



Faith & Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants & Canada up for Success

Peel Case Study Report
May 2017

Héctor Acero Ferrer, Aamna Ashraf, Trisha Scantlebury, Ronald A. Kuipers

Faith and Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants and Canada up for Success is a research partnership intended to explore partnerships between faith-based and government-funded settlement organizations in Ontario. This two-year project is led by the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) and funded by the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)**. More information about this project can be found at:

[www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Faith & Settlement Partnerships](http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Faith%20&%20Settlement%20Partnerships)

The project used multiple methods. Case studies were held within the local study sites (Toronto, Peel, Waterloo Region, London). Other methods included a literature review and a cross-site organizational survey. Reports were written for each method.

Research Partnership

Rich Janzen	Centre for Community Based Research
Joanna Ochocka	Centre for Community Based Research
Kyla English	Centre for Community Based Research
Chris Brnjas	Centre for Community Based Research
Jim Cresswell	Ambrose University
Ronald A. Kuipers	Institute for Christian Studies
Héctor Acero Ferrer	Institute for Christian Studies
Michael Skaljin	Interfaith Council of Peel
Huda Hussein	London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership
Mohammed Baobaid	Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration
Elyas Farooqi	Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration
Aamna Ashraf	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Trisha Scantlebury	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Idrisa Pandit	Renison University College
Doug Binner	The Salvation Army
Victoria Esses	The University of Western Ontario
Vera Dodic	Toronto Newcomer Office
Mark Chapman	Tyndale University College and Seminary
Giovanna Heron	Tyndale University College and Seminary
Tara Bedard	Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership
Sarah Best	Wilfrid Laurier University
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo	World Renew
Cameron Klapwyk	World Renew

Site Team – Peel Region

Héctor Acero Ferrer	Institute for Christian Studies
Aamna Ashraf	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Trisha Scantlebury	Peel Newcomer Strategy Group
Ronald Kuipers	Institute for Christian Studies



CENTRE FOR
COMMUNITY
BASED RESEARCH

Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR)
190 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G5

Phone: 519-885-1460 ext. 25293

E-mail: rich@communitybasedresearch.ca

Website: www.communitybasedresearch.ca

Table of Contents

Context	3
The Landscape of Immigration in the Peel Region	3
A few words on faith and settlement partnerships in the Peel Region	6
Methodology	7
Overall findings	9
Vision: To what extent are faith/settlement partnerships viewed positively?	9
Structure: What types of partnerships presently exist and how could they be improved?	13
Process: How can effective partnerships be better facilitated?	17
Conclusions	19

Context

The Landscape of Immigration in the Peel Region

One of the partners in this case study, the *Peel Newcomer Strategy Group*, has made significant efforts to collect data regarding immigration trends in the Peel region. This information presents a clear landscape of the region's growing population, its changing ethno-cultural make-up, and the impact of immigration on its demographic distribution.

Because of the significance of this data in the faith-settlement partnerships in Peel, in this report we have decided to present a brief landscape of the unique immigration patterns in the region. At the heart of the *Peel Newcomer Strategy Group's* strategy are statistics and data trends around the successful inclusion of newcomers in the Peel community. This section presents data pertinent to understanding the uniqueness of the region, identifying gaps in the information and research, thus developing a more comprehensive understanding of the newcomer experience. The statistics provided here are aimed to develop an understanding of the local environment and the opportunities and challenges within the Peel region, particularly in relation to its newcomer population.

Here are some of the most significant statistics:

Population:

- Peel's population is approximately 1.3 million (1,296,814)
- 55% of Peel's population consists of the City of Mississauga
- Between 2006 and 2011 Peel grew by 137,359 people
- According to the 2006 Census, the proportion of foreign-born population in Peel is at the highest level it has been in 75 years (Robert & Gilkinson, 2012)

Ethnicity:

- At 56.8%, Peel has the highest proportion of visible minorities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)
- 66.4% of Brampton's population is made up of visible minorities
- South Asian is the number one reported visible minority in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon
- 52.5% of Brampton's recent immigrants were born in India
- Of Caledon's total population, 47.3% are third generation (or more) Canadians

Immigration:

- In 2011 there were 650,530 immigrants in Peel and 2,620,455 immigrants in the GTA.
- Peel has 100,910 recent immigrants and is home to 24.8% of the GTA's total immigrant population

