



The Ellen Street Shout

Summer 2014



IRCOM'S VALUES

At IRCOM, we love what we do with our community. We are full of hope and optimism. Everyone should feel safe and respected. We believe that we are not just "clients" "staff" or "volunteers". We are all part of the same community. These are our values.

We put people first.

We are agents of change.

We are holistic.

We value integration.

We value independence.

We value diversity.

We value partnerships.



SUMMER CELEBRATION



Defining the values that drive us

By Vanessa Kornelsen

Diverse. Welcoming. Holistic. Partner. These words and more have characterized IRCOM and IRCOM's work for years, yet they have only recently been officially laid out in IRCOM's first organizational value statement. Why is that? Why now?

Continued on p 3

Volunteers in Action



They travelled the world and ended up at IRCOM!

Kendall McLean and Lukasz Grozny Niedwiedz are all set to get married in April, 2015. But even with all the work involved with planning a wedding, they haven't felt bound to Winnipeg, Manitoba, or even Canada. They have spent the last few years of their lives traveling, and to date have visited a total of 47 different countries! How did these world travelers end up spending the last six months of the school year volunteering at IRCOM?

It seems that you can't travel the world and come away without awesome stories of people from all over, in different countries and from different cultures. Having this wealth of positive experience with culture inspired Kendall



and Lukasz to give something back to those cultures right here in Winnipeg. IRCOM's Homework and Education for Youth Program just seemed to be the perfect fit!

If you ask them what it's like to volunteer at IRCOM, you'll probably hear them say something like this: "The kids, staff and volunteers at IRCOM are fun, friendly and appreciative. They all contribute to making our week a little bit brighter each time we volunteer."

IRCOM is certainly grateful to have busy people like Kendall and Lukasz who consistently make time to come out. Kendall is currently working on her Master's in Peace and Conflict Studies and Lukasz works for an agricultural company.

That's a little bit of their story. Will your story lead to IRCOM too?

Education has always been one of IRCOM After School Program's (ASP) key objectives. Helping youth succeed in school, both academically and socially, as they adapt to new school systems and improve their English is a very high calling, and IRCOM has for years been trying to address the challenge.

A few years ago, anyone familiar with ASP would have known that once a week was homework night. Youth could bring their homework to program and get individualized help with their academics. While that was a good start, IRCOM staff quickly realized it just wasn't enough.

In 2011, thanks to generous funding from Rogers Youth Fund, homework club branched off and became a separate entity. It began being offered five evenings a week and was run by a certified teacher who could offer more in depth answers to questions.

Today, homework club has joined the ranks of most of IRCOM's other programs and has its own acronym: HEY. It stands for Homework Education for

Youth and features four dedicated staff members. Newly hired Surafel Kuchem is a teacher who also helps liaise with schools. Educational Assistant Nadia Paul sometimes also acts as health facilitator as the need and opportunity arises. Education Support Worker Tomas Gerezghier oversees the mentorship program that allows extra one-on-one support to youth at their request and runs the IRCOM track team. Amal Shire is the newest addition to the HEY staff team in her role as Education Support Worker, and her background in biology will surely address the gap in science knowledge.

Like the rest of IRCOM, HEY is an evolving program. As new needs in education support present themselves, staff and volunteers stand ready to take advantage of any opportunities that come their way.

If you would like to volunteer with HEY, or any of IRCOM's other programs, fill out the volunteer application form at www.ircom.ca/programs.

Homework and Education for Youth: A Few Notes

WHO ARE YOU?



With Nadia Paul

1. Tell us about yourself.

My name is Nadia Paul. I was born in Winnipeg but my family comes from the Carribean. I graduated from International Development Studies at the University of Winnipeg in June 2013.

2. What do you do at IRCOM?

I am the Educational Assistant in the After School Homework Program HEY. I also help out in various programs that run throughout the week which has allowed me to take on the role of health facilitator to the youth.

