

Neighbourhood House Story in Canada

– A Case of Collingwood Nibourhood House in Vancouver –

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要旨 (Abstract)

本稿は、カナダ・バンクーバー市に位置する Collingwood Nibourhood House において、移民者がネイバーフッドハウスと出会い、自分自身の居場所を見つけながら地域社会とどのように関わり、生活を営んできたか、また、地域活動を通して、自己能力をどのように高め、発揮してきたかについて、インタビュー調査から明らかにした資料である。

キーワード : Neighbourhood House, Immigrant society, Community Development

I . What is Neighbourhood House ?

Neighbourhood houses are welcoming places where everyone of any age, nationality and ability can attend, participate, lead, and learn through programs, services, and community building. There is something for everyone, at any stage in their life. Throughout Metro Vancouver, Neighbourhood houses offer more than 400 programs and services, including those related to: early childhood development, youth, newcomers, seniors, advocacy and social change, and more. Neighbourhood houses grow alongside people and communities. We encourage and empower people to share ideas and launch new projects in their communities. We also serve as valuable links between local residents and other organizations, such as schools, support services, advocacy groups and multicultural associations. That willingness and ability to network and collaborate means Neighbourhood houses can respond quickly to emerging local needs and changing demographics; they are where unmet needs are met, and where unused community assets are mobilized.

II . How to make a Capacity Building in the community

I conducted an interview for person immigrated from Colombia to Canada at Collingwood Neighborhood House on 22 March, 2018. Interviewee is recreation coordinator at Collingwood Neighborhood House. This article describes how she immigrated from Colombia to Canada and had been making capacity building through a Neighborhood House.

1. Reason for moving from Colombia to Canada

I was from Colombia, South America and at that time, we saw in the newspaper advertisement about Canada. Opportunities to work, to get a visa as a worker. My husband was a Computer Engineer, and I was a Teacher of Physical Education. I had a Bachelors in PE (Physical Education), we saw in the newspaper nice pictures of Canada and Toronto, and Vancouver. My husband and I, we said "we're going to apply", because they were looking for professionals to come into Canada because of Y2K. Y2K is when the end of the century 2000, probably the computer is going to crash or something like that. They're looking for people who know about computers and we applied. Nine months later, we received a letter that we were going to have to interview on the embassy in Canada. Also, we wanted something ... More opportunities for our children. We have three children and a year after, we received approve that we could move to Canada, in March 1998. We moved in July 1998, to Vancouver and we decided to have a new life here and start found for opportunities. My husband and I, we had a business in Colombia selling computer and services, but at that time we sold computers. But a lot of computer coming from China. They were very cheap, and our business was going down, because we bought computers from USA. USA is more expensive, and we had to pay taxes, so very unfortunately. We saw the opportunity and we decided to come, to Canada. This is the reason we move, basically.

2. After immigrant, Encounter with Collingwood Neighborhood House

I didn't get a job immediately, because I didn't have my English skill. And I have three children. Basically, I worked at home part-time and the Government of Canada providing new immigrant English class for free, for one year. For settlement services in that time was, English as a second language for me, so I had opportunity to bring my child with me. They were in one room and I was in the other room, in the same building. (Collingwood Neighbourhood House) My child had a childminding when I was studying English in the morning, but my child was only 4 years old. He couldn't go to school, I couldn't work. The kids at home and the other was 11, and my older one was 15. We don't have anybody to taking him, so I have to stay with him and then I had a volunteer job, to improve the language. To improve the English skills and it's ... Basically, connected with this building. My English class was in another location but was provide for this neighborhood house.

I start to volunteer in 1999 and I had the opportunity to bring my child with me. I was doing volunteer in Parents and Tots program, that the mom brings the children with them and play together. Family place is one and the other is Parents and Tots. Tots is a little boy or little children. We bring the child with me and play together; at the same time, I was working as a volunteer. Helping the instructor as an Assistant to setup the equipment in the gym. We put the ladders, the mats, the balance beams, the balls. Any toys, I was helping to setup and cleanup. At the same time, I was bringing my child with me and I felled more confident to have my child with me all the time. Also, the money. If I put the child in the childcare, had to pay money and my husband didn't work for 6 months. (so, we ... The money we brought here from Columbia; every month have to pay the rent. Food, clothing.) Everything, so the money was started to be less and less. Until December 1999, he found a job in a good company and I was still doing my volunteer job. Because I couldn't work, I needed to care my children. I didn't have anybody to take care of the children. Then, little by little, I started to continue working in

here as a Volunteer staff for almost four years.

