

REPORT



Prepared by



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Canada

We also wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all the community workers, community leaders, and representatives from colleges and universities who participated in the study for their invaluable contribution.



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INTRODUCTION

Feasibility of the CWLC

Mothers Matter Centre (MMC) assessed the feasibility of implementing a Community Worker Leadership Certificate (CWLC) program in Canada. The study was conducted jointly by MMC and PRA Inc, between June 2018 and March 2019.

The feasibility of the CWLC was considered from three distinct angles:

- The needs of women employed as community workers, particularly immigrant and Indigenous community workers, who wish to gain additional skills and competencies to build a meaningful career as community workers.
- The capacity of postsecondary institutions (PSE) to provide the required learning opportunities, along with the required support to address any barriers to entry and participation by those individuals targeted by the CWLC.
- The needs of social purpose organizations (SPO) in their effort to recruit and develop community workers who have the required skills and competencies, and the capacity of SPOs to adequately support community workers who could participate in a CWLC program.

The study addresses one fundamental question: is it feasible to implement a CWLC program that enhances the capacity of women currently employed as community workers to pursue a meaningful career as community workers?

The methodology used to conduct the study includes:

- A review of relevant documents
- An analysis of data from the Census and the Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada
- A study of employment requirements associated with the position of community workers
- An inventory of educational programs currently offered for community workers
- Interviews and focus groups with community workers, SPO representatives and representatives from PSEs

Appendix A includes further details on the methodology.

COMMUNITY WORKERS

Overview

For the purpose of this study, community workers refer to those individuals involved in the National Occupational Classification (NOC) 4212, known as "social and community service workers." These individuals are involved in the delivery of a range of programs and services that support individuals and families.

While they assist individuals in a variety of circumstances, community workers do not provide clinical assistance, which typically falls under the social worker category.

Definition

"Social and community service workers administer and implement a variety of social assistance programs and community services, and assist clients to deal with personal and social problems. They are employed by social service and government agencies, mental health agencies, group homes, shelters, substance abuse centres, school boards, correctional facilities and other establishments."

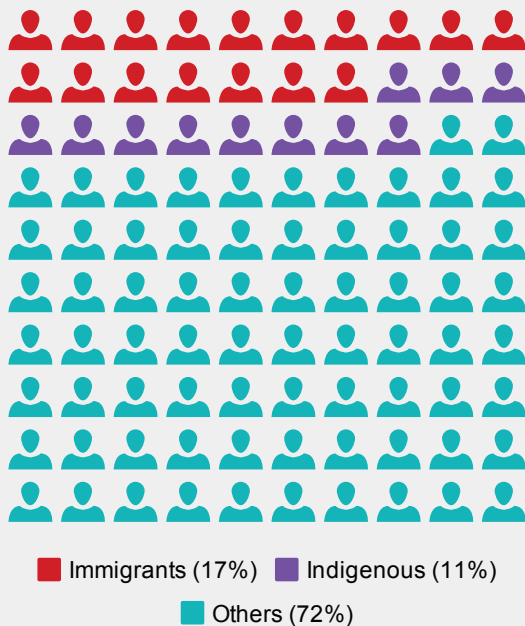
- Statistics Canada (NOC 4212)

Close to 150,000 Canadians are engaged as community workers, and a vast majority of them are women.

According to the 2016 Census, 147,310 Canadians were actively engaged as community workers. The vast majority (78%) of community workers are women and, of that group, more than a quarter are either immigrant women (17%) or Indigenous women (11%).

As of 2018, 39% of female community workers were employed by the public sector, which includes federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous public administrations and agencies (e.g., health centres, community centres, schools, municipal service providers, etc.). The remaining portion (61%) were employed by other organizations, typically community organizations and some private service providers.

Profile of women employed as community workers



Source: 2016 Census

The sector is expected to remain a strong source of employment, with 51,600 job openings forecasted for the period 2017 to 2026 (Canadian Occupational Projection System).

Community workers face precarious working conditions, both in terms of job stability and level of income.

Conditions of employment

Status of employment

A significant portion of women engaged as community workers are employed during a portion of the year only, or on a part-time basis:

- 51% of all women community workers are engaged on a full-time basis, while 40% work only a portion of the year, and the remainder (9%) work part-time.
- This trend is accentuated among immigrant women. While 47% of them work on a full-time basis, this number drops to 36% among recent immigrant women employed as community workers (immigrated between 2011 and 2014). As a result, many immigrant women only work part of the year.

