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CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

ACTIVITY REPORT #7

Submitted to the
Law Foundation of Ontario
Access to Justice Fund

On behalf of the

CONNECTING OTTAWA NETWORK

January 2016



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Introduction

This is the seventh Activity Report describing the implementation and outcomes of the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa project, funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario under the Connecting Region Initiative of the Access to Justice Fund. The report describes activities and performance milestones for the six-month period 30 June to 31 December 2015. Our focus has been the continued implementation of the planned activities, recruitment, training, assignment and supervision of volunteer facilitators, reaching out to our partners in the settlement services and community sectors, and keeping to our original role as case consultants to our partner organizations.

During this period we have operated well within the approved budget. [Please see the attached financial statement](#); this period has ended with a positive fund balance of \$6,955.09; actual expenditures were \$6,955.09 under budget. (Please see our financial statement with notes of significant variations and anticipated pressures in Q3-4.) We expect January/February expenditures to be about \$45,000 so request that the next funding instalment be forwarded no later than mid-March to facilitate cash flow.

The major change to our project has been David Hole's transition out of the Project Coordination position. David's skill, expertise and commitment to the project gave the Connecting Ottawa project a firm foundation of infrastructure and relationships for which to work with. His position has been replaced by Nico Koenig, a bilingual adult education and community development consultant, brings his experience in non-profit network management and commitment to relationship building to the position. During the month of July and August, David offered Nico an exemplary orientation into the management and vision of the project as well as introductions to the Connecting Ottawa advisory group, staff and partners. Nico Koenig has successfully integrated into his role and has brought renewed energy and perspective into project.

In September, our Advisory Group approved staff recommendations to develop a proposal to the Law Foundation to extend funding of the project for another year, until July 2017. Continuing with the existing mandate, the direction was to

- continue with consultation support to our network partners,
- address the growing interest and demand for PLE,
- implement tools to enable trusted intermediaries to identify legal issues with confidence,
- train selected facilitators to initiate outreach activities to focus population communities.

The funding proposal was submitted in October and the LFO Board informed us of the decision to extend our funding in December 2015. We are very appreciative of the Foundation's continued support for the Connecting Region initiative and the work being done here in Ottawa.

Here is a report of our progress so far. We thank the Law Foundation for its continued encouragement, interest and support.

Highlights

CONNECT COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

- **311** cases consultations have been documented by our lawyer and social worker over the reporting period
- **32** agencies referring to Connecting Ottawa; an increase of **77%** as compared to Jan - July 2015
- A total of **973** clients and their families have benefited (directly or indirectly) from interventions by Connecting Ottawa over the past three years.
- Three “Lunch and Learn” sessions hosted **25** partner agency staff covering Immigration and Refugee Law, Family Law and Housing Law
- Coordinated training session for 211 Staff regarding social and legal services for those who do not speak English or French

PROMOTE THE USE OF A WEBSITE RESOURCE BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

- Users of the ConnectingOttawa.com website increased from 5,023 to **16,934** (July 1- Dec 30 2015); an increase of **237%**
- The Syrian Refugee Resource page was accessed **10,489** times
- Use of social media promote access to justice in Arabic

DEVELOP AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS AS TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

- Coordinated Volunteer Facilitator training focused on discussing assignments, scenarios and changes to refugee law
- Facilitators received **11** assignments.
- Our volunteer Facilitators have assisted **53** clients since April 2013.

DEVELOP AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS TO OUTREACH TO THEIR NETWORKS

- Arabic immigrant and refugee legal referral service rack card created

PLE OUTREACH TO ISOLATED LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

- PLE session delivered to Ottawa’s faith leaders through partnership with Spirit of the Law Project
- Muslim Link, Ottawa Muslims news source, interviews and features Connecting Ottawa and the links between Mental Health and Poverty Law
- **9** PLE presentations offered to social and legal services groups including presentations with Refugee Network Ottawa and Catholic Centre for Immigrants

Activity Reports

CONNECT COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

OUR CHALLENGE

The challenge was set by Thomson and Kohl:

Develop a multi-sectorial network of organizations with the potential to build sufficient capacity for legal services to work in closer cooperation with community health and social services, local agencies serving immigrants, and services for disabled persons with a view to ensuring a more integrated service response for clients from the our focus populations, and Build the capacity to advocate at a systemic level whenever the system itself has created barriers to accessible legal services.

OUR INTENT

At an inaugural conference in Ottawa in January 2011, Connecting Ottawa developed a multi-sectorial network of local service organizations committed to finding new ways of working to ensure access to justice for our focus populations. They endorsed a plan that would add staff resources to the network: a social services worker and a legal services worker that would be available to advise and consult with front-line providers of information, assessment and referral services to people with issues that would benefit from legal services. Our intent is not to relieve the overflow of demand for case management services, but to strengthen the existing capacity for competent case management among our partners and, where appropriate, support advocacy efforts for system-level changes.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 311 cases consultations have been documented by our lawyer and social worker over the reporting period
- 32 agencies referring to Connecting Ottawa; an increase of 77% as compared to Jan - July 2015
- A total of 973 clients and their families have benefited (directly or indirectly) from interventions by Connecting Ottawa over the past three years.
- Three “Lunch and Learn” sessions hosted 25 partner staff covering Immigration and Refugee Law, Family Law and Housing Law
- Coordinated training session for 211 Staff regarding social and legal services for those who do not speak English or French

PROGRESS

Providing consultation services and maintaining our current staffing mix: a lawyer and a social worker

The network of partners currently includes 49 organizations: 18 community service agencies, 10 agencies serving immigrants, 11 organizations providing legal services, 6 agencies serving people with disabilities, and 3 organizations that offer placements to students interested in access to justice issues. The project also reaches out to additional organizations that could contribute to successful outcomes and liaises with other networks and coalitions (including Local Agencies Serving Immigrants [LASI], the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership [OLIP], Ottawa Public Library, Crime Prevention Ottawa and the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres).

We have recognized that organizations engage differently with the project; partners participate according to their capacity and resources. To better manage our relationship with the network we have categorized the partners according to the quality and extent of their engagement (Levels 1-3). Organizations in Category 1 are integral to the success of the project; they are fully engaged in decision-making processes and contribute time and resources. Organizations in Category 2 communicate regularly with the project, frequently consult concerning clients, and share their perspectives about our focus and direction. Organizations in Category 3 have expressed an interest in our activities and wish to be kept informed about access to justice issues and opportunities for cross-sectorial collaboration. All organizations receive our communications (information, newsletters, events calendar, etc.), have access to the web site, and be invited to our annual conference and other learning opportunities.

During this reporting period we met with 10 community service partners to assess how our legal issue awareness and system navigation tools can be improved, determine the training priorities for trusted intermediaries within these organizations, and consulted about access to justice for our focus populations. These meetings were especially important for the new Project Coordinator Nico Koenig to build professional connections with senior staff and managers.

Further to our Partnership Agreement, office accommodations and human resources services continue to be provided by Centre de services communaires de Vanier, a Community Resource Centre that is already home to la Clinique juridique francophone de l'Est d'Ottawa. CSC Vanier is the “employer of record” for project staff, manages payroll and benefits administration, provides the security of mature personnel policies and other human resources infrastructure, and provides office accommodations.

Connecting Ottawa currently has the following staff under contract: Alexandra-Marjorie Derisier LLL, LLB and Erin Fitzpatrick MSW, LLB, RSW. They are both bilingual in English and French; Alex also speaks Spanish and Creole fluently. Nico Koenig is an independent consultant under contract to provide project management services.

During this period we

- Reached out to our partners to raise awareness and promote use of project services.
- Discussed ways in which the project can build local capacity for case management for clients from our focus populations
- Shared best practices when responding to issues raised by these populations
- Understood partners' history and experience when referring to legal services
- Explored ways that the project can improve this experience
- Explored PLE and shared training opportunities
- Determined the most effective ways to maintain productive liaison with partners and other stakeholders.
- Provided case consultation and advice to network partners.

Staff primarily responds to requests for service but our lawyer and our social worker are regularly colocated with partner organizations with consultation hours weekly for one half-day at Catholic Centre for Immigrants and one half-day at Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO). New to this reporting period is a trial period of co-location period between Connecting Ottawa's lawyer and Economic & Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC).

Partner organizations consult with us about hard-to-serve client who face barriers to communication; we provide information and advice but no longer provide direct casework services on even an interim basis - we assess the legal issues and communication challenges, connect the client with needed services, and identify an ongoing case manager before terminating our involvement. The daily workload remains dominated by these casework activities. Although we understand that consultation and advice alone is insufficient support for overburdened front-line service providers who are often poorly prepared to respond to the additional demands of clients who have difficulties communicating their issues, by reverting to our original consultation role our staff will have more time available to allocate to training and organizational capacity building. Our goal at this point is to ensure that each case consultation is an opportunity to build the referring organization's capacity to better respond to the needs of our focus populations and to ensure that case managers on the front lines refer to legal services appropriately.