3. What do you like most about IRCOM?

It embraces people of all races and religions, but most of all, of different capacities. It is a special place that allows people to truly grow, learn from each other and meet their full potential. Every day presents new challenges, which pushes us to be creative and resourceful.

4. What do you do when you're not at IRCOM?

I like to spend time with my family and friends. I like to spend time at the beach, do art and go to the gym. When time permits, I also love to travel and experience other places in the world.

Values, cont

“As we grow it’s very important to have our values at the forefront of what we do, to make sure we’re actually doing what we intended,” explains Director of Training and Development Noelle DePape. DePape and Director of Programming Shereen Denetto worked together to spearhead the process of selecting, defining, and writing IRCOM’s value statement. “With the changing nature of immigration in Canada it’s more important than ever to have our values so that regardless of external factors we stay true to who we are.”

The process of getting to the final product was a long one. It began with a half day staff session where value statements from other organizations were read through and their framework examined. The differences between personal values and organizational values was discussed. A brainstorm of potential values was created.

The original plan was for this half day session to result in a completed set of values, but as the hours wore on staff began to comment that it would be better to go through the process slowly and thoughtfully.

And so the half-day session turned into a six month process, where at each monthly staff meeting another piece of the puzzle was addressed. First the top ten values were prioritized and an initial draft written. This draft was critiqued for its use of high-level terminology, however once the draft was put into plain language there was a sense that it had lost some meaning. It was written and rewritten, evaluated and rewritten, presented to someone new and rewritten again.

“I learned something from this process,” offers DePape. The lesson DePape took away was emphasized by IRCOM’s EAL teachers. It was something most of us working in the settlement sector, including DePape herself, already know somewhere in the dark recesses of our minds but struggle to recall every time we need to. It is the idea that making something linguistically accessible does not mean dumbing down the content. As DePape says, “People with low English levels can still understand complex ideas.” The barrier is the language, not the concept.

One of the challenges in IRCOM’s line of work is balancing human dignity. “Making things accessible” is important so that everyone can be involved, but in doing so we have to maintain a level of richness in our projects and programs that makes it worth being involved with in the first place. As IRCOM’s staff, board and community struggled together to find that balance IRCOM’s values were born.

UMOJA: Let us Unite

By Noelle DePape

In the Fall of 2009, Winnipeg Police Service members Chief Devon Clunis (at that time Superintendent) and Superintendent Dave Thorne, along with other stakeholders and community representatives, met with different newcomer community leaders and began a newcomers working committee called UMOJA. The idea was to sit down, listen and try to understand each other. The goal was to have a healthy dialogue between both parties to identify ways to break down some of the stereotypes and barriers that existed at that time.

UMOJA, in Swahili, stands for “UNITY”, to strive for and maintain unity and harmony in the family, community and nation.

UMOJA continues on today. As a group, we brainstorm with other agencies and newcomer representatives to promote a positive relationship between newcomers and the police. The group has been instrumental in not only the review of the Winnipeg Police Service complaint process, but also in cross cultural training/education for Police and in



providing education to the newcomer community about police related issues and procedures. UMOJA also plans and implements many trust building activities between police and the community.

Last year, UMOJA hosted the first New Canadian Dinner with Winnipeg Police Chief Devon Clunis and the RCMP “D” Division Commanding Officer Assistant Commissioner Kevin Brosseau. Invited guests were 80 adult and youth ambassadors from different newcomer communities and 20 Winnipeg Police Service officers and RCMP officers. The event was held at the University of Winnipeg and was catered by Diversity Catering. Police members ate dinner with the public which created a relaxed environment so newcomers could feel comfortable interacting with police. The police addressed community concerns and established and maintained trusting relationships, while developing an understanding of the struggles newcomers have faced and are facing.

Newcomers who attended gained a more trusting and positive perception of Police, and were able to gain a confidence in the Winnipeg Police Service.

Educating everyone about each other and working together to empower neighbourhoods was the goal. It was a huge success.

This year, UMOJA is excited to announce the 2nd Annual New Canadian Dinner with Winnipeg Police Chief, Devon Clunis, will be held in November and we are looking forward to it.