In this context, it will come as no surprise that community workers are more likely to hold more than one job. According to the Labour Force Survey, 7% of workers in Canada in 2018 were multiple job holders. Among women engaged as community workers, that proportion stood at 11%, and at 12% among immigrant women.

Examples of positions held by community workers

- Home visitor / parenting support
- Home care provider
- Community support worker
- Community outreach worker
- Mental outreach worker
- Special education technologist
- Community field liaison worker
- Summer camp worker
- Justice case manager
- Community worker youth advocate

Earnings

At the time of the last Census (2016), the average yearly earnings of female community workers who worked full time was close to \$49,000. For those who were working part of the year - a significant portion as previously noted - the yearly average earning was just over \$27,000.

Considering more specifically immigrant women who were engaged as community workers, those working full time earned close to \$50,000 annually, while those working part of the year earned just over \$30,000 annually.

Finally, in the specific case of Indigenous women engaged as community workers, those working full time earned on average just over \$45,000, while those working part of the year (39% of the total group) had yearly average earnings of just over \$24,000.



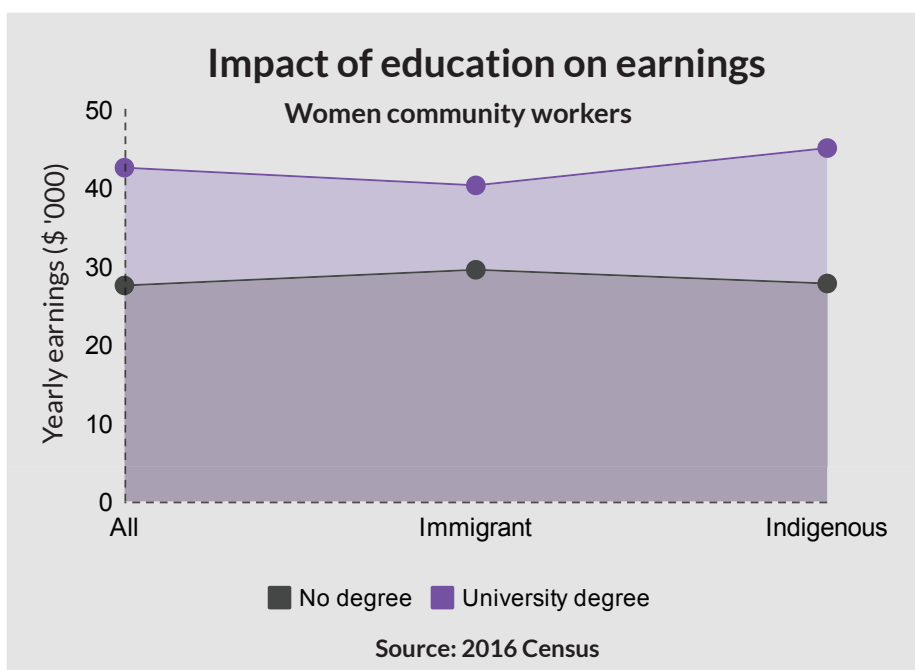
"We do not pay particularly well for the level of education we require. Our job pays them at the low end of the earning power."

- Manager of a community organization

Education and earnings

Community workers who have a higher level of education systematically earn more than those with limited education (e.g., no diploma or the equivalent of a high school diploma). As reported in the 2016 Census:

- Considering all women community workers, those who had a university degree earned on average just over \$42,000, while those with no degree earned just over \$27,000.
- In the case of immigrant women engaged as community workers, those with a university degree earned close to \$41,000, while those with no degree earned just over \$29,000.
- For Indigenous women engaged as community workers, those with a university degree earned \$45,000 while those with no degree earned close to \$28,000.



Community workers with a university degree earn on average 55% more than those with no degree.



What do we know about the most vulnerable women engaged as community workers?

Women who are engaged as community workers and who do not have any college or university education are a particularly important group to consider for the purpose of this study. What do we specifically know about them?

- At the time of the 2016 Census, there were close to 23,000 of these women who were engaged as community workers.
- Approximately 41% of them were working only a portion of the year.
- Those who were working full-time earned on average approximately \$40,000, while those who worked part of the year earned close to \$22,000.



