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Building Stronger Boards

A Study on the Diversity of Settlement Organizations in Winnipeg



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The CCPA Manitoba publishes research on the original lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation on Treaty 1 Territory. Beyond recognizing the importance of place, we acknowledge our responsibility to contribute to solutions to the problems caused by past and present colonial policies in Canada. We are committed to contributing research that builds on the strengths of Indigenous communities, respects the spirit and intent of Treaties, and that is done in partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit people and organizations.

Research Team

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Robert Daudet, Community Volunteer: Robert is a College Director & Principal for an international college located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, having worked in higher education for over ten years. As part of this role, Robert has developed programming to assist first-year international students adjust to life in Canada and to their new education system. His interest in supporting newcomers with their adjustment to Winnipeg led him to participating in this research project with IPW. Robert holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) degree from the University of Manitoba, along with a Master of Science in Digital Education from the University of Edinburgh.

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Glossary of Terms

Ethnocultural Organization: An organization created to serve the interests of a specific ethnocultural group or a group of ethnocultural communities from the same country or culture.

Immigrant: Someone who has moved from their country of birth/citizenship to another country to live there.

Lived experience: In this context, refers to people who live in Canada but came to Canada as immigrants or refugees.

Newcomer: Immigrants or refugees who arrived in Canada over the last five years.

Refugee: People who have fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.

Racialized people: This is used to refer to people who identify with a specific racial group, identity, ethnocultural group or racial minority group.

Settlement Agency: An organization established to provide settlement services to newcomer immigrants and refugees in Canada.

Equity-deserving groups: refers to communities that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to structural disadvantage and discrimination, and actively seek social justice and reparation. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social, and environmental barriers based on characteristics that are not limited to sex, age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, gender expression, nationality, race, sexual orientation, and creed.

Diversity and Inclusion: diversity when we think about it in the workplace or in organizations relates to equal opportunity goals associated with hiring, advancement, and retention of individuals representing diverse social identity groups, while inclusion is a relational construct derived from experiences of social belonging and being valued for one's uniqueness.

Types of Settlement Service Provider Organizations

Indirect Service Provider: an agency that brings together stakeholders related to newcomer, immigrant, and refugee settlement in each region for training, support, advocacy, and coordination and more (i.e., umbrella organizations).

Issue-Based Organization: a settlement agency that provides services based on specific settlement need or priority issue (i.e., language training, employment services, supports for women).

Settlement Agency – Ethnocultural Organization: a settlement agency that specifically supports newcomers, immigrants, and refugees from a particular ethnocultural community or a particular source country.

Settlement Agency – Faith-based Organization: a settlement agency that is connected to a faith community and specifically supports newcomers, immigrants, and refugees of the same faith.

Settlement Agency – Generic Organization: a settlement agency that serves ALL newcomers, immigrants and refugees and DOES NOT have specific ties to one segment of the newcomer, immigrant, and refugee population.

Settlement Agency – Linguistic Organization: a settlement agency that provides services for a particular linguistic newcomer, immigrant and refugee community.

Universal Service Provider: an agency that provides services to population groups born in Canada as well as all newcomers, immigrants, and refugees.

Racial and Ethnic Identity

The following list of racial and ethnic identities was included in the surveys. This is not an exhaustive list and does not ignore the diversity across or within groups. In addition, we acknowledge that there may be some overlap and inconsistencies in these categorizations.

Black (Black African, Black Caribbean descent, other)

East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese descent, and other people from East Asian countries)

Indigenous (in the Canadian context, this includes First Nation, Inuit and Métis Peoples)

Latinx or Hispanic

Middle Eastern (Arab, Persian, West Asian, Afghan, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Turkish, Kurdish descent, and people from other Middle Eastern countries)

South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, Bhutanese and Maldivians, and Indo-Caribbean descent)

Southeast Asian (Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Indonesian descent, and other people from South East Asian countries)

White (European descent)

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Executive Summary

THE MAIN PURPOSE of this study was to contribute to the promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion on the boards of directors of settlement organizations in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Specifically, this project had three goals: 1) to analyze the diversity composition amongst settlement and community Boards of Directors; 2) to assess the barriers to participation newcomers face on these Boards of Directors; and 3) to identify strategies that support increased diversity, representation, and inclusion of newcomers on Boards of Directors.

The participants in this project included board members with and without newcomer lived experience, senior managers, those who have previously been board members or in senior management positions, and individuals who have leadership experience but have not yet formally sat on a board of directors. The participants were adults (over the age of 18) who were involved in community leadership or settlement organizations in Winnipeg, Manitoba and had the English language skills to complete the survey and/or participate in focus groups or interviews conducted in English. Both immigrant and refugee (i.e., newcomer) and Canadian-born participants were included in this project. The data, in combination with a literature review, will be compiled into a report with recommendations and strategies for increasing diversity, representation and inclusion of newcomers on boards of directors of community and settlement organizations.

Using Community-Based Participatory Research design, and an intersectional, anti-oppressive framework, this project employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Specifically, the project used (a)

organization survey; (b) individual survey; and (c) focus groups to gather data. The organization survey was completed by Executive Directors or Board Chairs of settlement organizations. The individual survey gathered responses from current and former members of settlement organizations' boards of directors. Both surveys were conducted using Survey Monkey, an online survey platform. The surveys were composed of fixed- and open- response questions. Both surveys and focus groups were administered in English. The focus groups recruited participants who were current or former board members of settlement and community organizations, or senior management and individuals with relevant leadership experience who had not been appointed to a board of directors. The focus groups were conducted virtually via Zoom calls. The findings in this report were analyzed using a triangulation design, in which the qualitative and quantitative data were compared, cross-validated and complemented. Triangulation also helped to include diverse perspectives and experiences.

This study used purposive sampling to select participants that fit our specific participant groups. Participants were recruited primarily through settlement organizations in Manitoba. Email flyers were sent to a list of identified settlement organizations in Winnipeg, including information about the surveys and focus groups. Organizations were invited to share the opportunity to participate in research with the members of their organization. In addition, the survey included an invitation to participate in focus groups, and contact information for participants to contact researchers for more information. To complement these other efforts, professional networks of the research team were used to recruit participants. Ethics approval was received from the University of Manitoba Research Board. Each participant completed and signed consent forms to participate and for the use of this data in knowledge translation and dissemination.

The report includes the qualitative data analysis of the focus groups with 12 participants. The conversations in the focus groups centered on three topics: (a) the role of diversity and representation, (b) barriers and supports impacting board diversity, and (c) pathways for promoting diversity and leadership capacity among refugee, immigrant, and newcomer communities. The focus group participants reiterated many of the general themes found in the survey – low levels of diversity, experiences of tokenism, and challenges with informal board selection practices – and provided first-hand perspectives, identified positive practices, and generated recommendations for promoting board diversity and leadership capacity among refugee, immigrant, and newcomer communities.

The report also provides recommendations from the key findings and data analysis. In order to diversify boards of organizations that serve newcomers and sustain that diversity, organizations must (1) be creative and think outside the box in finding new ways of retaining board members including incentivising board participation; (2) change how they recruit board members and move away from using traditional methods of recruitment in their attempts to get representation from people with lived experience; and (3) change the way they do business and adopt anti-oppressive principles in all their work, including training all current and future board members in running meetings inclusively, eliminating traditional hierarchies, and avoiding informal chit-chats that exclude people.

Introduction

IN WINNIPEG, 24 percent of the population have lived experience as former immigrants or refugees (Statistics Canada, 2017). Of those who immigrate or resettle in Canada, only approximately 39 percent of these newcomers¹ access settlement services when they first arrive in Canada (IRCC, 2018). Settlement services play a crucial role in the orientation, settlement and integration of newcomers, and settlement sector leadership is an important part of the development and provision of services that are inclusive, accessible, and consistent with newcomers' needs. In particular, the boards of directors (BODs) of not-for-profit settlement organizations play a key role in directing these organizations' visions and mandates, strategic decision-making, funding allocations, and final decisions on the direction and delivery of their services (Macfarlane et al., 2010). These decisions can have long-lasting impacts on the organization and the communities they serve. However, existing research shows that the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of board members is rarely representative of the service-using population (Diversity Institute, 2020). In Winnipeg's settlement sector, community members and organization representatives who sit on Immigration Partnership Winnipeg's Civic Engagement and Inclusion Sector Table and its Immigrant Advisory Table identified a lack of newcomer representation on settlement and community organization boards of directors.

Representative boards are thought to be essential in ensuring the organization is adaptive, responsive and in touch with the community it serves (Fredette & Bernstein, 2019). Failure to be adequately responsive to

newcomer needs may negatively impact integration into the community, which could have negative impacts on living conditions, experiences, prospects, and sense of belonging. There is evidence that board diversity supports increased performance, innovation, service-using engagement, and creative problem solving, while also reducing financial risks (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019; Perchersky, 2016). Conversely, other studies have found that national and cultural diversity on boards presents communication challenges, increases intra-board conflict, and slows decision-making (Braendle & Stiglbauer, 2017; Kadam et al., 2020).

This study explored the diversity, inclusion, representation, and barriers of newcomer, immigrant and refugee populations in settlement and community organizations' BODs in Winnipeg in order to develop strategies that promote their increased participation and inclusion. The main goal of this research project is to develop tangible recommendations to implement an awareness and training program for community and settlement BODs to increase their diversity, inclusion, and representation of newcomers, and to build former immigrants' and refugees' board leadership capacity to increase their social inclusion. Specifically, this study aims to: outline the benefits of and need for board diversity; promote awareness of the current levels of diversity and areas for growth; and describe actionable strategies to promote diversity. The main approach of this study was Community-Based Participatory Research and used mixed methods for data collection including surveys and focus groups. The study was conducted by a research team who worked collaboratively with an advisory group composed of service providers who supported the research project in its different stages.

The study found that most settlement sector BODs are not representative of the populations they serve, with refugees and recent immigrants particularly underrepresented. Focus group participants shared that newcomer, immigrant and refugee representation on boards promotes connection with service-using communities, addresses systemic inequities that arise from lack of representation, promotes the well-being and strategic integration of newcomer, immigrant, and refugee board members, and provides new perspectives. Informal recruiting practices, discrimination, and lack of awareness of board positions, responsibilities, and experience requirements among newcomer, immigrant, and refugee communities were key barriers to their representation on boards. To address these challenges, participants generated a list of recommendations including community-based recruitment, diversity and inclusion board policy, cross-cultural training for board members, and opportunities to build leadership capacity (e.g., job shadowing,

mentorship). Additionally, participants called for cross-cultural communication and diversity and inclusion training to promote safe, anti-racist spaces within boards, as experiences of tokenism and micro-aggressions on boards were reported. While approximately half of boards report implementing specific recruitment policies to promote newcomer, immigrant, and refugee representation, less than a third have consistent diversity and inclusion training for board members. The results of this study will be shared across the sector and used to create training materials and resources. Additionally, this study showed the need for further research and efforts to strengthen the leadership of newcomers, immigrants, and refugees in settlement organizations' BODs.

This report includes major findings on the literature review, the methodology, results, and data analysis. The report ends with detailed conclusions and recommendations for settlement organizations and future research. The results of this study will be shared with settlement organizations, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg's partners and networks, and will be used by Immigration Partnership Winnipeg's Leadership Development and Board Capacity Working Group to promote inclusive practices and develop initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion on settlement sector BODs.

Literature Review

THIS LITERATURE REVIEW used a series of searches of English-language academic and grey literature, using Google Scholar, to gather a picture of the existing literature related to diversity on boards of directors. The first search was the most targeted, seeking literature on representation of newcomers, immigrants, and refugees on settlement sector boards, with research conducted in North America using the search terms *newcomer*, *board of directors*, *diversity*, *settlement*, and synonyms. These searches resulted in very limited literature and broadening the geographic limitations did not result in additional publications. A second round of searches was conducted to investigate diversity in non-profit organizations more generally. Finally, a third round of searches was conducted to examine diversity more generally in boards of directors in both for-profit and not-for-profit boards and to identify promising research for replication in the non-profit sphere. The three searches resulted in N = 20 total publications, the majority (n = 16) of which reported research conducted in North America. In the included literature, just n = 6 of the publications focused on nonprofits. The studies most often used quantitative research methods, but mixed-method studies, document analysis, site visits, interviews, and literature reviews were also present in the included publications.

This literature review is organized in several themes that include diversity and board composition, benefits and challenges of diversity, barriers to diversity, and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Diversity and Board Composition

While diversity is increasingly valued in hiring and selection decisions for leadership roles (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Olthius & van den Oever, 2020), the definitions and understanding of diversity varies widely between organizations. Conceptually, diversity can be defined as “variety, balance and disparity” in which variety is the inclusion of diverse perspectives, balance is the distribution and composition, and disparity is the difference between the perspectives of members (Perchersky, 2016, p. 90). Buse and colleagues (2016) define diversity as age, gender, and ethnicity, while Macfarlane (2010) describes diversity as including personal metrics such as culture, training, and life experience. In practice, many of these diversity metrics are overlooked, and board demographics, when reported, tend to only consider gender representation and racialized board membership (Braendle & Stiglbauer, 2017; Diversity Institute, 2020).

