboriginal peoples who are non Caucasian in race or non white in colour and this includes: Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean and Japanese (Government of Canada, HRSDC 2005).

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

Research Approach

Research conducted about specific populations is only meaningful if it incorporates input from the population itself. Policies or recommendations arising from studies conducted without sufficient input from these groups will be ineffective and may even serve to perpetuate the problem.

To gather data, focus groups were established. Consultations with focus groups can be a rich source of information. The group setting creates an atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual acceptance and understanding. This enables participants to fully explore common experiences without fear of reprisal or judgment.

If the group dynamic is strong, trust develops amongst the participants and together they work through issues and develop solutions in more detail than would be possible in individual discussions. Focus groups provide participants an opportunity to contribute to a collaboration, to be valued as experts, and to connect with others in similar circumstances. At its best, the experience can be empowering, enjoyable and cathartic.

The issues that emerged from the discussions with immigrant / visible minority women, non-minority women, executive directors and other personnel did not stem from a predetermined hypothesis. Issues and barriers emerged first in discussions and interviews, and were later clarified and investigated in more detail.

Research Methods

A project advisory committee, with representation from the university community, social work field and the non-profit sector, was established to guide the study. Five Alberta cities were selected to hold focus groups: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton. A researcher was hired and the methodology developed. A brief description of the study participants is presented below.

Study Participants

A total of 109 people participated in focus groups and interviews for the study. Table 1 shows the distribution of study participants.

Table 1: Study Participants

Participants	Method of Gathering Opinions	Number of Participants
Immigrant / Visible Minority Women	Focus Groups and Telephone Interviews	47
Non-minority Women (Canadian-born, non-minority women)	Focus Groups and Telephone Interviews	12
Resource Personnel	Personal and Telephone Interviews	13
Executive Directors	Personal and Telephone Interviews	37
TOTAL		109

Immigrant / Visible Minority Women

Immigrant / visible minority women working or volunteering in the sector were invited to participate in one of the five focus groups. In addition, seven women, unable to attend the focus groups, were interviewed by telephone. The number of immigrant / visible minority women participating in this study numbered at 47. All of these women were immigrants and 42 out of the 47 were from a visible minority. They were between 20 and 60 years old and had been in Alberta between two and 20 years.

All women in this group were educated before coming to Canada but none were able to work in their chosen fields once arriving here. Instead, they found work in positions requiring less experience and education. All worked or volunteered in the non-profit sector as front-line workers, program and volunteer coordinators.

Non-Minority Women

For the purpose of the study, a “Non-Minority Woman” was defined as a woman who was born in Canada and not from a visible minority group. Two focus groups were conducted in Calgary with non-minority women. All together there were twelve participants in this category. All respondents worked in the same sector, in positions such as fund developers, managers, front-line workers, volunteer coordinators, and as volunteers. They were asked to identify issues and barriers that prevented a fair and equitable workplace.

To gather general information about the sector interviews were also held with a total of thirteen resource personnel working directly or indirectly with voluntary organizations. The aim of including the non-minority group was to see what similarities and differences arose among the responses of the different focus groups.

Executive Directors

Executive directors were interviewed to provide additional perspectives and information on the topic. Telephone and personal interviews were conducted with 37 executive directors in the Calgary and Edmonton voluntary sector. Directors from voluntary organizations that had been operating for 10 or more years, with 10 or more employees were selected for inclusion in the study. Organizations of this age and size were assumed to have established human resource policies promoting fair and equitable treatment of all employees in the workplace. A cross-section of organizations providing human services was included in the study as well as organizations that work directly or indirectly with immigrant populations.

Research Supports

To support the research, protocols and a data collection matrix were developed, a literature review was conducted and documents were developed. These research supports are discussed below.

A data collection matrix was used to guide the development of the work plan and to link research questions to specific items to be completed during the study (Appendix One).

An interview guide was developed based on information generated from the pilot project and a literature review. A list of the key issues for focus group discussion is presented in the chart below. The information generated during the focus groups is presented in Part Two of this report.

To support the focus group and interviewing, a series of protocols were designed for the study, including a Focus Group Protocol, Immigrant / Visible Minority Women Staff and Volunteer Telephone Interview Protocol and an Executive Director Telephone Interview Protocol.

The Data Collection Matrix was used to design the protocols. The protocols were developed, tested, revised and then finalized (Appendix Three).

Table 2: Key Issues for Focus Group Discussion

Job Satisfaction Parameters	Issues
Pay / Job Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary, benefits • Hours worked or volunteered • Performance reviews, promotions and evaluations • Hiring / firing • Job Security
Education / Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal / informal recognition of prior education, skills and experience • Education requirements to do the job, technical complexity • Skill Gaps: *Feeling you need more skills / training to do the job or *Feeling you have more skills than needed for the job • Training and professional development
Job Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to use skills, share knowledge and contribute • Health and well being • Needs being met
Workplace Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplace relationships • Office space, safety • Job security • Discrimination, unequal access, unfair treatment
Best practices in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies, opinions, programs, resources, other

Literature Review

To support the research, a literature review was conducted to identify relevant research in the experience of immigrant / visible minority women in the workplace in general and the Alberta voluntary sector in particular. In addition determine if other provinces or countries have conducted similar research, to enable a comparison of results. This review was used to build on the work of the pilot project and to develop the research plan and instruments employed in this study.

Privacy Protection

In the report, respondents are not identified by name, as stipulated in the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP).

Focus groups can not be fully confidential or anonymous because participants' opinions are expressed in the context of a group setting. The women participating in the study contributed their opinions willingly in the spirit of helping others like themselves and to help advance working conditions for all involved in the voluntary sector.

Data Analysis

The information was analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative research method that involves looking for themes to emerge from texts. Using this technique, the key issues were quickly made apparent. They emerged early in the discussion and were addressed consistently across the focus groups.

Challenges and Limitations

There were challenges experienced in recruiting respondents for the study. Executive directors in particular were difficult to reach. Many working in this sector seemed to have reservations about speaking freely about the workplace issues and barriers they encounter. Once it was clear that the focus of the study was to search out positive solutions to these issues, people were more willing to share and were able to provide valuable insight. As a result of the participants' initial reluctance, completing the interviews took longer than anticipated, and the study completion was delayed.

While the study was designed to examine the human services, sub-sector of the non-profit sector in Alberta, some important issues that were raised proved to be broader and beyond the scope of the study's original focus. Racism and discrimination, recognition of foreign credentials and a lack of English fluency were defined as potential systemic issues facing newcomers in general, no matter what workplace or sector the immigrant / visible minority women were employed in. The challenge was to ensure systemic issues were also relevant to the sector under investigation. Immigrant / visible minority women concluded that these issues affected all workplaces in Canada and Alberta and were, in essence, the root causes of many workplace problems.

Many of the issues discussed in this report were inter-related and difficult to extricate from one

another. Some issues affected immigrants in Canada in general - not just Alberta. Other issues are personal and specific to more localized workplaces. The challenge was separating these issues for the purpose of discussion.

Focus groups are limited in their ability to reveal information that can be applied to a wider population because of the relatively small numbers of participants and because they do not form a representative sample. The participants in this study do not speak for all immigrant / visible minority women in Alberta; they do, however, represent a reasonable cross-section of women. One must be careful not to extrapolate from this study to all Alberta workplaces in general. Study participants were employees and volunteers in the human services sub-sector of the non-profit sector alone. Nevertheless, clear themes did emerge in this study which could give rise to investigations of other Alberta workplaces. These themes are presented in the report that follows.

PART TWO: ISSUES AND BARRIERS

Chapter Three: Systemic Issues

Introduction

Focus group participants were asked to identify the key issues and barriers they faced working or volunteering in the human services, non-profit sector in Alberta. A wide range of issues was discussed regarding the successful or unsuccessful integration of immigrant / visible minority women into workplaces in this sector. Three categories of issues emerged in the discussions: Systemic, Funding and Workplace. Systemic issues such as racism and discrimination, the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and shortcomings in spoken English are reviewed in this chapter. It should be noted that immigrant / visible minority women alone discussed these systemic issues. These issues were not raised by the non-minority women.

Racism and Discrimination

Ngo, Hieu Van (2000) defined racism as the belief that some races are intrinsically superior to others. Racism is often an unconscious by-product of ethnocentrism and unexamined privilege. Abusive and aggressive behavior may result towards members of another race but normally the reaction is less obvious. He also defined discrimination as unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice. It is any impermissible act, or failure to act, based in whole or in part on a person's race, colour, religion, national origin, sex, age, physical or mental handicap, that adversely affects privileges, benefits, working conditions, and results in disparate treatment, or has a disparate impact on individuals. Racism becomes systemic when social and organizational structures, policies and practices exclude, marginalize and discriminate against individuals who are considered not to be part of the traditional, dominant group.

All but two of the immigrant / visible minority women said that racism and discrimination were major barriers in the workplace in Alberta. Racism and discrimination were described as appearing on many levels, both personally and professionally. The effects of racism and discrimination described by this group are outlined below.

The Impact of Racism and Discrimination

Difficulty in securing well-paying, full-time jobs with benefits was identified as an impact of racism and discrimination. Respondents described settling for part-time, entry-level positions without benefits or security. Often they needed to find more than one job at a time to meet their financial obligations, or face poverty.

"Employers seemed reluctant to call me for an interview once they heard my (foreign) name or heard my accent on the phone. I called and called them but they (the employers) did not call me back. A few of my

friends (with simple last names and no accent) applied to the same places at the same time that I did and they (my friends) were called back right away and got jobs. I have to assume the reason was racism."

"It took me a long time to find a job. I think people were afraid to hire me."

"It is difficult to prove but I think I was not hired because of my colour."

Another impact was to not find meaningful work. Respondents described feeling underemployed and frustrated by not being able to contribute their skills in a meaningful way. Eighty-seven per cent of those participating in the study had university degrees and described their experience working in entry-level jobs as difficult and demeaning. The effects of underemployment are subtle and often manifest in psychological states such as depression and stress.

"I can't get a job in my field of study. The only work I can get is clerical work that is so boring."

"I would prefer if people just asked me: how am I different from them and what they need to know to be able to work well with me? They would find that I am not that different."

Focus group members also reported feeling stereotyped and treated poorly by co-workers and employers. The immigrant / visible minority women said:

"People think we are all member of gangs or criminals"

"People think we should feel lucky to have 'any job' not look for better jobs. They think any job must be better than where we came from. I came from a large city, bigger than the cities in Alberta. I did not come from a small village with huts."

Racism and discrimination resulted in the misconception that immigrants are ignorant:

"I have an accent. I am not stupid."

"English is my second language. I do not always understand what people are saying. They treat me like a child."

They also described feeling marginalized and rarely taken seriously at work. They concluded that their ideas and suggestions were ignored. They were bypassed for promotions and did not always feel part of the team.

"It is difficult to get promoted."

"How many of us do you see as directors? Not many"

"My ideas are not taken seriously at work."

They see racism and discrimination as factors that contribute to poverty:

"I can't get a job in the area I was trained in at home. All I can get is a minimum wage job. My take home pay is \$10.00 so I have to work at more than one job to pay the bills."

"After paying the bills, there is not much money left for food."

"It keeps us working in entry-level jobs and never getting ahead."

