



**Altered  
Minds  
Inc.**

learning, changing, growing

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



*Mission: 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.*



**Altered Minds Inc.**  
**July 8, 2021**

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## Executive Summary

In 2020-2021, Altered Minds Inc. received \$718,990 funding from 7 sources and served 636 newcomers, including refugees, landed immigrants, and approved permanent residents (PR) still in their home countries. We managed to keep our doors open throughout the pandemic by adjusting class sizes to comply with health protocols.

Program & Number of Clients Served in 2019-2020	Funding Source & Duration of Agreement	Amount
1. <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) 2020-2023	\$300,012
2. <u>Living English for Employment (LEE)</u> : Summer language and work experience program for newcomers with limited English – 76 participants	Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC) 2018-2021	\$132,540
	Second Harvest/Food Rescue – cooking classes	\$5,000
3. <u>Computers for Life (C4L)</u> : Basic computer classes for newcomers with limited English – 268 participants	Innovation, Science & Economic Development Canada (ISED) 2018-2022	\$129,574
	Red Cross (one time)	\$16,702
Other Grants:		
4. Assiniboine Credit Union	For a signal booster to reduce dropped calls	\$588
5. City of Winnipeg, Community Safety – for presentations on safety-related topics	To be delivered in 2021- 2022	\$5,000
	Total:	<b>\$718,990</b>

The most significant events of the fiscal year were:

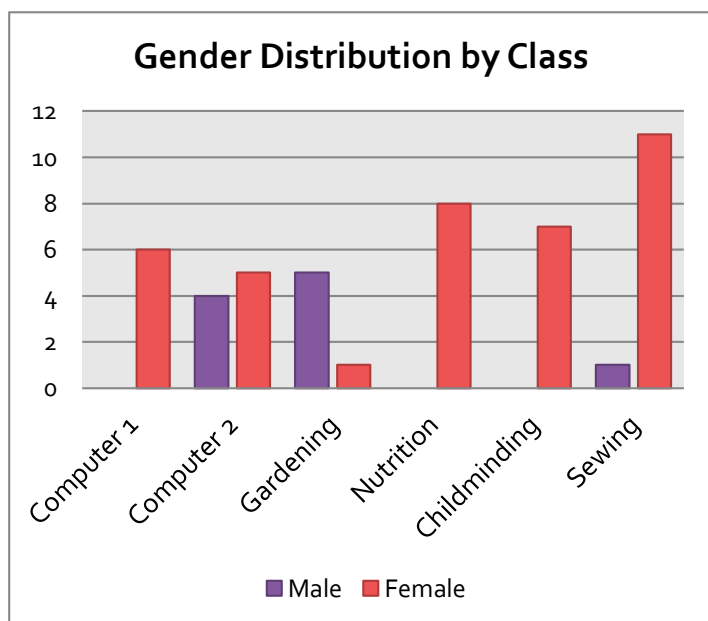
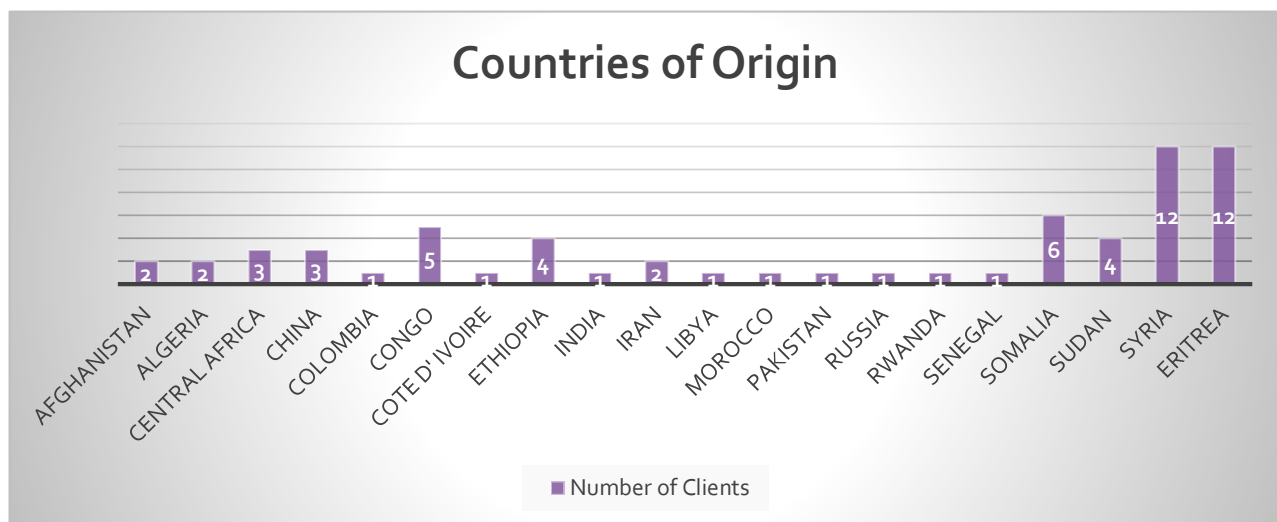
- Moving out of our Portage Ave location after 15 years and setting up at 406 Edmonton St.
- Becoming a registered charity.
- Writing more proposals than we had in the history of AMI! Our staff collectively submitted 24 proposals. Six of these were successful, 12 were refused, and 8 are pending.