- 10% (118,000) of Peel residents are recent immigrants and 38% (443,000) are long-term immigrants (Region of Peel, Public Health, 2012)
- Mississauga has 57.6% of the Region's total immigrant population
- At 50.5%, Peel has the highest proportion of immigrants in the GTA
- 52.5% of Brampton's recent immigrants were born in India
- 39.6% of Peel's immigrant population was between the ages of 25-44 at the time of immigration
- Peel has the second highest percentage (15.5%) of recent immigrants in the GTA
- Peel continues to welcome over 34,000 new residents every year

Religion:

- 87.0% of Peel's population identified a religious affiliation, the highest percentage in the GTA
- Christian religions were the most reported religious affiliations in Peel at 733,790 people, which was consistent with the rest of the GTA.
- At 9.5%, Peel's Sikh population is the highest in the GTA (122,960)
- Catholics represent 46.3% of Caledon's total population
- 13.0% identified as having no religious affiliation
- 9.4% identified as Muslim
- 8.8% identified as Hindu

Languages:

- 3.9% of people in Peel have no knowledge of either official language
- 15.6% of seniors (65+) in Peel have no knowledge of English or French
- In Caledon, people who speak an official language at home make up 93.5% of the population
- In Mississauga 6.9% of people have no knowledge of English and French
- The proportion of Brampton's population who speak only Punjabi at home is 14.9%. In fact, of the 124,100 people who speak only Punjabi at home in Ontario, 86,185 (69%) live in Peel
- The top home languages in Peel are Punjabi in Brampton, Urdu in Mississauga, and Italian in Caledon

Education and Training:

- 39.8% of residents in Mississauga with a post-secondary diploma or degree earned their education outside of Canada
- Within the GTA, Peel has the highest proportion (21.1%) of total population who earned a post-secondary education outside of Canada
- Recent immigrants in Peel are highly educated but their unemployment rate is higher than that of long-term immigrants and non-immigrants (Region of Peel, Public Health, 2012)

Children:

- Between 2011-13, The Peel District School Board (PDSB) witnessed an increase of 1,842 children aged 3-19 years registering, resulting in a 50% percent increase
- Children who are learning English or French as second languages at school entry are less likely than those who are bilingual or speak English or French fluently to be developmentally ready to enter school. (Region of Peel, Public Health, 2013)

A few words on faith and settlement partnerships in Peel

Currently, there are two major partnerships taking place in the Peel Region that are relevant to our research. One of them is a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and the other is a regional interfaith council. The coming together of these two groups (through formal and informal collaborations) constitutes the most significant faith-settlement partnership in the region and a unique experiment in the Canadian context. Below, you will find a summary of the vision statements of each one of these organizations.

- The ***Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (PNSG)*** is a Local Immigration Partnership designed to develop a coordinated and integrated settlement services model thus enhancing the social and economic inclusion of newcomers, immigrants, and refugees to the Peel community. As a community collaborative initiative, *PNSG* actively engages and brings together multiple stakeholders from all sectors to address the needs of newcomers, immigrants, and refugees.
- The ***Interfaith Council of Peel (ICP)*** is a networking group of interfaith leaders and community organizations who gather to discuss ways to build friendship, work together for social causes, and provide insight and guidance on issues regarding faith communities. *ICP* membership consists of religious/spiritual leaders, congregation members, and/or designated representatives from faith communities and not-for-profit organizations. *ICP* aims to build an inclusive community of spiritual neighbours in the region of Peel, where people of all faiths cooperate based on the shared values of peace, compassion, social justice, equity, and service.

Methodology

In this case study, we looked at the settlement of newcomers in the Peel Region with the specific aim of examining the current partnerships between (1) the local faith-informed groups¹ (through their participation in *ICP*), (2) the existing Local Immigration Partnership (*PNSG*), (3) settlement agencies, and (4) other community and government-funded, service organizations. Our main goal was to find the language to effectively describe the ways in which these partnerships have furthered the integration and settlement of newcomers, describing successful cases and identifying exemplary models, helpful resources, and best practices.

