

## **Report on Participants' Views on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) June 23 - 28, 2014**

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### *Introduction*

The Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) is a community-wide initiative that aims to extend Ottawa's genuine welcome to new residents, showcase Ottawa's diversity, and create opportunities for Ottawa residents – old and new - to connect culturally, socially and intellectually. WOW is expected to promote Ottawa as a cosmopolitan city that can attract and integrate newcomers from around the world.

WOW has been introduced in 2013 by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP), proclaimed by the Mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson – who continues to champion its objectives and growth.

More than forty local organizations held 35 events across the City in the 2014 Welcoming Ottawa Week. The 2014 WOW events were diverse and catered to a wide range of interest. These included a photo and stories exhibition at City Hall entitled *Faces and Stories of a Welcoming City*, sports contests, documentary screenings, arts and cultural presentations, walking tours, academic seminars, and various thematic workshops. The 2014 WOW saw a quadrupling of the number of events and sponsors in the inaugural year of WOW, and brought in new types of partners, from the local cultural scene and the business sector.

At the end of the week-long activities, we asked participating organizations and event attendees from OLIP networks for their feedback. This was done through an online survey and email follow-ups. We received 25 responses out of the 70 individuals who received our survey, representing a 35 percent response rate. To OLIP partners responses we added notes of a debriefing session held by the OLIP Secretariat. The findings from all of these sources are summarized below.

### *General Observations*

- WOW is rooting itself in the Ottawa community as a significant vehicle for showcasing, reflecting upon and celebrating Ottawa's cultural diversity obtained through immigration. The high level of interest and traction by community organizations to host events for the 2014 WOW was a testament of the real need for such a community-wide celebration and the recognition of WOW as a major, if not the only event that fills this gap.

- In its second year of existence WOW is already achieving change in the areas of intended impact. WOW Survey respondents mentioned that events have provided tangible contribution to the following areas: promoting Ottawa as a welcoming city where diversity is thriving; newcomers' sense of belonging and participation to Ottawa's civic life; connections between people (old and new residents) and institutions; public support for immigrant attraction and integration; enhanced understanding and empathy for immigrants' journey; and shared knowledge of challenges and solutions in immigrant integration.
- WOW is dynamic and creative; its mechanism allows for new types of events and activities to be added. Such as, the WOW Ambassador initiative, which brings the responsibility of welcome beyond the institutional programs to human one-on-one interactions was a great addition this year that touched many hearts and has a potential to grow.
- WOW would not be complete without engaging and recognizing Algonquin people in its events. The addition of the "Indigenous Walks" was an important step in recognizing Ottawa's history of welcome and diversity. In future more events with the engagement of Algonquin community members are recommended.
- WOW model is perfectly suited for its purpose by engaging multiple organizations and groups through an independent yet coordinated approach. In order for this model to work better there is a need to improve the communication platforms, build shared capacity for messaging and greater promotion of events.
- The role of mass media is critical for WOW success through broader outreach and engagement of larger segments of Ottawa population. Relationships with media should be enhanced for better coverage in future.

## ***2014 WOW Process and Impact***

The Survey was sent to 65 recipients who were WOW event hosts, Working Group members and associates, or both. We received a significant response rate of 24 answers to the survey (37% return rate). The summary of response results is provided below.