## Living English for Employment

Living English was a summer language program delivered by Altered Minds from 2008 to 2017. In 2018 we changed the name and focus to include a work experience component, which was funded as a 3-year Service Delivery Improvement project. CLB levels were from Foundations to CLB 4 although 2 students had CLB 5 for reading and writing. The program provided 7- weeks of in-class, work-related English practice and weekly work experience, prioritizing new arrivals to the province with the most limited English.

In 2020, 6 multi-level classes ran 5 days a week, 3 hours a day (9:00am-12:00pm). There were 2 Computer classes, 1 Gardening class, 1 Food Preparation & Nutrition class, and 1 Sewing class. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the students who completed LEE 2020 were female and 21% were male. The age range of program graduates was 22-54.



*LEE 2020 Coordinators.*

**Gardening class:** In addition to the two worksite locations, this class of 6 visited two gardens, a nursery and a landscaping company in the Niverville area, and spent a morning harvesting and packing vegetables at Fort Whyte Farms. They also worked with a landscaping company to create a garden installation at the Forks beside the boat launch area, a source of great pride for all. Two of the original 8 participants withdrew from the class.



**Sewing class:** In addition to two days of skills instruction, this group of 12 visited:

- Cutting Edge, where they learned about further sewing training and employment opportunities,
- Canadian Muslim Women's Institute (CMWI), which offers language and sewing skills training for newcomers, and
- Marshall Fabrics, where they shopped for fabric and notions. They produced many useful products, including face masks, backpacks, tote bags, and oven mitts.



**Computers 1 class:** This class of 8 had one day of skills instruction per week, and went on 2 outings with task sheets. The tasks required using the language practiced in class to complete follow-up activities which required using the computer skills they had learned. Students designed electronic postcards which they emailed to classroom visitors on Show and Tell Day.



**Computers 2 class:** This class of 10 needed a more challenging program. The group went on two outings during which they had to use English, and complete a follow on the computer. By the end of the course, students were able to produce Excel spreadsheets, Power Point slide-shows, share Google Docs, and create email accounts - all highly transferable workplace skills. All students who completed the program received a free, refurbished desktop computer, supplied by Computers for Schools Manitoba.



**Childminding class:** This class of 8 created toys and games from recyclable and common household items. They learned and were able to successfully perform many songs, activities, puppet shows, etc., and all gained great confidence in their language skills, and knowledge of local childminding norms and laws. Their skills instruction included water safety, disciplining, and anger management specific to working with young children. Given the concept-heavy and language-dense skills instruction, volunteer interpreters attended all the skills training classes.



