

Resolving Identity Dilemmas and Conflicts in Schools: A Regional SWIS Perspective

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ATLANTIC CANADA





Supporting Organizations Supporting Immigrants
Aider les organismes qui aident les immigrants

ARAIISA's Involvement in the SWIS Initiative

The purpose of regional coordination is to **improve national coherence** and **ensure consistent service delivery**.

Expected Activities:

- **Regular meetings with SWIS** across the Atlantic region.
- **A professional development training** tailored to the specific needs of SWIS.
- **Site visits** to organizations offering SWIS services.
- **In-person, regional events for SWIS** to receive training, network with one another, and share their experiences.
- **The development of an online course specific to the training needs of SWIS.**
- The development of a **SWIS-specific resource hub**.
- The development and translation of resources for the resource hub.

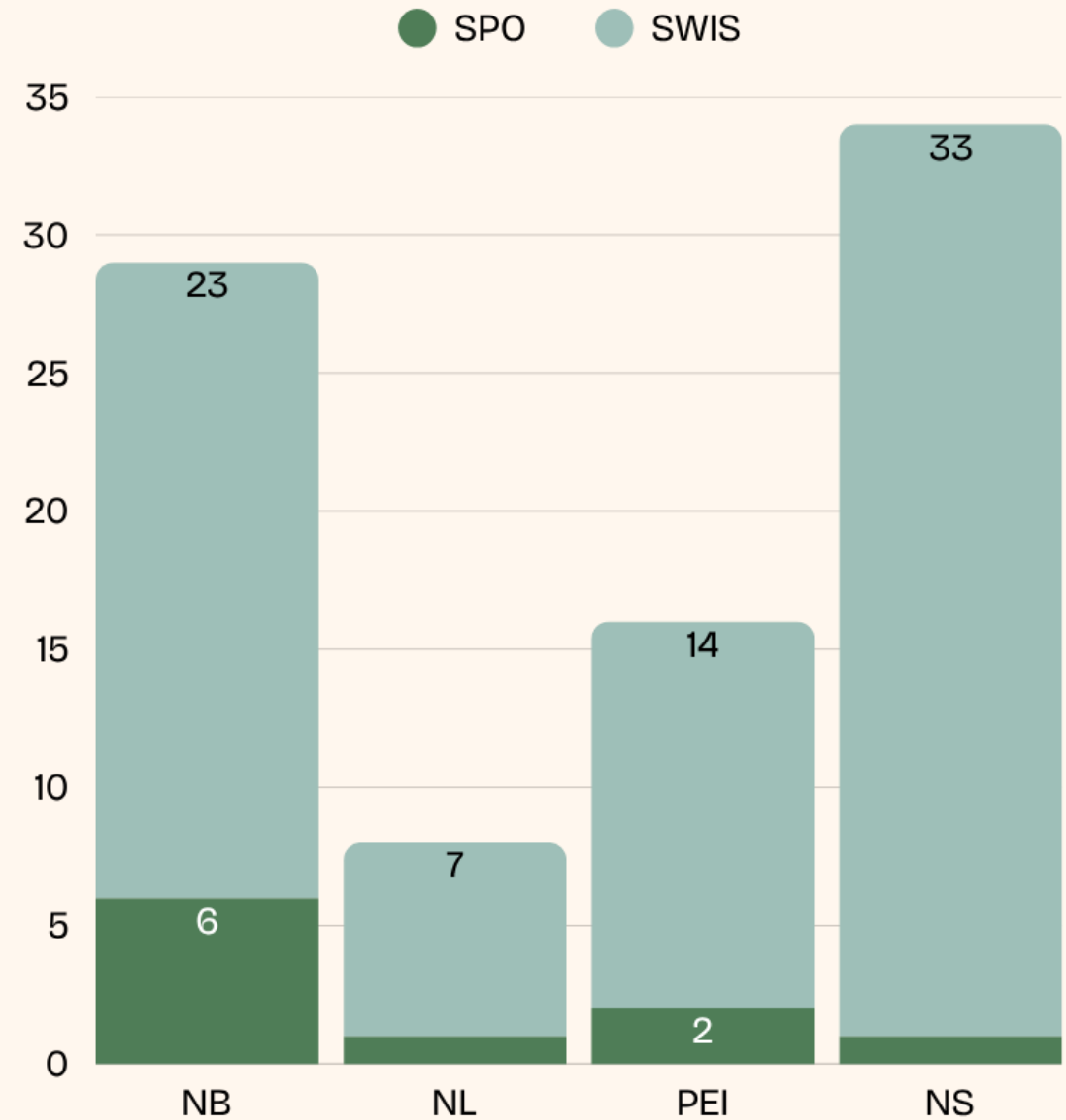


SWIS Service Delivery in the Atlantic Region

There are 10 organizations and approximately 80 SWIS delivering SWIS services in the Atlantic region.