Through this research we were able to identify some of the benefits and challenges that arise from the collaboration of religious groups (from diverse religious traditions) and public institutions in a common project such as the settlement of newcomers. We obtained narrative/qualitative data from each of the key constituencies in the region, through guided conversations that allowed participants to share their experiences with settlement.

In light of these goals, we conducted a four-tiered research program that combined two research methods, under the following structure:

1. Two Focus Groups, each with six faith leaders (*ICP* members)
2. One Focus Group with ten representatives from government-funded agencies
3. Two Key Informant Interviews with *PNSG* Staff
4. Four Key Informant Interviews with newcomers from Peel Region

Taking advantage of the uniquely developed *ICP*, we conducted focus groups with two subsets of its members (6 participants each). The first of these groups was a space to discuss the value of interfaith cooperation for the settlement of newcomers. In the second group, we attempted to unearth the experience of particular faith congregations currently participating in newcomer integration (through formal private sponsorship or informal connections with newcomers). Through this inquiry, we were able to identify common themes in the experience of faith-informed groups with newcomers and the practices that, from the perspective of faith leaders, have made settlement more or less successful.

In the second tier of the research we tackled similar questions to those we put to *ICP* members, this time with staff members of some of the government-funded organizations that currently sit at the *PNSG* table. These conversations with those dedicated to settlement-related work² allowed us to draw

¹ Throughout this report, we will use the expression “faith informed groups” to refer to all those organizations that, in their work with the community, are oriented by a particular faith affiliation. These can be faith congregations, religious groups, faith-based non-for-profit initiatives, or multi-faith partnerships.

² To understand the impact of the partnerships and collaborations facilitated by *PNSG*, it is important to clarify that the government-funded agencies gathered at the *PNSG* space are not exclusively frontline settlement. In our agencies focus group, we gathered representatives of housing, childcare, and mental health organizations as well.

conclusions regarding the particularities of the situations of newcomers that were not identifiable in our conversation with faith leaders, i.e., connections between variables like age, gender, and ethnic background.

In the third tier of the research we conducted interviews with *PNSG* staff. Given that these individuals possess working knowledge of the functions and contributions of both *ICP* organizations and government-funded agencies to the settlement process, our interviews with *PNSG* allowed us to distill emerging themes in the successful settlement of newcomers in the region, allowing us to identify the elements of the partnerships that work for faith congregations, government-funded agencies, and/or newcomers.

In the last stage of this process we approached newcomers whom we had identified – through the recruiting help of *PNSG* and the *Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP)*³ – as successful settlement/integration stories. We were intentional about selecting perceived-success stories because we wanted to provide a portrait of a working-model based on the narration of these newcomers, identify the most helpful moments of their journey, and determine whether those were at all linked to the partnerships that facilitated or contributed to their settlement.

The personal/professional experience of the individuals in all these categories, in combination with the data gathered by the organizations surveyed throughout the research, revealed best practices and successful models of collaboration between faith and government-funded partners, as well as barriers and pitfalls to such collaboration. We will outline these results in the next section.

This allowed us to get a more comprehensive picture of the integration of newcomers in the region beyond the limits of their initial settlement process.

³ The *Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP)* is a “multi-service charitable non-profit organization that assists the entire newcomer family in achieving settlement and integration within the Region of Peel” (<http://www.ncpeel.ca>). A representative of the NCP sits at the *PNSG* table of agencies.

Overall findings

Main themes

Vision: To what extent are faith/settlement partnerships viewed positively?

There were a number of themes that emerged out of our conversations. These themes represent several points of concrete agreement between representatives of government-funded agencies, faith-informed organizations, and newcomers regarding partnerships and their impact upon newcomer-settlement in the region of Peel. In this section, we have decided to highlight three themes that we consider most relevant to the topic of “vision” within the overall “Faith and Settlement Partnerships” research project. These are: (1) the need for a common language; (2) the value of networking; and (3) the multiplying effects of partnership.

1. Need for a Common Language: One of the most significant challenges that newcomers face in their integration process is the complex Canadian reality. In other words, newcomers need to develop an understanding of the functioning of various contexts of Canadian life (e.g., housing, childcare, employment, social environment), Canada’s multiple levels of governance (municipal, provincial, federal), and the impact of these realities on the settlement process. Once they have developed a clear understanding of each of these elements, newcomers are required to piece all of the information together as they develop a settlement strategy for themselves and their families. Each of these contexts and levels of governance has a distinct working language⁴ that newcomers need to understand – and navigate – if they want to successfully settle in Canada. This is an intricate, time-consuming process, which most times creates easily avoidable obstacles to successful settlement (from simple mistakes in job-application protocols to problems interpreting government forms).