**Food Preparation and Nutrition class:** This class of 8 had skills instruction in the commercial kitchen one day a week. They also visited a downtown farmers' market to practice their English and take photos which were subsequently used as writing prompts.

### **Student Demographics**

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to accept only 54 out of 125 students who registered, with 8-12 students per class. A total of 48 students completed the program. 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**

Nine partners were engaged in the LEE program over 3 years, in each of 6 employment areas.

Partner Name	Area	2018	2019	2020
One Nation Exchange	Sewing	x	x	x
Food Matters Manitoba	Nutrition	x	x	
Earth and Hyde	Leathercraft	x		
Almost Urban Vegetable	Gardening	x	x	x
Hnatiuk Gardens	Gardening	x	x	
Computers for Life	Computer		x	x
Myriad Eco-Village	Gardening		x	x
Immigrant Centre	Nutrition			x
NorWest Co-Op Community Health	Childminding			x
<b>Total (n=9 unique partners)</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

An independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party evaluation of LEE was completed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final year of program, guided by an evaluation committee comprised of representatives from IRCC, AMI, and Health in Common. LEE students, staff and partners completed feedback surveys and the summarized findings were submitted in a final report on September 30, 2020.

The findings affirmed that as a result of the program, participants:

- developed knowledge, skills and connections related to the Canadian work environment
- developed connections to communities and public institutions
- adapted language and other skills to adjust to Canadian society

Partners and stakeholders were engaged in strategies to respond to newcomer needs, and program supports resulted in more effective and efficient service delivery.

### **Challenges**

To comply with COVID restrictions, class sizes were decreased from 25 to 12, break times were staggered, and tables and chairs were spaced 2 meters apart. The pandemic made it impossible to find worksite practicums for all except the gardening class. Nonetheless, Coordinators and Instructors managed to arrange work skills training for all the students, and outings were organized to provide language and skills enrichment activities.