### ***1. Overall Impression of WOW 2014***

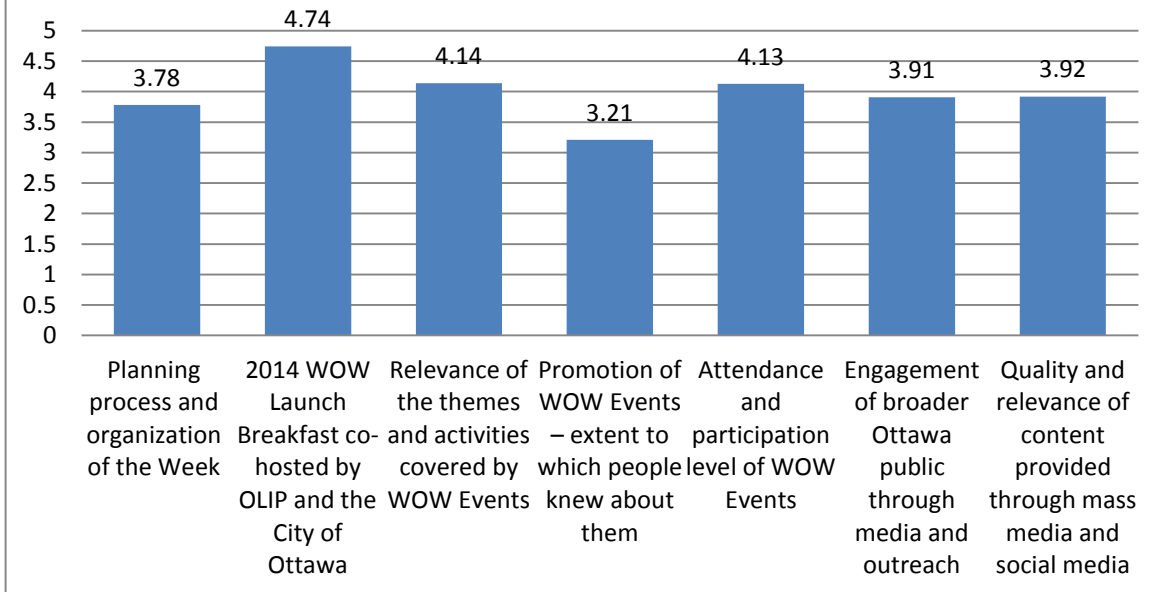
The Survey participants expressed an overall high level of satisfaction from the 2014 WOW: 69% of respondents rated their impression of the WOW either "excellent" or "very good" and 23 % rated "good".

### Rating of Overall Impression of 2014 WOW



## 2. Rating of Planning and Execution of WOW 2014

### Rating of the Selected Aspects of 2014 WOW



- The highest rated aspects of 2014 WOW were the Launch Breakfast co-hosted by OLIP and the City of Ottawa (Ranked a 4.74 on a 5 point scale), followed by the coverage of the WOW events (relevance and variety of the themes and types of events) and the attendance /participation level to the events. Almost all respondents commented on their satisfaction of the diversity of activities and events tailored to various interests and tastes. Despite this, many new areas of events were also suggested. It was mentioned that the Launch Breakfast could have done a better job in featuring the calendar of WOW 2014 events.

*"I really loved the variety of event types this year. Seems there was something for everyone: information and fun activities. I'm happy to see integration of introduction to Algonquin territory and indigenous culture related programming. Often Aboriginal and Newcomer/Immigration initiatives are kept separate in cities. Newcomers will have an important part to play in reconciliation, even if they were not here in Canada's past. Please continue to involve local Aboriginal organisations and events within WOW".*

Some of the most liked events were the WOW Ambassador initiative with the respective exhibition “Faces and Stories of a Welcoming Community”, and the Community Cup event. This shows that human engagement, mass celebratory and fun events for the whole family are among the most valued events.

*The WOW Ambassadors initiative! I hope to see it better publicized next year! It has such huge potential! The Community Cup was also fantastic!*

*Closing off the weeks event at Community Cup is a great way to end it :)*

Several events managed to attract a large number of newcomers, introduce them to existing programs and services and help build new connections.

*“Algonquin College indeed welcomed the World yesterday! From Iraq to Iran, to Russia, China, Brazil and more, we had close to 150 newcomers, international students, immigrants and their families attending the event.”*

- Quality and content provided through mass media/social media and the engagement of broader public through media and outreach were the next highest rated aspects of 2014 WOW process; with 3.92 and 3.91 points on average they fall in the “good” to “very good” category. Positive comments referred to the social media coverage and content, as well as the WOW Ambassador program coverage on mass media. Despite this, participants also commented about the need to expand relationships with mainstream and cultural media to publicize and engage even more community members, particularly newcomers who are not aware of available services, business sector and employers, as well as long-term Ottawa residents and the Ottawa public at large.

*“Media communication could be improved (better coverage in Citizen and also multicultural radio and TV, eg CHIN)”.*

*“Would increase publicity around the event... maybe on the radio or TV.”*

- Promotion of events to engage more participants and the overall planning process of 2014 WOW were the relatively weak areas, with respective rates of 3.21 and 3.78 out of 5.00. Branding and promotion of the WOW events is the area which requires the greatest improvement in the future. The WOW model, where participating organizations host and own their events under the common WOW umbrella is a great approach, however care should be exercised to ensure that individual, as well as centralized promotion of events do not suffer by delegating responsibility to the other party under this model, and both WOW event owners and Planning Committee do their part of promotion.