“Everything like that is important when you are settling. What you say about yourself, what you write in a resume, how you write it. It was challenging for me.” (Newcomer)

From the perspective of service providers and faith leaders, partnerships are viewed as a definite way to overcome these language-related challenges. The partnerships developed through the mediation of *PNSG* have facilitated the creation of a common language between different types of government-funded agencies – or at the very least the ability to translate the requirements of a particular agency into a language understood by other organizations – and by the newcomers themselves. Such a common language creates a platform for referrals, ongoing information sharing, and, ultimately, a smoother transition for the newcomer from the first arrival to the search for housing and childcare. This was often described as an enhanced-

⁴ With “language” we are identifying here a broad category that includes technical lingo, sets of procedures, and format of communication expectations.

listening to the needs of the community at the service and policy levels.

“Some of the ways that we [PNSG] made our partnerships stronger was listening to them around what neighborhoods needed assistance, applying for grants with them, helping them with information that would allow them to get funding, having them inform the data sets that we purchased from Stats Can saying, “What ones make a difference to you? We won't want to do it unless it makes a difference to you.” Asking them what the difference is that LIP is making because they didn't really see any merit to us.... A lot of our work was about clarifying our role, clarifying the expectations to our role, hearing what didn't work, hearing people say they didn't like the LIP. It was having those bold conversations with them.” (PNSG Staff)

In the specific context of faith-settlement partnerships, language-bridges can have a significant impact. Representatives of government-funded agencies and faith leaders coincided in asserting that faith groups and faith congregations are the first points of contact for a significant proportion of newcomers in the Peel region (providing an environment of familiarity and a “language”⁵ known to the newcomers). The informal and/or formal collaboration of faith and government partners has enabled faith groups and congregations to broker the relationships between newcomers and local agencies, facilitating the settlement process. While in many cases the assistance provided by faith-informed groups goes beyond “translation” (through their participation in programs such as private sponsorship), it is analytically relevant to highlight this role, as it coincides with an emerging theme of our conversations, which is not always limited to the boundaries of formal settlement support.

2. The Value of Networking: There was not a single angle of our research that questioned the value of networking in newcomer settlement. For the newcomers who were interviewed, settlement is basically understood as the process of generating a lasting network of support. Most of their days are spent trying to find the “right person in the right place,” so that their questions may be answered and their needs met. The need of such a network is all the more palpable when they arrive with their entire families, as they must attend to different sets of needs such as childcare and schooling, in addition to housing and employment.

Key to our research is the fact that organizational partnerships – regardless of the specific sector that is linked to settlement through them – increase the likelihood of the emergence of a network of support for newcomers. The awareness of the complex needs of newcomers that has been created through the networking that happens at the *PNSG* and the *ICP* tables has led them to create a system of informal referrals and one-on-one connections that facilitate successful

⁵ Here, we are again referring to something more encompassing than a mother tongue (although in many cases faith communities provide English-foreign language interpreters). Social practices and rituals represent a point of contact provided by the faith-informed organizations that cannot be offered by settlement agencies.

settlement.

“Sometimes it's just convening around an issue that matters to everyone, inviting those people and then allowing them to foster those conversations, but continuously asking how can we support. We aren't your funder but we can help you with the funding proposal. We aren't the ones to do that, what do you need? It's about asking what they need and then trying to meet those needs or championing an issue they highlighted.” (PSNG Staff)

Faith-informed organizations are also aware that, on their own, they are often limited, recognizing that networking expands the kind of support that they can offer to their members and beyond. ICP itself is a network born out of the need for interreligious dialogue and action in a region with a largely religiously-affiliated population. ICP's attention to social justice issues has led its participants to welcome representatives from community organizations such as PNSG, thereby expanding their inter-religious network into a cross-sectoral one.