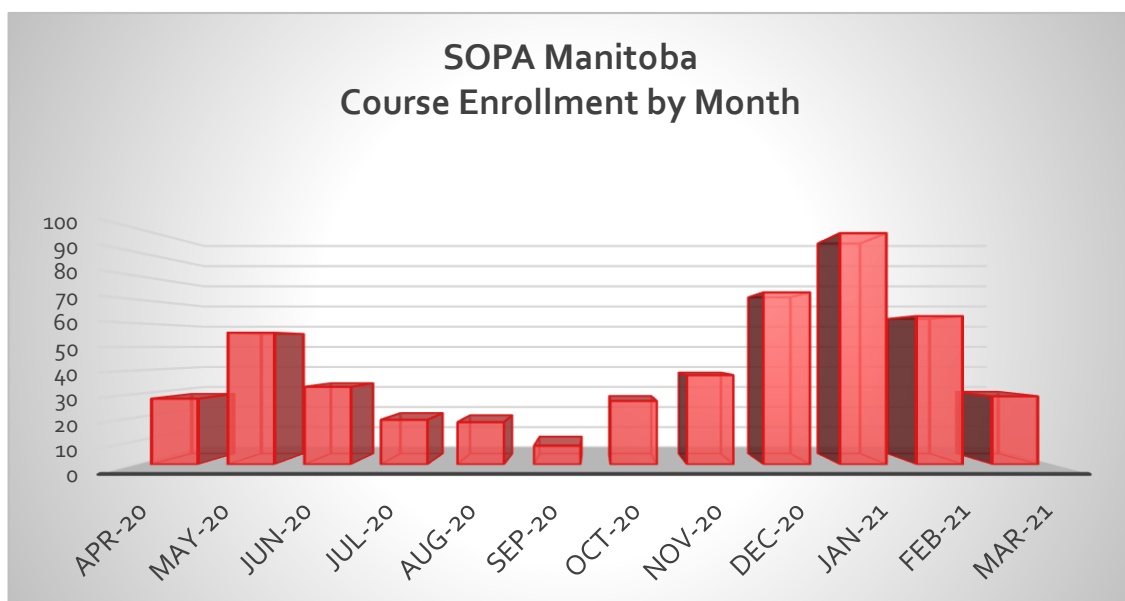
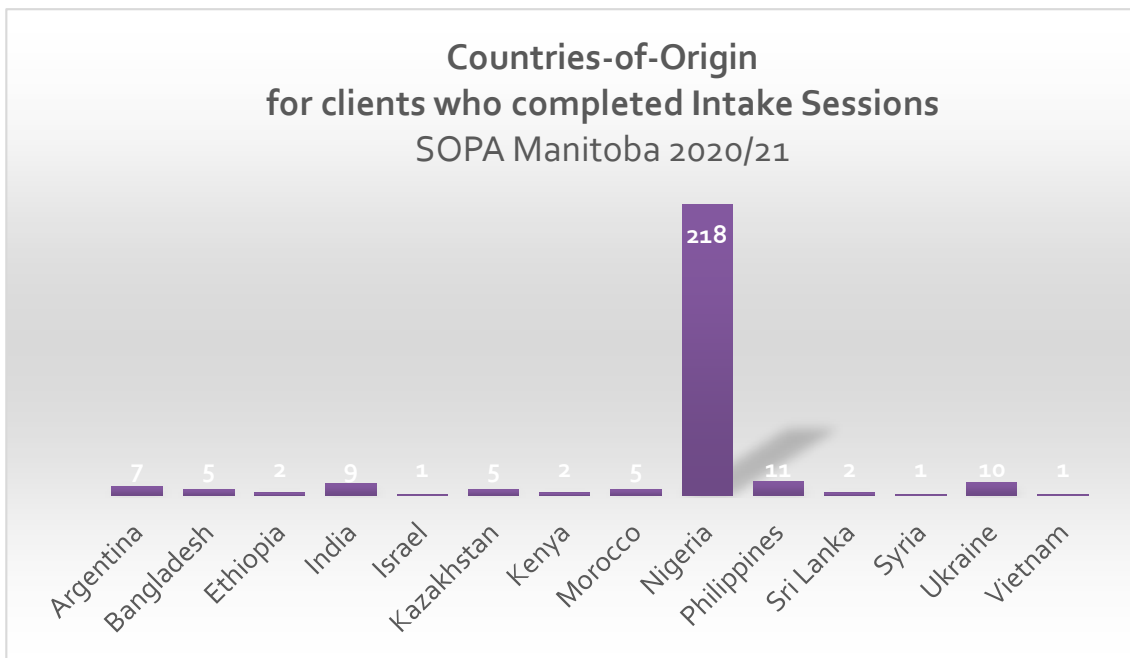


Sewing machine breakdowns and a flood that covered the entire floor caused some challenges, but did not require any class cancellations. A volunteer repair person was found to fix the machines, and although everyone had to put up with the noise for a few days, fans and driers were set up to get rid of excess water.



## 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 Permanent Residents 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 2020-2021 we completed 279 client intakes, most of whom enrolled in one or more facilitated or self-guided courses provided through the SOPA hub.





## Client Testimonials

"After going through the Job Search Strategies course I realized that I didn't actually have the job search strategies, as uploading a not well-thought resume to a job site and then leaving my luck to employers' search matches wasn't a strategy. The Job Search Strategies course prepared me for what to expect once I get to Canada and start looking for a job. My confidence has been elevated to a new level." - *Maria Agnes Castillo, Philippines*



"At all times my Intake Counselor was very responsive to my requests and questions so that I felt she was available around the clock. With the help of the Intake Counselor, we set a tailored action plan, which was a very great starter for me. It had a wealth of sources related to employment, housing, English language training, and education, settlement, and transportation, as well as key things to do during the first few days upon the arrival." - *Timur Ganiev, Kazakhstan*

"The tutorial I received from my Employment Counsellor was very beneficial in terms of how to job hunt. I also had the privilege to understand the labour market in my province. My counsellor also helped me with the list of potential recruiters and companies in my city before coming to Canada. I also had an interview coaching session with her, and it ultimately got me prepared, because I knew the kinds of questions to expect and how best to handle them." - *Ibrahim Bolaji, Nigeria*