They reported that racist and discriminatory attitudes from others made them feel that they were excluded or that they were not legitimate Canadians:

"Being a visible minority often means you will never be seen as a Canadian no matter how long you live in Alberta / Canada - one day or 40 years. I chose to come to this country and am proud to be a citizen."

"I am tired of telling people where I am from. I am a Canadian."

"My children, both born in Canada, are often asked where they are from. It really upsets them and me."

Respondents admitted that often racist messages are internalized by newcomers and visible minorities, dramatically altering both their self-perceptions and the way they deal with others.⁶ The conscious or subconscious incorporation of negative stereotyping can lead people to:

- Think of themselves or others as stupid, lazy, unimportant, or inferior.
- Criticize or verbally attack each other, or allow others to do so.
- Ignore their physical and emotional health.
- Criticize and hurt their children.
- Feel hopeless, despairing, and angry.
- Feel disconnected and lost.

While almost all of the immigrant / visible minority participants said these issues were prevalent in Alberta organizations, most executive directors interviewed for this study did not think that racism or discrimination were significant in their organizations at all:

"I don't think there is any racism in this organization. We just haven't found any immigrants who are qualified enough to hire."

"I don't have time to worry about whether I have enough of one colour or another on the payroll. I have a job to do and so little time to get it done."

Racism and discrimination were described by immigrant / visible minority women as unremitting and undeniable, and as something they felt powerless to change.

"Racism, like the cold weather in Alberta winters, is something you live with, work around, cover up and pretend it doesn't bother you."

"I would rather just ignore them (racism and discrimination). Nothing will change. I have heard these issues discussed for 20 years"

To many Albertans, it may be difficult to accept that racism is still felt sharply by immigrants and visible minorities. We take pride in the diversity of our communities and partake of the cultural festivals designed to celebrate the varied ethnicities amongst us. The respondents in this study, however, believe that racism and discrimination remain prevalent factors in our society. They described experiences similar to those of aboriginal people in Canada and the intolerance this group has long endured. One aboriginal leader writing on the subject described the aboriginal experience within Canada:

"Canada's cherished image as a tolerant society leads even progressive Canadians to the view that racism means only overt acts by some nasty individuals against other individuals.... What we see, experience, and

⁶ <http://www.rc.org/uer/InternalizedRacism.html>

understand on a daily basis, is racism interwoven in the very fabric of the social system in Canada...⁷

Participants did not wish to dwell on issues of racism and discrimination but desired to move beyond them. Recent newcomers agreed that focusing only on the negativity in the community or workplace was counter-productive. At present their goal is to move forward, to find their way in their adopted homeland. More established immigrant women participating in the discussion were quite clear that they were ready to move past these issues. Finding strategies to reduce racism and discrimination in Alberta were considered more worthy pursuits:

"These issues have been discussed and debated for 20 years, let's not talk about them anymore but do something to change them and move forward."

"There is no point talking about it, let's do something about it."

Respondents discussed the need for immigrants to dedicate themselves to working hard and impressing their new employers and co-workers.

Indicators of Racism

The literature indicated that racism and discrimination persist in this country. For example, post-secondary education is thought to be an essential component for career success, yet immigrants, despite being a highly educated population, continue to have higher unemployment rates than the overall population.⁸ It is still common for this group to be underemployed, working in occupations that do not correspond to their education and training. Visible minorities continue to be found in low-paying and part-time work such as manual labour, sales or services jobs. This type of work is largely non-union with low wages, few if any benefits, or job security.⁹

In 2001 Statistics Canada reported that 36 per cent of all visible minority persons in Canada lived in poverty, compared to 20 per cent of the wider Canadian population. The major causes of poverty described in the report were barriers to equal participation in the job market and lack of access to permanent, skilled, and reasonably well-paying jobs. Finding a job and advancing in a profession are still difficult for visible minorities in Canada.¹⁰ A segment of society that is trained and prepared to make a contribution is being under-utilized as a consequence of systemic racism and discrimination.

Focus group respondents believe that racism and discrimination are born from a lack of information. Though Canada prides itself on being a multicultural, bilingual country, individual citizens' exposure to countries outside Canada's borders may be limited. This can lead to a lack of cultural understanding. According to many respondents, diversity and multiculturalism in Albertan merely mean enjoying cultural festivals and ethnic restaurants. Partaking of these is a part of learning about new cultures but, as one respondent stated, it is not enough to affect serious change:

"Food and festivals alone is not enough. The issue is learning to integrate cultures together so all Albertans can work and live together."

7. Phil Fontaine, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations 1998 The Donald Gow Lecture/ Modern **Racism** in Canada

8. Statistic Canada, March 22, 2005.

9. Lee, Joanne, 1999.

10. Government of Canada Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Data.

Respondents discussed the role that the media plays in perpetuating this lack of knowledge about countries outside Canada, and promoting a fear of the unknown. The media presents short sound-bites with shocking images of war-torn settings, poverty, disease, and terrorism. While some of those media images are realistic, to many immigrants the images are as foreign and unreal as they are to Canadians. Most immigrants are young, well-educated, and industrious, and have come from large, established cities.

Reaction to the recent strike at a meat packing plant in southern Alberta was discussed at the focus group in Medicine Hat as an example of this. Opinions emerged that the workers should be thankful to have any job and should not be striking no matter what the working conditions; any conditions must be better than those in the country they came from. Such opinions, respondents stated, were based on the view that the immigrant workers at the plant were from third-world countries without sufficient food, clean water, or any quality of life. This belief seemed to excuse unfair, inequitable treatment and poor working conditions at the plant.

Respondents suggested that raising awareness about other countries and cultures would be the first step to increasing the value of diversity, and accepting and respecting different cultures. Learning to understand and value differences were suggested as the way to break down cultural barriers.

Recognition of Foreign Credentials

"My advice to any newcomer is do not even try working in your chosen field, just write a low level resume, find any kind of job you can to feed your family, and go back to school and build up your Canadian education. Without it you will be cleaning toilets all your life."

Immigrant / visible minority women described the difficulty they experienced having their foreign education credentials recognized in Canada. They described the process as confusing, discouraging and expensive. Refugees, they noted, face even greater challenges demonstrating their education as many leave their country of origin without documents. Most respondents found they needed to return to school to re-train. The cost of education is high, especially when earning only minimum wage. Respondents' comments about the accreditation process included:

"Once here, it can be difficult to get copies of school transcripts back home."

"It took a long time to hear the results of their evaluation."

"The language barrier makes the whole process harder."

"The price of exams is out of my reach."

They questioned whether the process of evaluating foreign credentials was necessary:

"Academic and technical skills mastered at school. In theory, should be the same no matter where educated. Fields such as accounting, administration, nursing and even engineering teach basic principles and skills that should be transferable between countries."

"The context or setting of applying the skills might be different in one country to the next. Engineering practice may be different in different climates but that does not mean that everything studied before is not applicable here in Canada. Taking selective courses and training could help people fill in the gaps of knowledge rather than having to go back to grade 12 and upgrade everything."

"A different set of skills might be needed to assist in the understanding the new workplace and enhance the ability of workers to adapt to and manage transition in their lives, not just returning to school and taking upgrading academic courses."

Financial responsibilities meant that many immigrants could only return to school part-time while continuing to work part-time.

"Immigrants must often go back to school, take expensive exams, while working to put food on the table to feed their families and pay back expensive debts."

"I just couldn't afford to go back to school with a family to support."

Focus group respondents said that without proof of Canadian education, it was virtually impossible to succeed. Finding full-time, well-paying, interesting work was described as difficult. They had to re-think their career plans and settle for lower-paying positions. They admitted to feeling under-paid and undervalued. Their comments included:

"As an immigrant I feel undervalued. I have a professional degree from my country that could be effectively used in Canada if it was recognized."

"My life would be so different if I was working in the area I was trained in at home and was being paid the level of that job."

"Other countries would accept my credentials - why not Canada?"

Respondents described the psychological impact of being underemployed: feelings of boredom, stress, reduced self-esteem and depression.

"Imagine, I am trained as a doctor and I must clean toilets!"

"You must hide your dignity and take any job to get started."

"I came from a wealthy background and now find myself in completely the opposite place. It is humiliating."

In addition to the difficulty experienced with foreign credentials recognition, focus group respondents reported that the lack of work experience in general, and the lack of Canadian work experience in particular, were additional barriers to finding employment in the local labour market. Respondents discussed the difficulty in having their prior work experience - work conducted before coming to Alberta - recognized as related work experience. Without specific Canadian work experience, finding a job was seen as problematic:

"I was applying for a dishwashing job and was asked if I had any Canadian experience! Dishwashing is considered to be an entry-level job and that requires so little experience. Why would I need Canadian experience for that type of job? I felt so badly not getting this job because I have a Masters Degree."

"Of course I do not have any Canadian experience I just moved here but I worked for fifteen years before coming to this country."

Respondents suggested that the relevance of Canadian experience was overemphasized and overvalued. Some jobs should not require Canadian experience. They said:

"If employers took the time to sit down and give newcomers a chance to explain their previous education and experience and to show they are willing and able to try something new, they might find the right person for the job is sitting in front of them."

"Lack of Canadian work experience and education is just an excuse that employers use for not taking an application seriously. It really is racism."

"If I were looking for work in Toronto, I probably wouldn't have had to go back to school because there is a much larger black community there and people are used to us. Someone would have hired me there but in southern Alberta it is different."

Issues and Barriers in Credentials and Work Experience

The issues and barriers related to foreign credentials and experience recognition are similar to those discussed regarding racism and discrimination. These include the difficulties securing well-paying, full-time jobs with benefits. Respondents described settling for part-time work, at entry-level salaries without benefits or security. Often they needed to find more than one job at a time to meet their financial obligations, or face low-income living.

Another impact was in finding work that is satisfying and meaningful. Respondents described feeling under-employed and frustrated by not being able to contribute the full range of their skills. As well they felt they were not seen as valued contributors to their team and were overlooked for promotions and interesting work assignments.

Recognition of Foreign Credentials and Underemployment

Research revealed that lack of recognition of foreign credentials perpetuates unemployment, under-employment and lack of advancement of immigrant / visible minority women in the workplace. In 2001, studies into the conditions for immigrants in the labour market ⁹ showed that, as a population, they were less likely to be employed in occupations requiring a university degree. Recent immigrants with a university degree were much more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be working in occupations that typically require no formal education. In Vancouver, for example, 31 per cent of recent immigrants with a university degree were employed in jobs requiring fewer skills, compared with only 13 per cent of Canadian-born graduates. In other urban centers such as Calgary and Edmonton, the difference between the two

10. Statistics Canada, 2001. Study: Immigrants in Canada's Urban Centres.

groups was at least 10 percentage points. Among recent immigrants, female graduates were more likely than their male counterparts to be employed in moderate or low-skilled jobs.

A lack of fairness stalls immigrant / visible minority women in low-skilled jobs and workplace barriers of many kinds help account for their limited progress up career ladders.¹² The regulations and procedures for recognizing foreign credentials must become accessible and manageable for new Canadians, without sacrificing professional standards.

Immigrant focus group members said the federal government should be responsible for foreign credential recognition as it directly relates to immigration and employment - both under federal government jurisdiction. They strongly advised that credentials be sorted out before immigrants enter Canada. One participant said that the Canadian Government should actively court potential immigrants for specific jobs while still in their country of origin, in the same manner that students are recruited at college by future employers:

"Businesses interview and recruit students right in college before they graduated. Canada recruits immigrants with education, training and skills but then does not follow through on their progress integrating into Canada's work place. Canada should embrace immigrants the same way as these businesses embraced the graduates."