All consultation activities are logged, with source and reasons for referral, legal and communication issues tracked, and case notes maintained. The extent of our involvement varies greatly: in some instances we are consulted without clients being identified or our consultations are relatively brief, in many other instances our staff is extensively involved with researching a legal issue, determining appropriate connections to services and other time-intensive support activities. There were 311 cases opened during this activity period, 30% more than reported during the last six-month period. A total of 973 clients and their families have benefited (directly or indirectly) from interventions by Connecting Ottawa over the past three years.

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During the reporting period, Connecting Ottawa has facilitated access to 16 interpretation services and has requested the services of volunteer facilitators for 10 assignments requiring their assistance.

CASELOAD ANALYSIS							
	# Cases 01-06 2013	# Cases 07-12 2013	# Cases 01-06 2014	# Cases 07-12 2014	# Cases 01-06 2015	# Cases 07-12 2015	# Cases Total
Social Worker	14	28	12	51	90	139	
Lawyer	20	67	103	72	130	164	
Shared	8	13	22	19	75	8	
TOTAL	42	108	128	145	239	311	973

	Jan - June 2015	July - Dec 2015
# Organizations Referring	18	32
# Interpretation Arranged	20	16
# Facilitators Requested and Assigned	6	10

The cases presented a full range of legal and social issues. Altogether, 32 different organizations requested case consultations from our lawyer and social which is a significant increase from the previous reporting period. Many of these new referring agencies are smaller community-based non-profits. This number of agencies who are referring to us is an important measurement that we hope to sustain and grow over time, as more agencies are aware of the type of specialized support we can offer. [Please see the case summary in the appendix.](#)

This reporting period, we also hosted three students from University of Ottawa Pro Bono Students Canada: Stephanie Kogane, Corrine Joseph, Catarina Ferreira. Pro Bono Students Canada placements provide opportunities for us to have a more sustained relationship with a student, albeit for fewer hours each week than other students we have

hosted in the past. Our lawyer has done exceptional work in offering these students an experience that also shares significant value to our partners. During October and November, each student volunteered three hours a week, assisting in drafting declarations and support letters, researching immigration and consumer protection issues, and supporting one of our partner agencies Catholic Centre for Immigrants during our case consultations.

Implementing the Legal Health Check Up as a PLE resource for trusted intermediaries.

The Legal Health Check Up (LHCU) was developed to enable trusted intermediaries and clients to readily recognise when a person with a lived experience may have a legal issue. Organised according to the same taxonomy of legal topics and subtopics developed by CLEO and Your Legal Rights and adopted by our web site, LHCU uses summary statements to describe life scenarios that can diagnose legal issues and identify a need for legal information or another legal service.

LHCU has been at the core of our current [“Lunch & Learn / Dîner – Causerie” sessions](#), and other training opportunities developed to raise awareness of legal issues among network partners. During this reporting period, we organized three monthly Lunch & Learn sessions for frontline social and legal service workers from across Ottawa. Each session focused on a different LHCU topic (Immigration Law, Family Law, Housing Law) and provided details related to legal terms, referral information, case studies, additional resources and discussion on best practices. Importantly, the Lunch & Learn sessions were also important as a brief networking opportunity for frontline staff who would not regularly meet each other outside of the working conditions but who face similar cases. Following the session, the PowerPoint presentation was shared electronically with participants and will soon be widely available through our website. In total 25 participants have attended (on average of 10 participants attended each meeting).



Promoting CICO/211 as the default information, assessment and referral resource for trusted intermediaries and clients from our focus populations.

The Community Information Centre of Ottawa continues to be an important resource and valued partner during project implementation. Connecting Ottawa has

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- Continued to promote 211 Eastern Ontario as the default information, assessment and referral (IAR) resource in all project communications, materials and activities, as well as through our use of social media.
- Coordinated a training program for CICO staff to strengthen capabilities regarding legal services information, assessment and referral. We provided one training session of CICO staff during this reporting period.
- Maintained a feed of the CICO database to the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa web sites.
- Extended the reach of the CICO Community Bulletin by posting events on the Connecting Ottawa/Connexion Ottawa web sites.

During 2015, there were 1834 calls to CICO/211 related to legal issues. As noted in the Connecting Ottawa Activity Report #6, calls are now tracked using new categories that no longer correspond to the previous system of data collection. In effect, 2015 has set a new base line for future trend analysis.

The data below represents the top 30 most referred legal needs which comes from a longer list of 237 legal needs.

Need	Referrals
Legal Issues Education/Information	193
Legal Counselling	84
Legal Issues Education/Information * Divorce/Custody/Support Issues	53
General Crime Victim Assistance	48
Legal Counselling * Low Income	41
Family Division of Provincial/Territorial Court	40
Legal Assistance Referral Services	36
General Legal Aid	35
Certificates/Forms Assistance * Legal Issues	30
Legal Representation	28
Provincial/Territorial Superior Courts	27
Criminal Division of Provincial/Territorial Court	26
General Legal Aid * Low Income	23
Border Patrol/Inspections	21
Provincial/Territorial Court Enforcement Officers	21
Civil Division of Provincial/Territorial Court	20
Spouse/Intimate Partner Abuse Prevention	20
Fire Services	20
Individual Advocacy	19
Court Filing Offices	17
Issue Advocacy * Housing Issues	17

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Crime Victim Accompaniment Services	16
Elder Abuse Prevention	16
Notary Public Services	16
Alternative Dispute Resolution * Divorce/Custody/Support Issues	15
Adult Probation	14
Public Nuisance Reporting	14
Adult Parole	13
Certificates/Forms Assistance * Government Services Issues	13
Consumer Fraud Reporting	13

As documented in Activity Report #6 (June 2015), Connecting Ottawa was provided important feedback from 211 regarding our test calls process with them. Throughout the previous 6 months of discussions with 211 staff, it was decided to discontinue the phone audit process and instead focus on building the regular communication between Connecting Ottawa and 211 staff. The intent is for Connecting Ottawa to renew our position as a ‘hot-line’ consultation, in the case where 211 staff require assistance when determining the correct referral.

One challenge to consider is CICO’s current relationship to the callers from the Ottawa region. As 211 is a provincial initiative, and CICO is the certified Ottawa service agency, there may be an increasing amount of cases where an Ottawa caller will be redirected to another 211 service agency in a different area of Ontario. Those that receive calls from Ottawa rely on the online database of 211 and not on professional local knowledge or consultative projects such as Connecting Ottawa. What this means is that Connecting Ottawa in-person training and consultation support has limits to impacting the outcomes of Ottawa-based callers. On the other hand, there is an increased opportunity to act an additional reminder to local Ottawa’s social and legal services to update their information on the 211 database to ensure its accuracy.

PROMOTE THE USE OF A WEBSITE RESOURCE BY TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

OUR CHALLENGE

There are excellent public legal education and information (PLEI) resources available, especially given the leadership of Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) and their web site initiative, Your Legal Rights. However, the fact remains that navigation of the legal system remains challenging for many front-line service providers in Ottawa.

OUR INTENT

To supplement the on-line information available from Your Legal Rights and the Community Information Centre of Ottawa (CICO) by developing a local web site resource that includes comprehensive and current information about local legal services, and by sharing information about the Connecting Ottawa project and the ways in which it can support project partners to ensure access to justice by our focus populations.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Users of the ConnectingOttawa.com website increased from 5,023 to **16,934** (July 1-Dec 30 2015); an increase of **237%**
- The Syrian Refugee Resource page was accessed **10,489** times
- Use of social media promote access to justice in Arabic

PROGRESS

We have established web sites in both English and French: the English site was launched on 9 January 2013 and the French site was launched on 19 February 2013. The domain registrations have been extended until November 2016.

During this period we have taken steps to develop the sites further by

- Adding security updates
- Expanding the “Resources” menu to provide information about Syrian Refugee Support
- Maintaining a current "Events" calendar and posting 35 events detailing workshops, public legal education sessions, conferences and other learning opportunities of interest to our partners.
- Adding attachment usability to allow “Resources” and “Events” page to host electronic documents, presentations and posters.
- Updating The French site to ensure it is consistent with the English site.