02

PROGRAM CONTENT

Insights gathered as part of this study confirm that a significant portion of women involved as community workers would benefit from an opportunity to enhance their skills and competencies in order to better serve their clients, to better care for themselves, and to pursue a more rewarding professional path as community workers. The study also confirms that suitable educational opportunities currently exist in some regions of the country, but important educational gaps remain.

This section of the report focuses on the content that would be expected in a new CWLC program. Building on this, section 03 of the report describes the principles that should drive the delivery structure of the CWLC.

Status quo and remaining gaps

At the time of this report, a number of educational options were available for individuals interested in pursuing a career as community workers. Full-time social work degrees are available in all regions of the country, along with other relevant degrees in social sciences. A number of other programs are offered by colleges, including full-time, two-year diplomas in social and community work. Appendix B provides examples of such degrees and diplomas in selected regions of the country.

While these options respond to the needs of many Canadians, particularly young Canadians engaging in full-time studies, they do not meet the needs of the group targeted by this feasibility study. Community workers engaged as part of this study indicated that what they need is flexible options that focus on key gaps in knowledge and competencies, which build on what they have already acquired in their work.

Scanning across Canada, there are some programs that can provide such assistance, typically one-year certificate programs offered either full-time or part-time, and that include online options. The Community Support Worker Certificate offered by the College of New Caledonia in British Columbia, or the Certificate in Community services offered at Concordia University in Quebec are examples of such programs. However, the fact remains that, in most regions of the country, community workers do not have access to such opportunities. Consequently, there are gaps that the CWLC could help address.

The remaining part of this section of the report describes the content that a CWLC should include, largely based on the observations shared by community workers and leaders of community organizations who employ these workers.

Proposed content

While the precise content of each CWLC program will require further development involving each institution involved in its delivery, the consultations held as part of this feasibility study and the review of existing programs provided an opportunity to identify key programming areas that such a certificate should cover. These suggestions reflect current needs and perceived gaps among existing community workers, which have a negative impact on the ability of these workers to fulfil their role and advance in their career.

Case management

"Clients may say they are depressed, they can't enjoy life. You know there is depression or anxiety. I went through mental health issue, so I can see it in other people, but the spectrum is huge, so how do you know?"

- Community worker

One of the most predominant challenges to emerge from the consultations held as part of this study is the expectation that community workers be in a position to manage and adapt to a wide range of scenarios that unfold during the course of their work. Rarely will clients come to them with a single need. For instance, as a home visitor assists a client as part of a literacy program, she may discover that the client has multiple needs or presents concurrent disorders (e.g., learning disabilities, mental health issues, addiction, or abusive relationships).

Being in a position to appropriately identify these issues, and to determine how best to manage them, by reaching out to colleagues or other services, is a challenge that community workers face on an ongoing basis, and this is an area where a lack of appropriate education credentials is felt particularly strongly. The CWLC program is expected to systematically cover this domain. Examples of courses in this area include introduction to counselling theories, group dynamics, interpersonal communication skills, or youth at risk.

Self-care

"Every client is from a different background. You have to know within seconds of when you meet them how to approach them. Sometimes, I go home exhausted because of how much I have dealt with emotionally."

- Community worker

A predominant concern expressed systematically by both community workers and their employers is the inability among some workers to adequately manage the stress and the impact resulting from ongoing exposure to personal problems and difficulties experienced by clients. As such, vicarious traumatization is observed among many community workers, leading to burn outs, mental health issues, and significant turnover in community organizations.

Being capable of recognizing one's limit and of implementing the appropriate measures to establish a healthy barrier between work and personal environments is a requirement of employment for those involved in community work. Current social work programs include self-care or physical care courses where students explore strategies to reduce stress and promote personal and professional wellness.

As one employer who was consulted put it, the ability to self-care is probably the most important component of any proposed certificate program, as it acts as the foundation upon which other skills and competencies can be built and exercised.

Cultural competencies

"People's experiences are formed by their cultural understanding, and having that lens to adequately support a client is essential."

- Manager of a community organization

As community work entails ongoing interactions with a wide range of audiences, honing cultural competencies is seen as another critical milestone that should be covered in the CWLC. This is particularly relevant when one considers the personal nature of the interactions between the community worker and her clients.

This challenge also reaches community workers themselves, based on their own identify. As noted during the consultations, one's own identify may be seen as an asset or something that can raise its own challenges. For instance, one young female community worker noted the difficulty of establishing her credibility with some groups of clients. Also, for Indigenous community workers, the systemic biases that they face personally may also affect their professional lives.