UMOJA continues to work on developing trust and unity between the community and the Winnipeg Police Service.

Congratulations to 2013-2014 NLI Graduates!

By Aiman Syed



The end of the NLI program year always comes with a lot of fun, food and celebration. The weather is perfect, the food is plentiful and the students are happy. So are the teachers! This year we managed to pull everything off without a hitch, and even had a chance to get some footage for the "Happy Song". There was a good dose of appreciation going around too. From the teachers to the students, from the students to the volunteers and teachers, and from the teachers to the volunteers. NLI did not run programming during the summer for a well-deserved break to be enjoyed by all!

Coming Soon: IRCOM Isabel

IRCOM House Ellen is located at 95 Ellen Street. We've been supporting and empowering newcomer families for over 20 years through housing, programming and services. And soon, there will be a 2nd IRCOM House! IRCOM is opening another transitional apartment block for families called IRCOM House Isabel. It's across from Freight House at Isabel & Ross. With the support of Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation and the Federal Government, this new block has 60 suites for newly arrived immigrant and refugee families, including large & small suites, as well as universally accessible suites. Plus, IRCOM House Isabel is equipped with big, bright common spaces for our community based programs and events. We are so excited to move into the Centennial neighbourhood! While our work is centred around newly arrived immigrants and refugees, we consider ourselves part of the larger fabric of the community. We've had the honour to work closely with sister organizations like Rossbrook House, Hugh John MacDonald School & Dufferin School to bring together community members from all walks of life. We are committed to maintaining these partnerships and building new ones. Although IRCOM House Isabel is significantly delayed and likely won't open until the Spring of 2015, the doors of IRCOM are open to the new relationships and connections that will come with moving. IRCOM will strive to be an ally in the neighbourhood, working together in the pursuit of a healthy, safe, vibrant & open community that benefits the lives of all.



Wow! What a whirlwind Ellie has been through! It's like nothing stays the same for two days at a time! First ASP Education Support Worker Tomas Gerezghier got married, then a few months later ASP Program Support Worker Bisetsa Bahati went and did the same. In case two weddings weren't enough to celebrate, Community Resource Specialist Richard Boli went and renewed his wedding vows! Child Care Worker Fana Aklilu got her Canadian citizenship! Ellie hasn't stopped dancing and cheering for weeks! Ellie had another proud moment when she welcomed back NLI Program Manager Jen Glenwright from her bike trip that took her from Bolivia to Brazil raising thousands of dollars for an orphanage. Way to go Jen! In baby news, past ASP Assistant Program Coordinator Faiza Hargaaya had a beautiful baby boy! Past Housing Admin Assistant Nadiah Sidhik loves being a mom so much she has opted to make it a permanent, full time lifestyle. Ellie is sad that she won't be coming back, but so happy that motherhood suits her! Present Housing Administrative Assistant Maryam Al-Azazi was accepted into a Respiratory Therapy program at the University of Manitoba and is busy training Agnieszka Shechan to take over for her. Congratulations Maryam, and welcome Agnieszka! Ellie experienced a tearful farewell when ASP Manager Muuxi Adam and Director of Housing Garry Neufeld moved on to new challenges at the end of the summer, but is excited to get to know the new Director of Housing and Community Development Carlos Vialard and congratulates Marko Gjuric on his promotion to ASP Assistant Manager. But that's not all! Ellie also welcomes Amal Shire and Gololcha Boru as new ASP Program Support Workers, Surafel Kuchem as ASP Teacher and School Liason, Mbula Makau as Office Administrator, Seid Omer as Newcomer Driver's Education Specialist, and Peter Karari as CRP Program Manager for Ellie's expected sister, IRCOM House Isabel. Vanessa Kornelsen came back (again!) this summer and confused everybody by taking part in the training for new staff. Ellie is happy to have her back in a new role as Volunteer and Community Services Program Assistant. PHEW! One thing is for sure: with all of these changes happening, Ellie never gets bored for a minute!

The Plug *Help us welcome new Canadians*



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