3. Volunteering in Collingwood Neighbourhood House

Volunteering, but sometimes I got little bit money, not like employee but because they wanted to incentive to me with a little money. Sometimes, okay. "You are doing a good job for this volunteer job, we give you 50 dollars or 100 dollars", something like that. A small amount of money. Then, it was basically I started working in here. I did a lot of work. I was working in the recreation department. I started to show my ideas in this place, because they had individual flyer for each program, and I'd say to my supervisor, "why we don't create one that include all the program?" He says "okay", "try and see how you are doing." He gives me the opportunity to do whatever I want, whatever I can provide. I created flyers and, I asked him "if I can teach Spanish to the little kids." He said to me "yes", I started to promote the program.

I went to the street and I gave flyers to people. Invite them to come. I was doing everything, the flyer and put it in the buildings, and talked to people. Talk to them, this was a good place to come and we opened the program, 'Spanish With Fun', on Saturdays. I brought my children with me, because they had better English than me, and they translated to the parents. Spanish songs, I was singing with them in Spanish and my daughter who was 11 years old at the time. She translated in English what the song was about. I created my own stories in Spanish, and I put in the piece of paper, and I showed the parents. The children and we had a lot of fun with them. This was one part and also, I was working in another department. It's family branch, it's a program that is running on Monday for families who don't have enough money. They bring the kids and they put the kids in the childcare room. I was taking care of the children when the parents were chatting and talking, have fun in the room. I was taking care of the kids. In the room and in the gym, we played with them basketball, soccer or anything. My qualification of university, I told my supervisor, "I am a PE (Physical Education) teacher, and I can teach soccer or basketball, or whatever. Volleyball or any program." He said to me, "if you want you can volunteer in this program and I start to show them how to play basketball, how to play soccer, how to play sports, as a volunteer." I was a teacher in Columbia. I was working here also because it's a recreation program. I started working, Parents and Tots. This is games, music and play together with the parents. Now we have so many programs here, I was working at that time with soccer. I was working at also basketball. I didn't know anything about hockey, but I learned how to hold the stick. How to play with the kids, I was checking the internet and investigate how they played. I was helping and when the instructor wasn't able to come, I was a substitute. When the teacher was not coming, somebody else had to come so I was going. My Supervisor saw me, that I had the skills to teach and he gave me the opportunity to teach the kids any program. We created another program with only girls to play together. Only girls, one day a week. To play basketball or soccer.

When I finished my English classes for one year (in 1999), they started to give me a little more money, because I was able to. I got a contract. I did a contract with the community neighborhood for teaching a Spanish with fun. First time, I am as a substitute. I can sub when nobody else come. It's almost a part-time job, but it's only on-call. When they needed me, they called me as a sub. Substitute. "You're able to come in today? The teacher is not coming, are you able?" like that. I said "okay, I go." I was building some more hours at that time. In 2004, my

supervisor was promoting. He needed somebody to help him more, so he put the job posting to apply as an assistant. I was an assistant for him, for eight hours a week. Only eight and then he had more hours to work as an elector. They gave me 18 hours, so I started to build more hours a week. I was working almost 18 hours a week. I also had the opportunity to take care of my kids, because I could work in a flexible. Whenever I had time, I was able to come. You had to come here from nine to three, it depends on how I can manage my time. They had the opportunity to have a Recreation Coordinator position and I applied. I got 31 hours a week, then I had 35 hours.

Now, I have been working here for more than 15 years as a Recreation Coordinator. We do a lot in recreation. We hired contractors, we had nine regular employees that were working part-time. We were promoting the program in the newspaper. We put all the program in the newspaper, every three months. Big one, this is the number of programs we have. This is preschool program, all of them are here. Collingwood Neighborhood House Recreation Program have newspaper and we had for preschool, children, adults and seniors' program. All of them. It's lots of work but fortunately, my supervisor gave me an assistant. The assistant working with me five hours a week to help me. To update this information. These programs have instructor. I have all these programs; this is the name of the instructor. Here, 19 instructors. Some instructor teaches two classes. Example, Sumba classes. One instructor teaches three times. The other instructor is ... She teaches four times a week and some people are working only one hour a week, two hours a week because they are teaching basketball once a week. There're, part-time job. For example, I hire one person to teach Sumba three times a week. She come in Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at night, but she has another job in another place. It's recreation, like that. Most of our instructor, they are working in other place and they come in the evening to supervise the basketball or soccer, or volleyball program, or badminton, or Tai chi. Something like that, most of them is part-time. The only full-time is me. My assistant is part-time. I have volunteers, look at the number. You see the volunteers, they apply as a volunteer and we call them when we need them, to working with us. We call them and say because they put here what day they available, which program they want to teach. English or arts, drawing. Martial art, so when they write down what they want.