The CWLC must therefore address cultural competencies, from the perspective of both the clients and the workers themselves. Examples of courses addressing this need include human service practice with Indigenous communities, understanding cultural and social differences, or the disability perspective in human diversity.

Mental health and addiction

"There is no expectation that a frontline support worker would be doing actual counselling but they have to have the ability to recognize that addiction is part of the challenges that anyone could be facing these days."

- Community college instructor

While not all community workers will focus their work on mental health and addiction, it is critical for them to have enough knowledge of the principles of mental health and addiction to be in a position to recognize associated symptoms, and to know how to respond, including reaching out and directing clients to other service providers.

During consultations held as part of this study, it was repeatedly noted that issues around addictions are becoming more prominent and that a lack of adequate skills in this area is placing both community workers and clients in a particularly vulnerable position. This is why mental health and addiction is seen as a critical component of any CWLC program. Instruction in this area is expected to provide foundational knowledge on mental health and addiction, and to address related areas such as housing and homelessness.

Administrative and technical skills and tools

"A desire to help people has always been important, but additional requirements now include professionalization, use of technology and resourcefulness."

- Community worker

The field of community work attracts individuals who have a profound desire to help others and improve the communities in which they live. This motivation goes a long way in sustaining community workers as they build their career. However, during consultations held as part of this study, it was repeatedly noted that strong administrative case management abilities are expected of all workers, and are lacking among many of them.

Strong management skills cover a range of topics, including case management technologies, communication tools, policies and procedures, and ethical considerations.

03

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

If offering relevant content is critical to the success of the proposed CWLC, the program structure and delivery is equally critical. The group targeted by this CWLC is composed of the very individuals who face the most important barriers to engaging in educational activities. They are typically earning less, have multiple layers of personal and professional responsibilities, and may be somewhat reluctant to engage in a learning program if they have limited educational credentials that may have been acquired a long time ago. And yet, they are the very individuals who can gain the most by engaging in a CWLC program.

This section of the report describes the overall principles that should guide the structure and delivery of a CWLC program. Again, it is based on the consultations held with all three key stakeholder groups: community workers, their employers, and postsecondary institutions. While they provide guidance, these principles also recognize that each participating institution would need to tailor the program.

A certificate program with pathway options

From the outset, the CWLC was expected to be a certificate program, as opposed to a diploma or a degree. By certificate program, it is meant a program of typically 30 credits, offered over one year for full-time students, or three years (or more) for part-time students. Diplomas tend to be two years full-time, while degrees require three or four years full-time. The information gathered as part of this study confirms that a certificate level is what best meets the needs of the target group. It offers the flexibility that potential participants require to successfully complete all program requirements. Examples of certificate programs currently offered in related fields typically last between eight months (full-time) and two years (part-time).

Having an accredited program is also essential. One fundamental goal for the CWLC program is to have participants add credentials to their profile, allowing them to not only build new skills, but also acquire an asset that can position them favourably in the labour force. As noted during the study, many organizations offer important and worthwhile professional development activities, but these do not lead to an actual accredited recognition. As such, the proposed CWLC program is expected to build on those professional development activities, by providing formally recognized and transferable knowledge and competencies.

Having an accredited program also provides a wide-range of opportunities for participants to bridge or ladder into other, more advanced, educational programs. Not all participants are expected to pursue these avenues, but the CWLC should, at a minimum, provide that option. This is why institutions that deliver a CWLC program would be expected to facilitate the transition of participants into other programs that they offer, by crediting all or a portion of the courses completed as part of the CWLC. These institutions would also be expected to establish articulation agreements with other institutions (particularly those located in the same region) to facilitate the transfer of credits obtained as part of the CWLC.

Recognition of existing knowledge and skills

Any CWLC program should include the possibility for participants to have some of their existing knowledge and skills recognized and credited as applicable. As such, it is expected that a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process will be offered by the institution.

During interviews conducted with community workers, it was emphasized that engaging in a new learning program would represent a significant challenge, and in that context, it is essential to maximize the time spent in the program, through some form of PLAR process.

Mixing theory and practical applications

What may well have been the most predominant concern expressed by community workers consulted as part of this study is not having sufficient practical activities integrated in a CWLC program. Potential participants clearly expect the program to be largely focused on knowledge and skills that can be readily applied in their work. While recognizing this requirement, there is also an expectation that some fundamental principles and knowledge will be covered through the certificate, particularly in light of the pathway options that is expected to be offered to participants.