We are still working on:

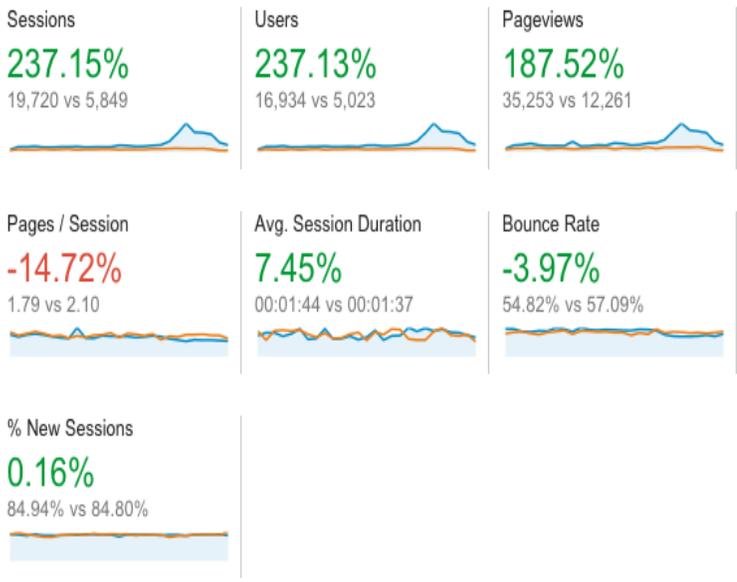
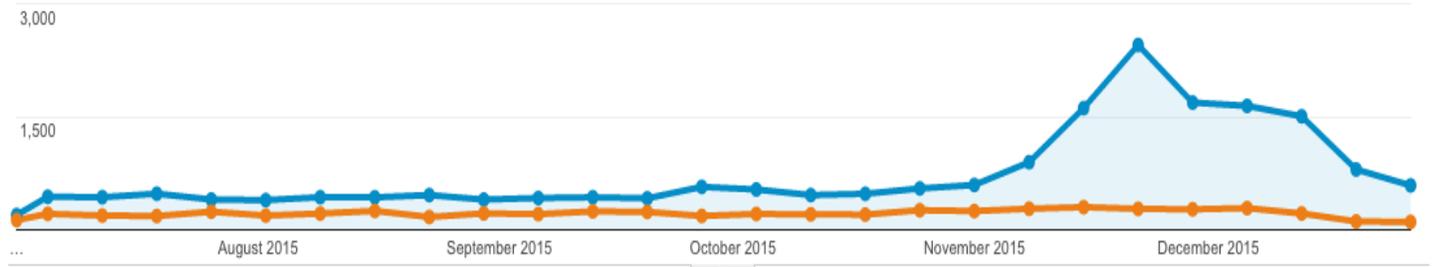
- Completing the News feature, which will allow us to regularly share current information or resources, shared from on-going events. The News tab will be available on both French and English sites near the end of January 2016.
- Developing video tutorials about how to make best use of the web site to (1) Find Legal Services and (2) Find Accessibility and Counselling Resources (3) Make use of the News Feature
- Scripts are in first draft; we anticipate video previews by the end of February 2016.
- Evaluating how the site is being used, via an embedded user survey.
- Adding video presentations of the keynote presentations from our Annual Conferences.

Google Analytics informs us that traffic to the sites continues to grow steadily. Comparison data using the same time period from 2014 and 2015 (July - Dec 31) is displayed in two charts below.

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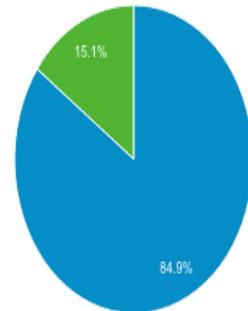
ConnectingOttawa.com

Jul 1, 2015 - Dec 31, 2015: ● Sessions
 Jul 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014: ● Sessions

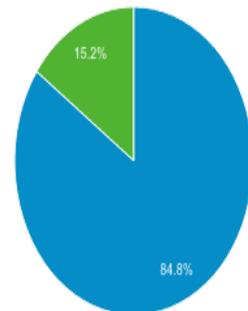


■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Jul 1, 2015 - Dec 31, 2015



Jul 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014

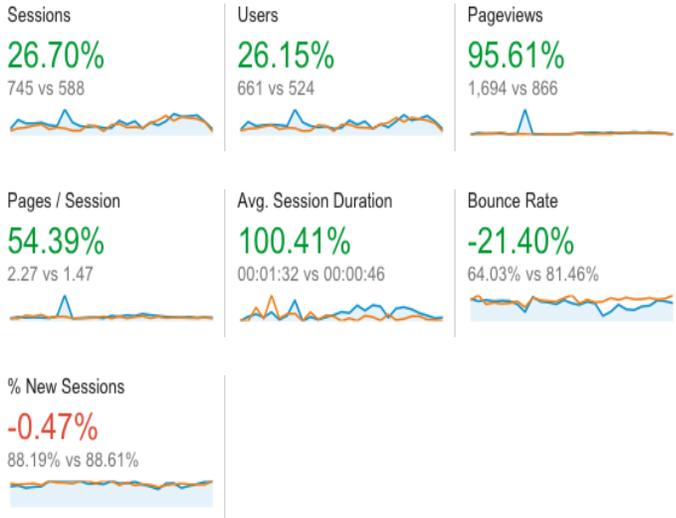
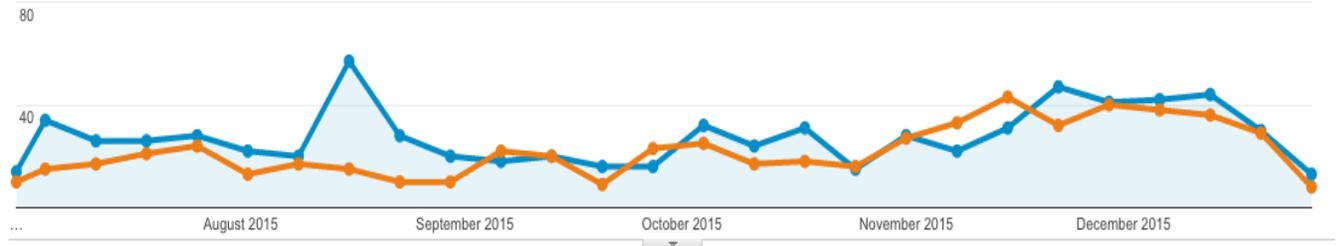


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ConnexionOttawa.com (FR)

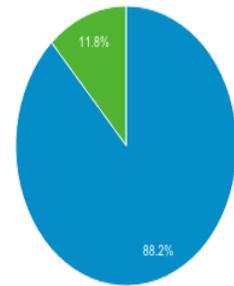
Jul 1, 2015 - Dec 31, 2015: ● Sessions

Jul 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014: ● Sessions

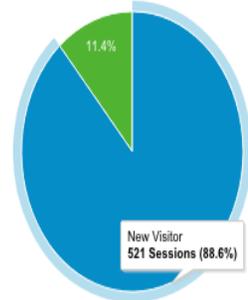


■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Jul 1, 2015 - Dec 31, 2015

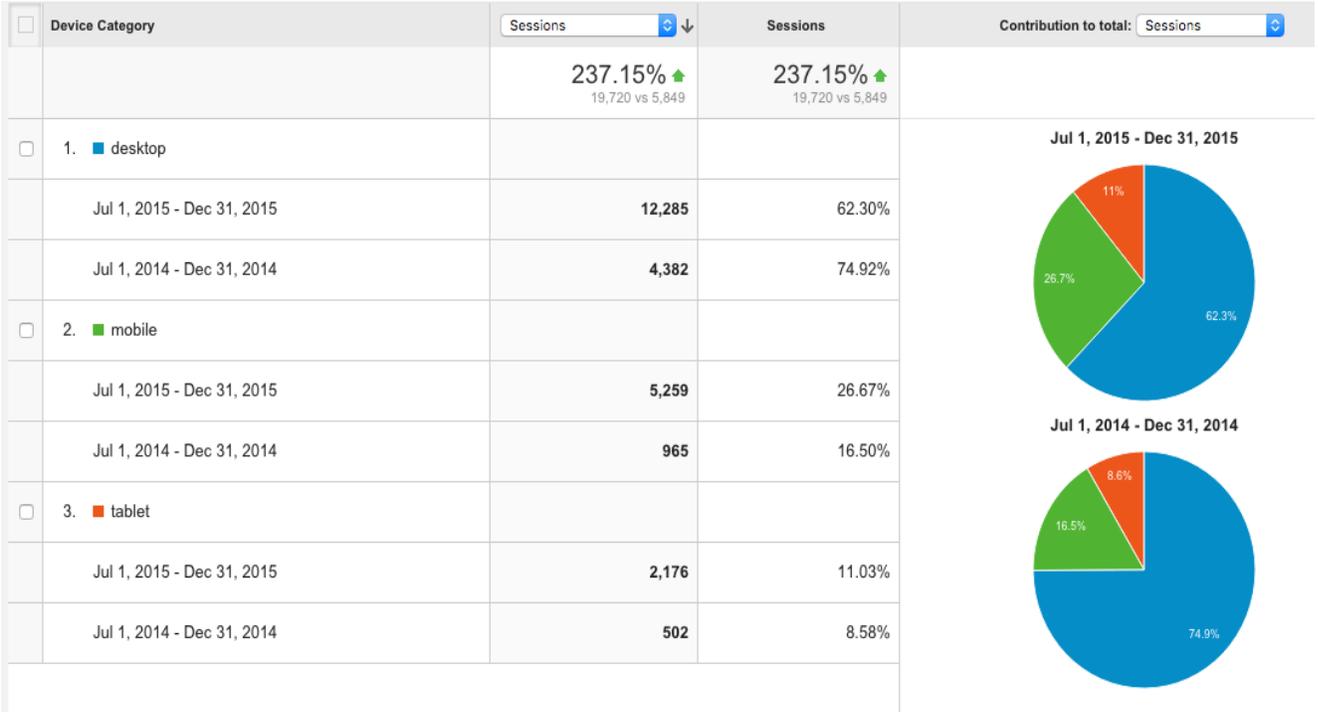


Jul 1, 2014 - Dec 31, 2014



When compared to the previous time (July to December 2014), the number of users of the English web site has increased by 237% (16,934 from 5,023); the number of users on the French web site has remained stable with a slight increase of 26.7%. The volume of page views has also increased significantly - by 187.5% (English) and 95.61% (French) respectively. 84.9% of traffic to the English site and 88.2% of traffic to the French site is comprised of new users.