Some of them have the skills, some of them don't have the skills. Also, we provide the training and the orientation. Orientation we ... Okay, what did you draw as a volunteer because they must do a criminal record check. Important, they don't have any criminal record. Especially, because it's a vulnerable place working with kids, with adults, with seniors. We need to check if this person does not have any record and then they put decoration here. Some of them have the skills and they put that they have knowledge, or they come in from another country, and they want to practice, or they want to show us the skills they have. Some instructors ... I'm going to give you an example, one lady from Iran. They know how to teach belly dance.

4. One lady from Iran - making "Opportunity"-

She was very feelings for the place, crying because she was doing a good job over there. She lost everything because she came as a refugee. She came here and asked me I would like to teach belly dance because this is what I am doing in my country. She was so happy to have the opportunity, to show us the skill that she had. We

open a program for her, and we advertise the program, we put in the newspaper. In the flyer, she helped to distribute the flyers and we put on the website. Everywhere and the registration, then woman came, and she start to teach the classes. Then, we pay her by percentage. 70% for her and 30% for Collingwood Neighborhood. This is an example that we do in recreation, but other people who are good. Coming from another country and they know how to teach Tai chi or arts. Whatever they know. If we interview them, we ask them to bring their resume. Bring the qualification or any certification and then we give the opportunity if we have the space in the building. We give them the opportunity, like this lady from Argentina. she's teaching Yoga and we gave her orientation. Orientation program, yeah. Orientation is to know the building, how the building operates and what is the responsibilities as instructor. She brings to me the first aid and the qualification, the resume. All the certification she has and look, certification. We open the program, and she's amazing instructor.

The immigrant people appreciate that we gave the opportunity to show the knowledge they have, but not always we can do that because this is a very busy place. Sometimes, we don't have rooms and right now, almost 82 programs in recreation. It's too much. If somebody else coming to me, I say I'm sorry. We don't have the space right now, we have to wait if any program is going to be cut or close, we can add the person. But we have lots of request, for program. Basically, this is what I am doing here in Collingwood Neighborhood House. Skills, to teach and provide us any knowledge.

This person, the Iranian lady that I told you. She doesn't speak any English; her husband speaks English. He translates in the class. Helping, she was doing how to move the hip. How to move, He translates, and the baby was with them because they had a baby. Two months old and they were so happy because they have a little bit of what they are doing in their own country. For some reason, I didn't ask why. I never ask why you come; I always ask did they want to tell me. That's fine, if not that's okay. How they want to participate in the recreation program, why do you want to participate, and they told me I was teaching in my country. Here, I don't know how to start or how can I show you? They show me what they were doing in their own country, in Iran. I was looking and I saw that it's real. We start to ... To start right now, she's teaching in other places. She's gone to the English classes and her English is going better. Almost, two years ago. This place is basically many people working here, the English is the second language and almost 85% of the employees, the English is the second language. You can go around, and you can find people from Philippines, from Colombia, from China, from Iran, from England, from Ukraine, Vietnamese, Asian. Different places, this building is basically supporting people when they coming to Canada.

They pass to me people who are new in Canada and say, "Carmen, this person wants to volunteer. How you can support this person? This person was a musician in their country." We try to open a new music class or something like that. If people want to open music class, we can, not always we can because we have to buy equipment. We have to find a room for them, we have to create a flyer. We have to ... It's lots of administration work we have to do, when we want to create a new program. All my experience was as an immigrant, as a new person in this country. I was feeling very grateful for them and say thank you for Collingwood Neighborhood House for giving me opportunity. To show me, to show my skills and I think this neighborhood is special for me. It's like my second house, because I come in everyday and I remember when I was the first year here, in

Canada. I was crying, I was checking what I want to do in this country. I don't speak English and I don't know what to do, and they open their arms for me. They say okay, come into us. Show us and the people here in general are very nice, very open. My experience was very positive, because I feel they say to me, "Okay, Carmen. I know you can do it, do it", even though they don't know me well.

Gave the people opportunity, the people appreciate, and I say thank you because in my ... If I'm going to Japan, I don't have any idea how to speak the Japanese and someone come to me, and say, "Yes, you can come and learn. You can teach Spanish if you want", so I'm going to get money. Okay, this is for me just very grateful to say thank you to the person. This building is basically to open the arms to everybody, it doesn't matter what language they speak or the status, or your background, or religion. They don't judge you; they are welcome everybody. This is our job in here, in this building. Welcome everybody, give the opportunities if you can do that to be a volunteer and later on, we're going to be better and better in what they are doing.