In 2006 the federal government stated its commitment to improving this issue by creating transition programs and a credential assessment agency to enable immigrants to move into the labour market.¹³ However, the responsibility for accreditation generally falls under provincial and territorial governments, employers, and post secondary institutions.

The Alberta Government recently proposed steps to improve immigrants' access to the labour market by shortening the processing time for foreign credential recognition and offering more skills and language training. The four strategies proposed in this policy entitled, "Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta" include:

- Supporting communities to help immigrants successfully transition into Alberta society.
- Increasing target numbers for immigrants moving to Alberta (target of 10% of new immigrants to Canada, a minimum of 24,000, up from 16,469 in 2004).
- Enhancing existing programs and services that help immigrants adapt to life in Alberta.
- Improving recognition of foreign-earned credentials and enhanced language training.

In Canada today, it is reported there are 340,000 highly educated individuals who are unable to access the labour market because their credentials were earned outside Canada and can not be recognized locally. In addition to this loss of human resource potential, the non-recognition of foreign credentials leads to an annual, national, economic loss of \$2.7 to \$4.1 billion dollars.¹⁴

12. Jackson, A. 2001.

13. DiversityWorks. March 19, 2006.

14. Marlin Papillion, December, 2002 Canadian Policy Research Network

Language Barriers

"Language and cross-cultural barriers prevent workers from standing together with their co-workers on common ground."

Immigrant / visible minority group respondents discussed communication issues as a barrier to finding meaningful work and fully participating in life in Alberta. They claimed that significant issues were their lack of fluency in English and having an accent. Language issues create the following barriers:

- Limitations in their ability to demonstrate their skills and experience.
- De-valuing of previous work experience and education.
- Reduction in the employability of immigrant / visible minority women.
- An inability to secure a job in their chosen field and to obtain promotions.

Women described their difficulty in understanding spoken English and the frustrations that emerged from miscommunication. They described being judged as less competent and less educated than they really were. The following problems were identified as stemming from language barriers:

- Increased feelings of fear, intimidation and low self-esteem.
- Frustrations and irritations from miscommunication.
- Difficulty advocating for oneself or one's family.
- Missing out on services or being placed in the wrong program.

Even if language was an issue, most newcomers placed a high priority on finding work before taking language classes. Once working, participants claimed it was hard to find the time, money and energy to take English as Second Language (ESL) training. Because of their reduced ability to follow through on language training, moving beyond entry-level positions at work seemed impossible.

"My main concern when I came here was to find a job so I could feed my family. Once working it was hard to find the time and the (financial) support for ESL training."

"Finding food and shelter, which means finding a job is important as the cost of living in Canada is high. Both parents need to work full time. Once they are working, it is difficult to receive subsidies for language training. Language is a barrier to getting ahead."

Issues Resulting from Language Barriers

One of the greatest impacts of systemic barriers, including language issues, is financial:

"When immigrants move to Alberta, the first thing they want to do is find a job. The cost of living is high in Alberta."

"You have to take what you can get to put food on the table."

Because of the systemic issues and barriers that new immigrants face, many are only able to find employment at the minimum wage level. This intensifies the financial pressures faced when moving to Alberta. At \$7.00 dollars an hour, the minimum wage in Alberta is lower than in most other provinces.

Though the provincial economy is strong, the benefits of high energy prices have not reached all segments of the economy. Raising the minimum wages is one strategy to reduce poverty and assist with some of the financial burden faced by new Canadians.

Table 3: Minimum Wage by Province¹⁵

Province	Rate/hour	Province	Rate/hour
New Brunswick	\$6.50	Saskatchewan	\$7.55
Newfoundland	\$6.50	Manitoba	\$7.60
Alberta	\$7.00	Quebec	\$7.60
PEI	\$7.15	Ontario	\$7.75
Yukon	\$7.20	BC	\$8.00
		NWT	\$8.25

More widespread access to collective bargaining protections was also recommended to protect workers. Most of the voluntary sector, however, is not unionized.

Respondents admitted cautioning relatives and friends in their home countries against coming to Canada. Several participants mentioned that there exists a website, www.notcanada.com, created to prevent potential immigrants from choosing Canada on account of the perceived difficulties with credentials, finding employment and the high cost of living. The website is operated by a team of former immigrants to Canada, who now permanently reside outside the country.¹⁶ Two of the reasons for not coming to Canada, the team posted on this website, relate to jobs and discrimination:

"Yes, coast-to-coast, there are no jobs. Immigrants are highly qualified (MD's, PhD's, Lawyers, Engineers etc.) but they are driving taxicabs, delivering pizzas or working in factories. Even people with bachelor's degrees from Canadian Universities cannot find jobs after graduation. This is the tragedy associated with immigration to Canada. I feel sorry for those immigrants who are stuck in Canada for the rest of their lives. It is indeed a very sad and hopeless future."

"Immigration to Canada is based on a point system, obtained with your education, qualifications and job experience. Points are good enough for immigration, but in Canada, they are not good enough to get a job in your field. Amazing, how the credentials that qualify you to come to Canada are the same credentials that don't qualify you for your profession in Canada. The reason is, Canada only wants immigrants to do the labor jobs - pizza delivery, driving taxis, factory work etc."

Unfortunately, many immigrants do work in these types of jobs because of systemic issues and barriers. Not all immigrants remain in Canada. The Calgary Chamber of Commerce in 2006 reported that between 35 per cent and 45 per cent of in-migrants to Alberta choose not to stay here and either move home or to the United States.¹⁷

15. Minimum Wage By Province Updated: 04/20/06

16. NotCanada.com Team 2005 <http://www.notcanada.com>

17. Calgary Chamber of Commerce, 2006.

Immigrants coming to Canada generally have lower earnings and higher unemployment rates, and it takes them much longer than in the past to reach the average earnings of other Canadians.¹⁸ We must remember that immigrants also contend daily with the stress of moving to a new country, leaving family and friends behind and trying to overcome language barriers. Canada needs new workers, especially now that its population is aging and fewer babies are being born. Labour market shortages are forecast for the future. Canada's visible minority population is predicted to double in the next 12 years to between 6.3 and 8.5 million people. Minorities will account for more than one-fifth of the population by 2017.¹⁹ It is time to fully employ the full range of qualified workers that we now have in Alberta.

18. Statistics Canada, March 2005.

19. Papillon, M., December 2002.

Chapter Four: Funding Issues

Funding, the second major issue and barrier identified in the study, is addressed in this chapter. Organizational and personnel issues and barriers are identified as arising from funding shortfalls. These issues were introduced by all groups of participants in the study: immigrant / visible minority woman, non-minority women and executive directors.

Organizational Issues and Barriers

Executive directors interviewed for the study unanimously reported that human resources issues due to inadequate funding were the key issue and barrier facing the human services, non-profit organizations. Two directors said:

"I spend a lot of my time sorting through the competing and sometime conflicting regulations and reporting requirements for funding from governments, business corporations, and private donors."

"I feel like a beggar always asking for food. Asking for money is not something everyone feels comfortable doing but is now an activity that everyone must do."

Efforts made in the 1990's to balance budgets led governments to restructure their operations at the provincial and federal levels. Significant funding cuts and the reallocation of some government services to non-profit organizations resulted. Some organizations experienced increased responsibility and client numbers but few received increased program funding. Alberta's economy in 2006 is flourishing but directors confirmed very few organizations have benefited from this prosperity. Directors reported having difficulty:

- Finding funding that covers the full costs of program delivery.
- Securing stable operational funding.
- Providing competitive salaries and salary increases.
- Providing professional development opportunities for staff.
- Hiring the best person for the job.
- Covering growing shortfalls in government funding with other sources of funds.
- Providing the infrastructure needed for effective program delivery.
- Securing funding to mount innovative and creative programs.

Some of the directors also mentioned:

"Some of our program funding was cut or reduced or eliminated."

"A major government facility was closed down in Alberta, where are those people going to go?"

"The number of clients asking for our services has increased but our funding has not."

"I have to spend so much more of my time raising money".

Disparity between Organizations

Organizations with adequate resources are better able to pursue their goals. Smaller agencies without the personnel to devote to fundraising reported having trouble competing with their larger counterparts. Directors' comments included:

"The search for scarce dollars has raised the competition bar between and among agencies. The gap in capacity between large and small organizations is widening."

"Successful fundraising can influence the ability of organizations - especially smaller ones - to be sustainable. Larger organizations, with infrastructure and fundraising capacity, are pushing smaller organizations out of business."

"Causes perceived to be more 'in fashion' or 'sexy' are raising more money than others. "

The disparity in capacity between smaller and larger organizations is only growing. Small, local operations were described as continually under threat of closure because of insufficient funding. The reliance on short-term and contract funding for the delivery of programs has resulted in organizations operating on a project-by-project basis. Long-term planning is frequently impossible as priorities are constantly shifting to meet funders' criteria. Realistic and unrealistic fundraising expectations were also discussed. With the drive to attract new sponsors and donations, many organizations have developed unattainable goals. Non-minority respondents commented that:

"Bigger does not always mean better."

"Fundraising professionals are being told to raise incredible amounts of money. Turnover in organizations of fundraisers is usually every two years and professional burnout is common."

These respondents also concluded that the quality of the services sometimes suffered when expectations became over-inflated or shifted too frequently to meet the changing requirements of sponsors/funders / board of directors.

Organizational structure and competency is needed to develop successful fundraising programs. Major funders in Alberta, such as the United Way, Calgary Rocky View, Family and Community Support Services, Alberta Government Person with Developmental Disabilities and others, have been striving to build organizational capacity through their funding application and reporting processes. Organizational activities, such as strategic planning, developing logic models, conducting outcomes-based planning and evaluation, and conducting business planning, are essential to building the capacity and the success of the sector. These activities require time and resources - including manpower - as well as decision-making and consensus building. The human resources required for these activities are not supported through project funding.

"Project based funding is not sustainable funding and is not a long- term solution. Core funding is needed."

Executive directors and non-minority respondents worried about organizational survival. Some organizations have been successful in making alliances with business and government agencies to raise additional funds, but small, local operations were continually under funding pressures. If smaller

organizations dissolve, vulnerable populations in the community could go unaided and unrepresented. Collaborations and partnerships are important for the survival of smaller organizations. Ongoing research, collaboration and an injection of funds are essential to ensure an efficient and effective voluntary sector.²⁰ With funding constraints, directors reported their organizations were stretched and strained, which affected the sector, the workplace and the clients. The impacts of funding cuts on human resources are discussed in this section.

Personnel Issues

"There is not enough money to cover programs. It is a juggling act finding funds from one source to cover another. Some people are paid from three different grants or co-workers doing the same job are paid different salaries because their funding comes from different sources."

"It all comes down to money. Without money, you can't pay your staff well. If you can't pay your staff, it is hard to keep them working for you, especially when there is so much opportunity in the for-profit sector. You have to keep hiring and training new staff, which takes your time from doing other work and costs even more money."

With limited resources, executive directors reported having difficulty paying their staff competitive wages and providing significant salary increases. Discrepancies in wages and benefits for similar positions in the same workplace arose because the funding for those positions came from different sources. Such discrepancies contributed to feelings of resentment, low self-esteem and de-motivation among the workers. Directors reported:

"Low-paid careers in the sector are not viable for many people, especially now the Alberta economy is booming."