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Mobile and tablet use has significantly increased in one-year period. ConnectingOttawa.com was accessed by a mobile smart phone 5259 times as compared to only 965 times during the same reporting period representing an increase of 445%. It is also worth noting that tablet use has significantly increased as well.

The topics that have had been of greatest interest based on page views are as follows:

Website / Topic	Number of Page Views (July - Dec 2015)
How to Help Syrian Refugees in Ottawa	10,489 (29.75%)
About Connecting Ottawa	1,053 (2.99%)
Family Law Information Centre	848 (2.41%)
Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee [OPGT] - Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General	783 (2.22%)
Partner abuse	807 (2.29%)
Counselling Resources for Persons with Precarious Immigration Status	598 (1.70%)

It is worth noting the significant number of page views (10,489) of our newly [created Syrian Refugee Resource page](#). In September, the Mayor of Ottawa Jim Watson was preparing a presentation to discuss how the City of Ottawa and social service agencies would be able to support government-sponsored Syrian refugees. As Connecting Ottawa has an extensive and current knowledge of the social and legal services accessible to newcomers and refugees, it was clear we had a responsibility to document and post accurate services following this presentation. Initially, our intent was to create a resource for our partner agencies, however, it is now clear that thousands more outside of our network were able to benefit from accessing this resource. This resource is the main cause of the significant increase of website traffic during the months of November and December.



LEGAL TOPICS

- Aboriginal Issues +
- Abuse and Family Violence +
- Consumer Law +
- Criminal Law +
- Education Law +

How to Help Syrian Refugees in Ottawa

If you are interested in supporting local agencies that support refugees here in our community, listed below are suggestions. This is not an exhaustive list. Please call 211 for further information and options and be aware that general social services agencies in Ottawa have been serving refugee needs in Ottawa for many years. Please see the [Connecting Ottawa resources](#) guide for a list of agencies who serve those “with precarious immigration status”.

Social Media

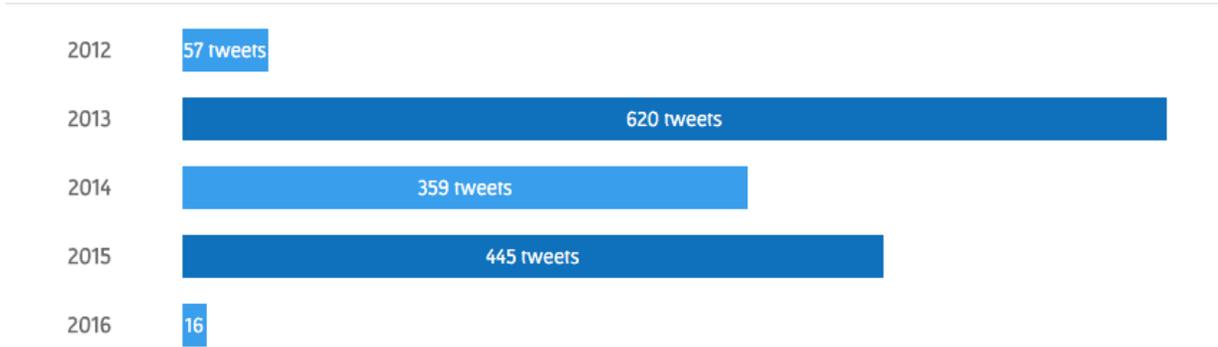
Each of Connecting Ottawa’s sites contains links to the project’s presence on Twitter and Facebook. Social media is another vehicle for the project to share news and information related to our focus populations, their access to services, and emerging legal issues, especially concerning immigration, poverty, and accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Since joining Twitter in June of 2012, we have posted a total of 1,502 tweets, 445 of which were made in 2015 alone. There were approximately 23,000 Impressions² during the reporting period. 442 persons or organizations are now following (up by 13.3%) as compared to the end of the previous reporting period.

¹ screenshot from <http://connectingottawa.com/how-help-syrian-refugees-ottawa>

² Impressions: Number of times the Tweet was seen by users on Twitter

Tweets per year



3

Based on our top shared tweets, it seems many people engage with our twitter posts when we share upcoming events that relate to legal or equity related events. The screenshot below documents our top three posts gaining the most Impressions, Engagements⁴ and Engagement Rate⁵.

Tweets	Top Tweets	Tweets and replies	Promoted	Impressions	Engagements	Engagement rate
	<p>Connecting Ottawa @connectottawa · Sep 13</p> <p>Wrongful Conviction Day Reception OCT 2 #Toronto buff.ly/1F7bYPT @LawFoundationOn @LegalAidOntario @AIDWYC @LawsocietyLSUC #IWCD2015</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			1,092	21	1.9%
	<p>Connecting Ottawa @connectottawa · Nov 25</p> <p>#RefugeesWelcome Event TODAY 7-9 The Refugee Story @rawsugarcafe #Ottawa @RefugeesOtt buff.ly/1Li3ZvB pic.twitter.com/SK7vHWhux3</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			1,271	25	2.0%
	<p>Connecting Ottawa @connectottawa · Dec 4</p> <p>Day 10/ #16Days Activism against Gender-Based Violence Calendar buff.ly/1Nk227E @OCTEVAW @SascOttawa pic.twitter.com/vlckx8Bhjk</p> <p>View Tweet activity</p>			847	20	2.4%

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³ Source <http://twitter.leermakers.net/>

⁴ Engagements: The total number of times a user interacted with a Tweet

⁵ Engagement Rate: Engagements divided by Impressions

⁶ Source: <https://analytics.twitter.com/>

Social media platforms like Twitter can be important tools for Connecting Ottawa to promote the project and deliver PLE messages and resources. However, based on our recent google analytic research, we have been able to conclude that social media activity only contributes slightly to our overall web traffic. Since our website was launched in 2013, an average of 2% of our total web traffic was directly linked to our social media presence.

We have also researched which agencies and individuals are promoting our own social media messages. Our main allies on Twitter, for example, are not in fact our network partners but are instead provincial access to justice agencies such as PLE Learning Exchange and TAG (The Action Group), as well as Ottawa University lawyers focused on refugee and immigration issues.

Based on these results, our social media activity may be more useful when it is directed towards minority language speaking individuals and groups who are based in Ottawa. Below is a screen capture of our first Twitter post, written in Arabic, which promoted a request for Arabic speakers to support social services in Ottawa.



DEVELOP AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS AS TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES

OUR CHALLENGE

For many clients – and particularly among our focus populations - a gap can exist between the point of referral and the point of legal services delivery; clients never actually connect with the services to which they have been referred. This gap can be bridged by trusted intermediaries who are volunteer facilitators trained and supported to problem solve with the client to systematically overcome the barriers to connection.

OUR INTENT

Connecting Ottawa will recruit, train, and pay honoraria to a pool of volunteer facilitators who can be effective trusted intermediaries and who can be matched with clients on the basis of gender, culture, languages spoken, and availability.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 4 Volunteer Facilitators have attended and assisted our Connecting Ottawa Lunch and Learn Events on the topics of Immigration Law and Housing Law
- Coordinated Volunteer Facilitator training focusing on current assignments, scenarios and changes to refugee law
- Facilitators received 11 assignments.
- Our volunteer Facilitators have assisted 53 clients since April 2013.

PROGRESS

Connecting Ottawa has continued to promote opportunities for multilingual persons to volunteer their time and experience to facilitate access to needed services by our focus populations. Our screening and orientation process includes interviews, information sessions, a positive Ottawa Police Service Record Check appropriate for volunteers working with vulnerable populations in community non-profit agencies, and completion of a full-day of training prior to assignment with a client. This training offers not only a shared learning experience re: active listening, problem solving, cultural competencies, privacy and confidentiality, maintaining personal boundaries, roles and responsibilities, etc., but also creates an opportunity for project staff to assess the capacities and capabilities of prospective Facilitators in a dynamic setting. Successful volunteers sign a Volunteer Agreement that describes the expected relationship between Facilitators and Connecting Ottawa.

Our Facilitators are a highly diverse group, ethnically, culturally, linguistically and in terms of their “Canadian experience” in the work force. Many have chosen to volunteer as another step in the process of finding meaningful paid employment where they can use their professional skills. We are always pleased to support the employment aspirations of our Facilitators and we celebrate with them when those aspirations are realized, even though their success will deplete our volunteer pool. Some Facilitators have yet to receive their first assignment because their cultural and linguistic profiles do not match the needs of the client or because of their limited availability or because there has been a temporary decline in the number of referrals for Facilitator support. Other Facilitators have experienced many assignments and are now in a position to mentor newer recruits.