You can tell, "Okay, Carmen." I have to add you, give me the resume and your experience, and I interview you, and say how many years was you teaching? How you handle it? How many kids you are able to handle in your class, what happen when child is not behave properly? How you can ask him to be better in the class or how you teach the person, or something like that. After I interview you, I go do the criminal record check. We open the program, we put in the flyer. We put in the newspaper, we advertise the program, and we try, and see. Okay, sometimes the program very success and lots of people coming, sometime program is not. People don't register, we have to say I'm sorry. Nobody registers for the program. One time happen in our program, we open a choir for people to singing but the time in the morning and many people are working. They don't come in the morning. We cannot and the person say I am available only in the morning. We try, but nobody registered. Some of the program, like hip hop. We open the hip hop three seasons ago in April and it's very good. Now, we have 18 people. It depends on some program is very popular. Some of the program are very ... The people, they are not interest. Don't have any interest to register.

Basically, not all the time we can do that because like I mentioned to you the time ... If we have rooms available, we can open the program. If we don't have any room or the person say to me, "Okay, I am able to teach only 4PM because I have to bring my kids from school. I am able to teach at 4PM." We are looking in the book, the booking and probably 4PM we don't have any room available. Sorry, we don't have any room for you, but if they say no., I can come in on Saturday morning and maybe Saturday morning we have a room. Okay, we want to open the program. We negotiate with the instructor what day, what time and the price. How much the person, if they are okay to receive 70% of the revenue or to pay \$25 an hour. That is the amount. this is a very small amount of fee. In the area, we are the cheapest one.

We have to calculate how many people approximately coming to the program. If you have for example 10 children, they pay \$44. It's \$440, we calculate if we can cover the expenses like pay the instructor. We have to calculate how much money we make, how much money we spent. We have to pay for the facility, have to pay for the administration and you have to pay the instructor, and supplies. If the person says to me, I need some shoes for the girls, we have to buy for them. We have to buy boys and girls shoes, we have to buy some three or four pairs for them. Children don't bring them, but basically the fees are for to cover the cost, to cover the wages

for the instructor and to cover for the supplies.

5. Differences about Neighbourhood House and Community Center

Here is not community center. The Neighborhood House is a non-profit organization, provide services to everybody who come to the building. Community Center, we receive money from the city to running the program and we also to have to ask people who pay a little bit, but the Community Center. They have more, the Community Center has more rooms. They have swimming pools, sometimes. Sometimes, they have weight rooms, and they provide more programs than us. We are very little compared with them and they are profit, we are non-profit. I think they get more money than us, the city is in charge of the Community Centers. I don't have too much knowledge about Community Center, but this is what I think.

Many people like me are looking for support. To make friends, to have the opportunity to interact with other person and to feel welcome in the country. If no Neighborhood House, I don't know what to do. I probably have to go to the schools and ask the schools to bring opportunity, to volunteer there and maybe go to ... I don't know, I have to probably go to the office. Immigrant office and ask them what I can do, or the settlement office, or something like that. Because, this Neighborhood House, it's totally different and many people who come here. They have to move to another province or in other places that don't have Neighborhood House. They start to say I miss this place because some people are very depressed, or they are sick. Or, they don't have any friends, they are coming here, and they find someone very friendly. Very open and they talk what do you want, if you no have money you can go for free to the programs because I am ... We gave them this card and it's for people who don't have enough money.

We gave them, this is Affordable Fun Card. They pay, for example you say no, I cannot pay for it or for the program because I don't have enough money. We ask them how much you can pay and sometimes they say to me I can pay half because I am not working. I can pay only \$10 and we say okay, that's fine. We gave them the opportunity to participate without money. we decide. Basically, me and with my Supervisor we may find an arrangement. How much money, when we create the budget, we put certain amount for subsidies. For families who have three children or only one person working in the family, or no work a lot. Single mom or single ... I have one lady from Japan, she's a single mom and she want to have the kids in the program. We gave her the special price because she's the only one who work, she doesn't have a partner and she don't have too much income. We gave them. Just talking, because I believe in the people. I don't feel the people going to lie and especially people who are new. I don't think they going to lie to me, if they are lying maybe one or two in 50. It's okay, I don't have any proof. In recreation, in the Community Center they have to fill the form and bring the proof on the income they have, because they need to know if it's true or not. But I believe many people many people are very honest, in here. We gave the opportunity to participate and I don't ask them for papers, no. It's part of our job to provide them and you can see in the face. You can see, you don't need to investigate too much. People are here.

