



**Altered
Minds
Inc.**

learning, changing, growing

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



Altered Minds Inc.

June 4, 2020

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Contents..... | 1 |
| Executive Summary | 2 |
| Entry Program | 3 |
| Living English for Employment..... | 4 |
| Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) | 5 |
| Computers for Life..... | 5 |
| Looking Ahead..... | 6 |
| Board of Directors | 8 |



Executive Summary

In 2019-2020, Altered Minds Inc. received funding from 4 sources to help immigrants gain knowledge and skills to integrate socially and economically in Manitoba. We served 3,650 newcomers, including permanent residents (PR) and prospective PRs residing in Manitoba, as well as pre-arrival immigrants still in their home countries.

| Program & Number of Clients Served in 2019-2020 | Funding Source & Duration of Agreement | Amount |
|--|---|--------------------|
| 1. <u>Entry Program (EP) & Entry Program Online (EPO)</u> : Orientation & language for newcomers to Manitoba - 2,839 participants | Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC) 2017-2020 | \$1,083,599 |
| 2. <u>Living English for Employment (LEE)</u> : Summer language and work experience program for newcomers with limited English – 76 participants | 2018-2021 | 120,279 |
| 3. <u>Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA)</u> : Settlement planning and employment services for immigrants destined to Manitoba – 292 participants | Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) 2015-2020 | 293,762 |
| 4. <u>Computers for Life (C4L)</u> : Basic computer classes for newcomers with limited English. ISED provided additional funding in the 4 th quarter to expand the program – 432 participants | Innovation, Science & Economic Development Canada (ISED) 2018-2022 | 106,983 |
| 5. <u>Get Out of Town: Newcomer Garden</u> : Promotes healthy eating, physical activity and mental wellness. Since January, 6 newcomer families have been planning and preparing garden plots on several acres of land north of Winnipeg – 11+ individuals | Winnipeg Regional Health Authority | 1,000 |
| | Total: | \$1,605,623 |

The most significant events of the fiscal year were:

- Adjusting to a 4-day work week as a result of accumulated decreases in federal funding
- Learning that IRCC would stop funding for the Entry Program, and saying goodbye staff in March
- Hiring and losing 3 great IT specialists who moved on to more permanent positions in IT
- Hiring a Fundraising Coordinator and Marketing Specialist to save the Entry Program and make up the shortfall in federal funding, only to have the Fundraising Specialist quit within a month.
- Completing our application for Charitable status

Entry Program

EP Statistics

Our records indicate that 2,839 newcomers from 109 different countries attended the Entry Program in 2019-2020. Sixty-four (64) % were Economic immigrants, 14% were Refugees, 18% were Family Class, and 4% were international students or foreign workers applying for permanent residency. Four hundred and forty-nine (449) newcomers volunteered while attending the program, and some continued on as paid interpreters, educational assistants and teachers in our programs. We developed many lasting partnerships over the years, and are particularly thankful for the regular presentations made by over 30 agencies on Guest Speaker Day.

Challenges

Enrolment decline: The number of newcomers registering for the Entry Program has been declining since 2014-2015. More individuals are applying for permanent residency after working or completing studies in Manitoba, and no longer feel like newcomers by the time they become Permanent Residents.

Reduced budget: Due to decreased landings in Manitoba in the past few years, the federal government gradually reduced funding for settlement services to the province over a 3-year span. From 2017 to 2020, our budget decreased by 21%, requiring us to gradually cut out field trips, interpretation services, and move to a 4-day work week in 2019-2020.

A 15-year legacy

It was a very emotional time when we were forced to close the Entry Program in March and say good-bye to staff who had been the heart of program since its inception, 15 years ago. Over 62,000 newcomers have benefited from our comprehensive orientation classes since 2005! When asked what students liked most about the program, here are students said...

- *My teacher was so good with us. I love Canada more because of the Entry Program.*
- *It helped me to know what is legal, where to go when I need help, how to express myself.*
- *It improved my self-confidence. It improved my ability to adapt in Canada.*
- *Friendly staff. Great teacher. Good time management. Creative teaching methods. Flexible lecture schedules.*
- *The interaction with other cultures. How students are received and treated. This step was very important to get better things in Canada.*
- *The teacher was pleasant and allow to ask questions. I liked that people from outside come to teach us, so I heard more than one person speaking, for example, about taxes.*
- *One person cannot whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra. Every person is working as a team: front desk, instructors, presenters. They are always there to solve problems or solve queries.*
- *Teachers and their positivity. Meeting and getting to know people from different countries and backgrounds.*

Living English for Employment

Living English for Employment provides 7- weeks of in-class, work-related English practice and weekly work experience for adult newcomers in July and August, when other EAL programs are closed. The program prioritizes new arrivals to the province with the most limited English. In 2019, learners were grouped in classes based on their choice of the following areas of study: Computers, Sewing, Nutrition & Food Preparation, and Gardening. The program was delivered by 16 part-time staff, 3 Coordinators, 2 Administrative Assistants, 5 Teachers, and 6 Educational Assistants (EAs).