Monitoring and reporting diversity along multiple metrics is an important aspect of transparency and can help boards understand the ways in which they are, and are not, representative of service-using communities. Tracking and reporting gender and ethnic diversity metrics is a common practice; among non-profit boards, half report gender diversity while 10 percent–20 percent report ethnoracial diversity (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Neilson & Neilson, 2013). Specific recommendations for improving tracking of current diversity metrics include measuring the ethnocultural composition of boards rather than racialized membership as an aggregate, as preliminary research has found that different ethnoracial communities face different challenges and levels of representation in leadership positions. Black communities are particularly underrepresented and face significant discrimination in leadership positions, with the majority of Black leaders reporting experiencing racial discrimination (67 percent) and micro-aggressions (80 percent) in the workplace (Diversity Institute, 2020; Myers et al., 2016). Gathering detailed data on board demographics can help to identify areas in which boards are not yet representative and what changes in recruitment and selection practices are needed. Tracking country of origin and nationality (i.e., newcomer membership) and cultural diversity is also recommended, as preliminary research suggests that multicultural and international board membership can impact board performance (Braendle & Stiglbauer, 2017; Neilson & Neilson, 2013; Thams et al., 2018). Expanding the conceptualization of diversity beyond observable characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, gender) the role of ideological diversity and “inner personal diversity” (e.g. ideas, culture,

background) is recommended (Olthius & van den Oever, 2020; Perchersky, 2016, p. 98). Understanding board diversity makes it possible to identify gaps in representation, encourage representation, and provide opportunities for social participation for equity-deserving groups.

Board Composition

Overall, gender composition of boards is consistently more representative than ethnoracial representation and non-profit boards tend to be more representative than private sector boards (Board Source, 2017; Diversity Institute, 2020; Perchersky, 2016). In a study of nearly 10,000 board members in eight major Canadian cities, the Diversity Institute (2020) found that cisgender women make up 41 percent of board positions, while racialized individuals are in 10 percent of positions, despite being nearly 30 percent of the population. Surveys of Canadian non-profit boards in Canada and the United States found that 83 percent–88 percent of board members were white (Board Source, 2017; Bradshaw et al., 2009; Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019; Ostrower, 2007). In the private sector, there tends to be even less ethnoracial representation, with approximately one in ten board members identifying as a racialized person (Macfarlane et al., 2010; Papadopoulos, 2019). The low levels of representation and diversity are likely to make the experience of board members from equity-deserving groups challenging and leave them at a social disadvantage as compared to well-represented communities. The Diversity Institute (2020) found that board members and leaders from equity-deserving groups² reported a “culture of silence” in which gender identity, disability status, non-visible ethnic diversity were not disclosed in favor of trying to “pass” as a member of a dominant group³ (p. 58).

The under-representation of equity-deserving communities occurs despite reported dissatisfaction with current levels of diversity and efforts of existing boards to recruit diverse membership. Among American non-profit boards, over half of boards report difficulty recruiting new board members (Board Source, 2017; Ostrower, 2007). A third of board members in US non-profits are dissatisfied with the current levels of gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and socio-economic diversity. While 95 percent of board members agree their board should seek out more diverse members, more than half of boards have no process for recruiting diverse skills (Board Source, 2017; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017). In Canadian boards, just 20–25 percent included equal opportunity board selection policies and less than half were willing to adopt inclusive measures to promote newcomer participation

(e.g., accommodations for religious holidays and dress, valuing intercultural knowledge and experience in selection considerations) (Cowper-smith & Duvieusart-Dery, 2016). The undervaluation of equity-deserving groups contributes to the lack of diversity on boards, with only 25 percent of board members agreeing that diversity is important part of “attracting and retaining top talent” and just 16 percent of board members perceiving that lack of diversity a priority (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Olthius & van den Oever, 2020, p. 12).

Newcomer Diversity

Diversity based on culture, international experience, or immigration status are rarely considered. In American for-profit companies, 30 percent had at least one newcomer member on the board, while a study of for-profit boards in 80 different countries reported that, on average, just 14.5 percent of boards have one newcomer member (Thams et al., 2018). Cowper-Smith & Duvieusart-Dery (2016) evaluated non-profit boards in Canada and found that just 14 percent had first generation immigrants or refugees, with slightly higher rates among non-profit organizations and slightly lower among governmental organizations. While first-generation newcomers make up approximately a quarter of the Canadian population, they are significantly under-represented in board positions (Statistics Canada, 2018). The lack of representation suggests that there are barriers that hinder newcomers’ equitable social participation and is detrimental to board performance. Studies have shown that newcomer membership on boards has been associated with increased board success on a variety of metrics (Kadam, 2020; Macfarlane et al. 2020; Nielsen & Nielson, 2013). The success of boards with newcomer representation is attributed to the diverse knowledge, approaches, perspectives, and business practices of newcomer board members (Kadam, 2020; Macfarlane et al. 2020; Nielsen & Nielson, 2013). Organizations including the Conference Board of Canada recognize the value that immigrants bring, stating that:

...hiring immigrants, new Canadians, or temporary foreign workers can provide Canadian businesses with such benefits as: expanded access to talent, knowledge, a base of skills; potential links to new global and domestic markets and business opportunities; and fresh perspectives and diverse points of view leading to enhanced innovation and creativity. (Macfarlane et al., 2010, p. 5)

Newcomer membership is particularly important in an increasingly globalized world, as this community frequently brings international and multicultural experience (Macfarlane et al., 2010; Kadam et al., 2020). In the settlement sector, in which the service-using communities have international, globalized, and multicultural experiences and perspectives, the inclusion of newcomer board members is likely to be particularly advantageous. Specifically, “national diversity is among the few diversity attributes that help increase performance”, even when diversity in age, education, and international experience produced null effects (Neilson & Neilson, 2013, p. 378). The researchers posited that newcomer board members bring diverse experiences and strategies to boards and reduce conformity to the status quo. In addition, Thams and colleagues (2020) found that newcomer members bring “access to knowledge of foreign institutional environments and business practices and enrich boards’ strategic decision making with a diversity of perspectives, mindsets, and viewpoints” (p. 8). Conversely, the study found that newcomer diversity on boards was linked to slower decision-making, as a result of communication challenges and language barriers, stereotyping of board members, and intra-board conflict, ultimately hindering board decision-making capacity (Thams et al., 2020).

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Benefits and Challenges of Diversity

Board diversity has been found to be beneficial for board performance and promotes positive organizational outcomes including better innovation, decision-making, and relations with service-using communities. Specifically, diverse boards are able to (a) access a broad knowledge base; (b) adapt and innovate; (c) relate to and represent service-users; (d) enhance organization’s standing in public opinion; and (e) manage disruption and engage in effective planning (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Olthius & van den Oever, 2020). For example, women serving as board members have been shown to improve board performance because they tend to be more active and engaged board members, have larger social and professional networks, increase ethical compliance of boards, improve community relations, promote equitable working conditions, and have a better understanding of complex problem solving (Ostrower, 2007; Perchersky, 2016, p. 91, 93). Multicultural board diversity promotes creativity and innovation through the provision of broader knowledge and perspectives (Kadam, 2020; Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009; Perchersky, 2016). Representative boards have higher levels

Diversity may lead to increased “cognitive conflict” or “constructive conflict” as a result of different value systems, experiences, perspectives, and levels of risk tolerance among board members, which creates the opportunity to address biases and question norms. Cognitive conflict, although linked to slower decision-making and increased intra-board tensions, has been found to have ultimately positive effects and is associated with improved strategic decision-making, better fiduciary performance, fewer accounting mistakes, and reduced conformity biases such as groupthink.

of employee satisfaction and are perceived more positively by service-using communities (Diversity Institute, 2020; Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009). Board members from equity-deserving groups bring a broader range of contacts to the board, as they often have networks and connections in diverse communities that are not traditionally represented on boards (Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009; Perchersky, 2016). In addition, board members with direct connections to service-using communities can provide insight into service-users experiences and promote community engagement (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019; Perchersky, 2016, p. 91, 93). As well as improving the boards’ understanding of service-user needs, board diversity can “legitimize [the] firm in the eyes of [the] communities and public” (Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009; Perchersky, 2016, p. 92).

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Conditions for Positive Diversity

Many of the challenges resulting from ethnocultural board diversity on boards have been linked to discrimination and prejudice, which reduce

cooperation between board members (Braendle & Stiglbauer, 2017; Kadam et al., 2020). If board members are not committed to working with diverse members, diversity can result in divisions and cultural conflict that decrease performance (Braendle & Stiglbauer, 2017). The negative effects are mitigated when board members have positive perceptions of diversity (i.e., are in favour of diverse board membership), which were found to have a stronger positive effect than intercultural communication skills (Kadam, 2020), suggesting that challenges in diverse boards are more closely linked to discrimination than communication barriers. Positive perceptions of diversity were associated with board harmony, individual and board performance, innovation, and positive board climate (Kadam, 2020). Gender diversity has also been found to moderate the negative effects of diversity and was correlated with higher proportions of newcomer membership on boards (Buse et al., 2016; Thams et al., 2018).

There is evidence suggesting that a minimum threshold of diversity is required for boards to benefit from the positive effects of diversity. Critical mass theory posits that boards must reach a tipping point – which is thought to be when there are three diverse members, or when 20–38 percent of the board is composed of members from equity-deserving groups – before these members are heard and allowed to contribute to decision-making (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019; Macfarlane et al., 2010). In a study of Canadian non-profit boards, it was found that while more than half of boards had at least one member that identifies as a member of an equity-deserving group,⁴ only 26 percent of boards reached the critical mass (three or more) of members from ethno-racial, equity-deserving groups (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019).

Barriers to Diversity

A study of non-profit and public boards in Ontario found that 69 percent of organizations could not identify any barriers to newcomer participation or inclusion; the barriers that were identified were focused on newcomers' limitations, including English language proficiency and Canadian experience (Cowper-Smith & Duveusart-Déry, 2016). In reality, the Diversity Institute's (2020) study of over 9,500 board members across Canada found that newcomers and other equity-deserving communities face many barriers to participation in Boards of Directors at individual, organizational and societal levels. For example, internalization of the stereotyped images of

leaders present in North American culture is one such barrier to diversity, both because there is the chance that selection committees will not view diverse board members as valuable candidates and because newcomer or other members from equity-deserving groups may limit their aspirations.

Representation is crucial to promoting diversity — “if you can’t see it, you can’t be it” — while a lack of diversity is a mutually reinforcing, negative cycle (Diversity Institute, 2020, p. 6). For individuals, a lack of social networks in the professional sector is another barrier to sitting on boards, which may pose particular difficulties for newcomers whose social capital has been disrupted due to migration or whose social connections are primarily in diaspora communities which are under-represented in leadership positions. The lack of newcomer leaders also contributes to the reduced access to mentorship, which promotes leadership capacity and board readiness (Diversity Institute, 2020; Myers et al. 2016). Organizational culture, prejudice, and discrimination (including micro-aggressions) are also significant barriers to appointing diverse members and are linked to negative experiences for board members from equity-deserving groups (Diversity Institute, 2020; Myers et al., 2016). A study conducted in the United States found that regions with conservative political ideologies and higher levels of anti-immigrant prejudice were less likely to have newcomer members on boards and posited that newcomer board members in these regions are more likely to have negative experiences (Thams et al., 2018). Discriminatory barriers are intersectional and result in compounding challenges in which individuals that identify with two or more equity-deserving groups face increased challenges (Diversity Institute, 2020), such that female, disabled, or racialized newcomers face additional difficulties reaching leadership positions.

While the vast majority (95 percent) of board members surveyed in Fucci and Deloitte’s study (2017) agreed that their board should recruit more diverse members, more than half (46 percent) reported no process for recruiting diverse skills. Traditional selection criteria and recruitment processes of boards can present barriers to newcomer board membership. Requirements of Canadian experience or industry-specific experience are particularly challenging for newcomers who may bring diverse skills, experience, and perspectives that are currently not adequately valued in hiring and selection metrics (Diversity Institute, 2020). As well as the specific selection criteria, traditional recruitment practices tend to perpetuate existing board demographics and homogeneity (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; LeBlanc, 2019). In particular, informal board selection practices that draw from pre-existing social contacts are a barrier to diverse hires, as are informal evaluation pro-

cesses in which potential board members are chosen based on the opinions of existing members rather than impartial assessments (Diversity Institute, 2020; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; LeBlanc, 2019).

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Altering board selection criteria and methods, addressing biases, valuing diversity, creating diversity and inclusion policies, and developing mentoring programs are key recommendations for promoting board representation and inclusion, as per the literature.

Recruitment and Selection

Broadening the selection criteria to include lived experience in diverse groups, passion and interest, community connections, experience as a service user, and interpersonal and intercultural skills is recommended (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Ostrower, 2007). Recognizing specific characteristics such as ethnicity, disability, or gender as adding value and qualification is another strategy for diverse board selection (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017). For newcomer members and settlement sector boards, this should include valuing international experience and valuing lived migration experience. Examining the selection and appointment practices is also recommended, in order to identify biases or methods which promote homogeneous membership (Hardy-Fanta & Stewartson, 2007). Certain forms of recruitment are thought to promote diversity, including (a) advertising in ethno-specific publications; (b) recruiting through partnerships with ethnocultural organizations; (c) choosing community leaders; and (d) advertising through public sources such as newspapers and websites (Bradshaw et al., 2009).

