Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba

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IRCOM After School Program

"Supporting new Canadian youth for a positive and brighter future"

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Inc. (IRCOM) is a not-for-profit organization that provides transitional housing and delivers social programming to newly arrived refugees and immigrants to Canada. We work with about 300 new immigrants and refugees from twenty countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe who live on-site and access our programs – over half of whom are children. We deliver a host of support services to newcomers, including recreation and after school programs for children and youth (which includes recreational and literacy programs), parenting programs, a newcomer literacy program for adults and a community support program. Aside from housing, all IRCOM programs are available and utilized by community members who are not residents, therefore our participants actually number in the area of 500-700 new Canadians.

IRCOM's After-School program provides two program components for children and youth five times a week. Our programs average 100 participants per day and our activities are aimed at providing services and support to immigrant and refugee children, who in addition to dealing with the trauma of the past, are now facing the challenges of living in a new country.

Two thirds of IRCOM's population is children, most of who are in the critical age bracket of 7 to 12 years old. Most of the newcomer children we serve face the challenges of integrating positively into their new environment. They find it difficult to cope with their schools, are taunted by their peers for being "failures" and for being unable to contribute anything meaningful to their social circle. This feeling of hopelessness inhibits the ability of newcomer children to develop their talents and skills in areas outside the academic field. In addition, children in the 7- 12 year age bracket have a lot of energy and are likely to channel their energies in activities that provide social inclusion such as gangs, if they are not provided with alternatives.

Due to the location of IRCOM House in a relatively insecure area in the inner city, the newcomer children who live on site are highly vulnerable to being recruited to gang and criminal activities. Gang members are always trying to provide an alternative trusting environment for young newcomers by appreciating their contribution through the provision of quick money and perceived protection.

IRCOM's After-School programs are therefore aimed at supporting young newcomers with academic, arts, social and recreational activities that help them engage in positive social activities during the critical hours after school. Our activities also work to help disadvantaged newcomer children discover and develop inner talents that they might not discover in a more formal academic environment.

Objectives of the IRCOM After-School Program

- **EDUCATION:** To create educational supports (i.e.: literacy, homework clubs) in order to assist newcomer children and youth in cultural adaptation and language

- **RECREATION:** To provide stimulating and active recreational activities for children and youth which will promote the values of cooperation, non-violence and cross-cultural communication

- **EMPOWERMENT:** To create a 'space' where self-esteem, recognition and appreciation for self, other and the environment can be learned and practiced

- **OUTREACH:** To expose IRCOM young people to different service providers, opportunities, cross-cultural scenarios and a variety of activities that exist in their neighbourhood through outreach and collaboration with other agencies

- **HEALTHY LIFESTYLES:** To keep youth away from high risk activities such as gangs, violence and substance abuse by providing positive mentorship and engaging, youth-friendly activities that encourage healthy living

Who IRCOM serves?

Our programs serve newcomer children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 in two different programs. Both our children and youth programs average a total participation of about 100 participants per day, five days a week. Our participants are from over 20 different countries and speak over 25 different languages. Although many of our participants live on site at IRCOM House, our programs are open to and serve many more participants from the neighbourhood community. The participants who don't live onsite at IRCOM House come to our programs either because of their relationship with our participants in the schools or because they are children who moved out of IRCOM and continue to feel connect to friends and staff.

Our children's program for 6 to 12 year old newcomer children runs five times a week with an average of 55 participants pay day. About 20 per cent of the participants at our children's programs do not live onsite at IRCOM and this number is continuing to increase as the impact of our programs is recognized and valued by families in the West Alexander and Central Park neighbourhoods.

Our youth program for 13 to 18 year old newcomer youth runs four times a week with an average of 45 participants per day. The majority of participants are in the age range of 13 to 15 years and engage in positive activities that help them to integrate with the wider community in Winnipeg. About 40 percent of the youth participants in our programs do not live onsite at IRCOM and either come from within the West Alexander and Central Park neighborhoods or come from other parts of the city where their families have moved to from IRCOM House.

Description of Services and Activities

Children's Programs

Our children's programs run five times a week after school from 4pm to 6pm and comprises of a number of different activities aimed at helping newcomer children integrate positively with their new community in Winnipeg. We run a different themed activity everyday of the week and this helps to engage the kids and keep them interested. Some of the activities that we do include:

- Arts & Crafts on Mondays with themed activities for different months
- Family program on Tuesdays with selected families; families including all children and parents take part in 12 week session programs at a time. New families are enrolled per session
- Variety programs on Wednesday; activities include outreach to neighbouring communities and agencies programs, literacy through karaoke or puppet plays, movie nights
- Raise-a-reader; a literacy program that involves helping newcomer kids improve their reading skills
- Gym program at Victoria Albert School that includes fun recreational as well as skill building activities

Youth Programs

Our youth programs run four times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays) from 7pm to 9pm with a variety of activities that are fun, empowering, and recreational helping to build the self esteem of newcomer youth. The content of our programs vary from season to season but for this year they include:

- Fusion nights on Mondays including an evening where youth learn how to mix music and its creation with the help of a local DJ, a joint fusion program with our partner program at Spence Neighbourhood Association, field trips to outdoor activities, and hip-hop workshops
- Youth leadership programs on Wednesdays including healthy relationships workshops, swimming at Sargent park pool and themed workshops on integration
- Homework drop-in program on Thursdays where our staff and volunteers help youth with their homework
- Girls' night and boys' night on Fridays; this involves separate programs for girls and boys with gender appropriate staff for both programs

Expected outcomes

Our programs are aimed helping newcomer youth and children integrate with their new communities and become resource individuals and role models to future newcomers in Canada. Our programs have both short term and long term expected outcomes.