Flexible delivery model

While the need to offer flexible delivery models is a central requirement of any new CWLC program, consultations held as part of this study confirm that there are a number of options that can be considered by institutions offering the program. Under some scenarios, offering an online program may be the most promising avenue, while in-person models may be more appropriate in other circumstances, based on the profile of participants targeted, geography, or institutional capabilities. Beyond the online versus in-person distinction, other formulae can also be explored, such as offering intense sessions of two or three days (or a week), with distance learning activities in-between.

Participants in a CWLC program will undoubtedly require a range of support measures. There are systemic barriers that could easily prevent those targeted by the program from engaging in it. During interviews conducted with postsecondary institutions, this reality was systematically acknowledged. Colleges and universities typically offer support measures, in addition to those made available by provincial governments.

The precise model that will be adopted to deliver any new CWLC program will have a direct impact on the range of supportive measures required. For instance, a program that would include intensive sessions of two or three days will need to address issues around accommodation, transportation, and child care, as applicable. Online programs will require appropriate technical support services.

Regardless of the model used, any new CWLC program should include an assessment of the anticipated requirements related to:

- Tuition fees
- Child care
- Transportation
- Technical support

In all cases, these support measures should also reflect specific cultural needs, particularly for new immigrants and for Indigenous participants, in accordance with the calls for action related to education issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015).

In addition, support from employers will be required to accommodate participation in the CWLC. During consultations held as part of this study, current employers emphasized that organizations will benefit from having community workers better equipped to undertake their tasks and that, as such, they would make every effort to accommodate their workers who would engage in it. As noted by one employer, organizations will support the CWLC program as long as they are convinced of its relevance.

04

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Based on the findings described in the previous sections, it is recommended that key stakeholders collaborate to proceed with the promotion and implementation of CWLC programs in regions of the country where access to relevant educational opportunities for community workers is lacking.

This section of the report describes the guiding principles that should guide the implementation of such programs, including the implementation of pilot projects, and identifies the key roles and responsibilities that each key stakeholder should assume.

Guiding principles

A number of principles that should guide the implementation of the CWLC emerged from the consultations held with community workers, their employers, and postsecondary institutions. These are seen as fundamental conditions for supporting a successful implementation of the CWLC and to contribute to its sustainability over time.



Local solutions

The CWLC is not intended to be a fixed model to be implemented nationally. Instead, it is a concept that should be responsive to local characteristics, and that should complement existing initiatives. As such, the goal is to allow stakeholders within a specific region to come together and design a CWLC that meets the needs of community workers and their employers, and build on the strengths of the postsecondary institution(s) involved.

In some regions, colleges will offer the most relevant structure for the CWLC, whereas universities may be a preferable option in other regions. As previously noted, some programs are expected to be offered online, while others will be offered in person, and a variety of delivery models can be implemented that incorporate either of both of these approaches.



Advisory structures

Regardless of the model ultimately retained for offering a CWLC, it is critical that it be selected, designed, and implemented with the input of community workers and representatives from organizations that employ community workers.

Advisory structures should be established early in the design phase of a CWLC program, and these should be fully integrated in the ongoing management structure of the program.

Particular attention should be placed on ensuring proper input from Indigenous women and new immigrant women who are currently engaged as community workers. This will go a long way in preventing systemic barriers that could limit access to the program, in addition to ensuring that the environment in which the CWLC is offered is conducive to their full participation, by creating a welcoming and appropriately diverse environment.

Having community workers involved in an advisory capacity requires adequate support. The structure established, the scheduling of meetings, the location of these meetings, any associated technological requirements (e.g., video conferences) should be selected with the actual input of community workers. Financial support to cover items such as transportation, salary replacement or child care should be considered as part of these accommodations.



Pilot projects

Considerable time, energy and resources are required for the implementation of any new certificate, and the proposed CWLC is no different. Designing the appropriate model, promoting the program, attracting potential participants, accommodating these participants, and continuously improving the program will mobilize multiple stakeholders. For this reason, it is recommended that pilot projects be implemented and assessed, and that lessons learned from these pilots be shared with other regions that may be considering the implementation of a CWLC.

During the consultations held with postsecondary institutions, discussions were systematically held to determine the extent to which any of these institutions would be in a position to implement a pilot project for the CWLC. Three institutions have confirmed their interest and capacity to undertake such a pilot project. A brief profile of each is included in this section of the report. It should be emphasized that these institutions have formally agreed to be included in this report as potential sites for pilot projects.