Perchersky (2016) argues that societal pressure is sufficient to increase board diversity, while Bradshaw's research team (2009) found that board members do not perceive pressure to increase diversity from donors or government regulations, but are motivated to increase diversity to better meet the needs of service-users. Rather than enforcing diversity quotas, other authors propose a mixtocracy model in which merit is valued, but existing biases are actively combatted through analytical hiring, changing selection criteria, and accepting a higher risk tolerance in recruitment by choosing members who do not typically serve on boards (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Perchersky, 2016). The mixtocracy model is also thought to be superior

Altering board selection criteria and methods, addressing biases, valuing diversity, creating diversity and inclusion policies, and developing mentoring programs are key recommendations for promoting board representation and inclusion, as per the literature.

to diversity quotas, as using quotas which define diversity based on personal characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity) may contribute to tokenism, rather than genuine diversity of experience, culture, education, and perspectives (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Perchersky, 2016). Specific strategies for countering hiring and selection biases include using data-based evaluation methods, clear documentation, and transparency in the selection practice, using impartial assessments and independent tracking of board composition over time (Hardy-Fanta & Stewartson, 2007; LeBlanc, 2019).

Diversity and Inclusion Policies

Board diversity and board functioning are significantly associated with (a) clear, printed policies about representation on the board; (b) a board committee related to diversity; and (c) strategic plans which include diversity-related goals (Bradshaw et al., 2009). It is recommended that existing board members establish and enact these policies, as directors have a responsibility to consider the strategic advantages and benefits of diversity (Macfarlane et al., 2010). In addition to representative demographic composition, creating positive environments for board members from equity-deserving groups is critical. Board functioning is improved with diversity but only when inclusivity practices and policies are in place to allow for the positive effects of diversity and to mitigate the negative effects of discrimination and intra-board conflict; a board's ability to work collaboratively was one of the top indicators of board performance (Board Source, 2017; Buse et al., 2016). Specific recommendations for promoting inclusivity include (a) formal orientation of new members; (b) continuing professional development; and (c) mentoring opportunities, all of which are correlated with board member satisfaction (Bradshaw et al., 2009). Ultimately, diversity and inclusion are crucial to create a safe environment focused on equality, as “women and minority board members do not want to be ‘minority board members’ – they want to be board members” (Fucci & Deloitte, 2017).

Methodology

THIS PROJECT EXPLORES the diversity, representation, and inclusion amongst settlement and community Boards of Directors using four guiding research questions:

1. What is the current composition of the settlement sector and community organization boards of directors?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of board diversity?
3. What are the barriers that limit the inclusion of racialized and newcomer members on boards of directors?
4. What strategies promote increased diversity, representation, and inclusion of racialized and newcomer membership on boards of directors?

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board. Participants for surveys and focus groups were recruited through emails and posters distributed among settlement agencies. Participants' consent was obtained, and this included consent to audio record focus groups and interviews and to share data. Data for this study was collected in Winnipeg, Manitoba between June and August 2021.

The participants were adults (over the age of 18) who were involved in community leadership or settlement organizations in Winnipeg, Manitoba and had the English language skills to complete the survey and/or participate

in focus groups or interviews conducted in English. Both immigrant and refugee (i.e., newcomer) and Canadian-born participants were included in this project. Specifically, participants included settlement and community organizations' (a) current and former board members, (b) senior management, and (c) individuals with relevant leadership experience who have not yet formally sat on a board of directors. Relevant boards – boards of settlement sector organizations – were identified by the research team, the community consultant, and members of a multi-organizational advisory board and recruited via email and posting of a recruitment poster.

This study implemented a mixed methods research design, using community-based participatory action (CBPA) research methods. Acting in partnership and collaboration with community members, the research team designed the data collection tools based on existing literature and the input of a multi-organizational advisory board and a community consultant. The surveys were completed electronically using SurveyMonkey and focus groups were conducted using Zoom. A community consultant was hired to support recruitment of key community members and to conduct focus groups. Participants of the focus groups received an honorarium as compensation for their time. The project followed COVID-19 protocols established by the University of Manitoba and Immigration Partnership Winnipeg.

Data was collected using two quantitative surveys and a set of focus group questions related to board composition and selection practices. The first survey (i.e. the organization survey) was completed by executive directors or board chairs on behalf of the organization and included perceptions on board demographics, board policy, and diversity and inclusion practices. One survey was filled out per organization. A second, individual survey was available to board members and members of senior management and included questions about perceptions of current board diversity and policies (e.g., *I feel our board of directors is representative of the population we serve*) and experiences of sitting on boards (e.g., *Have you ever felt at risk or unsafe voicing your ideas and feedback*). The focus groups included participants with board experience and informal leadership experience, and the focus group questions were designed to gather perspectives on diversity-related topics and to explore the challenges, benefits, risks, and barriers as they relate to board diversity and the experiences of community leaders and board members. A total of N = 16 participants completed the organization survey,⁵ N = 22 completed the board member survey, and N = 12 participants (n = 6 board members, n = 1 member of senior management, and n = 5 organizational staff and community leaders) attended the focus groups.

- **Organization Survey:** was completed by 16 executive directors or board chairs on behalf of their settlement organization board of directors.
- **Individual Survey:** was completed by 22 individuals including (a) current or former board members of settlement or community organizations; (b) senior management of settlement or community organizations; and (c) community members with leadership experience.
- **Five Focus Groups;** attended by 12 participants that included current board members, senior leadership (board chair), executive directors, senior management, and other staff. Participants were a mix of second generation, refugees, economic class migrants, and privately sponsored migrants. There were racialized and non-racialized participants.

The small number of participants limited us to develop an inferential data analysis and this report is limited to present descriptive quantitative data analysis. As it was a mixed methods approach, the qualitative data contributed to strengthening the analysis. The qualitative data taken from the focus groups was transcribed and thematically coded, in which key themes were identified by the first coder, redefined through discussion with the research team, and finalized in a second round of coding. Throughout the results and analysis, participant quotes were included where possible to emphasize and illustrate the key themes. Using a mixed-method design, the quantitative and qualitative results were triangulated to increase the validity of the data, organize, and integrate the data in four themes and provide both numerical and narrative evidence.

Consistent with the Community-Based Participatory Research approach, the research team presented a preliminary data analysis to the multi-organizational advisory board, which provided critical and supportive feedback for the data analysis and knowledge mobilization. Following feedback from the advisory board, the research team revisited the data and triangulation report to do a second more in depth analysis of the data. Finally, this report is a collaborative work that reflects different perspectives from settlement service providers and those with lived experience. This report will be shared with the advisory committee, interested organizations, funders and at conferences, and the findings and recommendations will lead to initiatives targeted at increasing representation and inclusion of newcomers, immigrants and refugees on settlement organizations' boards of directors.

Limitations

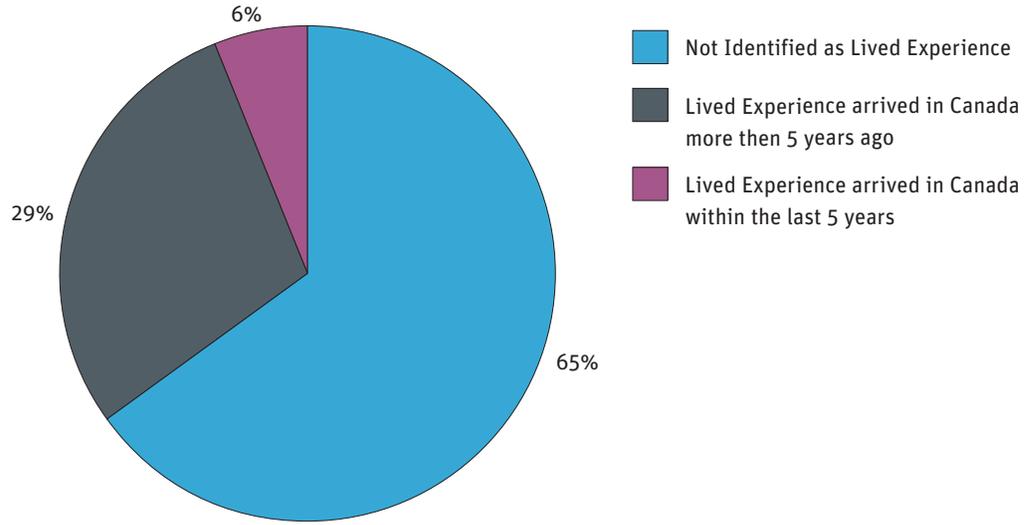
This pilot study collected data from settlement organizations and individuals in Winnipeg and focused on diversity and the representation of newcomers and racialized community members on local settlement organizations' boards. The discussion of diversity related to gender identity, disability, and sexual orientation is limited in this paper; future research on the experiences and representation of these groups on boards of directors and in leadership is recommended. Participation in the study was voluntary and boards that are already engaged with diversity and inclusion topics may have been more likely to participate, potentially resulting in higher reported rates of board diversity and DEI practices. However, familiarity and engagement with diversity and inclusion topics may have been useful in generating coherent commentary on board diversity and actionable recommendations. The small sample size of this study may make it difficult to generalize results to other community contexts, although findings did align with previous, large-scale studies (e.g., Board Source, 2017; Diversity Institute, 2020; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; Perchersky, 2016). The results and recommendations generated may provide a useful basis for creating future research and diversity and inclusion initiatives for boards and contribute to our awareness of the Canadian settlement service sector but should be interpreted as a case study of the Winnipeg community.

Findings and Analysis

The findings of this study are presented in three sections based on the organization survey, individual survey, and the focus groups questionnaires. The analysis follows the patterns of the questions with the themes of some of the questions converted into subheadings.

1. Organization Survey
2. Individual Board Members Survey
3. Focus Groups

FIGURE 1 Proportion of Board Members with Lived Experience as Refugees or Newcomers



Survey Results

Organization Survey

Representation and Composition of Boards

The study found that organization respondents were diverse organizations providing a wide range of services for newcomers, refugees and immigrants. Organization respondents had varying board sizes ranging from three to fourteen board members. As shown in *Figure 1*, 35 percent of board seats were held those with lived experience while only 6 percent were held those who arrived in Canada in the last five years.

There was some representation of newcomer immigrants or refugees in nearly all participating organizations, although we found that the larger an organization's board, the lesser the proportion of diversity in the board's composition.

The study shows there is more representation from naturalized Canadian citizens on boards than from those who have arrived more recently. Eligibility for naturalization requires a minimum of three years of residency, pointing to a likely correlation between volunteering on a board and how established a newcomer is in Canada, or that one has a higher potential to volunteer on a board when they have established relationships within the local community. Many former refugees and immigrants who have lived in Canada for more than five years are still deeply rooted in their communities and may maintain a current tab on the experiences of recent immigrants and refugees from similar backgrounds.

FIGURE 2 Board Members by Countries of Origin

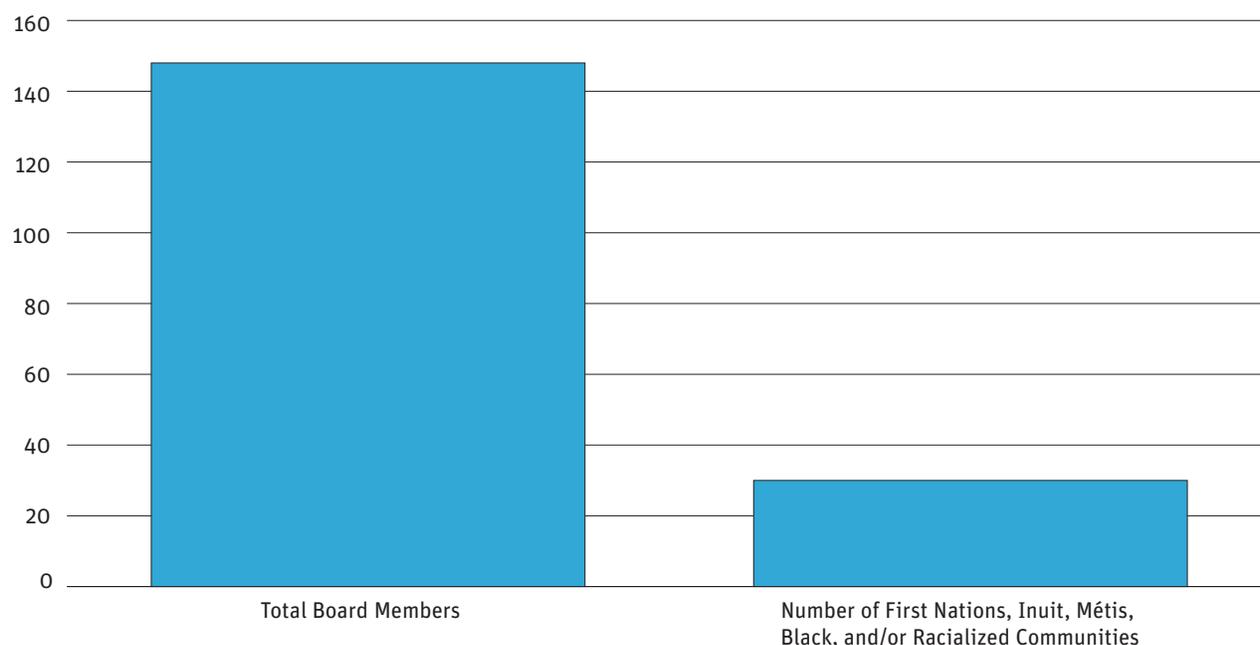
Country of Origin	Number	Percentage	Country of Origin	Number	Percentage
Argentina	2	4.00%	Jamaica	1	2.00%
Brazil	1	2.00%	Jordan	1	2.00%
Chad	1	2.00%	Morocco	1	2.00%
Chile	1	2.00%	Nigeria	3	7.00%
China	2	4.00%	Peru,	1	2.00%
Czech Republic	1	2.00%	Philippines	4	9.00%
Ecuador	1	2.00%	Poland	2	4.00%
El Salvador	1	2.00%	Russia	2	4.00%
England	2	4.00%	Rwanda	1	2.00%
Ethiopia	3	7.00%	South Africa	1	2.00%
Germany	1	2.00%	Syria	1	2.00%
Honduras	1	2.00%	Turkey	2	4.00%
India	4	9.00%	USSR	1	2.00%
Iran	2	4.00%	Vietnam	1	2.00%
Israel	1	2.00%			
Total Responses: 46					

While expected, there was a notable absence of individuals with temporary residency status on the boards of any of the organizations that responded to the survey. This may be explained by the temporary and precarious nature of the lives of those with temporary residency status and the need for board members to commit to sitting on a board for a set period. Despite these barriers, this ongoing lack of representation of temporary residents on settlement board of directors could result in settlement agencies' board of directors not having an awareness of the settlement support needs of temporary residents. Having said that, it is also unrealistic to find people with temporary status who have the time to commit to serving on boards.