"Staff is often underpaid. Some staff does not make a living wage with benefits."

Directors also discussed the difficulties competing for staff with the private and public sectors that can offer better salaries, job security and benefits to qualified workers, and the difficulties in maintaining experienced staff. Staff turnover remains a considerable issue for employers in the non-profit sector. When funds are scant, recruiting and training new staff is an unwanted additional expense.

Immigrant / visible minority women reported that because of the increased demands placed on workers in the under-funded non-profit sector they were paid a very low wage and were required to work harder. Pay raises were non-existent and there were little to no benefits. They concluded that the discrepancy in the pay rates of workers in similar positions due to funding sources was difficult for them to reconcile. They did understand the funding pressures faced by organizations, but felt uneasy about working amongst peers who were paid differently for doing the same work. Funding problems emerged in

20. In 2003, the Canadian Council on Social Development, in collaboration with the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations published [Funding Matters](#) to assist sector organization. Current work is also underway to document the size and scope of the voluntary and non-profit activity. The National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO) provide information about non-profit and voluntary groups, including their level and sources of funding. The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) released their study [Taking Stock: Examining the Financing of Non-profit Community Organizations in Calgary](#) in 2006.

most discussions of workplace conditions held in this study.

A review of the literature showed that annual salaries in the human services, non-profit sector in Canada have remained stagnant over the last decade, as low as \$20,000 for day-care workers and \$27,000 for mental health, substance abuse and social advocacy workers. Trained and experienced staff, including those working with high-needs clients, can earn as little \$10.00 an hour. To save on the salary and benefit costs of regular employees, agencies have begun hiring new staff principally on a contract or part-time basis.²¹

"Staff start with us and get experience and training then move on to full-time work elsewhere because that's what they want and we're not able to provide it for them."

"Excellent people are lost to the sector because they've needed to find full-time work."

"Losing employees and their knowledge is a real loss to the organization."

In addition, the resources required to nurture and develop existing staff or to attract new employees with the right skills are limited. Little money is available for staff to attend conferences or upgrade their skills through professional development. Training and skill enhancement are important for both the organizations and the worker but rarely can non-profit organizations afford to offer this. A non-minority staff member reported:

"I worked for the agency for 15 years and they never offered or even suggested I take any computer training. Now they want to lay me off because I am not skilled enough in computers. I should have taken training on my own but I had young children and not much money. I have given them the last 15 years of my life and now I feel betrayed."

Non-minority participants pointed to the fact that because of competition from other sectors, limited funds, time and expertise, these organizations hired people who did not have all the necessary skills and expertise. Members of the non-minority focus group explained that:

"Organizations hired who they could afford, whether or not that person had all the qualifications."

"The result of not hiring the best people for the job is that the organization does not operate at its full potential."

"Hiring less-qualified staff and managers has reduced organizational effectiveness."

Directors also discussed potential skill shortages in key areas such as management, business planning and non-profit management. The future of organizations could be threatened as the management of the sector ages and, because of the instability brought on by funding shortages; succession planning is not being given sufficient priority. If current trends continue, within the next 20 years, there will be an annual shortfall of 332,000 workers in the Alberta labour market. Considering these labour market changes already underway, the importance of succession planning within the sector is imperative.²²

21. Mailloux, Louise, et.al. (2002).

22. Government of Canada, Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002.

Growing Workloads

Immigrant / visible minority and non-minority women said that changes in staffing resulted in intensified workloads with no corresponding increase in compensation for some employees. At times, workers confirmed they were required to work harder, accepting lower wages, longer hours, fewer benefits, and less paid leave. Because of chronic organizational under-funding, the implied threat was that lay-offs would result if these lower standards were not accepted.

"I work long hours for low pay and I'm expected to work these hours. There is no one to take my place. The number of clients is increasing and I don't want to let them down."

Executive directors reported an increase in their workload and a shift in focus to include more fundraising. They spent more time on reporting on the use of funds and on seeking new ways to raise money. They described the pressure placed on the rest of their responsibilities caused by this shift in activity. In smaller organizations especially, this has meant an increased workload for some directors, and a growing pressure to complete an expanding number of tasks.

"It is pretty disheartening when you signed up with an organization because you really wanted to assist people and make a difference in their lives but all you can do is think about the dollars and cents involved."

"The expectations for fundraisers are escalating. Demands are changing and are often unrealistic as plans for organizations get bigger and bigger."

"I spend my time making contacts, meeting with funders, building relationships."

Executive directors confirmed that making this shift in their work was crucial to the continued viability of the organization. Increased workloads have resulted in increased stress for both individuals and the organizations. It is not uncommon for management and personnel to suffer 'burn-out'.

Staff Management

Organization and employee management is crucial to smooth day-to-day operations. Some responsibilities of management such as staff training, evaluation and performance reviews have been neglected because of the increased need to expend time on fund development. Immigrant / visible minority and non-minority women reported not receiving performance reviews or training for their positions. New employees were directed to read the organization's policy manuals as a method of job orientation. They said this method was an ineffective way to prepare for the tasks that would be required of them in their new positions. This approach does not provide the necessary introduction or information for immigrant / visible minority women new to a job or a workplace. Immigrant / visible minority respondents said:

"It is not easy to start a new job and sometimes an immigrant woman needs extra help but who will take that time?"

Chapter Five: Workplace Issues and Barriers

Workplace issues and barriers, the third type of concern identified by respondents, are explored in this section. Workplace issues and barriers were primarily raised during the focus group discussions with both immigrant and non-minority participants. These include changes in the nature of work, workplace stress, and misuse of volunteers, racism in the workplace, management issues, aggression in the workplace, board governance issues, a lack of fair and equitable treatment, and the limited capacity of immigrant / visible minority women.

The Changing Nature of Work

Both immigrant and non-minority focus group respondents discussed the changing nature of work in the sector. There were fewer full-time, permanent jobs and more short-term or part-time jobs. Two executive directors interviewed for the study commented:

"One of the negative aspects of funding cuts has been the difficulty finding the resources to hire full time people with benefits."

"I have been able to hire quite a few immigrant / visible minority women in the organization and I am proud of that. The jobs are part-time positions but more women are able to work and get experience."

Providing part-time, low-paying positions does not resolve employment needs. Two immigrant focus group respondents commented that:

"A part-time job is not enough, I want to be a part of the labour force and have a full-time job with a good salary that I can stay in."

"It is virtually impossible to get ahead in the sector. The reason generally given is that funding is limited, and as a result opportunities are limited."

Due to systemic barriers, immigrant / visible minority women have limited career options. They could not afford to work part-time but were compelled to accept part-time or contract jobs because permanent employment was not available. Some worked at more than one part-time job to make ends meet. This had both direct and indirect effects for individual employees, as well as the organization that employed them. Working part-time or as a temporary employee affected a worker's:

- Wages or salary.
- Access to benefits such as pensions or health insurance programs.
- Responsibility and recognition within the workplace.
- General job security.
- Flexibility in terms of work schedules and task assignments.
- Access to training opportunities and employment development.

The results of these changes in the nature of work were that immigrant / visible minority women:

- Worked at more than one part time job to make ends meet.
- Lost out on social interactions and connections.
- Were less invested and engaged in the organization.
- Worked long hours without benefits or opportunities for advancement.
- Had limited access to training opportunities, as well as support to share ideas and find advice.
- Had limited information about and increased fear in addressing labour concerns.
- Felt families and children suffered when parents worked long hours and nights or weekends.
- Worried about the cost of childcare and the difficulty in finding care at irregular hours.
- Lacked confidence with the methods and cost of commuting to and from work.

One employee noted that working two jobs could be difficult:

"...because you're pretty scattered, even if those jobs are similar in the kind of work you do, you spend more time getting to work. If you're going to work for eight hours, your travel time is less significant than if you're going to work for three or four."

Immigrant / visible minority women described being marginalized because they were not full participants in the workplace. They had little power and little involvement in making decisions. When funding was tied to specific projects the worker was left in a precarious position. Project work can be short-term and stressful. Some said they were "on call" and expected to work extended hours and respond to demands at irregular and inconvenient times, or even to volunteer extra time. These issues and barriers directly affected employee's income and access to benefits and training opportunities. Workplace morale and organizational productivity were also affected, as were their personal lives.

Workplace Stress

Stress was reported by all of the focus group respondents (immigrants and non-minority). They described the source of their stress at work as:

- Feeling tired, burnt out.
- Working overtime hours and not being compensated.
- Being required to volunteer for fundraising activities.
- Being underemployed.
- Doing demeaning work.
- Having to work more than one job to make a living wage.
- Feeling unappreciated or not respected.
- Feeling taken advantage of.
- Working without a job description and performance evaluation.
- Having limited or no participation in policy or decision-making.
- Having limited potential for promotions.

"The abuse of power and position can cause chronic stress and anxiety resulting in the victim gradually losing belief in themselves and suffering physical ill health and mental distress as a direct result of this behavior."

"People don't always have the energy or the nerve to stand up for their rights. It leads to stress."

The Canadian Mental Health Association defined workplace stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. Some stress is positive as it provides the energy and motivation to meet daily challenges, both at home and at the workplace. When the feeling of satisfaction turns into exhaustion, frustration or dissatisfaction, or when the challenges at work become excessive, the negative symptoms of stress manifest themselves.²³ Both immigrant and non-minority respondents reported increasing pressures on workers to accept lower labour standards such as lower wages, longer hours, fewer benefits, and less paid leave in the sub-sector.

"I work long hours for low pay and am expected to work these hours. There is no one to take my place. The number of clients is increasing I don't want to let them down."

"My work is very stressful. People depend on me."

Voluntary sector organizations rely heavily on their workers' goodwill. If workers are pushed too far however, negative situations can arise. Work-life imbalance and the misuse of staff in typically low-paid careers were reported.

"More often than not, it is support for the cause, or love of the clients, or a desire to 'make a difference' that compensates for low pay in the sector."

"Too little staff translates into unreasonable workload. It is a form of abuse."

The non-minority women participating in the focus groups said that if the stress levels increased too much they would simply advance to other jobs, especially now that numerous work opportunities exist outside the sub-sector. Some immigrant participants described feeling trapped in their positions because of discrimination, limited education credentials, language barriers, fear and low self-esteem. They lack the confidence to change employers and feel obligated to accept the reduced conditions of their current situations. Immigrant / visible minority women are particularly vulnerable to factors such as stress, disillusionment, burn-out, feelings of powerlessness and a perceived inability to affect change. These respondents reported:

"In the name of the cause today in the community and non-profit sector many employees come early to work and leave late, do not take a proper lunch break, perhaps just eat at their desk, and do not always enjoy their time off in the evenings."

"People employed by the sector are extraordinarily committed to their work, their service users and their organizations. With funding being tight, employees frequently work beyond the call of duty rather than to see people potentially losing out on services they provide."

Some organizations limit the amount of permissible overtime in order to reduce stress and decrease the amount of uncompensated work. The pressure to work overtime is based on the unrealistic expectation that in order to be considered successful, or a team player, one must complete the work underway, regardless of how attainable the goal is. One staff member said:

23. Canadian Mental Health Association, 2005.

"I felt that if only they stayed a little longer, worked a little harder, the situation would get better. There could be more funding, more job security, and more time to get the work done."

