

The Migrating Native People's Program of the Department of the Secretary of State supports Native Friendship Centres in concert with the Provinces and is designed to provide orientation for aboriginal people in an urban environment. The centres are designed to improve the quality of life by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to and participation in Canadian society while respecting cultural distinctiveness. Governments provide core funding, training funding, capital funding and community interaction and special projects.

Support: The Negro Community Centre of Montreal (NCC) has been in operation for 58 years and provides day care, pre-school, sports, sewing classes, counseling, field trips, library facilities, dance, theatre, legal aid, a job bank and senior citizen programs. There is also the added dimension of psychological support. The NCC provides an environment where support from the many frustrations encountered by minorities can be obtained.

Skills: The Committee was also made aware of several initiatives involving the strengthening of individual and group skills: life skills training, leadership and organizational development, volunteer development skills, board member development and others. These ranged from organizational development for regional leaders of the Canadian Council of Muslim Communities to a four-phase leadership training process for approximately 250 francophone organizations in Ontario, by the provincial government.

Pride: Government and other funding agencies must also recognize the necessity of multi-ethnic integration into more broadly based community organizations. Specific settlement and service organizations may be created to meet a particular need, but it is a source of considerable pride for all Canadians to see community organizations respond to an issue or an emergency unrelated to their ongoing program, like support for the boat people, the victims of the Italian earthquake and the support of ethnic minorities for the Manitoba Language accord. In the case of South East Asian refugees, neighbourhoods, church organizations, groups of friends, students, associates at work, agencies, the media, governments and many others assisted.

Neighbourhood House: One successful model of a centre which is trying to work in the area of social integration is the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. Although the agency continues to provide basic settlement assistance and multilingual aid in these areas, it identifies itself as a true "neighbourhood" service by having the staff reflect the multicultural nature of the community and employing a staff person to work specifically on visible minority concerns.

"For instance, a typical day at the Neighbourhood House you will see Vietnamese, Chinese, and East Indian people at the English classes, and you will see the children of the students participating in the mums and tots programs that we have. We will have a lunch at noon time where we have East Indians volunteering their time to run that program. In the afternoon we might have a preteen club in which several of the people participating are from the visible minorities. So at any one time you come into the Neighbourhood House... there is no requirement for participation. You do not even have to be a member of the neighbourhood house, you can walk in that door and you can participate in whatever is happening. It is non-discriminatory." (South Vancouver Neighbourhood House)