The data also showed that boards have limited representation from refugees: the organization with the largest proportion of refugees on their board was 20 percent, while no board had more than one individual with lived experience as a refugee. This may indicate that the experience of refugees is not well represented on the boards of settlement agencies and hence affecting informed decision making in creating opportunities for refugees.

The country of origin of the 46 board members with lived experience was varied. Likely owing to the large population of immigrants from the Philippines and India in Manitoba, there were more board members who

FIGURE 3 Number of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Black and Racialized Community Members on Boards



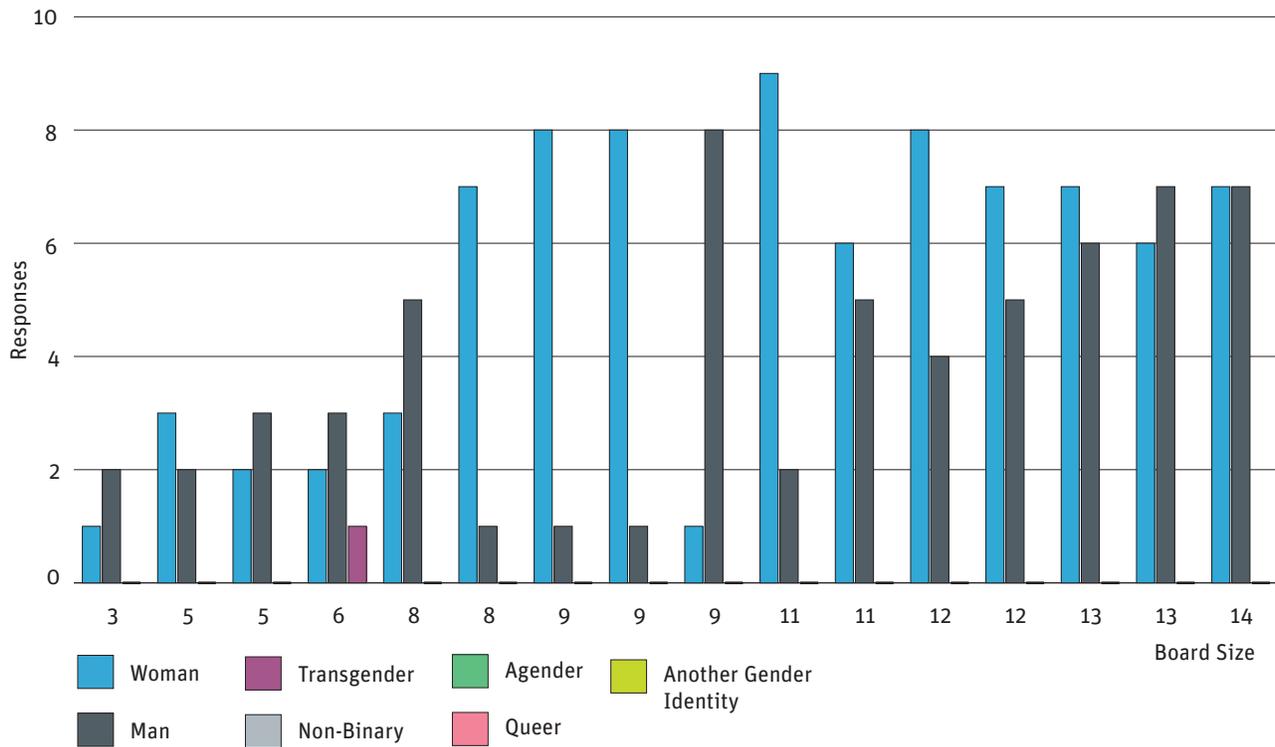
had origins in these two countries (9 percent each), followed by Nigeria and Ethiopia (7 percent each). *Figure 2* provides a list of countries where board members with lived experience originated.

Representation of persons of First Nation, Inuit, Métis, Black, and other racialized identities in the boards of participating organizations was found to be low. Only 20 percent of the board members identified as belonging to these groups (*The graph in figure 3 below shows the differences in representation*).

Data on religious diversity was inconclusive as most of the organizations did not disclose or did not know the religious background of their board members.

There are generally more cisgender women on boards than cisgender men (57 percent to 42 percent). Cisgender women have lower representation on small size boards (3–8 members), higher representation on middle size (8–11 members) boards, and gender equity increases as board size increases (12–14 members). However, respondents reported no board members of other genders.⁶ This may signal a missed opportunity to support newcomers who may not identify with the gender that was assigned to them at birth.⁷ *Figure 4* shows the distribution of gender across boards of various sizes.

FIGURE 4 Gender Identity of Board Members by Board Size



Note: Please refer to endnotes 6 & 7 on gender identity.

Recruitment Process

When asked about the existence of distinct recruitment/hiring processes to ensure a diverse board, 38 percent of participants reported that their organizations do not have a distinct recruitment process in place, 50 percent affirmed that their organizations have a distinct recruitment process which ensures the representation of newcomers on their boards. Despite this data, we saw huge disparities in board diversity in the previous section. One of the executive directors indicated:

Our members voted on a by-law change this year that a minimum of three Board Members at all times must have lived experience of facing systemic barriers as a racialized immigrant or refugee. We intend this to be a minimum but have a much higher percentage. We have always had at least half with immigrant experience, but often from non-racialized backgrounds as they were the leaders of our member agencies and therefore nominated to be on the board.

Others shared elaborate policies for representation while some were vague in their response. Here are a sample of their quotes:

- “Our new by-laws state that our board must have members with lived experience.”
- “We have a verbal understanding of intent, not a defined process.”
- “We aim to recruit former participants.”
- “We make an effort to have representatives from all immigrant categories (refugee, family class, economic) and current top source countries for newcomers to Manitoba.”

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

There were varied responses to the requirement for board members to take ongoing diversity, inclusion, and cultural safety training (or similar) to ensure understanding of newcomer issues and perspectives among board members. Only 31.3 percent of the organizations had ongoing diversity, inclusion, and cultural safety training (or similar) while 56.8 percent reported that they did not have such trainings as shown in *Figure 5*. From the comments below, it is possible that organizations did not have these trainings or offered them as an afterthought.

- “This is now specifically in our Board member job description and was highlighted in the nomination process. All our Board Members are senior staff of newcomer serving agencies so do take ongoing professional development in this area.”
- “I don’t disagree with this statement--I wish we did this work, but we are not.”
- “Not that I disagree, but that they are not required to take ongoing training”

Of those organizations that had diversity training, a few indicated that they offered training to everyone every one to two years, while about 19 percent indicated that they provided diversity training on a quarterly basis. Higher frequency of training is important for boards of directors for many reasons given relatively high turnover rates.

A majority of organizations (69 percent) asserted that they provide mentorship and support for potential newcomer, immigrant or refugees board members as shown in *Figure 6*.

The following are a variety of comments on the provision of mentorship:

FIGURE 5 Requirements of Board Members to Take Ongoing Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Safety Training

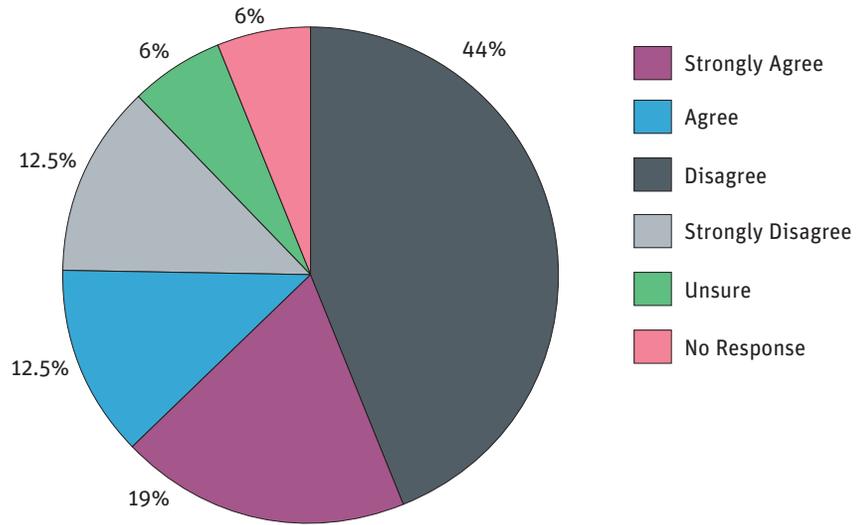
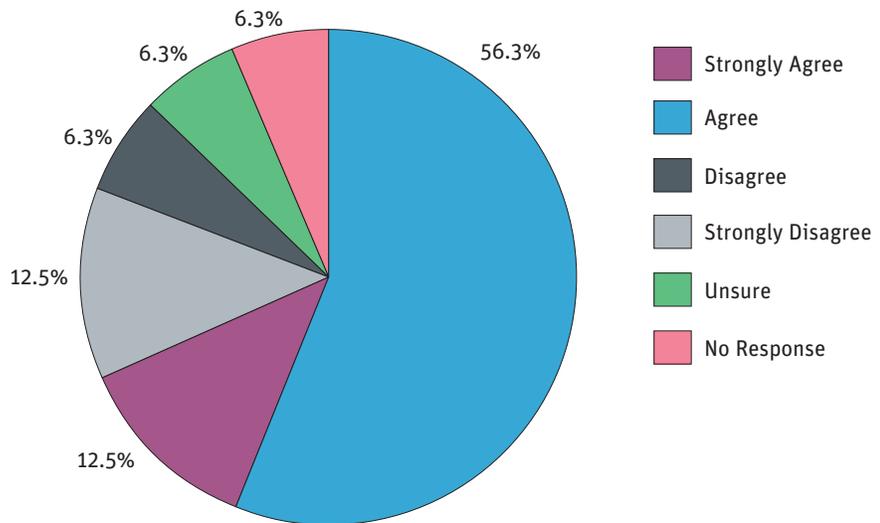


FIGURE 6 Provision of Support and Mentorship for Potential Newcomer, Immigrant, and Refugee Board Members

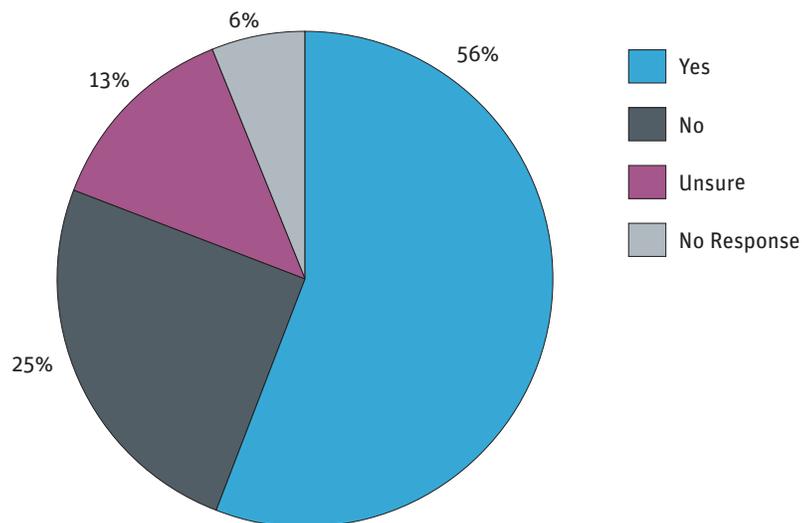


- “Again, we plan to be more intentional about this to maybe have mentors on the board for new board members and do a more intensive orientation process.”
- “I don’t disagree. We don’t currently do this work.”
- “We don’t have a formal pathway, but we ask potential board members to self-nominate or we approach people. There is a selection process not an election process so we would approach someone to join the board or encourage someone to put their name forward and be mentored.”

Diversity Policies

On the existence of diversity (more broadly DEI) policies, 56 percent of organizations surveyed stated that they had diversity and inclusion policies in their by-laws and governance policies, 25 percent stated they did not, while 13 percent stated they were unsure. While more than half of the organizations surveyed had policies in place, it is still a significant shortfall that 25 percent do not and concerning that 13 percent of organizational leaders do not know whether they have these policies in place at all. This highlights the importance of not only having DEI policies, but also ensuring all staff and board members are aware of them. While the existence of DEI policies is important, DEI in practice is crucial given that many organizations lack representation from racialized communities or where racialized board members feel they are unable to share their views at meetings as will be discussed in the following section.