Out of 143 applicants, 75 students started the program on July 8. The rest were placed on a waitlist and some joined the program to fill vacancies that opened up. The following program statistics are based on the 76 students who attended classes for the majority of the summer.

Student Demographics

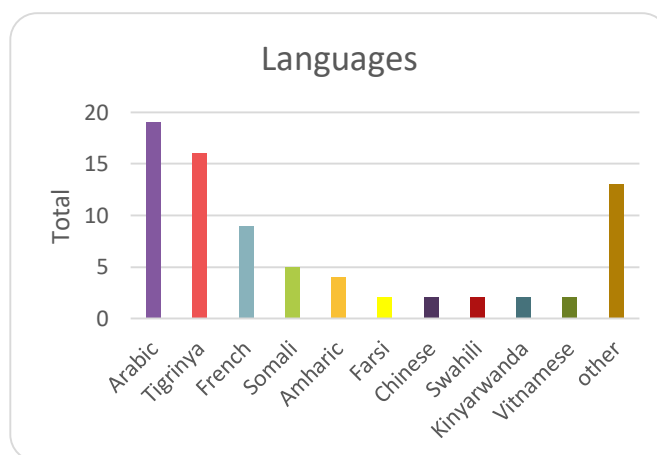
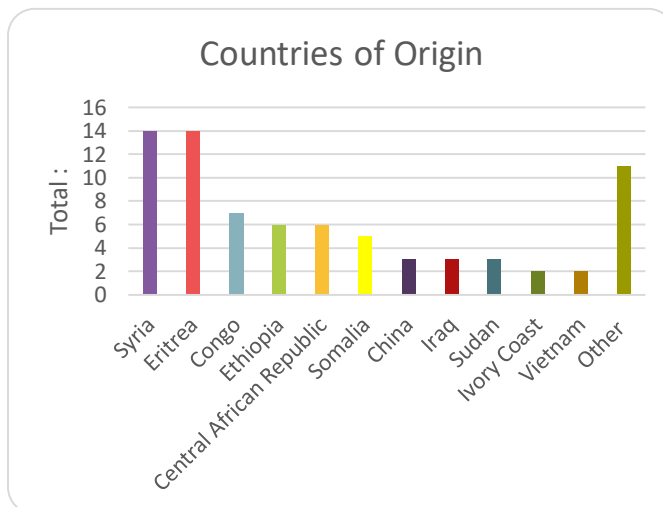
Students in the LEE program came from 22 different countries, with a majority from Syria and Eritrea. Students spoke at least 23 different languages. Forty percent (40%) of the students were males and 60% were females. Ages ranged from 18 - 70, with a majority of students between 25 and 44.

Partners

LEE 2019 built on the strength of past relationships with employer partners and instructors. Gardening students returned to the 2 commercial gardens - Hnatiuk Gardens and Almost Urban Vegetables - and 2 new partnerships were established with Fort Whyte Farm and Myriad Village.

For sewing, we continued our partnership with One Nation Exchange, using their training curriculum and an instructor from their organization. We also visited Cutting Edge, a social enterprise managed by the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute.

The nutrition group had another great experience with Food Matters Manitoba, which delivered a nutrition program adapted for our low level English speakers. The students went to a commercial kitchen at the Sergeant Tommy Prince Recreational Centre for this training.



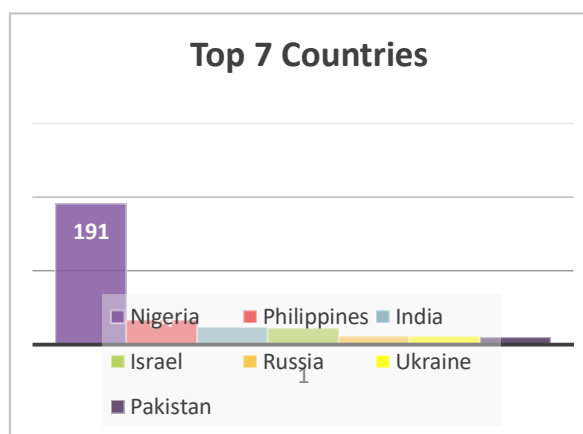
Challenges

Finding volunteer interpreters for 23 languages was difficult. We had under-estimated the need for interpretation services, and were left scrambling at the last minute.

Finding employers who could accommodate our students in the workplace was a logistical challenge. Managing groups of 5-15 students on a work site for only a half a day each week disrupts workplace routines. Furthermore, communicating with learners who have very limited English skills requires more support than most employers were able to give.