Short term outcomes:

- Improved attitudes towards learning amongst newcomer youth and children
- Improved success in school-related activities
- Ability to ask for support when they need it
- Increased self-confidence amongst newcomer youth and children
- Development of "leadership" qualities among newcomer youth to be able to act as role models for their younger siblings
- Increased appreciation for cross-cultural activities
- Exposure to service providers and activities outside of IRCOM
- Improved integration into the larger community through outdoor activities and collaboration with partner agencies
- Reduced percentage of IRCOM children involved with gangs
- Increased percentage of IRCOM children involved in positive activities (e.g. mentoring)

Long-term outcomes:

- Reduction in the number of newcomer youth involved in drugs and gang crime in Winnipeg
- Reduction in the school dropout rates amongst newcomer children and youth
- Improved life chances of program participants by enhancing cultural and social integration
- Increased quality of education for program participants
- Enhanced program participants' likelihood of furthering their education
- Encouraged greater goal-setting and leadership qualities among program participants
- Promotion of social responsibility and respect for law
- Decreased interaction with the justice system
- Decreased future dependence on social assistance
- Promotion of values of self reliance through hard work, training and employment
- Discovery of personal talents and skills to increase self confidence and self worth so participants can make healthy decisions

Evaluation

- Attendance to programs
- Positive verbal feedback of participants
- Excitement and interest of participants to engage in programming
- Improvement in behaviour/following the rules
- Sharing and working well with other children
- Family appreciation of the program
- Ability of children and youth to access programs outside of IRCOM independently
- Trust and willingness to share both the "good" and "bad" of their lives with volunteers and staff
- Seeking help when needed from staff and volunteers
- Demonstrating leadership (i.e.: helping their siblings or younger kids, being positive role model in their peer group)
- Keeping the youth out of gangs and drug life

On-going relationship with the City of Winnipeg

Over the past years, IRCOM has been the recipient of a yearly grant from the City of Winnipeg of approximately $52,000 per year. This grant is paid to IRCOM on a bi-annual basis. To remain accountable to the City of Winnipeg, IRCOM sends a monthly report to Joy Hildebrand/Jeff Smithson, our contacts at the City of Winnipeg, detailing the number of participants in attendance at the programs, the activities run and the monthly calendar of events. Furthermore, the City of Winnipeg is invited to attend events put on by IRCOM, such as our Annual Mosaic Summer Celebration which is a block party for the IRCOM community to celebrate the end of the school year and the beginning of summer.

The resources provided by the City of Winnipeg are put toward the on-going development and implementation of children, youth and family programming at IRCOM. The resources contributed by the City of Winnipeg have been invaluable in affording our newcomer population access to on-site recreational, social and educational programs, thus contributing to a more well-adjusted and successful transition into Canadian society.

We look forward to an on-going relationship with the City of Winnipeg so that our staff and volunteers can continue to provide these essential programs to our new Canadian families and our communities at large.

Planning for the Future

Due to the overall success of our children, youth and family programs over the years and the increasing needs, we would like, not only to sustain these programs in the coming years, but expand them to further benefit the newcomer community and other communities in the neighbourhood.

Fall 2011, IRCOM will be opening a new facility; IRCOM 2 with the support of both the Provincial and Federal governments. The new facility will replicate the holistic model of programming at our current site in order to ease the integration of newcomer families in Winnipeg. The provincial and federal governments have committed nearly $11 million in capital dollars towards this development; however, we would like our partners at the City of Winnipeg to support the expansion of our After School Programs to this second site. This will provide additional programming that will serve not only the new children and youth at this residence but also the many that are not being reached by our current programming due to limited capacity.

With the city's current funding, and that of several other funders we are able to support an average of a hundred newcomer kids per day. With our new site, we hope to reach another 100 newcomer youth and children. This means that we will be providing positive activities to about 200 newcomer children and youth everyday ensuring early intervention and a reduced level of drug and gang violence in our city.

Our Request for IRCOM 2

Item	Cost per unit	# of units	Other	Total
STAFF				
2 Youth Workers	$13 per hour X 25 hours per week X 2 staff	52 weeks	12% MERC	**$37,856**
PROGRAM SUPPLIES				
Art Supplies & Materials	$50 / month	12 months		**$600**
Sports Equipment	$500	1 time per year		**$500**
Transportation	**Regular Programming -** 2 outings per week X 20 kids x $2.80 return bus fare + 2 outings per week X 4 adults x $4.10 return bus	52 weeks = $5824 52 weeks = $1706		**$7530**
Gym & Field Rentals	$20 per rental X 4 (2 fields and 2 gyms)	2 seasons		**$160**
Snacks & water for outings	$3/person X 20 kids X 2 outings per week	52 weeks		**$6240**
Entrance fees for Outings/Field Trips	In-kind			**In-Kind**
TOTAL (before Administration)				**$52,886**
Administration (Overhead costs - office space, communications, accounting, computers) 15% of total				$7,933
TOTAL Requested				**$60,819**

Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to greater partnership with the City of Winnipeg in the future.

Sincerely,

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