*“Not easy to do but reaching out through even more networks to increase knowledge of WOW across city.”*

*“More and/or better promotion of the event at large as well as individual activities through a variety of networks. I only heard about WOW through the OLIP list-serve. An increased effort could maybe be made to involve the University of Ottawa in WOW?”*

➤ Other issues regarding the planning process were mentioned:

- Start early in the new year, more advance planning of events will help with better organization;
- Better recognition of event hosts during the opening /closing ceremonies to reward /encourage their efforts;
- Timing of the events: it might be challenging to attract many people during the morning events.

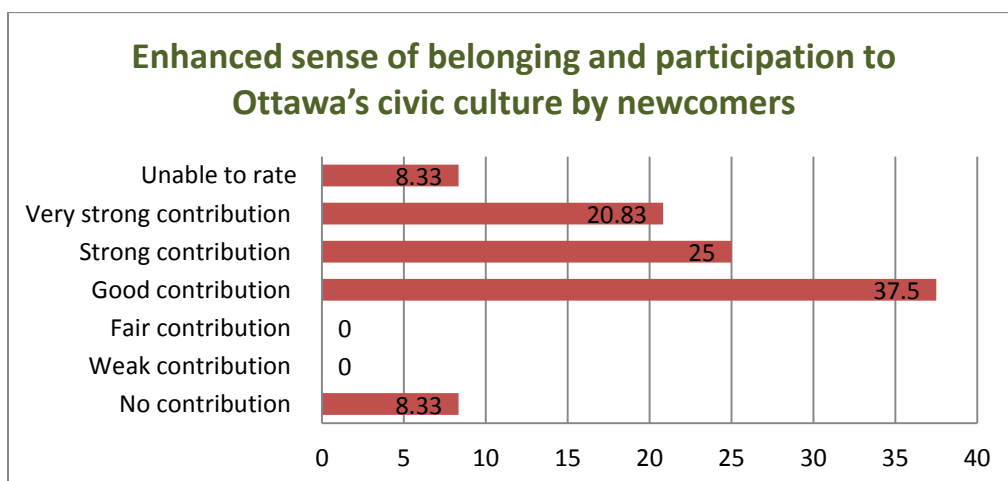
### 3. Other types of events to include in future WOWs

➤ The desirable events mentioned largely fall under the learning, arts and culture, and celebratory / broad public engagement categories. In addition, fundraising activities in conjunction with some events were suggested to fund the causes supported by WOW partner organizations.

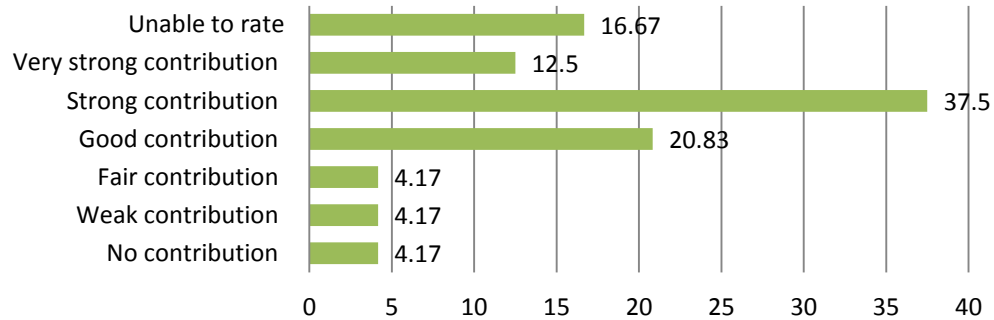
- Panel discussions engaging general public in a discussion with invited experts
- Training opportunities
- Literary, arts events
- More hands on activities (art and crafts, cooking, etc.) to engage newcomers and long-term residents, promote multicultural exchange and awareness
- Big public celebratory events; a big party.
- Neighbourhood based events such as open doors, fairs
- More youth-focused events (ex. musical acts, art contests, dance, etc.)
- Employer engagement events
- Fundraising events.