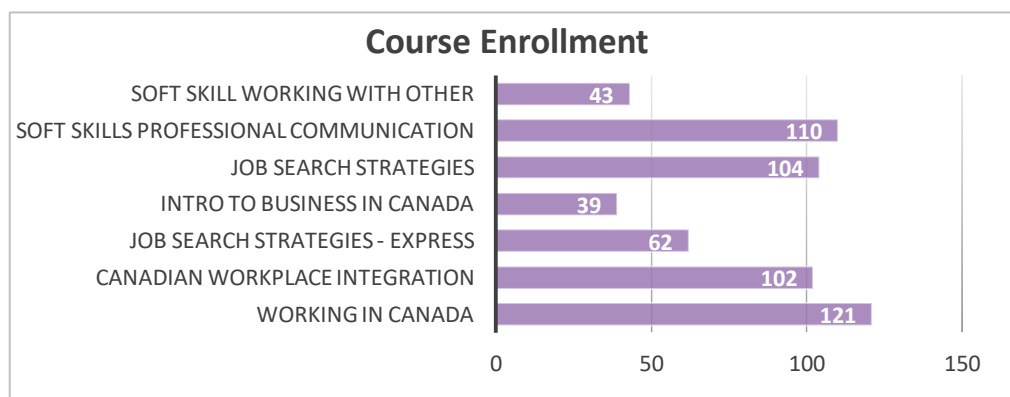
Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA)

SOPA is a national program administered by the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), with partners across Canada. Designated agencies in each region provide pre-arrival employment services for PRs destined to their province. Our SOPA Manitoba team consists of 1 Intake Counsellor, a Soft Skills Facilitator, a Job Search Strategies Facilitator, and an Employment Specialist. In 2019-2020 we completed 292 client intakes, most of whom enrolled in one or more of the facilitated and self-guided online courses in the figure below.



Challenges

Despite technological advances, face to face meetings with clients around the world pose an on-going challenge. Our SOPA facilitators primarily use Big Blue Button, but poor audio and video connections often force them to switch to Skype and other aps, or abandon the effort and revert to email communication.



Computers for Life

Our C4L program was a huge success this year. We delivered 34 courses, each 4 weeks long, including 22 Level 1 classes, and 12 Level 2 classes. Early in 2020 our program was selected to receive additional funding by ISED. This allowed us to deliver 10 additional classes in the last quarter of the fiscal year, add more hours and content to the course, and increase teacher prep time.

Five (5) teachers, 8 childminders and 66 interpreters were involved in delivering the program. We provided basic computer training to 432 clients – almost double the original target number of participants. Each graduate received a free computer to take home from Computers for Schools.

We also established new partnerships for class delivery. We delivered 8 classes at the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, where we set them up with a new computer lab using donated equipment. In March we planned to deliver classes at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM), 7 Oaks Adult Learning Centre, and the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA). Unfortunately, the classes were suspended in mid-course due to COVID 19, but we were able to set up a new computer lab at MIA for their continued use.

Quotes from our students:

I like everything about my C4L class. I like the atmosphere here. I like the teacher and her polite and soft way of teaching. I like my interpreter! But what I like most is the knowledge about computers. I had no knowledge on how to use it, but now I can use it.

The program is flexible and everybody can follow the teacher with the help of interpreters. The teacher was extremely helpful and his style of transforming information to us was steady and solid. But the duration of the course is too short

I like C4L program, it is very helpful for me because now I can do many things on the computer. I can make new files, save them and email them to a friend

I've learned a lot about computers and how to use Internet safely. Thank you for giving us this opportunity!



Looking Ahead

AMI has funding in place to continue delivering the following programs:

- Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) till March 2023
- Computers for Life (C4L) till March 2022, and
- Living English for Employment (LEE) till September 2020.
- Newcomer Garden till August 2020.

These funding agreements cover the wages of staff directly involved in program delivery, and proportional rent based on the square footage used by each program. A percentage of each project's budget can be used to cover 'administrative costs', which includes essential bookkeeping and oversight functions. However due to the loss of core funding from IRCC, we can no longer cover full-time salaries of administrative personnel, nor the rent of our current space.

We will be looking for a smaller and less expensive place to rent in the fall of 2020. Grace will continue to serve AMI as Executive Director, with greatly reduced hours. She will be moving to the Interlake where AMI has started a Newcomer Garden for refugees in the inner-city. Grace is eager to explore farming and gardening as a way that AMI can provide newcomers with the opportunity to develop self-reliance and income generating skills for a rapidly changing world.



Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors is comprised of individuals who support our mission statement, represent the demographics of the people we serve, and have skills and experience that assist the agency in achieving its goals.

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Chair | Gonzalo Agrimbau |
| Vice Chair | Adrian Ong |
| Secretary | Judianne Jayme |
| Member at Large | Hongyu (Max) Wang |
| Member | A'elaf Erdachew |
| Member | Araddhana Kumari |
| Member | Matt Teymouri |

Incorporating Directors/Founders: Grace Eidse, Deborah Spear



AMI welcomes refugees and immigrants to Manitoba and promotes the well-being of their families and communities, locally and overseas, by harnessing resources and providing responsive programs and services that assist individuals in adapting to change and overcoming barriers to a good quality of life.