FIGURE 7 Existence of Diversity and Inclusion Policies in Organizations By-laws and Governance



Evaluation and Engagement

Most of the participants (69 percent) stated that there is regular evaluation and engagement with participants to assess and plan better programs and services in their organizations.

Experiences with Representation and Composition

Individual Board Members Survey

Respondents to the individual survey were mostly board chairs and board members (91 percent), with one respondent who had prior board experience but was not actively sitting on a board. A total of 22 participants completed the survey. About two-thirds of these participants had prior experience sitting on boards of organizations, though we are unable to discern whether that experience included boards prior to coming to Canada.

Newcomers, immigrants and refugees made up 50 percent (11) of those participating in the individual surveys, about half of whom were permanent residents, with further categorization as follows: family sponsored (18 per-

FIGURE 8 Racial Identity of Board Members

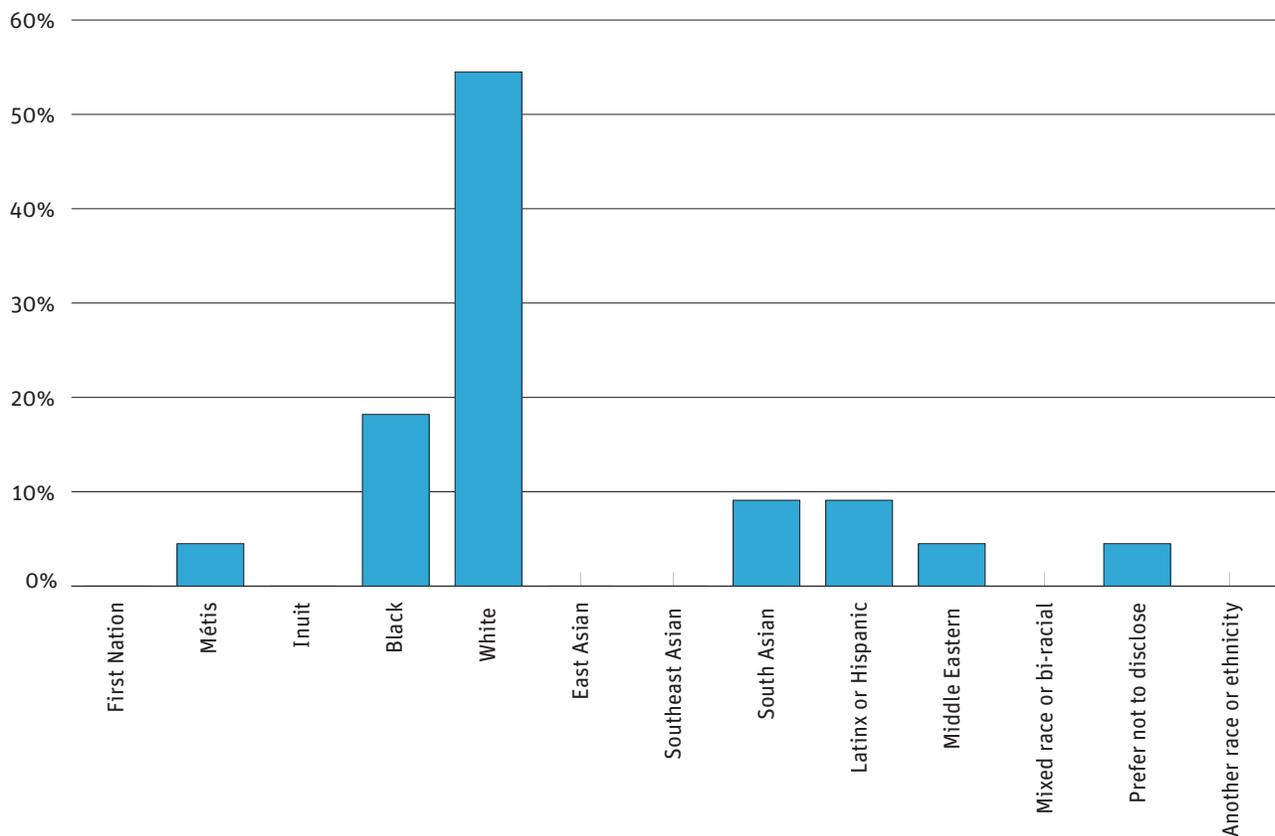
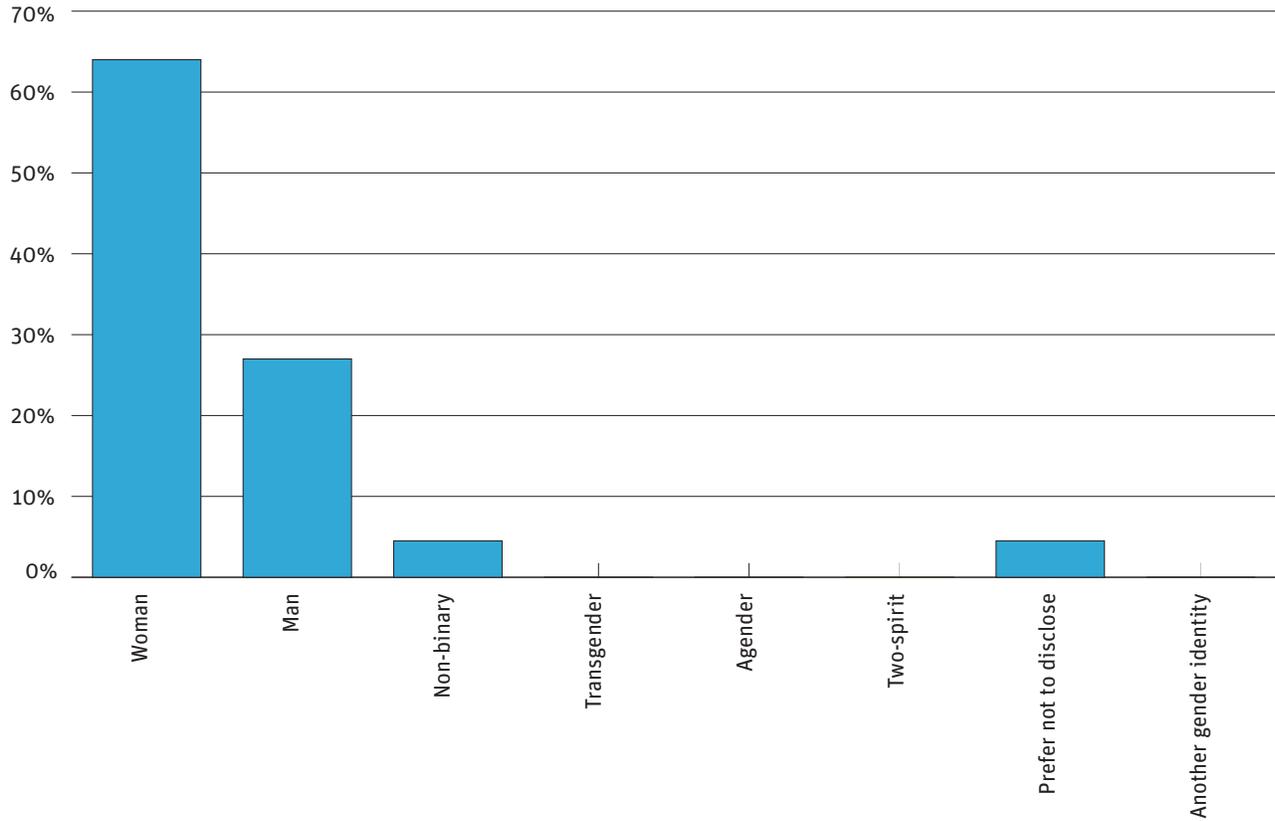


FIGURE 9 Gender Identity



Note: Please refer to endnotes 6 & 7 on gender identity.

cent), economic immigrant (9 percent) and refugees (0). There was 9 percent representation each from international students and temporary residents.

The data showed some racial diversity but there was a preponderance of board members of white European descent (55 percent) amongst those surveyed, as shown in *Figure 8*. Surprisingly, 72.8 percent of those interviewed indicated that their board composition was representative of ethnocultural backgrounds while 64 percent of participants thought their board membership was representative of the populations they served (36 percent of those respondents were white while 27 percent were from racialized communities). Further, 91 percent of the board members surveyed indicated that their fellow board members were knowledgeable about diverse practices and valued commitment to inclusive practices.

Another 90 percent of those interviewed, from all racial backgrounds, indicated that they felt safe to provide their input and share their views in board meetings. While the 22 survey results indicate quite positive

perspectives, there was a significant disagreement from the focus group interviews where many indicated lack of representation, disconnect from the experiences of the people their organizations served and an inability to share their views on boards.

The survey also showed low levels of diversity for: members of religious minorities (4.5 percent), gender identities (cisgender women constituting 64 percent, see *Figure 9*), sexual orientations (91 percent respondents identifying as heterosexual) and for folks with disabilities (4.5 percent).

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Practices

Of the organizations that participated in the survey, generic and universal organizations were most likely to state that they did have a distinct recruitment/hiring process for board members with lived experience, followed by issue-based organizations.

Only 50 percent have a confirmed distinct recruitment hiring process, despite being an industry focused on welcoming diversity/newcomers. Both the individual and organization survey responses to this question only had 50 percent able to confirm their board of directors had a distinct recruitment process for recruiting board members with lived experience as seen in *Figure 10*.

FIGURE 10 Recruitment and Hiring Processes to Ensure Representation

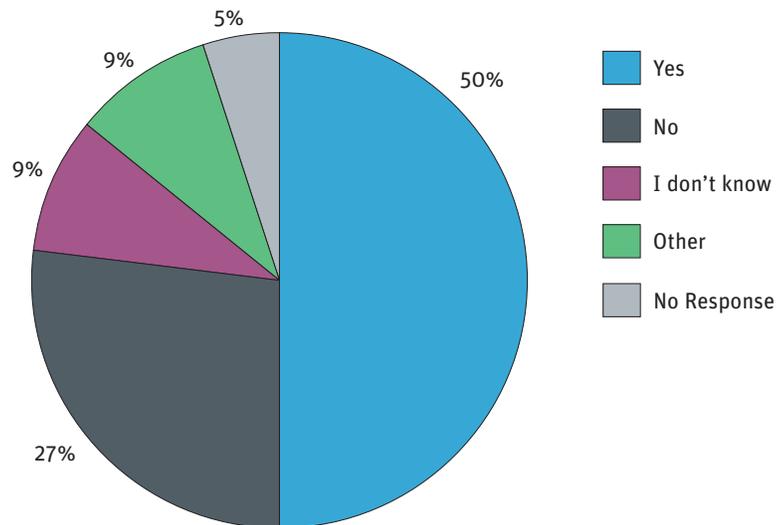
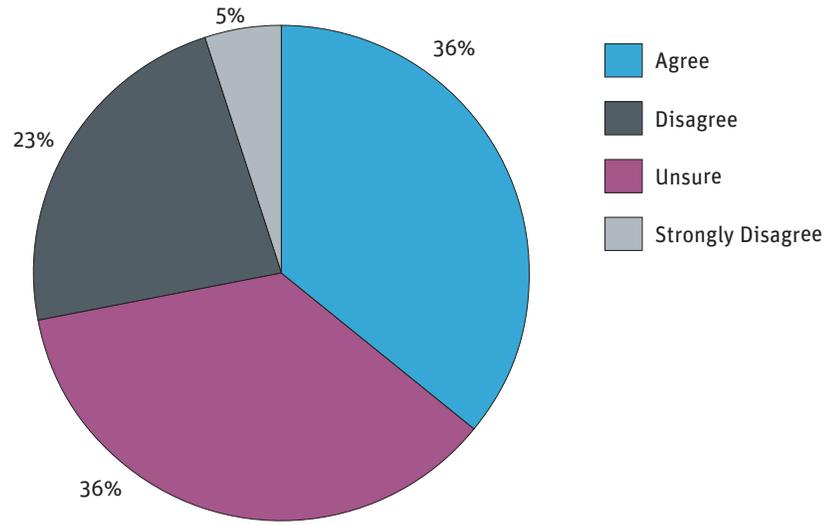


FIGURE 11 Mentorship Supports for Newcomer Board Members



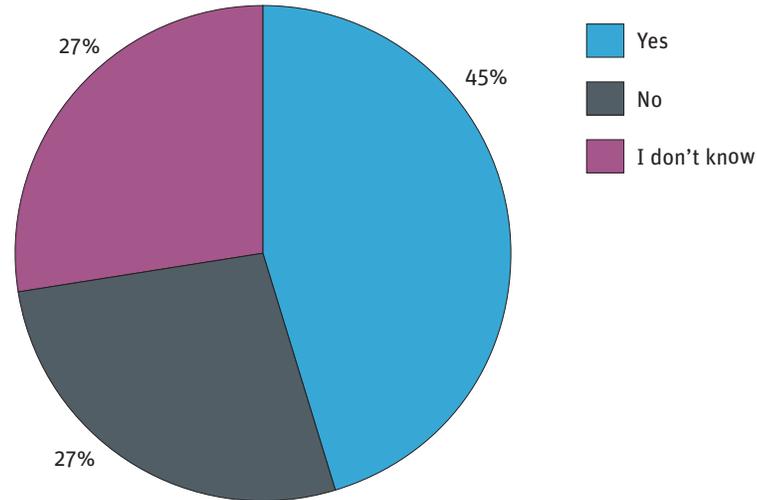
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

A slight majority (54.5 percent) of respondents expressed that their organizations provide support to become a board member as seen in *Figure 11*. For example, a participant commented, “[o]ne of the board members that I knew prior to joining the board, mentioned a few tips about different committees to be on, like the strategic planning committee or Finance committee etc.” Fewer than half of the individual survey participants (36.4 percent) responded that there are supports for newcomers, immigrants and/or refugees becoming board members. In some instances, there seemed to be little understanding of the value of these supports. For example, one board member surveyed asserted, “I’m not sure I understand the question; from whom would this support come? From within our board or from an external source? Our non-profit has virtually no budget for attending learning sessions.” However, individuals with lived experience were more likely to respond that they received a lot of support or some support and/or mentorship to join the board than those without lived experience.