"I have finished the two self-guided courses and enrolled in Soft Skills course work. The two self-guided courses provide in step by step leading learner to explore the world of working in Canada. If newcomers prefer to recognize Canadian working issues, how to adapt to the workplace, what the working concept is like, these courses are a good fit to those and me as well. Every time I log-into my SOPA courses, I feel like I am thirsty to discover new things and be ready prepared for positive thoughts. I thank the SOPA team for the encouragement and the many other information they provided. I am confident that when I arrive in Canada, I am better equipped on my employment and family's settlement." - *Nopporn Chanmekha, Thailand*

## Challenges

In 2020-2021, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) implemented a new database for the SOPA program that captures more details about clients and the services they use. SOPA teams across Canada implemented the New Org system database during the winter months, which unfortunately coincided with the highest intakes of the year and the busy holiday season. Entering the required data involves a lot more 'admin time' for our professional staff.

## Computers for Life (C4L)

Altered Minds completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> of a 3-year contract with Innovation, Science & Economic Development (ISED) Canada this year. The Department supports digital literacy training for under-represented groups.

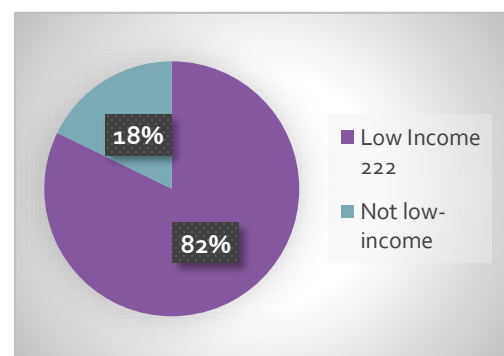
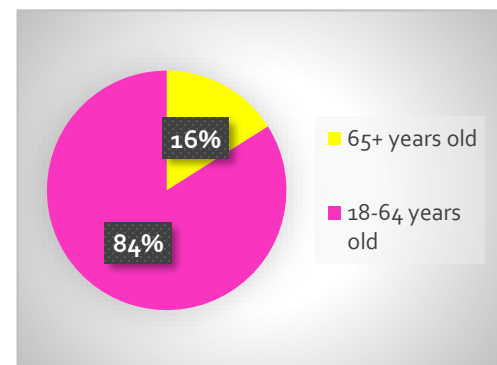
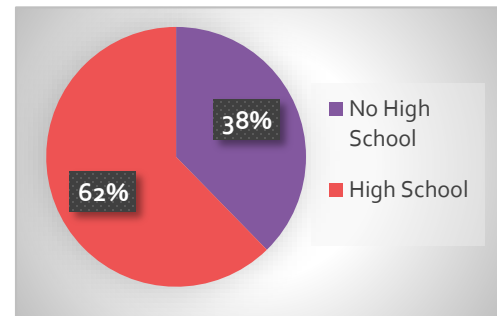
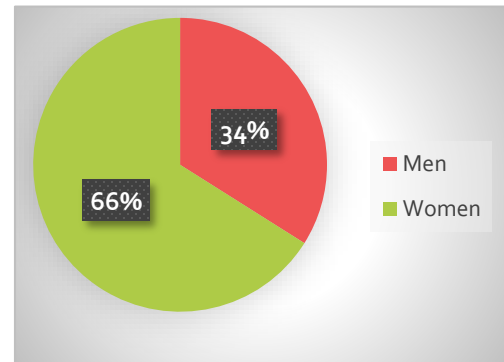
Between April 2020 and March 2021, we delivered 40, four-week courses of the “Computers for Life” (C4L) program to 268 newcomers. Of these participants:

- 267 speak a language other than English or French at home,
- 15 were persons with disabilities
- 101 had not completed high school
- 43 were seniors age 65 and older
- 222 were low-income
- 241 had been in Canada only a year or 2 and were not Canadian citizens
- The oldest was 89

The program provided child minding and interpreter supports, and each learner received a free refurbished desktop computer to take home upon completing their first 1-month course.