### 4. Impact

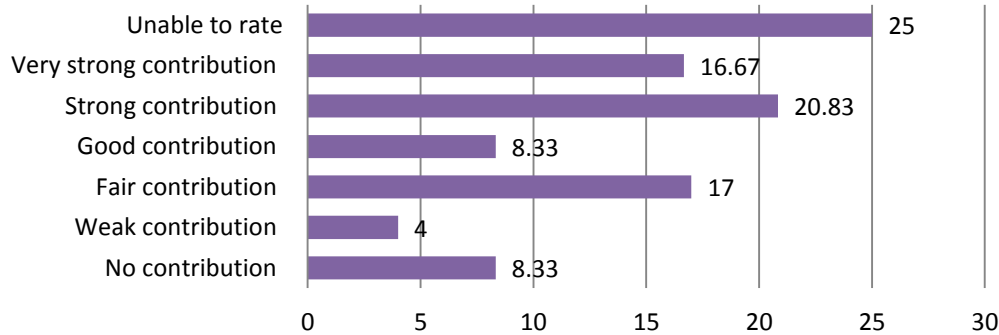
Participants were asked to rate six areas of impact, based on the extent to which 2014 WOW contributed to its long-term goals. Responses per impact area are presented graphically below, followed by further analysis.



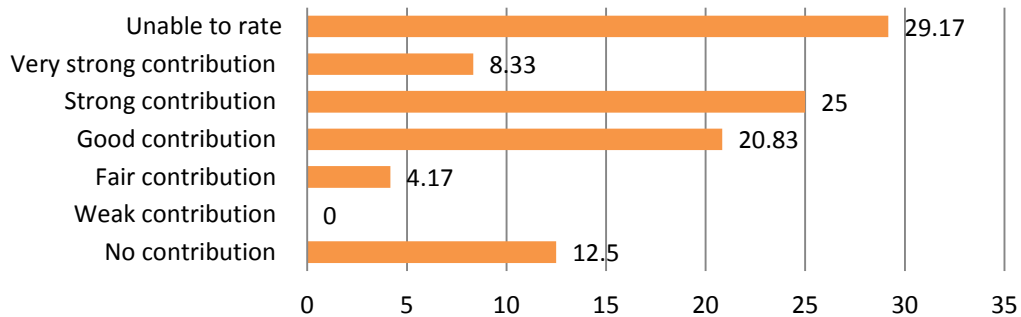
### Enhanced connections between people (old and new residents) and institutions

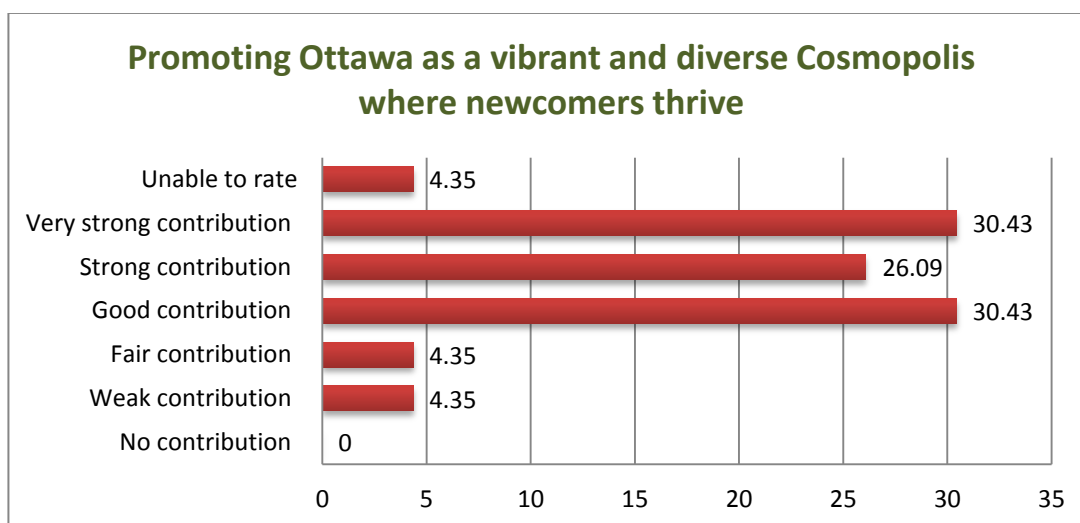
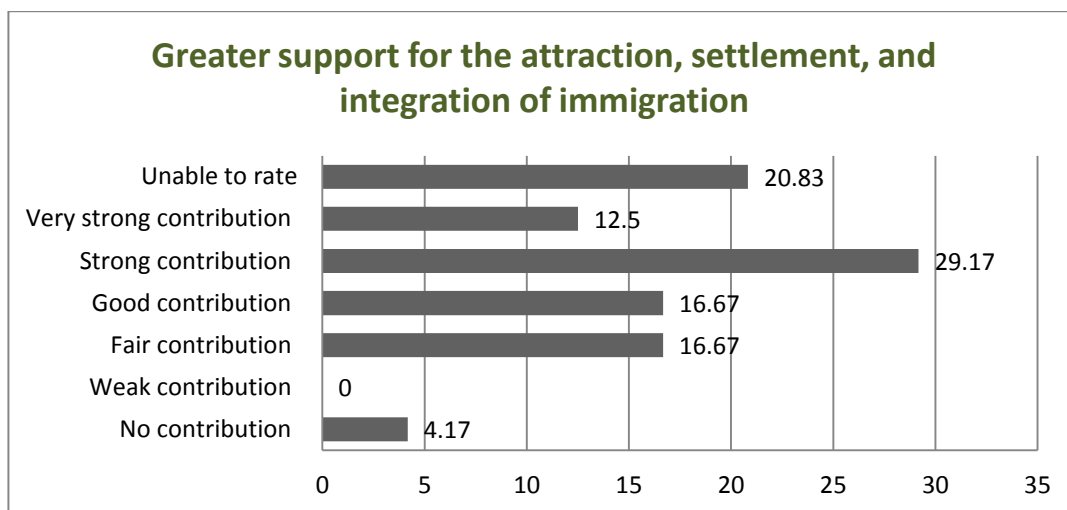