“Through our partnership with PNSG we have the largest faith leaders group that meets four times a year looking at connecting those faith leaders with refugees if they need specific religious or spiritual support. Around a sense of belonging and some of the challenges that emerge for even the most competent or qualified newcomers and with refugees there is an added level of complexity that we see and address.” (IPC Member)

3. Trust: Partnerships built upon relationships of trust are lasting, successful, can overcome challenges, and benefit settlement immensely. Two concrete findings support this result: 1) the central role of personal relationships in the networking processes related to settlement -at all levels- in the region; and 2) the fact that the faith-government divide can be overcome when the partners start their collaboration with an already-existent relationship of trust. Representatives of government-funded agencies and faith leaders coincided in asserting that previous relationships of trust were the condition of possibility for interacting effectively at a formal/official level.

“I am thinking about a particular instance where I was able to partner with a particular faith-based group and I was not a part of that faith-based group but I made sure that I learned about the cultural practices and what was appropriate before I even got into the space. From there it was a lot of thinking about that approach to partnership whereby partnerships [are] not necessarily between organizations but between people and developing that trust.” (Service Agency Representative)

“As we are sponsoring people we have people lined up who will help with doing jobs and we have volunteers who will help to teach the families English – we ask our community: what can you do. We are only dealing with one family, but I think that part of the issue always is that you need to

be willing to keep up the relationships for many years – which we did with the last family that we sponsored – because there are issues that turn up down the road that are not initially there.” (ICP Member)

These excerpts, taken from one of our focus groups with service agencies representatives and ICP members respectively, provide a sense of the significance of trust at multiple levels when it comes to successful partnerships (trust between organizations, trust across sectors, the trust of newcomers). They also evidence the multiple contexts in which personal relationships of trust originate positive information-sharing, referrals, and ongoing care for the newcomer and her integration. PNSG staff have recognized the struggled and attempted to address it in their conversation tables.

“The difference that I think sets us apart from even other LIPs is that we have a lot of trust that has been built over time with settlement agencies. Many LIPs might sit within regional government or municipal government, they don't really get face-to-face time with frontline. What we've heard is that's always been a struggle. For PNSG that was a struggle for a long time as well. ” (PNSG Staff)

These are a couple of concrete fronts where mistrust has been experienced and overcome through partnerships:

- a. Respondents from settlement organizations expressed uneasiness around developing partnerships with faith organizations (some participants were concerned, and felt that it is unclear, whether establishing a partnership with a faith congregation or religious group would violate their commitment to serving everyone equally. Settlement agency participants identified the words such as “mission” and “evangelization” in reference to faith-based groups, to demonstrate their apprehension).

“There are some suspicions around the motivations of faith-based groups. There is a need to develop strategies of trust between faith/settlement.” (Service Agency Representative)

- b. Respondents from the ICP groups constantly mentioned that government agencies are not concerned about the overall well-being of newcomers. They feel as if in many cases their faith-informed groups are left to pick up the pieces of an incomplete settlement process.

Structure: What types of partnerships presently exist and how could they be improved?

Our discussions unearthed a number of structural elements that have contributed to the development of Peel’s current faith-settlement partnerships, highlighting directions for possible improvement and growth. Many of these structural elements are not organizational or administrative; instead, they are linked to the qualitative value of the relationships that emerge within human communities. Keeping in sight their common objective –the successful integration of newcomers to the region– community workers and faith leaders have developed networks that support enduring partnerships. Faith leaders and representatives of service agencies coincided in affirming the significance of authentic human exchanges for these partnerships to develop.⁶

With this overall theme in mind, we identified a number of structural elements in the faith-settlement partnerships that subsist in the region of Peel, which we have clustered in the following three categories:

1. The Multiplying Effects of Partnerships: Our consultations with government-funded agencies and faith-informed groups revealed a multiplying effect in their partnerships. Although the participants were not always aware that this had taken place, original partnerships had paved the way for other partnerships to emerge. Even good personal relationships, which over time took the form of informal organizational partnerships, have allowed organizations to continue exploring further partnerships in their areas of need and create an environment where newcomers are likely to integrate successfully.