Diversity Policies

The existence of diversity policies is important to achieve diverse boards. About 46 percent of those interviewed stated that their organizations had diversity and inclusion policies within their board by-laws and governance policies, 27 percent stated they did not, while 27 percent stated they were unsure. Similar to the data shown from the organizational surveys, it is concerning that such

FIGURE 12 Diversity and Inclusion Policies in By-laws and Governance Policies



a percentage of individuals surveyed do not know if their organizations have DEI policies in place or not. A recommendation from this set of data would not only be for organizations to develop DEI policies but ensure that all staff and board members are made aware and understand them.

Focus Group Results

The focus group participants reiterated many of the general themes found in survey results – low levels of diversity, experiences of tokenism, and challenges with informal board selection practices. They also provided first-hand perspectives, identified positive practices, and generated recommendations for promoting board diversity and leadership capacity among refugee, immigrant, and newcomer communities. The conversations in the focus groups centered on three topics: (a) the role of diversity and representation, (b) barriers and supports impacting board diversity, and (c) pathways for promoting diversity and leadership capacity among refugee, immigrant, and newcomer communities.

Role of Diversity and Representation

Supporting the quantitative results from the surveys and existing research (Cowper-Smith & Duvieusart-Déry, 2016; Thams et al., 2018), focus group participants reported that newcomer and racialized community members are

under-represented in Winnipeg's settlement sector boards. For the newcomer and racialized board members, board membership frequently resulted in feelings of isolation, intimidation, and uselessness when their opinions were not valued or heard. Other participants reported feeling stereotyped and note that they are asked to speak to the experiences of Black, urban, and refugee communities despite not belonging to those communities. These negative experiences were linked with low levels of board diversity and a lack of willingness to incorporate diverse members as equals in the boardroom. Participants shared that, "there should be more focus on board members that represent the clients they serve" rather than nominal diversity initiatives. For some participants, this meant a minimum of 40 percent–50 percent of board members having lived experience as a refugee, immigrant, or newcomer, to represent the Canadian population average; others called for boards with an overwhelming majority of newcomer members to represent the demographics of service-using communities.

"It's strange to see newcomer serving organizations led exclusively by [white] Canadians, you know, people who were born here... how can you lead an organization for newcomers if you have never been a newcomer yourself?"

While most settlement organizations have many newcomer members on staff, one participant noted that, "as you get higher up, the whiter it gets and the less in-tune those organizations, those boards, are with what's actually happening on the ground."

Defining Diversity

Participants spoke to the importance of carefully defining diversity, noting that immigration is not a monolithic experience and is constantly changing; immigrants from 15 years ago had a very different experience than today. Even within "newcomers" diversity exists between recent immigrants and refugees. People immigrating from different regions and within distinct immigration waves come from diverse groups with different perspectives, strengths and needs. Emphasis was made on the need to understand that there is diversity in the experiences of people including time in Canada, ethnicity, region/nation/ethnic group of origin, age, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Benefits of Board Diversity and Board Membership

Increasing board diversity was viewed as a pathway to promoting inclusion and addressing the systemic inequalities that result from a lack of representation in positions of power.

“Diversity is what increases creativity and input — it is absolutely necessary that when it comes to the board level where the key decisions of organizations and communities and companies and boards and institutions are being made. If these boards are [not] diverse then we will still be having a mono-racially dominated organizational nation that does not serve the people that it leads and that results in further injustice, which, down the line, is going to hurt us as a country or as a community. But if the boards are diverse, if diversity is maintained, imbibed, if it is required then — unintentionally — people begin to learn that this is who we are, this is how we function, this is how society you know builds itself.”

Within the settlement sector, inclusion of newcomer members in leadership positions was thought to be a way that organizations can lead by example and demonstrate commitments to inclusion and integration.

“Just having [refugees, immigrants, and newcomers] on boards actually shows that you’re embracing them. That feeling of welcome, of being wanted, of being integrated, of being made part of the fabric of the society and not just the society at large but part of the decision-making part of the society is ...is invaluable.”

“The idea is integration — strategic integration that makes people feel like they are not just living inside but are part of the reason why society is what it is.”

Inclusion of board members with lived experience, particularly those with recent lived experience, was thought to inform and improve decision-making, increase congruence between the community needs and funding allocations, and bring the issues facing newcomer communities to the center of focus for settlement sector boards. Furthermore, newcomer members often bring strong connections to ethnocultural communities that can be translated into community involvement and fundraising potential.

“When we have members from newcomer and immigrant communities sitting on these boards, they are able to speak to the actual issues as opposed to the research. And I’m not saying research is invalid, in any shape or form, but I think there is something critical about lived experience and being able to relate back to the operations of the programming that happens on the ground.”

“Settlement agencies, what they need to know is what services they should be offering, where are the gaps, where are the trends. Are the services working? What if they aren’t? How do you evaluate if the services are working? And those are all skills that anybody that has been through our crazy settlement system knows innately, and they could bring more to the board in the first meeting than somebody who has been working in Winnipeg law firm for 20 years.”

In addition to the informed perspective that newcomer board members bring, international and multicultural experience is independently beneficial and promotes board functioning, increasing creativity, adaptability, and resilience (Kadam, 2020; Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009).

“Often people have settled in two or three countries before they get to Canada, so their understanding of settlement is really intense, and that’s what the staff can learn from. Because the staff want to learn from the board.

I think it [having diversity] stops people from getting stuck in a silo, I think, people have seen it [changes] happen without huge resources and [they] can really move things further forward.”

Board membership was perceived to be beneficial for refugees, immigrants, and newcomers and was thought to promote integration, wellbeing, and understanding of the community. For individuals in the process of recertification of professional credentials or other career disturbances, board membership is an opportunity to gain Canadian leadership experience, leadership skills, and experience in a Canadian professional context.

...Newcomers should be aware of is that, it is a chance to gain that prized Canadian experience, but in a leadership role. Because we all hear right off the bat that you should volunteer so that you get Canadian experience. But when you volunteer, you volunteer from the bottom. And this way, you can show on your resume that you have managerial skills, budgeting, planning, etc. very easily in Canada.

Some participants also noted that a leadership position may promote wellbeing, pride, and confidence for refugees, immigrants, and newcomers undergoing the long – and often frustrating – settlement experience, or what Silvius, Al-Ubeady and Haldorson (2021) call the “deluge of resettlement.”

“I know settlement workers really struggle when they have somebody going through a credential recognition program, and they say, you’ve had such a great career in your country of origin, or your second settlement program.

And that could be something to say ‘while you’re working through this frustrating process, please could you share your knowledge through a board, or through getting involved in your kid’s school or some leadership position, so other people can benefit from those skills they have, and that will also support their, you know, mental health, and status, being recognized for their background.”

“It’s always about pride. Most people who come to serve they just feel pride. You know, being in the leadership of the community and this is one of the biggest incentives that the people can get. Other than that, yeah so people feel pride and feel like they’re being honored being in positions of leadership and serving their own people.”

Finally, board membership was seen as a way to become engaged and integrated into the community, building understanding and connection with community members and community issues. Participants noted that integration was supported by inclusion in the informal conversations that occur prior to and following board meetings.

“You get to know the fabric of the city a little bit more than you would otherwise...you get to know different aspects of things that matter, you get to talk to people with different perspectives, you just get to expand your knowledge and your networks.”

Barriers and Challenges

As participants in the focus groups included board members and organization employees who had not yet sat on boards, they were able to share perspectives of the barriers and challenge to board diversity from the perspectives of existing boards and newcomer and racialized communities.

Board Culture & Systemic Discrimination

Evidenced by the current low levels of diversity within settlement sector boards, achieving representative boards will likely require adjustments to board policies and practices. The impetus for change may stem from board members, stakeholders, and/or funders (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Perchersky, 2016). Some participants felt that the desire for diverse membership is present, but tools to promote diversity and attract diverse candidates is a limiting factor; other participants cited a push for diversity from funders as motivating change; still other participants perceived that boards are resistant to change board demographics, culture, or practices.

“The board is mature, so they have a certain way of doing things and they are comfortable in staying in that same path. They don’t like change. So when a newcomer comes in, with all these wonderful ideas, so it’s more of a threat to them. They feel that that threat will take away their seat.”

Participants perceived that reluctance to accept diverse members stemmed from reluctance to lose board seats, a perceived lack of skilled newcomer candidates (e.g., candidates with specific leadership and executive experience or hard skills), and concerns around lack of Canadian experience and potential language barriers. For newcomer and racialized community members, board membership was sometimes perceived negatively. Participants shared experiences of discrimination, tokenism, and a lack of cultural safety when sitting on boards, particularly when they were the only racialized board member. Participants expressed frustration with experiences of being discouraged from seeking out leadership positions and pushed into “survival jobs” rather than being considered or encouraged to pursue decision-making positions such as board membership. Others were welcomed onto boards but felt that their contributions were unheard and undervalued, and they experienced exclusion from informal conversations and social networking. In particular, participants shared experiences of feeling unheard or unsafe when speaking to diversity, inclusion, and discrimination-related issues.

“I brought up racism as an issue. In the organization. And they had no idea. They – they didn’t understand what that could mean as an issue... They couldn’t articulate it, they couldn’t identify with it, they couldn’t sit with it. We had members from other organizations, and they were like, oh, no, that didn’t happen. And I’m like ‘you’re minimizing the experience that I’m telling you was a racially charged experience’. And they couldn’t – they didn’t – they couldn’t, and I also I feel like they didn’t want to digest it.”

“I would use the word systemic racism. It is exactly what it is, I won’t sugar-coat the word at all.”

Awareness & Confidence

While participants reported discrimination and reluctance to accept diversity, many shared positive experiences of board membership and cited a lack of awareness of board positions among newcomer communities as the largest barrier to board membership. Participants reported that refugees, immigrants, and newcomers are often not aware of the existence of Boards of Directors in the social sector and are unfamiliar with the roles, responsibilities, and

skills required for board members. In many countries of origin there are no synonymous positions within social organizations, and board positions are not commonly advertised in settlement materials. Therefore, many newcomer community members are unaware of positions and unclear if board membership carries legal or fiscal liability or would impact their immigration application process(es).

“I think education on what boards are, how they work, how people can be a part of it and contribute would really help.”

Participants shared that newly arrived newcomers may be uncertain of what they can contribute to boards, as they are still working to settle into a new community. However, within the settlement sector, first-hand experience of settlement and adjusting to a new socio-cultural landscape is an asset and valuable perspective to bring to boards.

“If a board member at the time did not say ‘come and join this board’ – even if I had seen the advertisement, I probably would not have gone for it. It’s the understanding that you bring value to the board, that you are not, um, expected to bring an all-around expertise. Because that is what stops a lot of people. They think, ‘I am new to Canada, I probably don’t know a lot of things, so what will I contribute?’”

“When you arrive here, the first five-six years, you don’t really think about being a part of the board because you know you’re in that I would say “survival mode”, where you’re trying to understand the whole system, how people live here, how to settle, how to find employment.”

Recruitment & Board Selection

Boards often have trouble finding suitable applicants for open positions (Board Source, 2017; Ostrower, 2007). Participants – and respondents from the organization survey – reported that their boards rely on informal recruiting practices, predominantly word-of-mouth recruiting and nominations from existing board members. This informal recruiting limits the participant pool to those within the networks of existing members and tends to perpetuate existing board demographics and perspectives.

“They rely on current members to pick new members, so of course they recommend someone from their own law firm, or their own social circle, rather than advertising it to clients.”

Selection requirements may also act as a barrier for newcomer board membership, as traditional board appointment criteria places high value on professional experience, executive experience, and Canadian experience and rarely values lived experience of migration or living as a member of an equity-deserving group, international experience, and informal experience (e.g., community organizing and event planning). Even among settlement boards, recent experience of migration remains undervalued and is rarely considered during the application process. Additionally, boards generally do not advertise positions to their service users, seeking established candidates from the professional sector (e.g., accountants) rather than prioritizing candidates with migration experience.

“Until boards know what they should be looking for, it’s hard to match them with the skills that people are bringing.”

Cultural differences may compound these challenges, with some participants reporting that within newcomer communities, community development and relationship building are a necessary precursor to engagement (e.g., board membership) with an organization; traditional recruiting methods such as online job postings or emails may not be effective in reaching these community members.

Accessibility

Another consideration for promoting diverse board membership is the accessibility of the position; many refugees, immigrants, and newcomers have significant responsibilities which may limit board participation. For example, board members with young children may have difficulty attending evening meetings.

