



Intercultural Institute of Montreal
4730 Papineau Avenue, Montreal, Qc. H2H 1V3
Tel. 514-288-7229 / Fax 514-844-6800
www.iim.qc.ca

News Bulletin of the Donation Campaign **ACTIVITIE'S HIGHLIGHTS: SEPTEMBER 2008-AUGUST 2009**

This news bulletin will keep our supporters, donors, members, collaborators and friends informed about the main features of our activities over the past year. Although, the recession has hit hard everybody personally and collectively, the year has been particularly filled with economic hardships for community organizations like ours. Our specific field of our work and action does not easily attract the attention of financial donors and agencies, as our work is not oriented to services to the poor and the marginalized, but rather addresses the issues that cause poverty, marginalization and disharmony in our societies.

At the Intercultural Institute of Montreal our focus has been to address the contemporary issues faced by each and every society, in terms of social cohesion and peace (internally and externally), the economic and social justice in the global context, the issues of understanding the needs of particular communities (social or cultural) within our societies, searching for ways to heal wounds of people and communities who are inflicted by prejudices and marginalization.

Our vision of interculturality is to reflect and act on the contemporary issues of today's life and living by searching out wisdom and experiences of diverse peoples and communities and their cultures that constitute every society and the world. Interculturality is not a tool to control and manage diversity but is a way to restore peace and harmony, on the basis of deep understanding of each other's ways of life and learning from whatever people have to offer for the good of all. It is this spirit that permeates our intellectual and spiritual vision and our concrete projects of social actions.

Community action projects

A. Intercultural networking of immigrant women: breaking isolation (results of a project carried out in 2008-2009)



In our last year's Campaign Bulletin we had announced the beginning of a new project on issues involving the lives and situations of immigrant women in Montreal. Although the project began in June 2008, most of its

activities took place between September 2008 and February 2009. Here we give an account of these activities and the results obtained from this project.

The project primarily addressed the issue of social and cultural isolation that immigrant women, particularly newly arrived ones, experience here. The project proposed to address this issue by organizing a series of 12 workshops in two different neighborhoods of Montreal namely, Park- Extension and Center-South sector of Montreal. These activities had the following objectives, in terms of encouraging participation of immigrant women in the host society, and thus break their isolation. Specificity of this project, was not only socializing immigrant women through intercultural rapprochement with the host society, but also enhances their sense of empowerment by inviting them to share their knowledge and practices that are required in their daily lives to carry out their responsibilities towards their families and children.

The topics of these workshops were: a. family economy; b. relationship to school; c. work and employment; d. food and nutrition; e. family health f. religion.

Results: 12 workshops were held in the two targeted neighborhoods. Total of 176 women have participated, many of them regularly in a sustained manner. In general we achieved our objectives, because the participation of a core of women clearly demonstrated their motivation and interest to be part of this kind of program. Moreover many expressed that this has been very beneficial for them, on one hand to be informed about the functioning of the host society, and on the other hand to be in contact with other women in similar situation. As for the partner organizations in two neighborhoods each has benefited in different ways. The workers of the two organizations expressed that it has increased their sensitivity to the dimensions of immigrant women's lives as they were not quite aware of and it also provided them with the knowledge of cultural diversity.

B. Intercultural Peer-helper project: "Development of a model of peer-helper intervention for crime-prevention, involving youth from ethno-cultural communities" (a 3-year project from March 2009 to February 2012)



The project has just begun in April 2009 and it is based on the results of several research projects conducted by the Intercultural Institute of Montreal, between 1998 and 2006. It will be carried out in the Villeray and St.Michel neighborhoods and is directed, in particular, towards the Haitian and Latin American communities. It addresses the problem of anti-social behavior among youth, which could, eventually, lead to criminality.

The project aims primarily to develop a new model of intervention for the prevention of criminality among young people. The intercultural peer-helpers who will be trained, will act as helpers to counter the factors of recognizable risk, such as peer rejection, inadequate parental practices, absence of community attachment,

school drop-out, runaways, prostitution, etc., all of which are often caused, or aggravated, by “*identity malaise*” that youth in these communities could experience.

Moreover, our project is motivated by the notion of “*community empowerment*” that is, the communities taking charge themselves in confronting these problems. The peer- helpers will be recruited and trained with this objective. They will be required to work closely with all the actors in the designated communities. In that sense, the project will progress in close partnership with the organizations, *Trans-Art 2000* and the *Centre d’Orientation Paralégale et Sociale pour Immigrants*. These organizations are actively involved in the targeted communities.

The project covers a period of three years; initially a group of ten young adults, between the ages of 20 and 30 years, will be trained in an intercultural approach to helping relationships. These peer-helpers will work with teen-agers from 12 to 16 years old, identified as being at risk. Initially, the peer-helpers will organize workshops with groups of teen-agers in the partnership organizations. Concurrently, they will work in the field, meeting and accompanying teen-agers in the places where they gather, such as parks, gymnasiums and cafés. Finally, the peer-helpers, with the support of the trainers, will offer sensitization workshops for school and law-enforcement personnel: these meetings will facilitate dialogue on the experiences of Haitian and Latin-American youth, which may help to better understand the anti-social behavior that stems from the “*identity malaise*” that inhabits them.

Public programs

- **March 2009: Roundtable discussion on issue of our Journal InterCulture: <Fair Trade and Intercultural Regeneration of Communities>**



“Fair trade introduces into the economic analysis an entirely new dimension which cannot be apprehended in the standard economy: the community”- Stephen Marglin, Economist, author of The Dismal Science: How Thinking Like an Economist Undermines Community

- ***Inter-religious dialogue an activities in partnership***

IIM and ROJEP: April 2009: This is a project initiated by a group called ROJEP, an ecumenical community based group dedicated to social justice and peace. ROJEP invited IIM’s collaboration to initiate a process of inter-religious dialogue among the participants of their organization. After several meetings of reflection and organizational work, this meeting of dialogue was held in April 2009.

The theme: "How does my spiritual tradition inspire me to engage with commitment in action for social cohesion within my neighborhood and social environment, which is becoming pluralistic?"

IIM and Chair of Religious studies, Cultures and Society, University of Montreal:

IIM has collaborated during this year on a project carried out by the Chair of the University of Montreal. The title of the project <*Religious heritage of Quebec*>, a research-action project that has as objectives to document heritage of diverse religious traditions, old and new, of Quebec and develop a teaching tool for school professional and community actors.

- ***Intercultural Training programs***

May 2009: Training seminar: <Men, Immigration and Cultural Diversity: the challenges for psychosocial intervention>

The goal of training seminar was to sensitize social and health care workers in the institutions as well as in the community organizations, to the realities of immigrant men, in order to better understand the intercultural issues and challenges that they are to face while working with them.

Note: We have offered several tailored intercultural training programs to requesting community organizations and institutions. Moreover there were several presentations in local, national and international conferences.

Resources and Publications

We have published the following documents: two of the bi-annual issues our journal InterCulture on the following themes: 1. *Fair Trade and Intercultural Regeneration of Communities*; 2. *Pondering over Pluralistic Quebec*. A report of the project on < Intercultural Networking of Immigrant Women> is also available at the Institute.

The referral and individualized consultation services were carried out as usual.