Facilitators attended the Connecting Ottawa fall training session in October led by our social worker Erin Fitzpatrick. The training focused on discussing assignments, challenges they have encountered, updates to refugee law, as well as discussing different assignment scenarios they may face in the future. The training day was also an excellent opportunity to discuss ways the Facilitators could outreach to diverse language groups in Ottawa. Staff made a commitment to continuously communicate with Facilitators between training sessions, via newsletters and opportunities to meet to share their experiences as volunteers.

Currently there are 17 Facilitators available for assignment, with the capacity among them to speak 19 languages. We have continued to respond to referrals for facilitators to accompany clients to legal and non-legal service appointments and have also used two CILAT-certified Facilitators (English, French, Spanish, Arabic) as paid interpreters whenever appropriate. During the reporting period, we have achieved the following results:

- 2 Facilitator Newsletters have been created and distributed which feature common assignment scenarios, upcoming events and workshops, news from Connecting Ottawa as well as case studies from the Volunteer Facilitators
- Facilitators received 11 assignments.
- 4 Volunteer Facilitators have attended and assisted our Connecting Ottawa Lunch and Learn Events on the topics of Immigration Law and Housing Law
- Our volunteer Facilitators have assisted 53 clients since April 2013.

DEVELOP AND SUPPORT VOLUNTEER FACILITATORS TO OUTREACH TO THEIR NETWORKS

OUR CHALLENGE

Many persons who are isolated from the mainstream Canadian experience because of cultural and language barriers; in consequence they are not only relatively unaware of common legal issues but also not connected to the many services that are part of our network. Additionally, Connecting Ottawa's volunteer facilitators are an underutilized resource. The primary role that has been ascribed to them has been enormously valuable but has not fully harnessed the experience, skills, and resourcefulness of these volunteers, many of whom were highly educated professionals in their home countries but are currently underemployed – and underappreciated – in this, their adopted country.

OUR INTENT

To recruit volunteers from our existing pool of facilitators, and train and equip them to most effectively communicate with their personal networks about legal issues and what can be done to address them. We will produce print materials (handouts, in up to 5 languages) to support this outreach by adapting and co-branding CLEO's multilingual resources to include local references.

HIGHLIGHTS

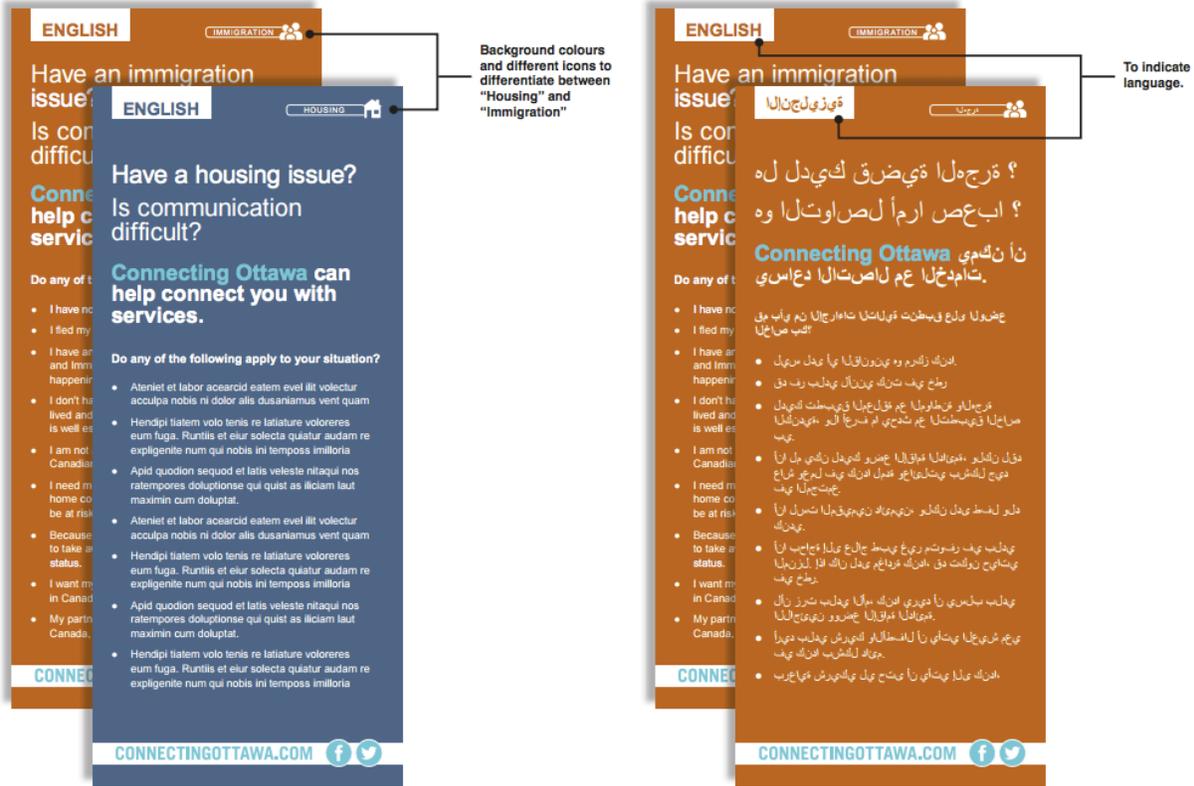
- Arabic immigrant and refugee legal referral service rack card created

PROGRESS

During this reporting period, we have created a draft rack card that incorporates our Legal Health Check Up (LHCU) statements developed in the previous year, and pair the statements with Ottawa-based referral services and contact information. Initially, each rack card will focus on our top LHCU legal topics: Immigrant and Refugee Law, Housing Law, Family Law, Criminal Law and Employment and Source of Income. Each rack card will be translated into the top 4 minority languages spoken in Ottawa (Spanish, Farsi, Somali, Arabic) as well as into Braille. In total, 25 separate rack cards will be created (five legal topics translated in five different languages).

Following feedback from our partner agencies, we plan to revise and translate the rack cards by professional interpreters. Once these rack cards have been created, we will be working with our volunteer facilitators to use the rack cards during their outreach initiatives to their networks.

Below is the first draft design that has been loosely translated into Arabic for the purpose of this example.



PLE OUTREACH TO ISOLATED LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

OUR CHALLENGE

Our legal services partners have the mandate, experience and resources to present public legal education and information at events throughout Ottawa. PLE materials have already been developed on a number of legal issues. However, PLE resources are not often directed to our focus populations in regularly accessed locations such as libraries, community centres, newcomer centres, rehabilitation centres and peer support groups for persons with disabilities.

OUR INTENT

Work with our partners in the legal services sector to direct these existing PLE resources to effectively reach our focus populations and the trusted intermediaries with whom they connect. Connecting Ottawa will become the local clearinghouse for PLE events that target linguistic minorities, a convener, and provider of logistical supports (when necessary) to enable regularly scheduled events at accessible locations.

HIGHLIGHTS

- PLE session delivered to Ottawa's faith leaders through partnership with Spirit of the Law Project
- Muslim Link, Ottawa Muslims news source, interviews and features Connecting Ottawa and the links between Mental Health and Poverty Law
- 9 presentations and collaborations with social and legal services groups including presentations with Refugee Network Ottawa and Catholic Centre for Immigrants

PROGRESS

Connecting Ottawa is aware that our network contains a wealth of PLE resources. Our legal services partners have the mandate, experience and resources to present public legal education and information at events throughout Ottawa. During this reporting period, we have explored ways to direct PLE resources to effectively reach our focus populations and the trusted intermediaries with whom they connect.

An important step into working with new trusted intermediaries was our recent partnership with Law Foundation of Ontario funded Spirit of the Law project. Working in different areas of Ontario, Spirit of the Law aims to train members of Ontario's faith sector with basic legal information related to three key areas of poverty law with a mental health lens: housing, social assistance, and employment. Faith leaders are ideal community-based trusted intermediaries to connect with regarding legal referrals. Many of the faith leaders involved in this project

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support numerous newcomer and minority language groups and are often asked where to access social and legal services.



In December, twelve interfaith leaders, including ministers, imams and other faith practitioners, came from across Ottawa for *Session 1: Introduction to Poverty Law & Mental Health*. Here, Connecting Ottawa provided an overview of the legal supports for people dealing with social assistance, employment, and housing-related problems while experiencing mental health issues. Based on this workshop, future community-based PLE workshops have been requested

by the attendees. In 2016, Connecting Ottawa and Spirit of the Law aim to collaborate together again to offer a second session on Poverty Law and Mental Health.

A further complement to this PLE outreach was an article published by [MuslimLink](#) about Connecting Ottawa and our work with Spirit of the Law. Muslim Link is Ottawa Muslims news source, covering events and news that interest the Muslim community in Ottawa. Please refer to the [full article in the appendix](#).

In addition, we have made 9 presentations and collaborated with other groups on complementary initiatives:

- 4 Presentations on Sponsorships with Catholic Centre for Immigrants
- "How to Deal with Difficult Clients" workshop at Catholic Centre for Immigrants
- Provided logistical and other supports to the early development of the Ottawa Sanctuary City Network.
- Collaborated and supported the ReNOO Group (Refugee Network Ottawa)
- Legal Information and Services in Ottawa Presentation to Staff At 211
- Presentation/ Workshop at University of Ottawa: Ticket Defence Program Legal Clinic Law Students

PROJECT COORDINATION

OUR CHALLENGE

To manage a project that will move from being “a good idea” to being a demonstration of “good practice” and excellent outcomes.