Many additional steps will be required to identify the precise model, to secure the associated funding, and to complete all internal approval requirements. As such, the commitment of these four institutions is to initiate the steps that could lead up to the approval and implementation of a CWLC program, with the support from other stakeholders, including Mothers Matter Centre, and government partners.

Overview

Established in 1848, Saint-Paul University (SPU) offers undergraduate and graduate programs in both French and English. The university has a long tradition of offering programs in theology and counselling. Its student population stands at approximately 1,000.

SPU currently offers certificate programs in areas such as ethics and contemporary social issues, social communications, and social innovation.

SPU and the University of Ottawa are independent but federated under provincial legislation. This relationship facilitates the collaboration between the two institutions, including exchanges of professors, the possibility for students to register in classes offered by either institution, and pathways for students wishing to enrol in programs offered by the other university.

Tuition fees for full-time students enrolled in certificate programs were \$2,638 in 2018-2019.

Cultural initiatives

SPU has established Indigenous Studies programs, as well as an Indigenous Initiatives Service that is mandated to support Indigenous students and staff, and increasing awareness among its community of First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

In 2018, the Quebec Native Women organization and SPU launched a joint summer school program on Indigenous women's governance. Offered as an intensive practical 3-credit course, the program is intended to focus on participants' ability to carry out their leadership role.

More generally, the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan of SPU includes a commitment to build closer partnerships with community stakeholders, and the CWLC initiative is directly aligned with this goal.

Key contacts

Chantal Beauvais, Rector

Michael McLellan, Executive Assistant to the Rector



Pilot project - Site 2

Assiniboine Community College, Brandon, MB

Overview

Established in 1961 as a vocational school, the Assiniboine Community College (ACC) became an accredited community college in 1969. It offers over 40 certificates, diplomas and advanced credential programs across a variety of disciplines including culinary arts and hospitality, business, agriculture and environment, health and human services, trades and technology. It also offers apprenticeship programming in a range of skilled trades disciplines.

The ACC has campuses and training centres in Brandon, Dauphin, Russel and Winnipeg. Its current student population stands at over 3,000.

The college currently offers a two-year Social Service Worker diploma that would serve as the foundation upon which a CWLC could be designed and delivered. The material covered by the diploma includes, among other things, counselling, cultural awareness, Aboriginal issues, mental health, addiction, conflict resolution, professional practice, and computer skills.

Tuition fees for full-time students vary by program, and typically range between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

Cultural initiatives

The ACC has adopted an Indigenization Strategy, which is "a commitment to a process of instilling Indigenous world views, knowledge, beliefs, ways of doing and being from the diverse Indigenous cultures we are united with, into our organization at every level in all things including academics, organizational/operational structures as well as within all our social/cultural aspects."

The college also established Indigenous services to offer a wide range of support to Indigenous students, including access to Elders, Indigenous organizations, and relevant community events.

Key contact

Bruce Klassen, Chair of Public Safety



Pilot project - Site 3

Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB

Overview

Established in 1910, Mount Royal University (MRU) offered a range of postsecondary programs at the college level until it was granted university status in 2009. It currently offers bachelor degrees and diplomas in arts, business, counselling, communication, computer information, health, and science. It also offers certificate programs in nursing, athletic therapy, business administration, and environmental science. Its student population stands at over 14,000.

The MRU currently offers a two-year Social Work diploma that will serve as the foundation upon which a CWLC program could be designed and delivered. The diploma covers areas such as psychology, social work practice and methods, leadership, community development, mental health, counselling, and community development.

Tuition fees for full-time students are \$6,600.

Cultural initiatives

As an illustration of initiatives undertaken to facilitate the integration of newcomers, MRU offers the Bridge to Canadian Nursing (BCN) program that facilitates the transition of new immigrants with nursing credentials. The program includes both theory courses and practicum at hospitals to support an effective transition to the Canadian health sector. The BCN program reflects the strategic goal that MRU has established to make higher education accessible and relevant to newcomers and Indigenous communities.

The MRU has also adopted an Indigenous Strategic Plan 2016-2021 that includes five goals, such as Indigenous MRU, Indigenous research, bridge-building with Indigenous education stakeholders, support for Indigenous learners, and inclusive curricula and pedagogies.