"It is common in the sector for employers to accept the practice of staff working longer hours. Few organizations set out to exploit their workforce, but end up doing so by condoning the practice of staff working extra hours. Even where staff is able to build up over time, workload issues mean they are never able to take it all and often end up losing the time and money they are owed."

Conditions in the sector such as fear of job loss, layoffs due to unstable funding and increased demands for overtime resulting from staff cutbacks all serve as negative stressors. Employees who start to feel the "pressure to perform" feel they are increasing their effort to meet rising expectations with no commensurate growth in job satisfaction. Stress leads to job dissatisfaction, employee turnover, reduced efficiency and illness. Absenteeism, illness, alcoholism, "petty internal politics", poor decision making, indifference and apathy, lack of motivation or creativity are all by-products of an over-stressed workplace.²⁴ In stressful workplaces, some focus group respondents reported they might not have the energy, the time or the ability to look for work elsewhere.

Misuse of Volunteers

Immigrant women turned to volunteering as a point of entry into regular employment, to make essential work contacts and gain valuable Canadian experience. Immigrant respondents did not always see the intrinsic value in volunteering.

"If we are working, it doesn't make sense not to get paid."

The advantage of volunteering as a way to enter the workforce was debated in the focus groups with immigrant / visible minority women. Volunteering could be a useful way to reduce workplace barriers if the volunteer tasks are meaningful and if they expose people to the full range of activities within an organization, including those undertaken by management.

"Immigrant women stuff envelopes send faxes, type letters, and act as volunteer receptionists in order to have one line on their resume stating they have "Canadian" work experience."²⁵

"Is one of the key mechanisms for 'radicalizing' and feminizing settlement work as low-paid and undervalued? It provides the structural underpinning to support the sector, which include negative attributes like marginalization, lack of voice and representation."²⁶

If volunteering is to be considered valuable from both the individual and the organization's perspective, it must be supported financially, as well as managed by personnel who will place, train and monitor the individual and the program. Organizations with volunteer coordinators and programs are better able to accommodate these requirements.

24. Canadian Mental Health Association, 2005.

25. Lee, J, 1999.

26. *Ibid.*

Some volunteers were successful in finding full-time work in the wider community. Many respondents reported that immigrant and refugee women moved out of volunteer positions into part-time paid positions either at the sponsoring agency or at other community-based agencies. Rather than being promoted to a higher position, the movement is generally lateral, to another position at the same level. Informing immigrants about the value of volunteering was recommended, as long as information about their rights and responsibilities was provided and the volunteer activities could be monitored.

Racism in the Workplace

The immigrant / visible minority women participating in the study reported racism and discrimination within the context of the workplace. A summary of the focus group discussions revealed strong perceptions of racism and discrimination in the voluntary sector: Key points in the discussion were:

- The diverse cultural mix in Alberta was not reflected in all parts of the organizations that serve this province. Immigrant / visible minority women tend to be concentrated in lower-paying occupations with poorer working conditions, whereas non-minority workers tend to be in positions with healthier compensation and working conditions.
- Many positions in the human services, non-profit sector consist of part-time or short-term contract work. In addition, these workplaces are generally not unionized, with no protection from discriminatory practices or the promotion of employment security and development.
- There was a limited number of immigrant / visible minority women in policy and decision-making roles and a predominance of white, middle class women and men in positions of power and influence.
- Immigrant / visible minority women are excluded and not taken seriously in some of their work roles.

"When I first started my job there were only two black people working in the organization. The experience was difficult. Co-workers looked at everything we did. Co-workers would go to the administration to complain. Administrators have to make sure they listen to both sides of the story not just one side. In my case the administrators realized I was doing a good job."

They described workplace racism as insidious:

"People make racist comments, while looking you straight in the eye and the words pass right through the smile on their face."

"It is passive-aggressive treatment really, I am invited to critical meetings or events but I don't feel as if I am ever really taken seriously."

Issues in Staff - Management Relations

Both immigrant and non-minority focus group participants discussed working in toxic workplaces where management styles were counter-productive. More than 75 per cent of the focus group participants (both immigrant and non-minority) reported having worked for difficult managers, including those who were controlling, micro-managing, undemocratic and even abusive. Some said that the financial pressures placed upon organizations, and the stress of running organizations in this setting, might lead people to act in unreasonable ways. Others wondered if managers have been promoted beyond their abilities. Workplaces

with such managers can not retain talented, productive workers. Non-minority respondents said:

"I worked with an incompetent manager, who could not communicate with her staff. She would give direction, then change it, keep back information, then would take credit for our (her staff) work but would use us to take the fall for her if there was a problem. The office was full of conflict and petty politics. I was afraid to complain to superiors so just bottled up my stress, then ended up having to take sick leave because I felt so ill."

"Managing an organization is complicated and requires skills, training and experience, especially when organizations are under pressure."

"People join organizations but leave their bosses...they either physically or psychologically quit their bosses."²⁷

Few respondents said they were appreciated or respected in their workplace. When organizations have limited financial power to reward their employees, they need to consider other rewards such as encouragement, respect and nurturing. However, receiving compliments or positive feedback was not a common occurrence. Women were saddened by this fact because they believed only a few kindly-chosen words would motivate and rejuvenate them.

"What is needed is respect. If we are all required to work for low wages and are not taken seriously or listened to or shown any respect, why should we stay?"

Focus group respondents from both the immigrant and the non-minority groups said that some organizations in the sector used ineffective management techniques. In an effort to become more businesslike and accountable, traditionally softer non-profit approaches had been replaced by rigid corporate structures. Use of these "old-fashioned, top-down, corporate" styles of management was discussed as a workplace barrier in the focus groups held with the non-minority groups. They discussed these styles as being less effective than the more progressive styles that shared power and decision-making throughout the organization.

"The command and control leadership style is good in a crisis, when people need a leader to give orders and do it quickly. In crises, people don't necessarily want a democratic style. They want a leadership with a clear sense of where we need to go. But once the crisis subsides, so should the authoritarian, top-down approach."

"Some leaders may do more harm than good in an organization."

Employees expressed the need to pay attention to the culture of their workplaces. The leadership's responsibility is to clarify what is and is not acceptable behavior and to commit to creating a positive, productive work environment. Different management styles were identified, by both directors and staff interviewed for the study, that could provide a more positive atmosphere in this demanding sector. Using self-directed teams and co-operatives were examples of how power in the organization could be shared. When power and decision-making are shared, employees' perceptions of their work roles and responsibilities shift and they begin to play a more active role. Positive outcomes could include:

- Perpetuating a structure that supports and nurtures.

27. Buckingham and Coffman, 1999.

- Honouring the skills and talents of others.
- Feeling valued and an important contributor to the team.

Their comments included:

"Participatory learning and collective knowledge is so positive."

"Power of collective thought is much stronger than the power of individual."

"All perspectives have a voice; diverse ideas are able to emerge."

"Conflict is resolved together as a team."

Research regarding decision-making processes in diverse teams²⁸ indicates that less hierarchical management structures are effective. Communication and openness are described as key components of good management. Employees often bring new perspective and add value to decisions. Giving staff a voice so they feel they have made a contribution builds trust, loyalty, morale and commitment. If the leader is someone the staff distrusts or is someone who has kept people "in line" by abusing power, then the work environment suffers. Respondents concluded it was good business practice to create a positive environment rather than wasting productivity in constantly dealing with disgruntled workers and high staff turnover.

The Abuse of Power in Workplaces

Workplace bullying is ongoing, repeated aggressive behavior that humiliates, intimidates and degrades. Over the past decade, workplace bullying has become a recognized occupational health and safety issue. In this province, the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code has specific policies to prevent workplace violence which it defines broadly as any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted in the course of his or her employment. It requires Alberta businesses to implement a workplace violence policy and communicate it to employees, conduct a hazard assessment of risk factors and create a method of documenting and investigating incidents.²⁹ Executive directors interviewed for this study stated that they do have protective policies in place in their organizations but very few grievances have come forward.

Participants in both the immigrant and non-minority focus groups identified workplace aggression and bullying as key issues and barriers in the study.

They reported:

"It can be subtle or overt."

"One may join an organization, especially the non-profit sector because they love the type of work, but staying in the job and feeling productive, largely depends on the person you report to."

"ED's (executive directors) allowed to take ownership of their organization and become far too controlling, unreasonable. Their expectations change and are unreasonable."

"Arrogance gets in the way; wanting things my way gets in the way, wanting to be in control gets in the way, people rationalize why it's OK for them to act that way."

28. Gand, J., 2005.

29. Alberta Venture, October 2004.

Workplace aggression creates a tremendous liability for the employer by causing stress-related health and safety problems and forcing good employees to leave the organization. Employee turnover and stress leave are costly issues for employers to contend with. Immigrant / minority women interviewed for this study confirmed that this issue is especially problematic for vulnerable employees who do not report the aggressive treatment for fear that they will lose their jobs. Thus, many cases of workplace bullying go unreported. This kind of activity is hard to prove, especially in this sector that so lacks in resources. Few organizations have a policy in place regarding this issue. Those that do have such policies rarely test them. Many feel it is easier to ignore a difficult situation than to confront an aggressor. Respondents described:

"The (grievance) process involved reporting problems to the ED (executive director) and a board member who was a personal friend of the ED. My grievance was with the ED. When I tried to speak with others on the board about the issue, I was told that it was not their role to listen to grievances. There was no one to turn to."

"(Grievances) go unreported because of fear to report it."

"Has an economic impact."

"Increased workplace stress."

"Has an impact on our personal / family lives."

"Most (organizations) do not have employee assistance programs or human resource departments that can assist them."

"There is a gap in the resources and information available about this issue."

"There is the fear of reprisal if someone speaks up."

During this study many stories emerged, from both immigrant / minority women and non-minority women, about bosses who harassed or bullied their employees. Employees expected that any effort to resolve these problems would result in either losing their jobs and work references or having their reputations tarnished. When small organizations are involved in these issues, speaking up for your rights might mean losing employment. Organizations in the voluntary sectors need clear policies regarding harassment. Currently, most workers feel their only course of action when they are bullied is to tolerate the rough treatment or leave the organization without pursuing a grievance against their aggressor.

Board Governance

Immigrant / visible minority participants noted that very few organizations had immigrant / visible minority women leaders and directors. Only a small number of such women worked in policy and decision-making roles in the sector. Immigrant / visible minority respondents said that the level of diversity among clients in Alberta is increasing and they questioned the ability of boards to develop policies and strategic direction when lacking essential representation from the community. They recommended encouraging and promoting diversity at the board and management levels of organizations.

Non-minority focus group respondents also mentioned the lack of diversity among leaders in the sector. They stressed that the lack of diversity and high turnover was an issue to consider. If the processes

were not happening organically, they argued that steps should be taken to encourage a greater inclusion.

"Lack of diversity is because they (board members) are out of touch. The ongoing cost of hiring and training new staff should be placed in the budget as part of a business expense, and then perhaps they would notice."

Respondents from both the immigrant and non-minority groups mentioned that board members needed to be more involved in organizations to better monitor and assess operations. Immigrant / visible minority respondents questioned what mechanism existed in organizations to monitor and protect employees and ensure that the workplace is fair and equitable. The non-minority group were more direct in their comments. In keeping with the Carver Model of Governance, these respondents noticed a power shift in organizations that reduced involvement of the board in organizational activities. Board members now take an arms-length approach to operational activities and focus more on policy and fund development.