OUR INTENT

Our purpose is to strengthen the capacity of network partners without creating another organization, by resourcing and coordinating activities, evaluating performance and outcomes, ensuring that all partners understand their contribution and role over time, and communicating regularly and effectively with our network partners and other stakeholders.

The project coordinator provides progress reports at every meeting of the Advisory Group, consults with project staff weekly, approves all project expenditures, works with the bookkeeper (at South Ottawa CLS) to ensure the project’s financial health, and is always available for consultation about the many and varied issues that emerge with almost frightening regularity.

PROGRESS

During this reporting period, the Advisory Group met on 17 September 2015 and again on 10 December 2015. The contents of this Activity Report will be received when we meet again on 17 March 2016.

The current membership of the Advisory Group is as follows:

NAME	SERVICES SECTOR	PARTNERING ORGANIZATION
Lois McIntyre	Community	Canadian Hearing Society
Mohamoud Hagi-Aden	Community	South East Ottawa CHC
Daniel Gagnon	Legal	Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre
Siffan Rahman	Community	Somerset West CHC
Aloys Sirabahenda	Immigrant	The Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC)
Christine Sharp	Community	CIC / 211
Gary Stein	Legal	South Ottawa Community Legal Services
Maria Theresa Garcia	Immigrant	Catholic Immigration Centre

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In September, project staff met to discuss the future direction and priorities for the project which became the basis for a proposal to the Law Foundation of Ontario to extend project funding for another year (that is, from 1 July 2016 until 30 June 2017). In December, the Advisory Group received notice that the proposal was accepted. We are grateful to the Board of the Law Foundation for their continued support of the Connecting Ottawa project.

SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

OUR CHALLENGE

To share our experience – good and not so good - with peers and colleagues so that the system of legal services is strengthened and is more readily accessed by our focus populations.

OUR INTENT

We will not only host an annual conference for network partners and interested stakeholders but also to seek out conferences, symposia and other opportunities to make presentations, participate on panels, offer workshops, and poster lessons learned to audiences of our peers and colleagues in community services, especially legal services. In addition, to further develop and inform our network of partners, the project will produce and electronically distribute a newsletter (the Communiqué) periodically.

Progress

Our annual conference has been booked for the May 18, 2016. Although the theme has not yet been confirmed it is likely that we will use this as an opportunity to showcase our language specific Legal Health Check Up rack cards.

Connecting Ottawa has produced and distributed promotional materials to our partners and other referral sources: rack cards, posters, and sticky notes.

During this reporting period, we have been asked to present our best practices in a number of presentations and collaborations:

- Presentation to Connecting Communities Fall Forum in Toronto.
- Presentation about Connecting Ottawa and Community Development Practice to Community Development Social Work Undergraduate course at Carleton University
- Continued contributions to the work of CHI-COP (Collaborative-Holistic-Integrated Community of Practice) – CLEO
- Participation in OPICCO Conference including brief presentation re: LHCU and Sanctuary City
- Access to Justice Pro Bono Students Canada University of Ottawa
- Presentation of Connecting Ottawa and our Services Law Society of Upper Canada LPP Program

We were also able to share best practices and network at the following professional development opportunities:

- OCSWSSW Annual Conference
- TAG Group/LSUC Mental Health Teleconference
- Health Law ConProf YY Chen
- Refugee HUB: Webinar sponsoring refugees
- Innovation and Access to Justice Conference

Financial Report

CONNECTING OTTAWA		2520
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS		
FOR THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015		
	Budget	Actuals
	(12 Months)	(6 Month)
REVENUE		
2.0 Law Foundation of Ontario		
412 Received During Year	256,560	128,280.00
412 From Deferred Revenue (Prior Year's Surplus)		
	256,560	128,280.00
EXPENSES		
3.2 Website Hosting, Management and Administration		
595 Translation		
625 Website Hosting, Management and Administration	8,000	7,729.68
	8,000	7,729.68
3.3 Facilitators to Connect Clients and Legal Services		
590 Training	400.00	477.60
620 Volunteer (IPL) Honoraria	2,000.00	75.00
550 Meeting Costs		
595 Translation		
615 Travel		
	2,400	552.60
3.4 Legal Worker/Social Worker Connection		
515 Allocated Administration	10,000.00	6,000.00
530 Cloud/Mobile Services	2,000.00	953.62
540 Equipment Purchases	2,000.00	41.31
545 Materials and Supplies	800.00	345.97
550 Meeting Costs	500.00	337.71
557 Professional Fees		
56X Salaries and Benefits	161,660.00	76,652.71
562 Resource Development		100.00
585 Staffing Costs		
590 Training/Professional Development	2,000.00	1,454.80
595 Translation/Interpretation		
615 Travel	4,000.00	1,036.87
699 Sundry		
	182,960	86,922.99
3.5 Overcoming Barriers to Accessibility		
545 Materials and Supplies		
595 Translation/Interpretation		
610 Transportation/Child Care, Etc		
3.6 Secretariat		
510 Administration		
545 Materials and Supplies		
550 Meeting Costs		50.77
560 Project Co-ordinator	50,000.00	19,488.75
595 Translation/Interpretation	2,500.00	959.52
620 Volunteer (IPL) Honoraria		
615 Travel	400.00	12.47
	52,900	20,511.51
3.7 Shared Lessons Learned		
520 Annual Conference	2,500	(55.84)
545 Materials and Supplies		15.84
550 Conferences, etc		40.00
615 Travel	1,000	
	3,500	(0.00)
3.8 Administration		
542 Lead Agency Stipend	5,000	5,000.00
527 Bookkeeping	1,000	519.70
525 Bank Charges		88.43
522 Auditing	800	
699 Sundry		
799 Contingency		
	6,800	5,608.13
	256,560	121,324.91
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES		
(EXPENSES OVER REVENUE)	0.00	6,955.09
	Total Expenses	121,324.91

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CONNECTING OTTAWA	
FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT NOVEMBER 30, 2015	
ASSETS	
110 Cash	49,044.54
120 Due from General Fund	
150 Prepaid Expenses	
LIABILITIES	
120 Due to General Fund	(41,971.98)
210 Accounts Payable	(117.47)
230 Deferred Revenue	
FUND BALANCE	6,955.09
Fund Balance, Beginning of Year	57,875.90
Prior Year Surplus Returned to Funder	(57,875.90)
	0.00
Excess of Revenue over Expenses for Current Period	6,955.09
Fund Balance, End of Period	6,955.09

NOTES

- At the end of this reporting period, all expenses were within budget.
- The Lead Agency Stipend is paid to South Ottawa CLS to compensate for their time sponsoring and supporting this project; the stipend is now fully paid for 2015-16 and no further cost is anticipated.
- The Allocated Administration costs which are paid to Vanier Community Services for hosting our two staff has increased by \$2,000.00 per year to total 12,000.00. We are prepared to cover the extra costs for the remainder of the funding year.
- The total of \$57,875.90 was returned to the Law Foundation of Ontario, which was the total amount of unused funding from the 2014-2015 year.
- As has been the case in previous years, the volunteer honoraria remains underused. We are currently exploring other ways to use the honoraria as a way to support outreach initiatives as well as volunteer assignments.

Appendix

Case Studies

Case Study #1

REASON FOR REFERRAL:

"Jaques" is a single 55 year old man who is a refugee claimant who came to Canada in 2009 from Haiti. Prior to his illness he worked at a cleaner. He speaks Creole, French and little English. The client was referred to Connecting Ottawa via the Social Worker at TOH where he was being treated for cancer and kidney failure with chemotherapy and outpatient dialysis.

ASSESSMENT:

The client was informed his life saving medical treatment would be terminated imminently due to his lack of extended health care coverage.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

- Connecting Ottawa participated in a multidisciplinary team meeting at the hospital and worked collaboratively with the client's refugee lawyer (LAO lawyer). We drafted and submitted together a "Request for Ministerial Discretion" in order to have client receive the necessary type of Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) coverage for required medical treatment.
- We arranged for a Creole speaking Volunteer Facilitator to attend medical appointment for the client's refugee application. This provided language support during this appointment.
- The lawyer has arranged this appointment for his ongoing refugee appeal application. If his refugee application was successful in a timely manner then the client would have OHIP - the concern - of course was timing. The issue was that without treatment the client would die within weeks.
- Created plan for services in community to support client (South East Ottawa Community Health Centre etc.). The client was relatively socially isolated but very pleasant and receptive to assistance.

OUTCOMES:

The client's IFHP "type" was promptly changed. This allowed for the chemotherapy which will prolong his life.

Case Study #2

REASON FOR REFERRAL:

The client, Ms. Amalija Giandrė is a citizen of Lithuania. She does not speak English. Her native language is Lithuanian. Amalija was in the process of being sponsored to Canada by her husband, Bernard Lagacė a Canadian Citizen.