Key contact

Brad Mahon, Interim Dean, Faculty of Continuing Education & Extension
Dimitra Fotopoulos, Program Director, Faculty of Continuing Education & Extension

Roles and responsibilities

Moving forward, key stakeholders will be required to collaborate to make the CWLC a success, and be a sustainable initiative. The roles and responsibilities of key players are summarized here. They reflect the direction described in the precedent sections of the report.



Coordination and promotion

While CWLC programs are expected to be implemented locally to reflect regional needs and requirements, there is a need for national leadership to promote and help bridge these initiatives, particularly when it comes to sharing lessons learned and best practices. Mothers Matter Centre (MMC) is expected to play this role. Through this feasibility study, MMC has already engaged stakeholders in exploring ways to support community workers. The ongoing role of MMC includes promoting the concept of the CWLC program, engaging community organizations to raise awareness of the available certificates, monitoring the implementation of CWLC programs and their impacts on community workers, and supporting emerging initiatives.



Program delivery

A number of colleges and universities are expected to deliver CWLC programs. Others will play an important role in facilitating pathways by recognizing and crediting the courses (or a portion of courses) of those program participants who will undertake further studies. As applicable, agreements may be signed between institutions, while others will use the PLAR process to facilitate this transition.



Advisory role

As already noted in the report, a fundamental principle of the CWLC initiative is to ensure that those most impacted by it be directly involved in all stages of program design and delivery. In particular, any systemic barriers that would limit access to the program and its benefits must be addressed to ensure that all targeted groups, particularly newcomers and Indigenous women, are actively engaged in these initiatives. Their participation in an advisory capacity is therefore essential. The same goes for community employers who are expected to support their workers. By being directly engaged in any CWLC initiative, they will be best positioned to facilitate the participation of their workers.



Support and promotion

The federal government, particularly through the National Literacy Secretariat, has directly contributed to the CWLC initiative, by providing funding for this feasibility study. As pilot projects are being considered, the federal government is expected to maintain an active role, through funding support, and through the promotion of this important initiative.

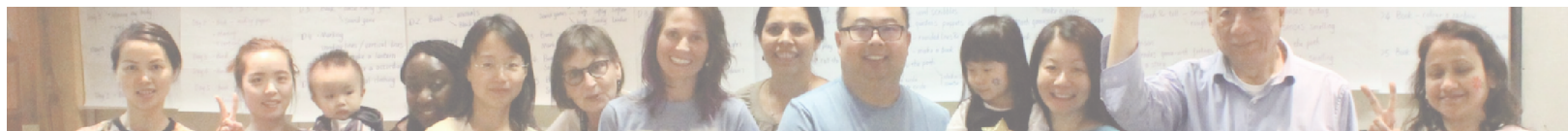
CONCLUSIONS

Close to 150,000 community workers in Canada support individuals and families faced with a wide range of challenges. The vast majority of these community workers are women, including significant groups who are new immigrant or Indigenous women. In order to pursue their passion of helping others, many of these individuals find themselves in precarious working conditions, moving from contract to contract, being employed for only a portion of the year or on a part-time basis.

As they undertake their daily tasks, community workers navigate a range of circumstances, including unforeseen ones, where they must learn to quickly recognize symptoms and set appropriate courses of actions. This study indicates that too many of these workers are ill-equipped to face these challenges. They lack some of the knowledge, skills or competencies that can further their ability to adequately serve their clients, manage their own care, and support the mission of the organization to which they belong.

The proposed CWLC is meant to address this gap by empowering community workers who wish to upgrade their credentials and by allowing them to grow into a demanding but highly rewarding career. While the proposed CWLC can go a long way in improving the conditions of community workers, there is also an acknowledgement that broader factors, including shortcomings of funding models that currently support community organizations, limit the ability of community organizations to offer stable and appropriate employment conditions.

To ensure an efficient approach to the delivery of a CWLC, an incremental approach is recommended, including the implementation of pilot projects. Three institutions have agreed to work with Mothers Matter Centre in further exploring the conditions under which such projects could be implemented. A number of guiding principles will be applied to any pilot project, including the necessity to involve community workers and their employers in an advisory role, to ensure that no systematic barriers limit the access to the program and its associated benefits.



Appendix A Methodology



Document
review



Labour market
statistics



Employment
requirements



Inventory of
programs



Interviews and
focus groups

In order to guide the study, a research framework was developed that identified a series of questions to be addressed, along with indicators and data sources. On that bases, five key activities were undertaken:

Document review

Throughout the study, relevant documents, primarily from publicly available sources or those identified and shared by individuals interviewed were gathered and analyzed, and these findings informed all reporting activities.