SPOs and SWIS by Province



Newcomer Children and Youth in Atlantic Canada

Permanent resident admissions by age group (2024)

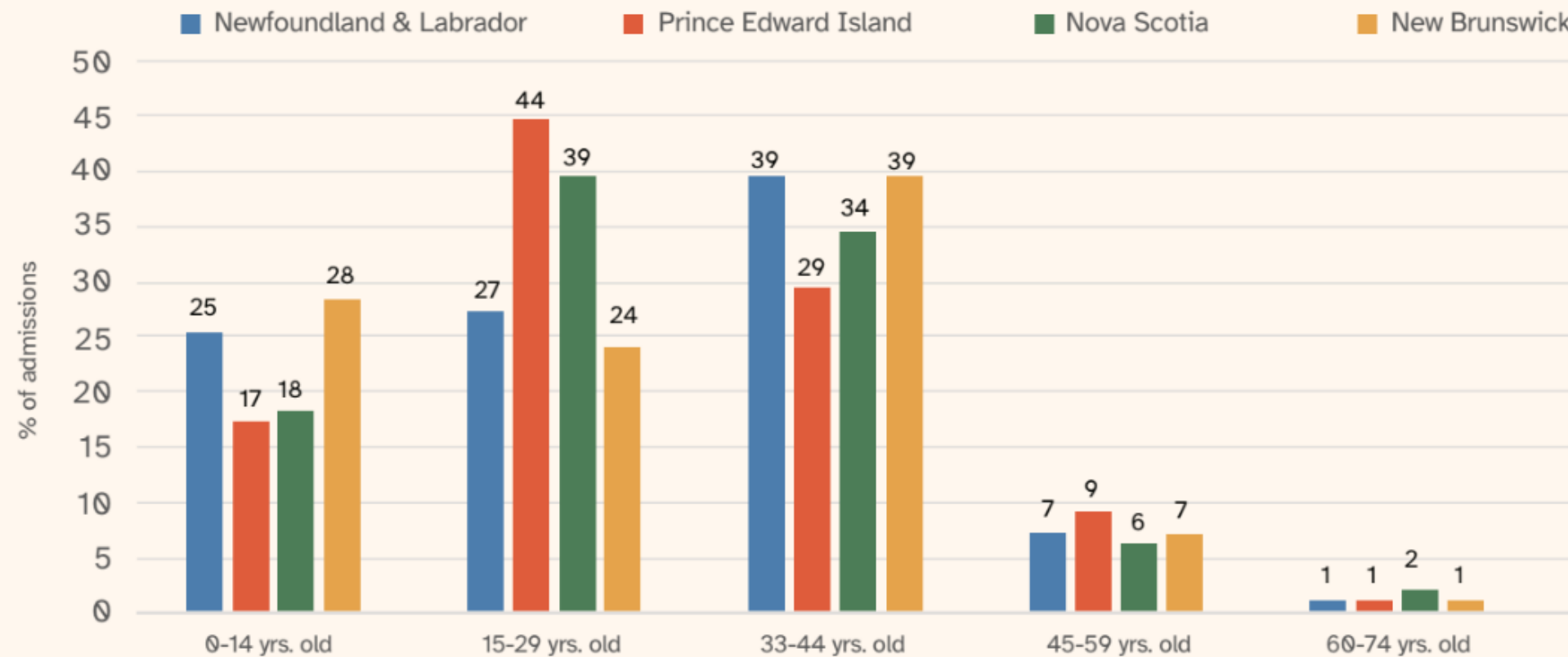


Figure 2: Permanent resident admissions to the Atlantic provinces in 2024, according to age group.

To read more, click [here](#).



SWIS Service Delivery in the Atlantic Region

Read the report in English [here](#).

Read the report in French [here](#).



Challenge: Relationships with School Districts

- Limited Understanding of the SWIS Role
- Unclear Boundaries
- Additional Training Needed
 - De-escalation
 - Non-violent crisis intervention
 - Emergency preparedness
 - Behaviour intervention





Opportunities:

- Standardized messaging from IRCC to provincial departments of education
- Increased promotion of SWIS services
- Better collaboration between SWIS/SPOs and schools/districts





Thank you!