ASSESSMENT:

Amalija and Bernard were married in Lithuania in 2013. Amalija has a 4 year old son named Aleksandros Giandrė also a citizen of Lithuania, who was also being sponsored by Bernard. Bernard is not Aleksandros' biological father. Amalija came to Canada in June 2015 on a visitor visa. She was accompanied by her then 3 year old son Aleksandros. The purpose of the visit was for Amalija and Aleksandros to become familiar with Canadian life and to spend time with their Sponsor Bernard as they were soon to live together as a family. They had received word from Citizenship and Immigration Canada that Bernard was approved for sponsorship. Amalija and Aleksandros were to return to Lithuania in December 2015 to await their Permanent Residence in Canada.

In the fall of 2015, during her stay in Canada Amalija noticed multiple behavioral changes in Aleksandros. He started wetting the bed and his clothes during playtime. At this time her husband's behavior changed significantly as well. Aleksandros started exhibiting sexually explicit behaviour. When Amalija asked Aleksandros who had taught him these sexually explicit behaviours Aleksandros explained that it was a secret game he "played" with Bernard. Amalija had been attending a local prayer group in the city and shared her story with a woman from the prayer group. Incidentally this woman was also an employee of the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, she referred Amalija to a settlement worker who then contacted Connecting Ottawa's Lawyer. Amalija fled her home and was placed in a women's shelter with Aleksandros.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

Actions taken by Catholic Centre for Immigrants and Connecting Ottawa with the assistance of various partner agencies:

- Visa extension for Amalija and Aleksandros (CCI with advice and consultation from Connecting Ottawa's Lawyer)
- Police report and report with Children's Aid Society (CCI with advice and consultation from Connecting Ottawa's Lawyer)
- Letters of support and phone calls to the women's shelter explaining the clients' precarious immigration status (Connecting Ottawa).
- Connecting Ottawa instructed the client to write her story and the reasons she is unable to return to Mexico.

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- Connecting Ottawa explained in depth to the client her immigration status and her options. At length were discussed the differences between a Refugee claim and its likelihood of success and a Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds Permanent Residence claim and its likelihood of success. Connecting Ottawa also explained what a DCO (Designated Country of Origin) was.
- Connecting Ottawa consulted by phone with Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre to refer the client up to three consultations with new facts emerging on the case on a weekly basis.
- Connecting Ottawa facilitated a meeting with a social worker from Vanier Community Services Centre, which resulted in the child being enrolled in a Play Group and with the HIPPY Ottawa program for preschoolers. A Public Health Nurse also now does scheduled home visits with the child.
- Connecting Ottawa undertook to help the client with understanding various immigration forms.
- A letter of support was drafted by Connecting Ottawa to be sent to the client's church for help with her Humanitarian and compassionate ground claim.

OUTCOMES:

- Connecting Ottawa's lawyer along with a volunteer facilitator accompanied the client to the first meeting with a lawyer from Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre. The lawyer agreed to open a file.
- A volunteer facilitator who speaks 'Lithuanian' was paired with the client to accompany the client to her various legal appointments.

CASE COMMENT:

Please note that in this case, what was an asset to working this case was that the Settlement worker and the Connecting Ottawa staff spoke enough Lithuanian to expedite the process.

Lunch and Learn Poster

Lunch & Learn / Dîner - Causerie (Connecting Ottawa) Friday Jan 8, 2016

Connecting Ottawa
Effective communication
Accessible justice

Connexion Ottawa
Une communication efficace
Une justice accessible

The Law Foundation of Ontario

LUNCH & LEARN DÎNER - CAUSERIE

This Month's Topic / Sujet du mois:
Housing Law - Droit du logement
Focus on Maintenance & Repairs

FRIDAY / VENDREDI
JAN. 8, 12:00 – 13:00PM
CATHOLIC CENTRE FOR IMMIGRANTS, 219 ARGYLE AVE. ROOM 113
contact: nico@connectingottawa.com
bring your own lunch/ apportez votre dîner

Bilingual informal meetings held over lunch on Fridays. Each month, learn about a legal topic with our social worker and lawyer.

Rencontre informelle bilingue pendant l'heure du dîner. Un vendredi par mois, venez-vous renseigner sur un sujet de droit avec notre travailleuse sociale et notre avocate.

The Connecting Ottawa project aims to improve access to justice for people who are not proficient in English or French or who face communication challenges as the result of a disability, condition or sensory impairment.

Le projet Connexion Ottawa a comme objectif d'améliorer l'accès à la justice pour les individus qui ne sont pas en mesure de s'exprimer en anglais ou en français ou qui connaissent des défis de communication dû à un handicap, un état de santé ou une déficience sensorielle.

CONNECTINGOTTAWA.COM **CONNEXIONOTTAWA.COM**  

Syrian Refugee Support Page

(<http://connectingottawa.com/how-help-syrian-refugees-ottawa>)

HOW TO HELP SYRIAN REFUGEES IN OTTAWA

Ottawa Community Organizations Serving Refugees

If you are interested in supporting local agencies that support refugees here in our community, listed below are suggestions. This is not an exhaustive list. Please call 211 for further information and options and be aware that general social services agencies in Ottawa have been serving refugee needs in Ottawa for many years including programs at each of the Community Health and Resource Centres. Please see the [Connecting Ottawa resources](#) guide for list of agencies who serve those “with precarious immigration status”. <http://connectingottawa.com>

Refugee 613

A non-partisan coalition of citizens, settlement agencies, sponsorship groups, immigration lawyers, fundraisers and local institutions working together to co-ordinate Ottawa's response to the global refugee crisis. We're working hard to provide information and support for sponsorships, donations and volunteering. Visit us at www.refugee613.ca to sign up for our mailing list and receive updates when we have new services to offer.

The Coalition in Ottawa for Refugees (COR)

This coalition is a non-profit coalition of groups that supports refugees who are overseas, particularly by engaging in refugee sponsorship and resettlement. The member groups of this coalition promote the private sponsorship of refugees for settlement in Canada among other important services. The following faith groups/ affiliations/ organizations support their initiatives: Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Mennonite, Ottawa Muslim Women's Association, Roman Catholic, United Church, Presbyterian, Unitarian, World University Service of Canada Capital Rainbow Refuge, Inter-Amicos/OCISO, Group of 5. Please contact cor@bell.net for information about the coalition.

Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI)

The Catholic Centre for Immigrants' mission is to welcome immigrants and refugees, enable their integration and build a more welcoming community in Ottawa. It is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to provide assistance to all immigrants and refugees. The Centre has a long history of working with refugees and we support privately sponsored refugees through the pastoral and sponsorship program.

Kindly see website for more information regarding how to donate via the “donate” icon on the right side of the screen.

Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)

This organization has been providing comprehensive settlement and integration services to the Ottawa community since 1978. OCISO’s programs include community integration, public education, mental health counselling, school based programs, and English language instruction to newcomers. OCISO directly serves about 10,000 immigrants and refugees every year. There are three locations in Ottawa (central and south). Our multi-faceted programs and services are delivered in over 50 languages to clients from 120 countries by OCISO’s team of knowledgeable, skilled and professional staff. The work is augmented by the generous efforts of our enthusiastic, caring and talented volunteers, both established and new Canadians. One of OCISO’s programs is the “Group of Five” sponsorship. Please see website for more details. The volume of calls lately has exceeded resources and your patience is appreciated while staff and volunteers get back to you. Kindly see website for more information regarding how to donate via the “Canada Helps” icon on the right side of the screen.

Additional organizations:

- **Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO)**- <http://www.immigrantwomenservices.com>
- **CESOC (French services/ Services en français)** - <http://www.cesoc.ca/index.php/en>
- **Matthew House** - matthewhouseottawa.org: The mandate of Matthew house includes the Furniture Bank which “isn’t just about furniture”. It’s about children sleeping on a bed instead of a blanket on the floor. It’s about helping families and newcomers, young and old, women fleeing from family violence and the working poor make their shelter a home. With community support, Matthew House Ottawa: Furniture Bank helps an average of 50 individuals and families a month. The Furniture Bank’s mission is to distribute quality used furniture and household goods to Ottawa’s marginalised population including refugees, those transitioning from institutions, half-way houses, and shelters, along with others who have lost their possessions. Originally The Furniture Bank of Ottawa as a service was founded in 2008 following the Haitian refugee crisis. Since then it has grown in response to community need and today operates in partnership with many [local social agencies](#)
- **Carty House** - www.cartyhouse.org: Communal residence in Ottawa that provides transitional housing for female refugee claimants and convention refugees
- **YMCA/ YWCA Newcomers Program**
- **Councillor Rick Chiarelli Clothing Donation Map and Information:** With the help of Councillor Chiarelli, Capital Welcomes, Ottawa Neighbourhood Services, the Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul (among others) are happy to accept new or gently used clothing over the holiday season and beyond for the purpose of helping refugees and our local vulnerable population. These not-for-profit groups, many of whom have been serving Ottawa for decades, will assure that the right donations go to both refugees and

the poor of Ottawa. www.rickchiarelli.com/syrian-refugees-clothing-collection-effort.html

Toronto-Based

- [Lifeline Syria](http://lifelinesyria.ca/donate-2/) - <http://lifelinesyria.ca/donate-2/>

Legal Resources: Refugee Process & Sponsorship Process:

- 1) Canadian Association Refugee Lawyers “CARL” website: www.carl-acaadr.ca
- 2) [Refugee Hub at University of Ottawa](http://www.refugeehub.ca/)- Please visit the website to learn about the “SPP Program” which launched October 1, 2015 at City Hall. The aim of this program is to match pro bono lawyers with those who wish to sponsor Syrian Refugees. Over 100 lawyers throughout Canada have offered to assist with the applications at no cost. For more information please Contact : Refugeespp@uottawa.ca. Donations accepted via website. <http://www.refugeehub.ca/>
- 3) Canadian Council for Refugees “CCR” website: www.ccrweb.ca
- 4) Legal Aid Ontario
 - a. General Website website: www.lao.on.ca
 - b. Ottawa’s LAO clinics that provide Immigration and Refugee Law Services are
 - i. West End Legal Services website www.westendlegal.ca
 - ii. Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre website www.clsoc.ca
 - iii. Clinique juridique francophone de l’est d’Ottawa website www.cscvanier.com
 - iv. South Ottawa Community Legal Services website www.socls.org
- 5) Ottawa Integrated Legal Services Office (ILSO), 85 Albert Street Suite 200 Ottawa K1P 6A4. Immigration duty counsel service is available on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1pm-4pm. This service is available by appointment only by calling 613-569-7448.