Labour market statistics

The research team worked with Statistics Canada to scope, confirm and order labour market information on “social and community service workers” (NOC 4212), and proceeded with its analysis. The goal was to obtain detailed information from either or both the Census and the Labour Force Survey that can provide a detailed profile of these individuals, including any relevant trends in employment. Key findings that emerged from these data sets were incorporated in the reporting activities, including this report.

Employment requirements

Using predominantly data from Canada's Job Bank, administered by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), an analysis of job opportunities for community workers was conducted to better understand the nature of these opportunities and the associated requirements, particularly the educational requirements sought by potential employers. To this end, a total of 109 job opportunities in fields related to community workers and posted as of March 27, 2018, were identified and set aside for analysis. The focus of the resulting analysis was on understanding the type of employment opportunities offered (field of work and employers), the conditions of employment (full-time, part-time, others), salaries, and educational requirements (minimum level of education required to apply).

Inventory of programs

An environmental scan of past and existing certificate programs that are comparable to the proposed CWLC program was conducted. The inventory included certificate programs accredited and delivered by PSE institutions, which target learners with paid or volunteer experience with SPOs providing support services for people from vulnerable communities. The inventory included 21 certificate programs, including 12 programs within Canada and 9 programs from outside Canada. Research for this inventory used publicly available information, in addition to direct communications with representatives of PSE institutions.

Interviews and focus groups

Interviews and focus groups were held with community workers, SPOs, and postsecondary institutions. These consultations were focused on four regions: Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia. In total:

- 42 women community workers participated in focus groups, held in person or over the phone. Particular efforts were made to include new immigrant and Indigenous women engaged as community workers.
- 14 SPOs were consulted. Particular efforts were made to include SPOs that work directly with new immigrant and Indigenous individuals.
- 15 postsecondary institutions were consulted, including both colleges and universities. These interviews were conducted with individuals occupying leadership positions, particularly in ongoing learning and certificate domains.

Appendix B

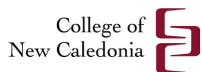
Existing Programs

As part of the feasibility study, a number of existing programs that were related to community work were identified in four targeted regions: Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia.

The goal was not to provide an exhaustive list of programs available in each of these regions, let alone in Canada as a whole. It was rather to provide illustrations of the range of programs currently in place. This information served, among other things, to identify institutions that should be consulted as part of this study.

A list of these programs is presented on the next page.

Selected institutions offering related certificates and diplomas in the targeted regions



College of New Caledonia - Community Support Worker Certificate

Offered online, on a part-time basis, targets specifically community workers already in the work force.



Thompson Rivers University - Social Service Worker Certificate

Offered online, on a part-time or full time basis, including a practicum



University of the Fraser Valley - Community Support Worker Certificate

Offered on site in Abbotsford, on a part-time or full time basis.



Vancouver Community College - Community Counselling Skills Certificate

Offered on site in Vancouver, on a part-time or full-time basis, including workplace activities.



Assiniboine Community College - Social Service Worker Diploma

Offered on site in Winnipeg on a full-time basis for two years.



Robertson College - Community Support Worker Diploma

Offered on site in Winnipeg on a full-time basis for 45 weeks, including a practicum.



Red River College - Disability and Community Support Diploma

Offered on site in Winnipeg on a full-time basis for two years, including a practicum



Trillium College - Community Service Worker Certificate

Offered on site in Toronto, on a full-time basis for 11 months, including a practicum.



Seneca College - Social Service Worker Diploma

Offered on site in Toronto, on a full-time basis (two years) or part time, including a practicum.



George Brown College - Community Worker Diploma

Offered on site in Toronto, on a full-time basis for two years, including a practicum.



Concordia University - Certificate in Community Service

Offered on site in Montréal, on a part-time basis, and targets individuals already in the workforce.

Appendix C

Additional Studies

In support of the feasibility study, two additional studies were conducted, which provide additional insights on learning and employment opportunities in fields associated with social work:

- Mothers Matter Centre. (2019). *Inventory of postsecondary education programs relevant to the community worker leadership certificate feasibility study*. Vancouver.
- Mothers Matter Centre. (2019). *Existing job opportunities in Canada for community support service work: An analysis of existing job advertisements posted by Canadian-based employers in the ESDC Job Bank for the positions of community worker (NOC 4212)*. Vancouver.



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