Under the Carver model, boards of directors lead the organization by setting basic direction and policies. Execution of the directives is the responsibility of staff members. Various rules govern the board-staff relationship and the expected range of activities for the executive director ("executive limitations"). The board's role is to deal with broad strategic decisions with long-term applicability. The board's domain is "governance"; board members are not expected to collaborate with staff on more operational tasks.³⁰ The result, respondents said, is that the powers of the board have been excessively limited.

Volunteer board members, generally employed full-time elsewhere, must deal with constraints in time, resources, and expertise. Meeting agendas are often focused, intense and efficient. Tenure on boards can be limited. With limited involvement in the organizations, day-to-day problems do not necessarily reach the attention of the board. If board members receive the message that organizations are operating efficiently and effectively, they often feel no need to probe further into organizational activities.

It is essential for board members to understand what is and is not effective at the organizational level. As well, they must understand the root causes of any problems occurring at the agency. There is a connection between good governance and the ability to achieve organizational goals.

Limited Capacity of Immigrant / Visible Minority Women

"Capacity building involves equipping people with skills and competencies which they would not otherwise have, realizing existing skills and developing potential, promoting increased self confidence, promoting people's ability to take responsibility for identifying and meeting their own and other people's needs."³¹

"We need to educate immigrants to stand up for themselves, be positive and look beyond racism and discrimination."

30. Plumtree Tim. August 2002.

31. Cooper, M. et.al, 2006.

Immigrant / visible minority respondents noticed there were gaps in the capacity of women in their group to meet the challenges faced in the workplace. A variety of areas were discussed in this context including:

- Confidence.
- Attitude.
- Communication and marketing skills.
- Understanding individual skills and abilities.
- Understanding of job requirements.
- Accessing and interpreting information.
- Finding and using resources, tools, support and networks.

Building individual capacity was considered essential to meeting the challenges of the workplace. Attitude, for example, was discussed as both a possible issue and a potential strategy for reducing barriers faced by immigrant / visible minority women. Building positive attitudes was described as a way to overcome negative aspects of the workplace. Respondents concluded that it was highly important to stay positive, even when things were not going well. They suggested learning to laugh and look beyond the hurtful things people may say or do. Conversely, attitude was also described as a barrier to success. Respondents concluded that if they blamed people or their environment for their lack of success they may not move forward.

"It is easy to blame others for your problems, but it is better not to think about what others say and do your best. You will be rewarded in the end."

"If you work hard, you will do well."

Respondents also concluded that this group of women needed to increase their capacity to sell themselves and market their skills in the workplace. Cultural differences might prevent women from actively promoting themselves to employers. Self-promotion can be difficult and immigrant / visible minority women may require assistance acquiring this skill. Job-finding clubs or support groups are potential resources to assist in this process. Having a clear identification and understanding of skills and experience and how to present these skills to an employer or manager is crucial to finding success in the workplace.

The Lethbridge focus group participants discussed the coaching they received in their job hunt, in the areas of:

- Writing a resume that described present and prior work and experience.
- Building self-esteem.
- Interviewing and presentation skills.
- Learning about Alberta labour rights and responsibilities.
- What to expect and what not accept in terms of job offers.

An employment officer assisted them through the various steps of the initial contact, application, interview, placement and follow-up. Women worked through the job-finding process as a group and so had the support of others in a similar situation. The key to success, respondents said, was the support of an experienced employment officer or mentor and the support of a peer group. They said the experience assisted in teaching them about finding work, the Alberta workplace as well as helped to build self-esteem

and self-marketing skills.

One respondent discussed her role as an informal mentor for an immigrant woman in the organization where they worked. The mentor assisted the new employee in understanding how the organization worked. The process, though time-intensive, was described as being positive for both women involved. Formal or informal mentors in an organization could assist new employees in successfully adapting to the new workplace culture. Respondents debated whether this role should be a paid position or a volunteer position. They believed that taking on the role of mentor can be time-consuming and regular workloads need to be considered before making any final commitments. Having a mentor or a support person as a resource to ask questions of was recommended as a strategy to assist women in many ways.

Developing networks is another way to build capacity among immigrant / visible minority. Networks are a way to share information and ideas regarding a full range of work-related issues. In a group, it is possible to make contacts, hear other people's experiences and suggestions and find the social support necessary to achieve emotional and career success.

Building individual capacity through attitude, self-marketing, and support were considered important ways to work through the barriers immigrant / visible minority women face to success in the workplace.

PART THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Chapter Six: Conclusions

In summary, three types of issues and barriers facing immigrant / visible minority women in the sub-sector were identified in the study. These were systemic issues and barriers, funding issues and barriers and workplace issues and barriers. Immigrant / visible minority women alone discussed systemic issues and barriers. Systemic issues and barriers - racism and discrimination, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and language concerns - were reported by immigrant / visible minority women to limit their access to and success in the labour market. These women were generally not successful in finding meaningful employment in their fields of interest nor did they do well financially. The barriers served to rob individuals of a higher standard of living and quality of life, in addition to denying employers of potentially valuable human resources.

Two types of funding issues and barriers were identified in the study: organizational and personnel. Executive directors argued that a lack of funding was the key issue facing the sector. Funding constraints created pressure on management and staff and decreased working conditions in the voluntary sector. Both the immigrant and non-minority participants discussed personnel issues. Lower wages, staffing shortages, increased workload, ineffective employee management, and reduced professional development were identified in the discussions as organizational stressors brought on by limited funding. A few organizations have been successful in finding stable funding through careful planning and marketing while others are in a state of constant flux, surviving project-by-project.

With limited funding, full-time employment opportunities declined. Employees and volunteers work harder and for longer hours. More time and effort is required to raise funds, possibly to the detriment of program delivery and client progress. Immigrant / visible minority women feel the full impact of organizational stresses. As a group, they see themselves as unable to access the policies and procedures designed to protect them in difficult situations, and are not confident that new employment could be easily found if they resigned their current positions.

There were some marked differences in the responses of participant groups in the study. Similarities and differences amongst the respondents are outlined below.

Variation in Responses

Similarities and Differences amongst All Participants

All participants were positive in their descriptions of the voluntary sector in Alberta. They enjoyed helping the community and found satisfaction in working with their clients and co-workers. They saw an opportunity to make a difference. Immigrant / visible minority women concluded they could make a positive contribution to their organizations by sharing their unique knowledge of language and culture. They also

found good friends and “like-minded” people there.

Discussions of systemic issues and barriers, and their associated impact on people and the workplace were identified exclusively by immigrant / visible minority women interviewed for the study. Other respondent groups, including the non-minority focus groups and the executive directors interviewed for the study, did not feel that the same systemic issues were relevant in their sector. They confirmed there were other reasons – mostly related to limitations in finances - that accounted for many of the barriers found in the sector.

Most executive directors in this study did not feel there was a need for initiatives or programs to hire and promote diverse personnel in their organizations. When asked how hiring decisions were made, they reported hiring the best person for the job based upon education and work experience. Diversity was not a factor that contributed to their decision unless diversity-related skills and experience were required for the job.

Similarities and Differences amongst Focus Group Participants/ Interviewees

Both sets of focus group participants discussed similar workplace issues. One difference between the immigrant and the non-minority focus groups was that the former group focused more on day-to-day workplace issues and the latter group focused more on management and strategic issues. The immigrant / visible minority group talked about learning to tolerate difficult situations, while the non-minority group discussed the strategies for improving their organizations and the sector as a whole.

The non-minority group was less willing to “put up with” the negative aspects of their workplaces. They said they would resign from their positions if they had to, and move on to other employment. Single mothers in the group were less likely to directly move into a new job search because of their financial responsibilities but they did say that when the opportunity arose they would accept a new position. Immigrant / visible minority women said they were more vulnerable than non-minorities to problems in the workplace but did not feel confident to seek new employment.

Some immigrant / visible minority women were unaware of their right to speak up, to ask questions or to find solutions. Others knew they had rights but did not want to exercise those rights. The capacity of some women was described as limited by a lack of information, confidence and support. A few women talked about the importance of standing up for one’s rights but not everyone agreed they would feel comfortable doing so. The non-minority focus group members understood they had rights within the workplace but this group did not describe themselves as willing to exercise those rights. They said there was too much at stake to risk filing a grievance or making a complaint. They could lose their jobs or become known as trouble-makers. It was simpler, they said, just to move on.

The noticeable absence of minority leaders in organizations was mentioned by all of the focus group participants. Very few senior managers and board members in the sector are immigrant / visible minority women. The population in Alberta is growing more diverse and all said that the leadership must reflect this change. Both groups concluded that the participation of more diverse individuals throughout the

organization would improve decision-making and governance.

The focus group members discussed governance both directly and indirectly. The non-minority group spoke directly about the responsibility of the board members to monitor and promote a fair and equitable workplace. They discussed the effectiveness of different board governance models. The immigrant / visible minority women spoke indirectly about the issue of governance by asking what safeguards were in place to protect employees in the workplace from difficult situations.

Non-minority respondents said their organizations might have safeguards in place to protect fairness in the workplace, but most were reluctant to use them. They would rather leave a job and look elsewhere than have to confront a difficult situation. They did not feel that these mechanisms were safe or reliable.

Executive directors interviewed for the study reported that most organizations have a mechanism for staff with grievances to come forward and resolve their issues. They did not feel that harassment and bullying were concerns, and as few cases have been brought forward, they concluded that the system must be working effectively. The fact that staff and management did not agree on the level of protection in the workplace is an indication that clearer systems should be in place in organizations in this sector. Legislation exists in Alberta to protect workplace dignity and promote equitable treatment, but it is essential for organizations to have clear policies and processes that protect the security and confidentiality of all employees. Policies and grievance procedures need to be reviewed for effectiveness across the voluntary sector. Situating grievance procedures outside of or independent from the organization may be a means of providing protection for the rights of the employees.

Similarities and Differences: Executive Directors and Focus Group Participation

Executive directors unanimously reported that funding restrictions were a critical impediment in the sector. They focused on organizational problems that emerged when operating with limited funding.

These include difficulties in:

- Securing stable operational funding.
- Providing competitive salary and offering salary increases.
- Providing professional development opportunities for staff.
- Hiring the best person for the job.
- Covering growing shortfalls in government funding with other stable sources of funds.
- Providing the infrastructure needed for effective program delivery.
- Securing funding to mount innovative and creative programs.

Both sets of focus group participants also considered funding a central issue. As non-profit organizations strive to create a better community, it is important that they also work at creating inclusive workplaces that are respectful and welcoming of diversity. Key questions emerging from the study pertain to what is valued and not valued in society. If Alberta values the economic contribution of immigrants, then steps must be taken to reduce barriers to their full participation in society. Employment is an essential component of one's identity, self-worth and emotional well-being. Workplace conditions and the ability to

address issues and barriers in the workplace are equally influential in shaping an employee's psychological health. Barriers, whether intentional or unintentional, are a form of abusive behavior. Barriers prevent women from reaching their employment goals, suppress their motivation and result in a feeling of marginalization.