“Having a board composed only of the groups we serve [newcomers] also has its challenges. Immigrants tend to be extremely busy – working 2–3 jobs – which affects the ability to reach quorum at board meetings. It also means they don’t have time to dedicate to agency events or initiatives”

Working in an unpaid volunteer board membership role may also limit newcomer participation, as volunteering on a board may not be culturally familiar or appealing; others may not have the time to dedicate to an unpaid role.

“When most immigrants come here, they have a lot of expectations, they have a lot of establishment they want to work on. For them to come and get involved, especially doing a voluntary job, sometimes is a big challenge.”

Convergences and Contradictions

WE DISCOVERED THERE were some convergences and contradictions in looking at the organization surveys, the individual board member survey and the focus groups results. There were few areas of convergence for instance, in the kind of settlement services that existed, the range of services provided and the level representation of people with lived experience on boards. However, there are some significant contrasts between what organizations stated in their surveys and what individual board members and focus group participants provided.

Convergences

All three data collection methods found convergences in the range of services settlement services being offered by agencies in Winnipeg. The individual surveys found language-based programs, generic and universal settlement services as the most common while the organization survey had generic, universal, and issue-based services being the most common services provided by participating agencies. However, the organization survey included some faith-based organizations which were missing from the individual surveys.

All the three data collection methods showed a very low representation of people with lived experience on boards of organizations. The organization

survey showed glaring disparities in the number of board members from racial minorities and those from white majority backgrounds. The organization survey showed low percentages of board members from First Nations, Métis, Inuit and racialized communities that were corroborated by both the individual survey and the focus group discussions.

Contradictions

We found several differences between the data from the two surveys and the focus groups. There were quite a few areas where the data showed a complete divergence in the findings between the different data collection tools but there were also inconsistencies within single data sets. An assumption made by the research team was that the presence of DEI policies at the board level would result in boards with more diversity: this was not the case. Most organizations responded that they had policies in place to ensure representation, but the data still showed wide margins of disparities in representation of racialized populations and service users.

FIGURE 13 Contrasts of Representation

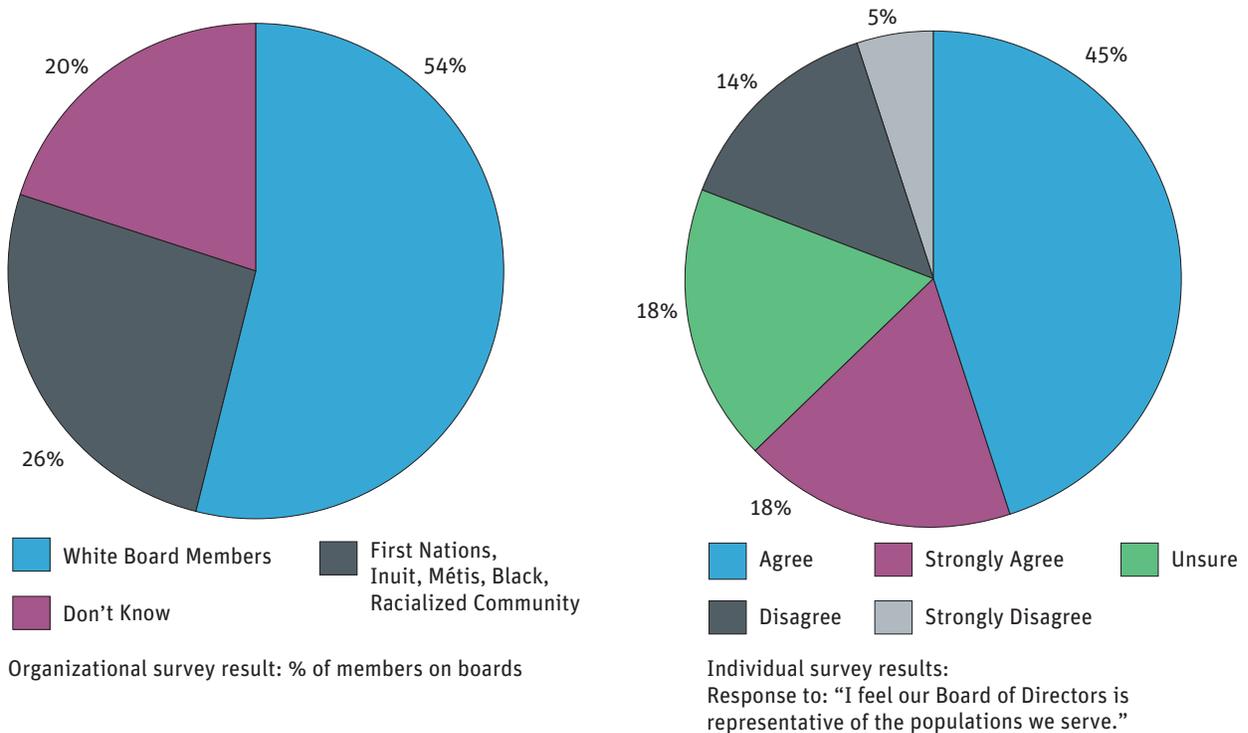
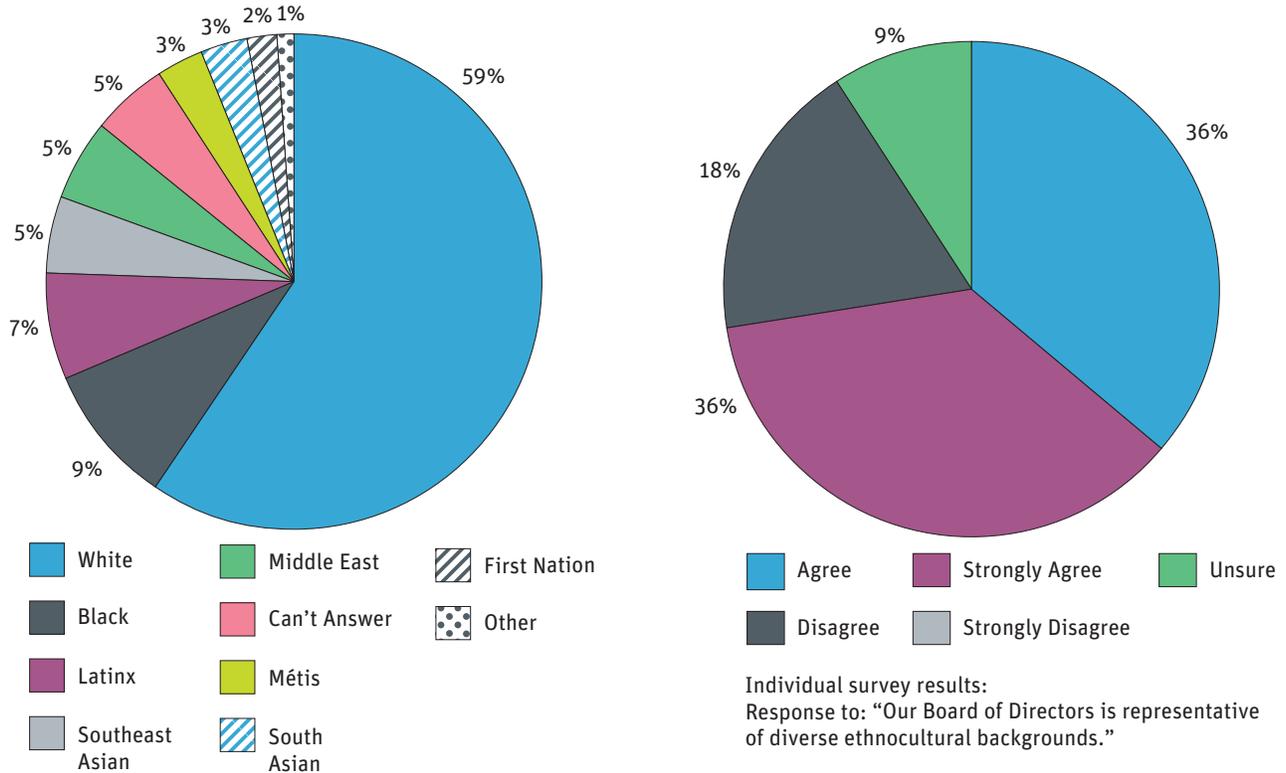


FIGURE 14 : Differences in Representation from the Surveys



Organizational survey responses of ethno-racial groups.

There were a few contradictions between the different datasets and one example can be found in *Figure 13*. Most participants from the individual survey (63.7 percent), including lived and non-lived experience board members, agreed with the perception that board members are representative of the people they serve. This contradicts the data from the organization survey, where organizations with board members from service-using communities and folks who have lived experience were a minority. This was echoed in the focus group discussions where participants described situations where boards were often disconnected from the service-using communities as they were not familiar with the lived experiences of service recipients and the boards were not diverse enough to reflect the community.

Another example of data divergence is that of board members feeling safe to voice their ideas in board meetings. When asked, individual survey participants from ethnocultural communities (91 percent) indicated that they never felt unsafe in voicing their ideas to support the boards they served in.

This contrasts with what we heard from the focus groups where participants talked about feeling insecure, being tokenized and their contributions being often undervalued.

Further, a high percentage of individual board members (72.8 percent) felt that their fellow board members represent diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. This contrasts with the low representation of a diversity of board members from ethnocultural backgrounds on boards of settlement sector organizations. The comparison in *Figure 14* is a telling example of this disparity. The first chart is from the organization survey which shows 59 percent of board members being of white background while the individual survey shows 63 percent of those interviewed agreeing that their board is representative of the population they serve.

Discussion

THROUGH ANALYSIS OF the results, three key themes emerged from the perspectives of existing boards and prospective board members: *representation, inclusion and cultural safety; recruitment and accessibility; and awareness and opportunities.*

Representation, Inclusion and Cultural Safety

“Often times we see that the boards don’t represent the population that they’re serving. I think it’s important that we can find ways that immigrants and refugees can be included in boards, so they actually resemble the population that they serve.”

When defining diversity, the intersectional and nuanced identities of board members must be considered if boards are to accurately represent their participant populations. As well as traditional metrics such as age, gender and ethnicity, diversity includes “culture, personality, skill, training, educational background, and life experience” (Macfarlane, 2010, p. 3). Ultimately, the goal of diversity is *representation and inclusion*, in which organizational leadership includes individuals that share identities, experiences, and perspectives with the service-using communities. Participants in this research highlighted the importance of boards having genuine inclusion and representation rather than tokenization. There is evidence that representative boards are more connected with community issues, better adapt to challenges, and are

perceived more positively by service-using communities (Diversity Institute, 2020; Kadam, 2020; Macfarlane et al. 2020; Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009).

Within the settlement sector, refugee, immigrant, and newcomer representation is particularly important as members on boards can bring first-hand experience and close familiarity with the needs, challenges, goals, and strengths of the participant population. As the service landscape continually evolves, the lived experience and wisdom of recent immigrants and refugees may be particularly useful, as they can provide feedback on current settlement processes, guide organizational decision-making and funding allocation, and advocate for the needs of recent immigrants. As well as prioritizing lived migration experience, participants called for inclusion of racialized board members, particularly from ethnocultural backgrounds present within the service-using communities. Racialized board members may be able to speak to the intersecting identities held by many newcomers, as adapting to the sociocultural context, expectations, and discrimination related to ethnicity is a part of the settlement experience for many. Recognizing that *newcomer* is a term that encompasses a wide range of diversity — including linguistic groups, religious groups, countries of origin, ethnicities, socio-economic status, and reasons for immigration — it is crucial to include board members to represent the service-using communities, while keeping in mind that individual board members can speak from their experience and are informed by their communities, but cannot speak to the experiences of all groups.

In addition to increasing the number of newcomer and racialized community members sitting on boards, participants emphasized the need to promote cultures of inclusion, anti-racism, and safety that are necessary to create safe spaces for these members to contribute and vocalize their perspectives and experiences. Consistent with the existing literature (e.g., Diversity Institute, 2020; Myers et al., 2016), many newcomer and racialized board members shared experiences of being the one and only “minority” member on the board and reported experiences of tokenism, microaggressions, and feelings of insecurity and exclusion. Demographic imbalances may lead to a board culture that feels unsafe and creates an environment where it is difficult for board members from equity-deserving groups to impact board decisions and have their voices heard. If existing board members are not committed to working with diverse members, diversity can result in “mentally opposing cultural sub-units on the board” and ultimately decrease board performance (Braendle & Stiglbauer, 2017, p. 181). Some participants reported feeling unable to influence board decisions as the only member from an equity-deserving group and called for more diversity on boards

to increase solidarity, safety, and decision-making power, consistent with existing research that finds a critical mass must be reached before diverse members are able to significantly influence decision-making (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019; Macfarlane et al., 2010).

“I think it really is getting three or four people on a board together, so they can change the... kind of atmosphere there... I think it’s not that newcomers need to adapt, but that boards need to adapt to be a good place to be for newcomers.

To address such challenges, some boards have implemented mandatory diversity and inclusion training for their employees, but the majority do not yet have board-wide training. Diversity in board selection should significantly change board composition, but it is equally important to provide training in cross-cultural communication and anti-racism practices to ensure diverse boards are successful.