Besides our regular classes at 259 Portage Ave and 406 Edmonton St, we also delivered classes at the Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM), Seven Oaks Adult Learning Centre, and the Canadian Muslim Women’s Institute (CMWI). The graphs and table below provide more details about the types of learners who benefitted from the program.

Despite COVID 19 restrictions, we managed to meet the project's milestones by adjusting our activities. First, face-to-face classes were decreased from 12 to 6 clients per room. Second, we offered online classes for Level 2 students using Google Meet. Third, we added video-conferencing training to the last week of Level 1 classes to ensure clients were able to join Level 2 class online if they wanted to. We increased the length of the online sessions by 30 min to provide enough time for handling technical difficulties. Lastly, in addition to providing learners with free desktop computers at the end of the course, we also helped them rent or purchase headsets and webcams.



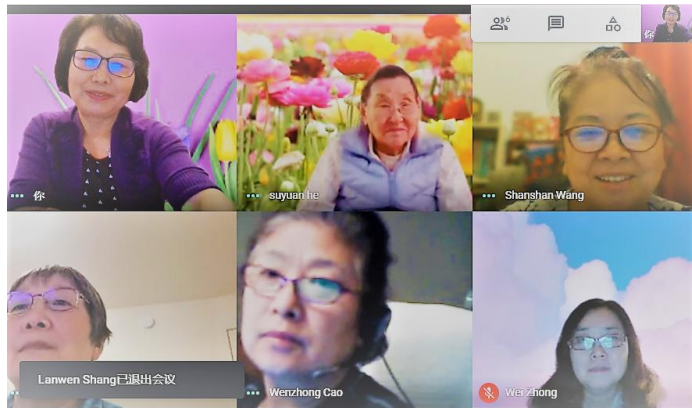
## Partners

Our SOPA team coordinated and delivered settlement and employment related webinars in collaboration with 6 partner agencies in Manitoba, as follows:

- New Journey Housing: Renting in Manitoba and the Manitoba Rent Assist Program
- Manitoba Childcare Association: Childcare System in Manitoba
- Winnipeg School Division: Manitoba School System
- Canada Revenue Agency: Newcomers' Benefits and Credits and the Canadian Tax System
- Independent Financial Advisor: Financial Advisor as a Potential Career
- Manitoba Civil Service Commission: Seeking Employment in the Provincial Government

## Challenges

The major challenge we faced was that Computers for Schools, the non-profit agency that supplied us with computers, ran out of refurbished computers to give to our students. They also ran out of MS Office software, which they had always loaded onto students' computers. The Program Coordinator and instructors had to hunt down computers and free software that could replace applications like Word, Power Point and Excel.



*Our oldest student was 89. She was thrilled to talk to her children online, and learn to change the background of her screen.*





## Looking Ahead

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

- Computers for Life (C4L) till March 2022, and
- Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA) till March 2023

These funding agreements cover the wages of program staff, a portion of the rent, and essential bookkeeping functions. However due to the loss of core funding, the agency can no longer cover the salaries of administrative personnel. Grace will continue to serve as Executive Director on a volunteer basis until the end of our current funding agreements, or until other doors open.

AMI's staff is skilled at using technology to deliver distance education and provide training for those with limited English proficiency or experience with computers. Grace has started a newcomer garden in the Interlake and is eager to explore ways that AMI can help newcomers from agricultural backgrounds establish family farms. We are looking forward to working with new board members to leverage our charitable status, technological and training skills, our concern for the environment, and our passion for gardening and regenerative agriculture to find a new path forward.

## Board of Directors

AMI's Board of Directors is comprised of individuals who support the agency's mission statement, represent the demographics of the people we serve, and have skills and experience that assist the agency in achieving its goals. We are sorry to say good-bye to board members who have been with us for many years, and thankful for their support through difficult times.

At the same time, we are excited to explore fresh ideas and see how Altered Minds will adapt and transform to meet the future.