### Greater knowledge and understanding of community challenges in the integration of immigrants



### Enhanced empathy by Ottawans for immigrants' journey in settling and integrating in Ottawa





According to the survey participants, WOW 2014 has succeeded to bring an impact in all targeted areas of long-term impact. Based on the survey the areas of impact which had the highest contribution during the 2014 WOW are classified in the following descending order (the highest contribution is determined by the combined number of “good”, “strong”, and “very strong” scores).

1. Promoting Ottawa as a vibrant and diverse Cosmopolis where newcomers thrive (87%)
2. Enhanced sense of belonging and participation to Ottawa’s civic culture by newcomers (83%)
3. Enhanced connections between people (old and new residents) and institutions (71%)
4. Greater support for the attraction, settlement, and integration of immigration (58 %)
5. Enhanced empathy by Ottawans for immigrants’ journey in settling and integrating in Ottawa (54 %)
6. Greater knowledge and understanding of community challenges in the integration of immigrants (46%).

The following quotes speak for themselves about the impact that has been achieved.

*"All the events that I went to were great – WOW does give a sense of a community trying to improve its attraction and retention !".*

*"The session at the School of Nursing, University of Ottawa on perinatal food choices of African immigrant women served both as an educational event but also as a platform for networking with potential project partners. It was a step in the right direction in terms of closing the gap between academic researchers and community members and service providers.*

*"The Art exhibition hosted by Immigrant Women Services (IWSO) was a huge success. It created the opportunity for newcomer women to tell their stories of resiliency through art and showcase their artistic talents".*

*"The stories of the ambassadors and nominators made me reflect back on how my mom felt when she came. As a child I didn't see what my mom was going through in the integration process because she sheltered me from all of these challenges from finding employment, to finding friendship, to getting involved in the city, feeling like you belong. Realizing how she must have struggled from these stories made me go back home and thank my mom. I encourage other children of immigrants to come to City Hall and look at the exhibition and bring their parents because I think this is a big thank you to the parents."*

*"The Workshop was very well received, and contributed greatly to building additional momentum on the issue of equity. Having this event preceded by a book launch on similar issues "Workplace Diversity: How to Get It Right" by Syd Gravel, former Ottawa Policy Staff Sergeant, created a nice community space, where people who share similar goals to make our city more inclusive/equitable connected. I could see that people who wouldn't have met otherwise met because they came to both our events.*

## *Suggestions for further improvement*

- Start the planning process earlier in the year and make an effort to engage more organizations to host events in various areas, including organizations outside of OLIP's traditional network. Make sure to continue hosting events with Algonquin and aboriginal communities.
- Strengthen relationships with media, engage and educate media representatives on the issues addressed by WOW throughout the year, including mainstream and cultural media.
- Strengthen the mechanisms of publicizing and promoting WOW events; this should be a shared responsibility of the WOW event hosts and Planning Committee.
- Work with WOW event host organizations to better prepare to act under a common umbrella; set common branding expectations, messaging and a shared vision for the WOW mission and goals.