Recruitment and Accessibility

Consistent with existing research that finds 50–70 percent of boards report difficulty recruiting new board members (Board Source, 2017; Ostrower, 2007), Winnipeg board members reported that recruiting and retaining diverse members can be challenging. The informal recruiting strategies used by boards tend to perpetuate existing perspectives and can act as barriers for diverse members, as recruitment draws from existing board members’ social networks and evaluation relies on personal opinion rather than formal metrics (Diversity Institute, 2020; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017; LeBlanc, 2019). Participants reported that when refugee, immigrant, and newcomer participants are selected through informal recruitment, they tend to be from established immigrant groups while newcomers with recent experiences of immigration are often overlooked, as they may not have social ties within professional or social sectors. To address this, participants recommended actively recruiting within service-using communities, program participants, and seeking specific lived experiences to promote service-using representation within leadership.

“A lot of people who run settlement agencies did arrive as immigrants, but maybe 30 or 40 years ago, or from a white European country, or maybe, like me, were French and English speakers when they arrived... [to increase representation] we really needed to say we needed people with lived experience

of systemic barriers, not just people who happened to be born in different countries. Because you can be born in a different country but not represent the people that are arriving now... it's important to say that you need boards that are representative of the people that are using the services of the agency now, not 20 years ago.”

In addition to ineffective recruitment practices, the selection criteria traditionally used in the sector often excludes newcomers and fails to value lived experience. Selection criteria that do not necessarily align with the requirements of the job has been found to be a barrier for diverse board members across sectors (Diversity institute, 2020; Fucci & Deloitte, 2017). For example, requirements of Canadian experience may limit newcomer membership and fail to recognize the leadership skills gained in leadership positions abroad (Diversity Institute, 2020). The prioritization of formal professional experience can also be another barrier, while lived experience in an equity-deserving group, as an immigrant, and informal and international experience are often undervalued or not considered at all. Altering selection criteria to match the actual requirements of the position and accepting informal and international experience is a strategy to better balance the needs of a board and increase accessibility for diverse applicants.

Volunteer positions may not be a priority, particularly if the value of board membership is not clear, if the term commitments are too high, or if the timing and scheduling of board meetings is inaccessible. For example, several participants mentioned that evening board meetings are challenging for families with young children. Promoting flexibility in board positions and generating awareness of the benefits of board membership – such as gaining Canadian experience, contributing to one’s community, and creating social connections – is recommended to increase newcomer membership on boards.

Challenges or commitments commonly associated with identification with several equity-deserving groups, such as the higher levels of unpaid work done by women, can be additional barriers to board membership (Diversity Institute, 2020). In this study, participants noted that many refugees, immigrants, and newcomers focus on settlement, gaining financial security, and social integration at the expense of volunteerism.

Awareness and Opportunities

Compounding challenges in selection procedures, the low level of awareness of board positions in the social service sector is a limiting factor to achieving

board diversity. Participants report that there is often a lack of awareness that board positions exist in the social service sector among refugee, immigrant, and newcomer communities, as there may be no synonymous position in their countries of origin. The lack of familiarity with board membership includes uncertainty about the role of a board, the responsibilities of board membership, the skills and experience required to sit on boards, and of the benefits of being a board member. Refugee, immigrant, and newcomer members may also be unsure what they can contribute to boards as newcomers to their local communities or lack the confidence to apply to a leadership position. Existing boards may also be uncertain about the value of refugees, immigrants, and newcomers on boards, or lack a connection to these communities, making it difficult to recruit new members. To address these challenges, it is crucial to promote awareness and provide opportunities for confidence and leadership capacity building.

Recommendations

TO ESTABLISH DIVERSE boards, many organizations have taken on the effort of establishing DEI policies, changing their recruitment practices and engaging in efforts to reach out to people with lived experience to join their boards. However, these initiatives alone are not always enough. A lack of understanding by existing non-newcomer board members of the importance of recruiting and retaining people with lived experience is a serious impediment to successfully diversifying boards of directors. Organizations often suffer from lack of diversity on their boards because of rigidity and resistance to change, including the traditional, often business-like, culture of boards. When the traditional business culture of boards persists, newcomers often discover that there is no genuine effort to accommodate them and their contributions and they quickly retreat from those boards, resulting in high turnover. There are three important points to consider in changing the traditional working culture of boards.

Anti-oppression:

As a prerequisite for recruiting newcomers, immigrants and refugees to their boards, organizations should adopt anti-oppression principles in all of their work. Anti-oppression principles, as described in the Anti-Oppression Framework for Child Welfare in Ontario (2010) includes: a recognition of socially constructed power imbalances and how they can affect participation and integration of equity-deserving groups; the analysis of what is and is not

oppression at individual, organizational and systemic levels; meaningfully addressing those inequities; and evaluating the impact of changes. Organizations should train their existing board members and all incoming ones in the use of anti-oppression processes in their meetings and their business. Eliminating the traditional structures of hierarchy in boards can create more equal playing fields that don't emphasize division, like executive and governance committees composed of the most experienced members of the board. Organizations should invite any member to these committees to feel welcome to contribute to the organization. This also requires consciously eliminating the use of jargon, acronyms and pretentious words and explaining key items to bring along newcomers to the board. However, it's important to know that newcomers are not a monolithic group and organizations must avoid the thinking that all newcomers come with minimal understanding of the working environment of boards. Informal chitchats in board meetings tend to use language that excludes those who are new in a way that can create an unwelcome environment for newcomers on boards, and efforts should be made to ensure these are inclusive or to eliminate them altogether. Organizations should be open to making a complete shift in meeting scheduling to accommodate the availability of newcomers whose demands may include shift work, childcare and playing multiple roles in their communities.

Recruitment and Selection:

Despite implementing DEI principles, organizations still struggle to maintain diversity on their boards because of flaws in their recruitment and selection processes. To diversify their boards, organizations should not depend on the usual channels of using established volunteer organizations like Volunteer Manitoba and informal networks. Organizations should use ethnocultural community networks and staff with lived experience to recommend people from their communities for board positions. Often, they know those who have the skills, experience, and time to commit to boards as they themselves are advocates for their communities. Making presentations to specific ethnocultural communities that are beneficiaries of the organization's programs on the importance of representation at decision-making tables is another approach. Adjusting asset matrices to include lived experience as an asset alongside professional qualifications like accounting, fundraising, legal etc will ensure those skills are at the forefront of selection. When an organization values the contributions of lived experience and beneficiary communities into decision-making, there is greater likelihood of culture change that will

further encourage newcomers' comfort in joining these boards. Organizations should also reach out to newcomers with the understanding that all lived experience is different. Every potential newcomer board member's own background and lived experience is what they bring to the table, not the lived experience and background of every newcomer. Organizations should be flexible in how they accommodate potential board members by offering a trial period where they can sit on the board for a time to evaluate whether it is best fit for their contribution.

Creativity:

Organizations need to be creative in attracting, recruiting, and retaining board members from service-using and lived experience communities, and particularly folks from racialized community groups. Newcomers are often juggling many competing demands and have dynamic lives adapting to their new communities. Many have financial demands from families back home, paying costs like refugee travel loans, working multiple jobs or with irregular shifts that makes finding time to volunteer more challenging. In the first five years after settlement, they are often on the move and constantly adjusting their professional commitments, making it possible to recruit them but challenging to retain them, especially if they have negative first experiences on their boards. One way that organizations can get creative is by incentivising the participation of newcomers on boards. This may not be the norm, but to ensure meaningful participation of newcomers, organizations need to go the extra mile to ensure the diversity of their boards.

The summarized recommendations listed below incorporate findings from the surveys, focus groups, and existing research:

Representation and Board Culture

- Recruit a higher proportion of racialized and newcomer board members to increase feelings of safety and solidarity to support newcomer and racialized board members to be heard and active members of boards. A minimum threshold of 25 percent, with 40 percent as an aspirational goal for board membership coming from people with lived experience has been suggested in this study; this is in line with studies that suggest a threshold between 20–38 percent (Fredette & Sessler Bernstein, 2019; Macfarlane et al., 2010).

- Explore the possibility of an ad hoc or advisory committee to the board made up of racialized and newcomer members that is able to advise the board on questions of key importance. This could bring those voices to the board in the short-term, and provide opportunities to learn about the organization for participation as board members in the long-term.
- Establish formal diversity and inclusion policies within board governance. These can include quotas for selection from equity-deserving groups and service-using communities, establishment of mandatory cultural awareness training, feedback mechanisms, and/or a designated board member to oversee diversity and inclusion at all organizational levels. Organizations should establish mandatory benchmarks to achieve and attain diversity on their boards and hold themselves to these policies.
- Promote a shift in board culture by explicitly stating inclusion as a value and actively prioritizing commitments to diversity, inclusion, equity, and anti-racism. Establish representation as an organizational goal and explicitly state it on visible organizational materials including organizational banners, trademarks, on the front pages of documents like the annual reports and report backs to the communities. Organizations need to be seen to be actively seeking the input of people with lived experience for them to feel welcome to consider joining boards.
- Provide cross-cultural training and/or support for all board members to promote inclusion and to help members with varied experiences work better together for the good of the organization.
- Change the traditional training process. Seek the views of community members and staff with lived experience on what could be beneficial to include in the training of newcomer board members.
- Promote or create mentoring programs in which newcomer and racialized board members can build leadership capacity and support new newcomer and racialized board members.
- Leadership styles followed by an organization can have significant influence on the diversity of an organization. Transformational leaders that value diversity, equity and inclusion will help organizations in better understanding the necessity of and move towards actualizing board diversity.

Recruitment and Accessibility

- Engage in active, community-based recruitment strategies, including volunteer-matching programs, targeted recruitment to diverse networks such as advertisements in community centers within the service-using community, developing cross-sector connections with ethnocultural groups and organizations and directly to organizational service users.
- Establish selection criteria that value international experience, informal experience, and lived experience as a refugee, immigrant, newcomer, and/or as a member of an equity-deserving group.
- Develop relationships and connections in order to better recruit board members from participant populations of agencies and similar agencies, as these individuals bring experience and familiarity with the programs. Recognize that some candidates may be difficult to reach through traditional methods such as email blasts or posted advertisements.
- Create community engagement coordinator positions that oversee recruitment for all levels of the organization, including the board.
- Recruit new participants through organizations with volunteer-matching services (e.g, Volunteer Manitoba).

Awareness and Opportunities

- Create opportunities for interested individuals to attend board meetings, shadow board members, or join the board on a trial basis, to learn more about boards and build leadership capacity before committing to a position.
- Include board positions as a type of volunteering opportunity in settlement information and supports; many newcomers bring leadership experience.
- Generate pathways for service users to volunteer in the organization (such as evaluation of programs, consultations, collaboration, co-creation of programming) work in the organization, and be considered for board positions as they gain experience within the organization.
- Promote mentorship programs where existing members can mentor and guide community leaders to prepare them for board membership.

- Create and recruit for committee positions as well as full-time board positions to generate opportunities for involvement to accommodate varying levels of confidence and commitment.
- Keep board terms short to reduce the barrier of long-term commitment.

It is also important to note the budgetary constraints and limitations of non-profit organizations that might impede their ability to act on these recommendations. Non-profit boards must juggle a wide range of responsibilities with often limited resources, and care should be given to supporting long-term, reliable funding for organizations doing this work.

Implications and Conclusion

THIS PROJECT GENERATED recommendations to address the existing barriers to refugee, immigrant, and newcomer representation on Winnipeg settlement sector boards of directors. The recommendations generated from this study can likely be adapted and applied to other Canadian contexts, although further research into the unique needs and challenges in local communities is recommended. The results of this study will be shared with settlement organizations with the intention of promoting understanding and engagement with diversity and inclusion topics. In addition, a leadership capacity building and cross-cultural training pilot project will be developed and provided to interested boards and newcomer community leaders with the goal of increasing newcomer representation and promoting strategic integration of refugees, immigrants, and newcomers into leadership positions in the Canadian settlement sector. Thank you to the participants in this project for their time and engagement, to the Research Advisory Committee and to the Manitoba Research Alliance for their support of this study.

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Endnotes

1 Henceforth, the term newcomers will be used to describe the service-using communities of refugees, immigrants, and other newcomer classes. This term was chosen as an inclusive overarching term to describe the diverse experiences of migration. However, we acknowledge that not all individuals with a migration history may identify with this label, and it may not describe all migration experiences, such as those of second-generation immigrants.

2 In the report, the term “minority” was used.

3 Sometimes called being ‘stealth’ for transgender people, who may attempt to be seen as cisgender in order to avoid discrimination in the workplace.

4 In this study, the term “minority” was used.

5 There were 17 responses to this survey, but one organization provided two submissions; only one of these submissions was included.

6 The authors wish to note that the surveys provided to organizations did not provide comprehensive options for gender identity. The inclusion of ‘transgender’ as an option was not meant to exclude binary trans folks from the categories of ‘men’ and ‘women.’ Nor were the survey’s designed to deny variety within the transgender community, which includes gender queer, agender, Two-Spirit and non-binary people, as well as others who express different forms of gender diversity. A full guide to gender identity terms is available here: <https://egale.ca/awareness/glossary-of-terms/>

7 The authors of this report would again like to acknowledge that there is room for more inclusive framing of questions relating to gender and sexuality in future surveys. In particular, the lack of consistency within the two surveys regarding gender identity and the failure to use the term cisgender when contrasted with transgender people within the surveys, which unintentionally implied that only cisgender people may identify as men or women. With respect to inconsistencies across surveys, participants of the organizational survey were not given the option to select ‘Two Spirit’ as their gender identity, while those in the individual survey survey did have that option, as well as the option not to disclose. Researchers will aim for consistency of terminology and more inclusive language and options in future studies.



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