***Please note that legal clinics and ILSO Refugee law have an “eligibility criteria”. For further information please call the general Legal Aid information line at 1-800-265-1392. Information regarding eligibility criteria at legal aid clinics and duty counsel services will be provided.
- 6) [Settlement.org](http://www.settlement.org) – for the Refugee process in general (***not specifically sponsorship process for Syrian Refugees and changes post September 19, 2015).

- 7) Connecting Ottawa <http://connectingottawa.com>- Legal information and Resources for Persons with Precarious Immigration Status: <http://connectingottawa.com/counselling-resources> and See:
- a. Upcoming Events Calendar for Public Events and Information Sessions and Public Legal Information about Sponsoring Refugees will be posted here. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to be advised of Legal Information Sessions and Upcoming Events and Courses that pertain to Immigration and Refugee (Sponsorship) Issues.

INTERNATIONAL Financial Support and Donations:

These organizations are helping Syrian refugees with immediate and basic needs. Each organization has a description of their precise services on their website. Organizations have online donation icon on websites for direct donations and certain of the organizations listed below are part of the Federal Government Matching Program (see below for further information).

[UNHCR - United Nations Refugee Agency Canada](#)

[Doctors Without Borders/ Medecins Sans Frontiers](#) MSF is continuing to support health structures within Syria. They are also providing healthcare along migrant routes and in refugee camps in Jordan, Turkey, Hungary, Lebanon and Iraq, and rescuing people in danger on the Mediterranean Sea. The teams are providing medical assistance to those in transit across Europe, and delivering care to those who need it most. MSF must operate with complete independence and neutrality. This allows access patients on both sides of a conflict, and enables work wherever needs are greatest in nearly 70 different countries around the world. They therefore rely on private donations from the members of the public, and cannot participate in the Canadian government's recently announced matching fund. MSF **gratefully accepting donations** from our private donors, whose support will allow us to continue to deliver critical medical care to those who need it most. To learn more about MSF's response to the refugee crisis and how your support can help make a difference, visit **crisis page on msf.ca**

[UNICEF - Unicef Canada](#)

[International Organization for Migration](#)

[OXFAM](#)

[World Food Programme \(United Nations\)](#)

[Migrant Offshore Aid](#)

[Amnesty International](#)

[Canadian Red Cross](#)

[World Vision](#)

[CanadaHelps Syrian Refugee Relief](#)

[FEDERAL GOVERNMENT matching program applies these organizations:](#)

The Federal Government Matching Program was announced September 13, 2015. Donations to certain organizations will be matched by the Federal Government up to \$100 million dollars until December 2015. Here are the organizations that are part of this program:

- Red Cross/ Red Crescent
- World Vision
- OXFAM
- CARE

Holistic Support: Local Imams Attend Workshop on Mental Illness and the Law (muslimlink.ca)

<http://muslimlink.ca/in-focus/our-challenges/local-imams-attend-workshop-on-mental-illness-and-the-law>

Written by [Chelby Daigle](#)

In early December, local imams, along with other faith leaders, attended a workshop at the [South Nepean Muslim Community \(SNMC\)](#) mosque exploring the intersection of mental illness and the law. The workshop was presented by [Connecting Ottawa](#) as part of [The Spirit of the Law](#), a provincial project run by [Interfaith Initiatives for Civic Engagement \(IICE\)](#) and funded by the [Law Foundation of Ontario](#). The project aims to work with faith communities to ensure that people living with mental illness who come in to conflict with the law can receive support by ensuring that faith communities and legal professionals are taking a holistic approach to their care.

Haitian Canadian lawyer Alexandra Derisier, who works with Connecting Ottawa, delivered the workshop. It explored a number of issues related to mental illness and the law, including running through typical scenarios that faith leaders might encounter and providing them with contact lists for legal and mental health services.

Derisier sees faith leaders as an important asset for services like hers, which offer support to people who experience barriers, such as language or disability, to accessing legal services. “Faith leaders have access to people we wouldn’t have access to. They are exposed to people who have all kinds of problems who don’t necessarily trust the system or know where to go. So faith leaders bring people to us so they can get access to services they otherwise might not have known of,” she explained, “If one of my clients is Arabic speaking and spends all of their time in the Arabic speaking community, they might not know to come to me, but their faith leader could know to come to me.”

According to Michael Skaljic, the director of IICE, “The organization is an emerging non-profit which aims to help professional sectors like health care, education, corrections, [and] build bridges with the faith sector in terms of professional understandings, relationships, communications. We do trainings and public education. On the other side, we also work with the faith sector for them to better understand all of those other sectors. We need to break down the silos because the faith sector like many sectors is siloed from other professionals. So we look at how to approach things more holistically, encouraging leaders for the different sectors to work together in the best interest of those they are providing service to.”

Derisier, who is herself very involved in Ottawa’s Haitian Christian community, agrees that faith leaders are often overlooked as partners in service provision by other sectors. “Sometimes we want to dissociate the person’s mental illness from their faith and we can’t do that. Because sometimes they are going to need their faith to help to cope with their mental illness and sometimes even their faith is a trigger for their mental illness so you can’t dissociate it.”

She feels that having faith leaders who are properly educated about mental illness is essential in combating the stigma towards mental illness in some religious and cultural communities. “I used to [practice] refugee law and I would tell my clients that they need a psychological assessment,” she said, “And they would say ‘No, I’m not crazy!’. But no one said they were ‘crazy’. There are cultural practices that prevent people from seeking psychological help and there are religious practices that prevent people from seeking psychological help. So a person fears that if they go forward with seeking psychological help they will be branded by their community as ‘crazy’. But if faith leaders are cognizant of the supports out there for people coping with mental illness, it makes it that much easier for people to get the help that they need.”

[Imam Ahmed Limame](#) of the [Gatineau Mosque](#), attended the session along with [Imam Zijad Delic](#), the imam of SNMC who hosted the session, and [Imam Sikander Hashmi](#) of the [Kanata Muslim Association](#).

[Imam Limame](#) found the workshop incredibly useful for his work as an imam. “Many times in the past I wish I had had Connecting Ottawa’s number, I really could have used their help,” he shared, “Many times I have referred people in the past to psychiatrists or legal workers, but now I really see the importance of making sure I follow up and work more closely with these other professionals on these cases. I realized that we need to work in a team instead of me

just being focused on the spiritual angle. We need to work together to support people more holistically. I have already asked Connecting Ottawa if they could come to present at my mosque and I'm very pleased that people who work with them speak French."

He also feels that there needs to be more opportunities for imams and other faith leaders to receive professional development on issues such as mental illness and legal services. "I think to do your job well as an imam you need to be aware of the issues but also have specialized workshops so we can do our job effectively.

[Imam Michael Abdur Rashid Taylor](#) is the Ontario Regional Chaplain with the Ministry of Corrections and is an advisor on the Spirit of the Law Project. He also is the current secretary of the Canadian Council of Imams, based in Toronto. Imam Taylor has 10 years of experience in organizing training on mental health issues for religious leaders, including imams, as he was the Director of Spiritual Care for the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

He sees it as essential that imams are offered professional development opportunities such as this workshop. "Many imams do not have training on mental health and that's a serious gap," he explained, "Programs that sensitize and train imams on how to support people living with mental illness are urgently needed right now. But the thing with working with imams is that you have to find time. It is exceedingly difficult to find time in these men's lives. They are very very busy. You have to pre-plan and slot the time so you can get the commitment from the imams to be there."

[Imam Taylor](#) is pleased that three imams from Ottawa-Gatineau were able to attend the workshop and plans to work with the local community to organize more sessions for Muslim religious leaders as well as leaders in other faith communities in Ottawa.

To learn more about Connecting Ottawa visit their [website](#)

To learn more about the Spirit of the Law Project visit the [IICE website](#)