32

Focus group participants indicated that fair and equitable treatment in the workplace can be achieved when the sector endeavor towards creating a fair and an equitable working environment. This involves implementing policies and practices for fairness in hiring and promoting, and encouraging equitable treatment amongst all workers. It is critical to provide information to enhance the knowledge and capacity of individuals, and provide them with support to reduce workplace stress.

September 22, 2006 Discussion

Women in the Non Profit Sector: A Dialogue to Build Bridges, Capacities and Alliances

The results of the study were presented and discussed at a forum entitled "Women in Non Profit: A Dialogue to Build Bridges, Capacity and Alliances". The event was held September 22, 2006 in Calgary, Alberta. The dialogue began with a three-part panel presentation including:

- National perspective of the non profit sector.
- Initiatives undertaken in the sector by Alberta Government.
- Findings of this study of the equitable treatment of immigrant and visible minority women as employees and as volunteers in the voluntary sub-sector in Alberta.

The objectives of this dialogue were:

- To present the findings of our research on "Equitable Treatment of Immigrant / Visible Minority Women as Employees and as Volunteers in the Alberta Voluntary Sector".
- To provide an opportunity for women to discuss the issues and barriers identified in the research.
- To provide an opportunity for women to leave with skills / information that would be helpful for them at their workplaces.
- To identify strategies that would allow the women / organizations to push the boundaries on the issues and barriers identified in the research.

Discussion Group Topics

Six discussion groups were organized:

- **Equitable / Discrimination Free Community – Is it possible?**
Using theatre and participatory techniques, the discussion included workplace harassment, discrimination, legal rights / responsibilities and power inequities.

32. Patricia Evans: The Verbally Abusive Relationship 1996

- **Internalized Racism**
Discussing the consequences of internalizing racism, the session focused on conscious and subconscious incorporation and acceptance of all the negative stereotypes from personal experiences, as well as images from media, folklore and accounts of history.
- **Creating Inclusive Workplaces**
Using experience to discuss and demonstrate ways of creating inclusive work environments that are respectful and welcoming of diversity.
- **Mobilize Social Networks for Institutional / Organizational Change**
Focusing on coordination and accountability amongst individual and organizations, the sessions outlined steps that can lead to desired change.
- **Intergenerational Connections (Succession Planning)**
Alberta is facing the biggest labour shortage in its history and it is imminent that the leaders in the non-profit sector are reaching retirement age. Consequently succession planning is imperative. The session presented some best practice approaches to leadership management in the voluntary sector.
- **Building Portfolios (Prior Learning Assessment Research)**
Learning is a life long process. Experiences and learning can be developed into a portfolio to enhance ones mobility in the job market. The discussion focused on portfolio building and presentation tools and techniques.

Forum Evaluation Summary

Participants were requested to fill out and submit forms evaluating the sessions and suggesting strategies for the issues raised during the forum. Forty-seven evaluation forms were returned, representing 45 per cent of the people in attendance. As ANIW is in the early stages of building strategies to address the issues identified in the research, it was critical to document the feedback from the participants. The following is a summary of what was received.

Participants reported:

- That they will be able to use the information at their workplace.
- That they felt energized and encouraged to bring issues for discussion at their workplace.
- That the discussions were well facilitated, inclusive, respectful and informative.
- That they needed more time for discussions.

For the strategies, participants reported and emphasized the need to:

- Educate women about workplace legislation that is in place to protect them.
- Form a collective, a union, a common voice, or a grassroots group to address issues of equality / diversity at the workplace.
- Develop mentoring/leadership programs.
- Opportunities to Network and Continue the dialogue.

Chapter Seven: Recommended Strategies

Recommended strategies for optimizing the workplace experiences of immigrant / visible minority women were discussed throughout the study and in the ensuing discussion forum held in September, 2006. The strategies that emerged from these groups will lead to expanded access to and increased success in the workplace for immigrant / visible minority women, as well as help promote a more equitable and rewarding experience in the non-profit sector for workers both Canadian- and foreign-born. These strategies fall into four main categories:

1. Address racism and discrimination.
2. Recognize foreign credentials.
3. Rectify funding shortfalls.
4. Create equitable and well functioning workplaces.

Recommended Strategies

Address Racism and Discrimination

1. Current multiculturalism policies and labour standards legislation exist that effectively protect the vulnerable in our society; the sector can use these guidelines to develop organizational capacity to address workplace racism and discrimination.
2. Leadership in the sector can commit to learning about racism and discrimination in the sector and in their organizations and lead the way to implement strategies that can effectively address the issues.
3. Employees need to educate themselves with current federal /provincial policies that protect the rights of individuals. Work with each other to ensure that provisions related to employment rights, and responsibilities are respected.

Recognize Foreign Credentials

Many interviewed for this study questioned the reluctance of governments and various stake-holders to resolve the issues related to the recognition of foreign credentials.

1. As one of the stakeholders sector leadership therefore must take on the advocating responsibility to avoid consequences such as the potential loss of social opportunity cost and human capital that comes with the failure to recognize foreign credentials.
2. Sector leadership in conjunction with educational institutions, certification agencies and government departments working on streamlining processes at the national, provincial and

local levels are encouraged to review models of equitable recognition of foreign credentials. Follow it up with a dialogue to identify a suitable model for Alberta and how the model can be implemented in Alberta.

Rectify Funding Shortfalls

1. Federal and provincial governments recognize and adequately fund the work of charities and not for profit organizations so that they can effectively assist the governments in fulfilling their policy goals.
2. Federal and provincial governments ensure that payments for contract work given to non profit sector are at par with those given to other sectors of the economy.
3. Sector leaders need to have a greater understanding of how funding affects human resources issues in the not for profit sector and seek ways to engage all stakeholders in a discussion on the issue.

Create Equitable Workplaces

1. Sector leaders ensure that human resources policies and practices are developed , implemented and reviewed on a regular basis with consequences for those that do not adhere to the ethical practices of these policies.
2. Board of Directors be engaged in monitoring and implementing human resources practices in the work place. Ensure safe environment for employees to exercise their democratic rights without the fear of reprisal.
3. Sector leaders ensure that all employees are given orientation on organizational procedures pertaining to human resources that enforce fairness in hiring, promotions and grievance processes.
4. Sector leaders ensure spaces are created for peer support, mentoring and that other skill building opportunities are in place for immigrant / visible minority women to flourish as leaders and decision makers at all levels within the organization and across the non-profit sector.

This study has shown that the non-profit sector has a number of ongoing and unresolved challenges including:

- Low pay with little or no benefits for many positions.
- Systemic and structural barriers to the recognition of foreign qualifications.
- Inadequate and or inconsistent development of human resources practices and procedures.
- Lack of investment in staff training and development.

Immigrant / visible minority women in the same workplace encounter, in addition to the challenges listed above, a number of other key challenges arising from:

- Racism and discrimination.
- The underemployment and unemployment as credentials are not recognized.
- Lack of orientation to organizational culture and practices.
- Fear of reprisal and the lack of a safe workplace environment to reach their full potential
- Language barriers.

Many voluntary sector organizations and funders have reported feeling the pressure to meet the needs and acknowledge that current practice of employing project based funding is neither sustainable nor conducive to alleviating the needs of this growing sector. The larger society including the three levels of government, have yet to fully recognize the economic benefits of the voluntary sector. If society truly values this sector, then necessary and required steps should be taken to strength the sector.

As an organization, ANIW and its members therefore have a huge task ahead of them, conveying that Immigrant / visible minority women; are able and need to be key players in setting and meeting the goals of this sector and ensuring the contributions of immigrant / visible minority women are recognized and that they are called upon to participate in building the capacity of the voluntary sector as a fair and equitable employer.

PART FOUR: APPENDICES

Appendix One: Data Collection Matrix

The Data Collection Matrix (DCM) presented in the following pages summarizes the research approach to complete the project. The DCM is used to guide the development of the Work Plan and to link research questions with specific items to be covered in the document review and voluntary sector representative focus groups and executive director interviews. This cross-referencing keeps the research focused and manageable so that valuable resources are used to collect the most pertinent information. The DCM provides a documented common understanding of the scope of the research prior to undertaking any data collection activities.

Equitable Treatment of Women in the Voluntary Sector Project Data Collection Matrix		
Research Objectives	Research Questions	Sub-questions
1.1 To Define Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What issues are facing visible minority and immigrant women in their participation in the voluntary sector? b. What are the causes of these issues? c. Whose role and responsibilities (formal and informal) are these issues (individual, supervisor, organization management, and government)? 	<p>Based on your experience, which issues do you feel are the most important? Why are these issues important?</p> <p>Who is responsible/controls this issue? Look at each issue identified to: Is this issue unique to this specific group, to women as a whole, to the voluntary sector, to every sector?</p>
1.2 To identify a short-list of key Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are the Key Issues above facing visible minority and immigrant women in their participation in the voluntary sector? 	<p>As a group, can we agree on the priority key issues?</p>
1.3 To understand the effects of the issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. What are the effects of these issues? c. Is this issue unique to the voluntary sector, to women, to this specific group of women? 	<p>Are you successful at your work and/or volunteering? Why? What is the effect of this issue?</p>
2.1 To understand how work place policies/practices affect the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. What policies/practices do organizations have in place regarding these issues? e. Are policies /practices followed, effective, helpful? f. Are there any underlying assumptions, other reasons behind these issues? 	<p>Are there policies and practices in place about these issues? Are these going to help you? Why do you feel this way?</p> <p>Because you are an immigrant or from a visible minority, do you feel assumptions are made about you? If so, what?</p>

Equitable Treatment of Women in the Voluntary Sector Project Data Collection Matrix

<p>2.2 To Determine opportunities and barriers existing to job satisfaction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What opportunities and constraints are present that restrict successful work experiences? b. Within whose role and responsibility (formal and informal) do opportunities and constraints lie? c. How aware is the sector of the need to change? d. Under what conditions could the successful changes take place? 	<p>What challenges did you experience? Did you have any special needs? Were these needs met? Do you feel you have power to address this issue? What opportunities exist around this issue?</p>
<p>3.1 To Determine creative solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How can the voluntary sector be transformed in order to better serve the needs of immigrant and visible minority women? Mainstream women? b. What best practices could be shared c. Whose responsibility/jurisdiction? d. What resources or tools are required in order to design, improve and monitor suggested changes in the workplace? e. How can solutions be promoted? 	<p>Can you suggest creative solutions to these issues? What conditions are necessary to make changes? What resources are available to make changes? Who is responsible for these changes? How can we make change happen?</p>
<p>4.1 To Determine future potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How well is the sector prepared to retain and provide a satisfactory workplace? 	<p>What evidence exists to suggest that the demand for change will increase/decrease? Given changes in the labour market, how can sector be transformed to better serve Alberta needs?</p>

Appendix Two: Focus Group Material

Focus Group Outline and Guide

1) Review the issues identified (listed below)

Choose the most important issues. This can be done before the focus group in private.
No need to identify yourself or your agency.

2) Discuss the major issues

If these issues exist, how would they effect an organization or the sector?

Are there policies and practices in place?

Are they working?

Are there ways of improving these issues?

What conditions are necessary to make changes?

What resources are available to make changes? (e.g. Government, supervisors)

Who is responsible for these changes?

How can change happen?

Issue Identified in the Pilot Study

Job Satisfaction Issues - Related to One's Pay:

Salary, benefits,

Hours worked or volunteered.