One of the most interesting results of our research is that those organizations comfortable partnering with other organizations in the same sector seem to be more open to breach the sectoral divides. This is the case of both the table of government-funded agencies –hosted by *PNSG*– and of *ICP*, who entered into a relationship because of their previous internal experience of partnership. The following comment, from one of our service agencies group participants, summarizes this effectively:

“Now we are talking a lot more about integrated services and how we as organizations can really partner well so that we can take an all-encompassing approach to serving the communities that we are working with. I am also seeing conversations happening with faith-based organizations. Whereas before I would have a conversation with one person now I am having conversations with the women’s group as well as someone

⁶ Several times in our discussions with respondents the word “friendship” was used as the best way to describe the origin of a successful and lasting partnership. Our goal in all these cases was to identify some structural elements of these task-grounded (or task-oriented) friendships.

who is a part of the social services committee as well as someone who is in the newcomers committee as well. So there seems to be more a fabric that is being sown between the organizations that we get to tap into as well.”
(Service Agency Representative)

Partnerships, therefore, have multiplying effects on several contexts and directions. They replicate within both service agencies and local communities, breaching the professional-volunteer barrier that is often found in the area of settlement. The coming together of service providers and community members in a given partnership-table models a process that can subsequently be replicated in faith communities, agencies, and at other tables in order to provide an integrated approach to settlement.

“And that it is a well established community where our families are secure and if we care about where we live we want it to be the best place we can live. So ICP says that we can work together, live together, eat together and tries to spread that respect and understand around. So there is a two way street where we come together and form a community and then go back to our communities and understand that we are all part of Peel – or even all part of Toronto and it benefits all of us.” (ICP Member)

2. Faith-Settlement, a “triple threat”: Faith-Settlement partnerships in the region are often built upon existing networks of formal and informal partnerships/collaborations, particularly of three types: (1) Government-funded agency to government-funded agency; (2) faith group to faith group; and (3) personal collaborations.

The reason to add the expression “triple threat” to this theme is that, interestingly, each one of these three levels/areas of partnership challenges a common assumption about partnerships. Faith leaders and agency representatives alike noted that, in their respective sectors, there are internal attitudes of mistrust that need to be fought constantly for partnerships to succeed (e.g., faith communities hesitate to engage in work with other faith communities, service agencies often perceive themselves as competing with one another for funding). Existing partnerships question the premises behind previously harboured mistrust, providing further empowerment to an integrated approach to settlement.

“There is much more openness now within the faith community – they are more involved in issues of poverty and a whole variety of other social determinants of health. There is also much more openness amongst organizations within the not-for-profit sector. The challenge (from the perspective of the Punjabi Services Health Services) is that when a faith organization asks us to send out staff to their office we have logistical and practical issues to deal with such as insurance – ensuring that everyone can

travel safely, ensuring that they are going to a safe environment, ensuring that there is a backup clinical supervisor in case someone suicidal shows up. So these are some of the structural issues that we are struggling to overcome. There is an openness from the faith organization because they are willing to give us clients, and accommodations. We are in the process of working this out.” (Service Agency Representative)

Particularly relevant to this discussion of alleviating tensions, or addressing lack of trust, was the flourishing of personal relationships. We cannot stress enough the positive impact that personal relationships have had in faith-settlement partnerships in the region. They are perceived as the cornerstone of successful and lasting partnering as well as the element that guarantees the newcomers’ trust.

“So the personal relationship is absolutely critical to the success of building a community that cares or a community that supports its new immigrants, new refugees, those who are coming in without that experience of having knowledge of how the system operates or without having the resources at hand that gives them the type of lifestyle that they would like to see. So that informal support is absolutely critical to engaging and keeping our immigrants and refugees staying in the region – otherwise they would tend to leave and then you are not really building a community, you are building a transition place and we don’t a transition place in Peel.” (ICP Member)

The successful faith-settlement network brokered by PNSG only emerged because these three types of partnerships were already in existence. This was particularly evident in the case of ICP, a table of interfaith cooperation that had done much of the ground work in trust-building, cross-congregational translation, and information sharing, and could then be integrated in the larger conversation facilitated by PNSG. In turn, the success of partnerships in the Peel region has had an impact in these previously existent partnerships. Two items should be highlighted here:

- a. Relationships facilitated by PNSG and ICP allow similar types of organizations (whether it be two faith congregations or two government-funded organizations, etc.) to experience the benefits of partnerships with a known counterpart first, thus encouraging these organizations to reach out to their social networks, and beyond, to establish additional partnerships when it is required.
 - b. Establishing these partnerships positions smaller organizations within a larger community network, where information about current needs, best practices and previous partnerships can be shared.
3. Informal structure responds to needs/ Formal structures provide longevity: Another structural element identified in our discussions is the interaction between formal and informal

partnerships. In particular, the Syrian refugee crisis put existing structures to the test and revealed the capacity-building of the formal-informal cooperation. The most flexible collaborations proved to be the most effective when responding to this crisis. The incorporation of private citizens, government-funded organizations, and faith-informed groups in the same project allowed the region to respond to a disproportionate number of newcomers with unprecedented needs. On the one hand, knowing where the needs are, who can address the issues, and what type of procedures need to emerge is a process better developed in the context of informality. On the other hand, having the infrastructure to properly respond to those needs often falls to the formal context.

While none of the respondents denied the importance of formal interaction between organizations, their desire to communicate the benefits of their “informal connections” was palpable amongst government-funded agencies and faith-informed organizations. Some of the respondents clarified, however, that formal partnerships are vital in developing lasting structures, in which informal collaborations can also take place. Sustainability is a significant concern when it comes to partnerships, and formal structures provide a sense of reliability that generates trust. Three specifically structural elements were identified in already existent partnerships in the region in relation to this formal/informal interaction:

- a. A number of informal partnerships exist between faith/settlement communities (these relationships were established prior to the Syrian refugee crisis). These partnerships facilitate activities such as information sharing, referrals, and networking.
- b. Some long-term collaborations around health and mental health care, education, housing, and child protection services also have a relatively long history in the region.
- c. However, there are a limited number of formal faith/settlement partnerships in Peel. Those organizations who have established positive, formal partnerships have designed their own tools, such as a Memoranda of Understanding, to help encourage successful working relationships.

“Many informal partnerships have developed over the past several years between faith/settlement communities in Peel. Formal partnerships are less common.” (Service Agency Representative)

Process: How can effective partnerships be better facilitated?

The vision and structure results point toward a number of practical ways of facilitating partnerships. Given the historical importance of the Peel Region in the settlement landscape of Canada, processes that developed organically, and at times by chance, could be reflected upon and recorded in this research. Many of our respondents were attempting, through their answers, to account for those elements that led to successful partnerships and could be replicated in other cases. The following are three themes regarding processes:

1. Member and resource sharing: Different partnership tables share members and resources, which is a structural benefit of the multi-level partnership format. Of particular importance here is the fact that cross-appointed members significantly aid the translation and information-sharing fronts, as well as makes cross-sector referrals and organizational partnerships easier to implement.

This structural element points to a theme we were able to identify in our discussions about processes, that is, the importance of developing mechanisms for member and resource sharing. This process has been organically generated in Peel, and could be easily replicated in other regions. Its most significant effects are in the way organizations perceive each other. A cross-appointed member not only serves as a bridge-builder but is able to identify areas of common interest, alleviate misconceptions, and resolve conflicts.

“To give you an example, PNSG is one such example. I have been involved with PNSG since day one until now so I know all that has happened. There was not that very intentional connection to faith but now they have seen through my sharing, or some of the other community leaders who have spoken and said that faith is an integral part of who they are they recognize that they work also needs to be factored in if we are going to serve our settlement sector effectively. That learning happens through osmosis – it does not necessarily have to be intentional all of the time.” (ICP Member who has been cross-appointed to the PNSG table)

2. Developing common terminologies: Corresponding to a theme highlighted on the first part of this section, we should also emphasize the development of a common language under the topic of process. Organizations on both sides of the faith/settlement divide have very specific ways of addressing issues that correspond to their technical or religious contexts. As it has been mentioned already, respondents on both sides coincided in affirming that there are several advantages to developing a common language in conversation.

“One of the main barriers to partnership is language, therefore common terminologies between faith/settlement organizations can be useful in

establishing and maintaining successful relationships.” (ICP Member)

While the outcome of this process is important, the process itself is perceived as beneficial to service providers, to newcomers, and to the community at large. These language-related conversations have a twofold goal: they generate common ways of addressing issues that are often new to the community, and they generate trust. A number of focus group participants emphasized that building trust is a fundamental piece in the establishment of partnerships and that having a common language helps to alleviate suspicions and opens the path for trusting relationships.