We don't do that because we believe that this is real. I put my ... I am put in their shoes, I say, "Okay, I came to Canada. I didn't have any money, I can't, and the people gave me the opportunity to be here. They gave me

discount for my kids, why I don't want to do the same for other people? What, I'm going to judge them?" No, I don't do that. Yeah, this is what I'm doing here. Emotional, because no other places are going to provide those kinds of services. Especially, when you are living in another country and you find someone to provide you, I find out that ... I think people from Japan are very good people, very nice, they have very good skills. I had a couple of participants from Japan and they are amazing. They are very good people, and we don't want people to be isolated in this country, because that's when the people are alone. They want to do something wrong, they want to ... Sometime, they go back to their country or they start to be criminals. We don't want to ... We want to have good people here, in Canada. Also, we want to provide them the opportunity. For the reason when I come, I say, "Okay, what did you want?" We do our best to provide them what they want, what they need. Basically, to cover the needs. Some people, as you say, they don't have any friends. They are coming alone, they don't speak the language. They need a place to go and this is a place that the people come. They start to be happy and they ... People who are depressed, they told me. When I start coming to your classes, I start to feel better because they participate. Other people, like me, go to dance. Go to basketball, go to soccer, go to badminton. They start to build a relationship with other people who have the same skills. I was playing basketball and I was looking at places where can I go to play basketball? I love basketball and some other people love volleyball. You are coming in the evening or at night, you're going to see lots of adults who come into volleyball. Almost 45 people coming to play volleyball on Mondays and Wednesdays. Also, soccer. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Badminton. People, they have a man or woman. They are joined, they are coming to learn how to play. To learn how to speak English and they make some friend here. They have a good relationship, they ... I know one couple get married. They get married because they were playing. Every week, they come in and they start to talk about the ... She was from Korea and the other was from China. They start to play volleyball every Wednesday and then one day, she told me, "I'm going to get married." I say, "Who is your partner?" I say why? What happened? You never know, some people. You can meet somebody here or they become very good friends.

It's very interesting place to know and many countries have Community Center, Neighborhood House. Because it's the way that the people ... If you are alone at home, crying or something and you coming here. You have someone to talk, "Okay, I am feeling bad because I broke up with my boyfriend. I don't know what to do", and you have somebody to listen to you. You can refer this person, "Okay, have somebody you can go to talk", to talk to the counselor or the psychology. I gave him the paper, okay. Contact this person and the person can help you to be better. We are connecting most of the time, especially the settlement workers. They are specialized, they know everything. They know what the person is they need to collect it, like one mother coming and they don't have diaper for the kids, or they are very poor. They sent the person to a place that they can provide emotional support and give all the needs they need to complete. Anything they need, yeah. This is basically ... This building, you have different department but all of them have the same goal or the same object, just to provide services to the person. I don't know if you get from the P1, from the reception. The flyers. it's only one building and this is my daughter, and my granddaughter. It's Laura and Sofia. I didn't know this picture until now, until you open that because she's in the flier. This is Parents and Tots. This is the program I start working with, this is my memories because I start working in this with my little boy, he was four years old.

III. Message for Japan

Especially, you said that people are isolated. I was looking the other day about ... Thinking about people, people don't have to judge other people because they don't have enough. The same skills, some people are very good with the hands and they create wood, and they create some nice stuff. Other people are very intelligent, and in the society, we need those people. We need people who are cleaning and people who are the President. People are ... Because, this is the societies, we have different skills, and we have to understand that not everybody the same. All the people have different skills, different ways to think and we have to respect. Also, we have values here. The values are welcome everybody, respect them. I think the values are here, let me see if we have it here. In this case, on the back. Participation, dates. We have for example in the ... In each program that we have, we have a contract with the children and the instructor to say what did you want to be treated? This person say I want to be treated with respect. I need to be treated with compassion. Because, we have children with special needs, the children who mental problems or physical problems. We are supporting them, and we provide them services exactly the same as other people. It's like everybody need to respect, doesn't matter what religion they come in or what background, or what education. People need to be respect, so we have values. Values mean is they have the opportunity to be welcome. It doesn't matter what they are coming from, what is anything. This is people, we have to respect them. Supposed to be in the main page and they have it before, computer services. Recreation and the first page are what ... You see the values, maybe in the old one. Values, okay. Here.

Neighborhood House place to connection and instruction. Give ... You can read all of them, participate, operation. Mutual respect, intercultural so understand other cultures. Social with interrelation partnerships, the idea is if I don't know anything about your culture, you can give me information. I can give to my information, that is way we can understand each other and respect each other, because each culture has their own values and their own religions. It's tolerated a little bit, I can tolerate to be with one person from China. The way that they eat, the way that they ... You know? This the values and this is the mission of our country.

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Reference

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