Performance reviews, promotions and evaluations

Hiring/firing. Job Security

Education /Training:

Formal and informal recognition of prior education, skills and experience

Education requirements to do the job, technical complexity

Skills Gaps:

- Feeling you need more skills/training to do the job or
- Feeling you have more skills than needed for the job.

Training and professional development

Job Satisfaction Issues - Not related to one's Pay

Ability to use skills, share knowledge and contribute

Health and well-being

Needs being met

Work Place Practices:

Daily Relationships (peers supervisors, administration and management)

Office space, security,

Job security

Discrimination, unequal access, unfair treatment

Barriers to the Adoption and Implementation of Best Work Place Practices:

Policies

Opinions

Programs

Resources, other?

Consent to Participate Form

All involved in the research will be requested to complete a *Consent to Participate in Research* Form. Participants will be requested to fill out two copies of the form before participating. The draft form is presented below.



205, 1409 Edmonton Trail NE • Calgary, Alberta T2E 3K8
Tel: (403) 262-8040 • Email: aniw@shaw.ca • Website: www.aniw.ca

Consent to Participate in Research Form

I understand that the purpose of this study is to provide feedback about my experience working or volunteering in the Voluntary Sector. Colleen McCracken, the Project Researcher, will use the information obtained about me in this study to learn how Immigrant/Visible Minority Women within the Voluntary Sector are best served by agencies in this sector.

The information that I provide or give the researchers access to is confidential. My name and address are not attached to my answers except through a coded number. Any personal information will be destroyed at the completion of the study and will not be shared with any individual or organization. The information I provide is protected under the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP). My answers will be put together with those of many other research participants before they are reported. ANIW will provide me with a summary of the information if I wish.

I do not have to answer the researcher's questions. I can refuse to answer any questions I do not want to answer. I can withdraw from the research study at any time.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Colleen McCracken, Principal Researcher, CLMcCracken Consulting, at (403) 283-4677 or the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women Suite 205 - 1409 Edmonton Trail NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 3K8

Phone: (403) 262-8040 Email: aniw@shaw.ca.

Please sign two copies: ANIW will be kept on file by ANIW and the second copy is for your personal records.

Focus Group Feedback Form

Thank you for participating in the Focus Group today. We would appreciate your opinions of the day and ask for any suggestions you might have for this research in the future. It can be hard to talk about all of the issues and make sure that everyone has a chance to speak. If you feel that something was missing, please let us know.

1. Please rate your satisfaction with the focus group in the areas below on a five point scale where 1 = 'Not at all' and 5 = 'A great deal'.

1.1 How satisfied were you with the Focus Group?

Please Circle your Opinion

Not at All				A Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5

Comments _____

1.2 Do you feel we identified the most important issues?

Please Circle your Opinion

Not at All				A Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5

Comments _____

2.1 What worked well for you?

2.2 What did not work well for you?

2.3 Were you surprised by anything that happened?

2.4 What have you gained from being a part of this focus group?

3.1 Are there any unresolved issues, which need further discussion?

3.2 Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for being a part of this process to identify and clarify issues facing immigrant and visible minority women in the voluntary sector.

Sample Focus Group Contact Letter

The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women is asking for your help with a Research Study to find focus group participants.

Nature of the Study

The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW), a registered not for profit provincial organization since 1986, is developing a **strategy for the equitable treatment of immigrant /visible minority women within the voluntary sector**. In 2003/2004 ANIW, in partnership with the Gender Institute for Research at the University of Calgary, conducted research that identified issues of importance in this area.

Today ANIW plans to take another look at these issues identified in the report to see if they are still considered important and to look for suggestions to improve the workplace. We are seeking immigrant women or women of colour or Aboriginal women working or volunteering in the voluntary sector. Their opinions about issues and solutions will give us important information for the study.

We are not evaluating specific organizations or people but are looking at the sector and issues in a broad sense. Individual names will not be used and privacy will be protected (Please see the consent to participate form below). The plan for the focus group is presented below.

If you can help us find women who might be willing to participate, please pass on the information or I will send them the information. I am working with Central Alberta Immigration and Refugee personnel in Red Deer and have been in touch with the Central Alberta Diversity Association. We have recruited participants but we are looking for a few more

We are planning to hold a Focus Group in Calgary to discuss this topic

Monday February 6 - 3-6 p.m.

And we are recruiting participants.

Here is the plan:

Focus Group Outline

1) Review the issues identified (listed below) and choose the most important issues. This can be done before the focus group in private. No need to identify yourself or your agency. Please print you information on a sheet of paper and Colleen will summarize the issue and bring them to the discussion. You could send your ideas to Colleen at mccmah@shaw.ca, or phone her at 283-4677, or bring in your sheet of paper to the focus group.

2) Discuss the major issues.

Some topics will include:

- If these issues exist, how would they effect an organization or the sector?
- Are there policies and practices in place?
- Are they working?
- Are there ways of improving these issues?
- What conditions are necessary to make changes?

What resources are available to make changes? (e.g. government, supervisors)
Who is responsible for these changes?
How can change happen?

3) Summarize the conversation.

Issue Identified in the Pilot Study

Job Satisfaction Issues - Related to One's Pay:

Salary, benefits,
Hours worked or volunteered.
Performance reviews, promotions and evaluations
Hiring/firing. Job Security

Education /Training:

Formal and informal recognition of prior education, skills and experience
Education requirements to do the job, technical complexity
Skills Gaps:

- Feeling you need more skills/training to do the job or
- Feeling you have more skills than needed for the job.

Training and professional development

Job Satisfaction Issues - Not related to one's Pay

Ability to use skills, share knowledge and contribute
Health and well-being
Needs being met

Work Place Practices:

Daily Relationships (peers supervisors, administration and management)
Office space, security,
Job security
Discrimination, unequal access, unfair treatment

Barriers to the Adoption and Implementation of Best Work Place Practices:

Policies
Opinions
Programs
Resources

Appendix Three: Protocols

Voluntary Sector Workplace Questionnaire

A bit about you:

(Please place a mark in the space below that feels right for you)

1.1 I am a:

Volunteer Staff Executive Manager Board Member Other

1.2 I currently work in:

Edmonton Red Deer Calgary Lethbridge Medicine Hat

I was born in Canada I came to Canada _____ years ago.

1.3 I came to Canada as:

an Immigrant a Refugee.

1.4 I am considered to be a visible minority (*Asian, Woman of Colour, Aboriginal*).

Yes No.

1.4 I have worked in this sector (*nonprofit/ volunteer sector*):

_____ less than one year, or for _____ years.

2. Why do you work or Volunteer in this Sector?

(Please print your responses)

2.1 I work in this sector (the nonprofit / voluntary) because:

3.1 How important is an understanding of diversity issues in your workplace?

Very important Important Somewhat Not Important Don't know

3.2 Why do you feel this way?

3.3 How would you rate your workplace's understanding of these issues?

___ Very Good ___ Good ___ Somewhat ___ Not Good ___ Don't Know

3.4 Why do you feel this way?

4. Your Opinions

In your opinion:

4.1 What are the most important issues /challenges (related to job security and satisfaction) facing visible minority and immigrant women who work and volunteer in this sector?
(Please use extra space if needed)

4.2 How do these issues(s) affect women working there?

4.3 What is being done (Policies, practices, training) or are in place to improve these issues?

Are they working?

Why do you feel this way?

5.1 What barriers are in the way to solving these issues?

5.2 How can barriers be reduced?

6.1 What conditions are needed to make changes?

6.2 What resources are available/needed to make changes?

6.3 Who is responsible for these changes? (e.g. government, supervisors)

7. Is there anything you would like to add?

ANIW is planning to host a conference this year.

Would be interested in receiving information about the event? Or helping volunteer?

Information: Yes No Volunteer: Yes No

Name (*Please Print*) _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ **Postal Code** _____

Email address _____ **Phone** _____

Can we call you back if we are unclear about one of your answers?

Thank you for being part of this process to identify and clarify issues facing immigrant and visible minority women in the voluntary sector.

Executive Directors Contact Letter

Hello my name is Colleen McCracken, the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW), a registered not for profit provincial organization since 1986, is developing a **strategy for the equitable treatment of immigrant and visible minority women within the voluntary sector in southern Alberta**. In 2003/2004 ANIW, in partnership with the Gender Institute for Research at the University of Calgary, conducted research that identified issues of importance in this area. ANIW plans to follow-up these issues and explore options to improve working conditions for women working as **employees and volunteers**. I have been contracted by ANIW to conduct the study by talking with stakeholders about:

- Key issues facing visible minority and immigrant women whom volunteer and work in the voluntary sector.
- Opportunities and barriers to job security and satisfaction that exist in the voluntary sector for this population.
- Strategies and best practices to improve the sector.

Your name was identified by ANIW as someone who could provide some information about your experiences with this issue in the voluntary sector. A representative of CLMcCracken Consulting will contact you regarding your participation in this important study and arrange a telephone interview time that works with your schedule. The interview will be conducted by Colleen McCracken and should take 30 minutes. We will be happy to send you a copy of the interview guide in advance if you wish to receive it before your telephone interview.

The research is a study of the sector as a whole in Alberta not an evaluation of a specific organization or individual. Participation in the study is voluntary. Individual names will not be used in the presentation of results and privacy will be protected under the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). All answers will be put together with those of many other research participants before they are reported. The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women has commissioned this study. If you have further questions concerning matters related to research, please contact kamal Sehgal, Executive Director, Alberta Network of Immigrant Women, aniw@shaw.ca or (403) 262-8040 or Colleen McCracken, CLMcCracken Consulting, mccmah@shaw.ca or (403) 283-4677. Thank you very much for considering our request,

Colleen McCracken
CLMcCracken Consulting

January 10, 2006

Executive Director Interview Guide

1) CONTACT INFORMATION *(for internal purposes only)*

Let's start by confirming your contact information in case I need to call you back to clarify or confirm any of the material we discuss today:

Name	
Date	
Current Position	
Contact Numbers	

I am a:

Volunteer Staff Executive Manager Board Member Other

I currently live in:

Edmonton Red Deer Calgary Lethbridge Medicine Hat

2) ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

I would like to ask you for some information about the profile of the most recent organization you have been involved with.

2.2 Clients

I would like to ask you about the nature of the clients you serve?

Do you keep client statistics? Yes No

Do you provide services in more than one language? Yes No

Which language (s)? _____

Has your client base changed in any way in the last 5 years? Yes No

If so, in what way? _____

How does this effect your organization? _____

3) DIVERSITY

3.1 How important an understanding of diversity issues is to your agency's^{10*} overall goals and ability to function?

Very important Important Somewhat Not Important

3.2 Why do you feel this way? _____

* Please note: if you are not currently participating in an agency, please speak generally about the voluntary sector.

3.3 How do you prepare your organization diversity?

4) ISSUES

4.1 In your opinion, what are some of the challenges facing visible minority and immigrant women who work and volunteer in this sector?

4.2 What barriers related to these issues do you see present in the voluntary sector?

4.3 What opportunities related to these issues do you see present in the voluntary sector?

4.4 How should voluntary sector organizations respond to these issues?

5) STRATEGIES

5.1 What strategies will reduce these barriers and enhance opportunities?

5.2 What policies and practices do you have in place regarding fair and equitable workplace practices?

Are they formal/ Informal?

5.3 What resources or tools are required in order to design, improve and monitor suggested changes in the work place?

6) ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Thank you for participating in the study.

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