3. Providing administrative support for follow-up: Designing and implementing tools such as Memoranda of Understanding creates strong partnerships. These documents can outline the kind of support organizations and faith communities provide to each other in the settlement process and the boundaries needed in their interaction with each other. Although the importance of informal cooperation was constantly highlighted by our respondents, the need of a formal framework when it comes to official dealings, which involve funding and allocation of resources, was also mentioned. This was particularly relevant in our discussion with service agencies:

*“We work with a faith organizations and I only like to work within a formal frameworks. Some of the relationships go too far too fast. One of the things we ask them is to serve every refugee, not just the Muslim refugee. We have been provided with a medical doctor. He has to see every single person and they agree to that. We have refugees from all over the world who are of difficult faiths and we do not want to create any discrimination. So that is why I prefer to work with faith organizations within a formal framework so that we know exactly what we are getting into and why we are doing it.”
(Service Agency Representative)*

One of PNSG’s most significant contributions to the landscape of settlement in the region is the administrative support they provide to the discussion table of service agencies. This administrative support includes the space where the meetings take place, facilitation tools, and minute-taking. Although basic logistical elements, these contributions allow for continuity and gradual development of their discussions, bringing them closer to an integrated approach to settlement.

Conclusions

Our case study provided a brief overview of the successful model happening in the Peel Region, one of the most diverse places in the country and one of the first places of arrival of newcomers to Canada. Consequently, Peel offers a space where the pressures of settlement are amplified and the urgency for results is higher. Given this context, Peel constitutes a helpful pilot-project, a point of reference for the rest of the country. There are a number of recommendations that emerge out of this case study. These recommendations are directed towards different types of organizations, levels of government, and community groups.

The idea of an integrated approach to settlement seems attainable in the Peel Region in great part because of the conversations facilitated and the relationships brokered by *PNSG*. However, the role of *PNSG* is difficult to understand, as it is not directly related to front-line work. In terms of policy, our recommendations can be summarized in a call to develop policies that facilitate the emergence of conversation tables such as those led by *PNSG*. This will allow different already-existing organizations to contribute to settlement in a more efficient way. This work in policy should be paired with awareness-raising campaigns, shedding light on the importance of bringing different sectors (volunteer/professional, community/government, secular/religious) together to respond to the needs of newcomers.

Although significant work has been done in the context of service agencies, particularly to equip them to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, it is still unclear for them how they can utilize the contribution of faith-informed organizations to further their work with newcomers. In the Peel Region, most of the points of contact between these two sectors are informal and depend on fortuitous exchanges between faith leaders and government-funded agency representatives. The changing needs of recent waves of newcomers have forced agencies to be more attentive to faith-informed groups thus developing an interest in understanding the religious communities. Assigning a central role to this understanding –of the significance of religious groups for newcomers– is necessary to providing an integrated approach to settlement.

In terms of faith-organizations, it is clear from our discussions that the existence of interfaith cooperation is a definite step toward further partnership. Interfaith cooperation has allowed specific faith groups to be more reflective of their own biases, aware of their needs, and open to cooperation with other community partners. In regards to partnerships between faith-groups and other community organizations, it is important to clarify that they are and will likely remain in a “grey area” between formal and informal partnerships. This should be fostered and encouraged, since it allows them to respond effectively to rapidly emerging needs. We suggest that further investigative work be done to provide a better understanding of the contexts, structures, and organizations that allow informal partnerships to flourish.

Finally, there is an overall call to fostering open conversations in the local communities, where diverse stakeholders can openly share their fears, hesitations, and hopes for partnerships (this recommendation is not exclusive to the work in the settlement sector, but any other possible areas of cooperation). The process of dialogue has proven key to the success of partnerships in the Peel Region because it has allowed relationships of trust to develop across sectors, with concrete positive outcomes in newcomer-

integration. Sectors that already work together in a context of dialogue have allowed the trust that many newcomers place in their faith communities to extend beyond those, facilitating their integration. This is effectively captured in the following closing comment, from one of the *PNSG* staff persons:

“I think we should continue to explore the possibility of partnerships, because based on what I see, that's how it works. We get people from the church, the mosque, the temple. They're very much compelled to going there. And sometimes, new families, they would go to there first. They would address their faith community before addressing anyone else in the community, because of that's who they trust” (PNSG Staff)