Please reach out:
ofinnamore@araisa.ca
swisatl.ca



School Settlement in Nova Scotia

Role Conflicts & Approaches

**Immigrant Services
YMCA of Greater
Halifax Dartmouth**

Amy Belanger





YMCA Immigrant Services

Offering programs and services for over 35 years

Smaller Centers work since **2010**

11 Settlement Hubs

Over **15** language sites in smaller centers

140 passionate and dedicated Staff

9000 newcomer clients served annually

70+ School Settlement sites across NS

31 School Settlement Staff



YMCA Wrap Around Support

Child and Youth Settlement Overview

Youth Outreach

Intervention

Employment

GBV prevention

2SLGBTQIA+ program

School Settlement

Family Settlement Overview

Crisis & Navigation

Language

Employment

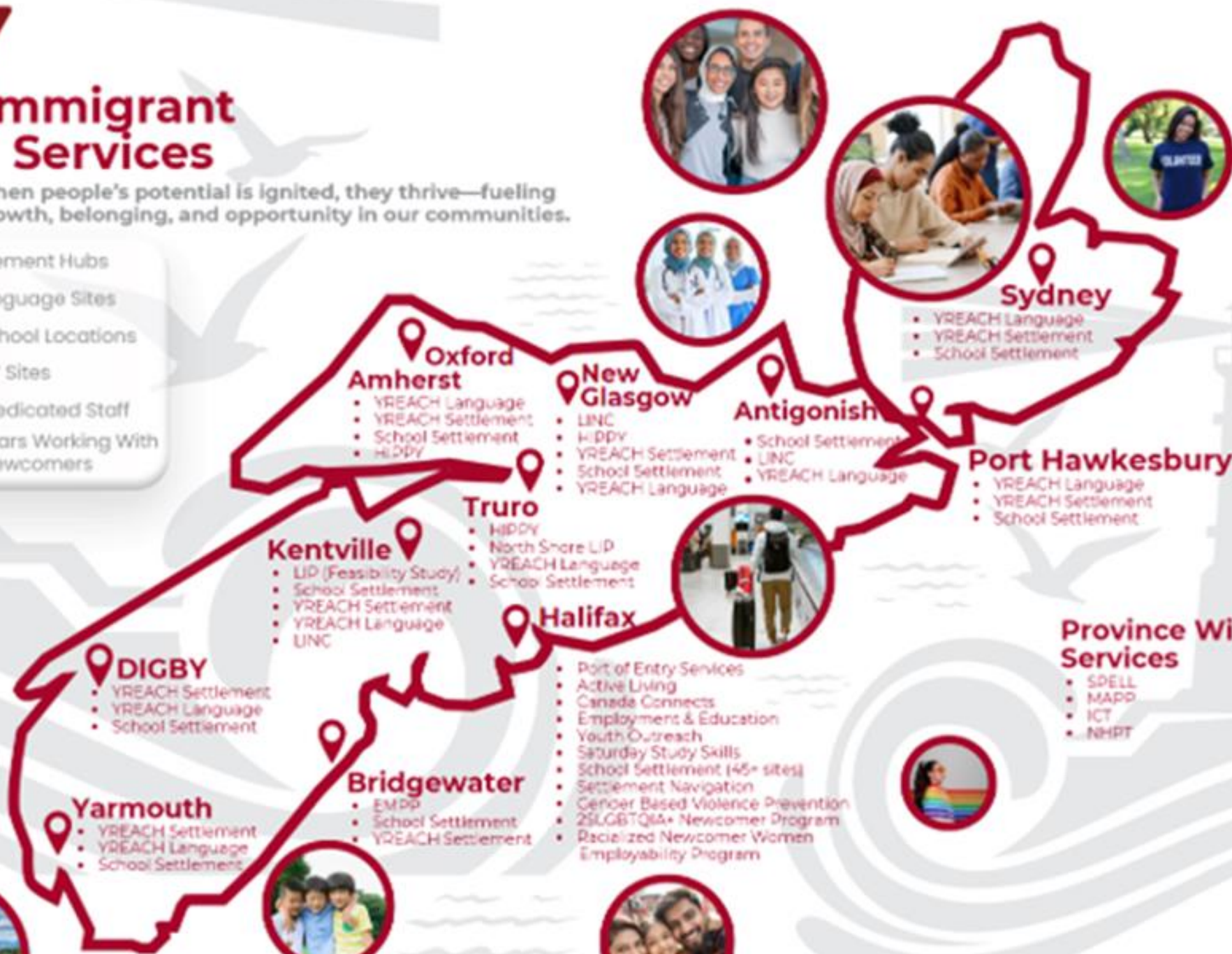
Senior & Family programs



Immigrant Services

When people's potential is ignited, they thrive—fueling growth, belonging, and opportunity in our communities.

- 11 Settlement Hubs
- 15+ Language Sites
- 80+ School Locations
- 3 HIPPY Sites
- 140+ Dedicated Staff
- 35+ Years Working With Newcomers



Who We Work With in The Halifax Region

In the last year, we
have worked with...

3892

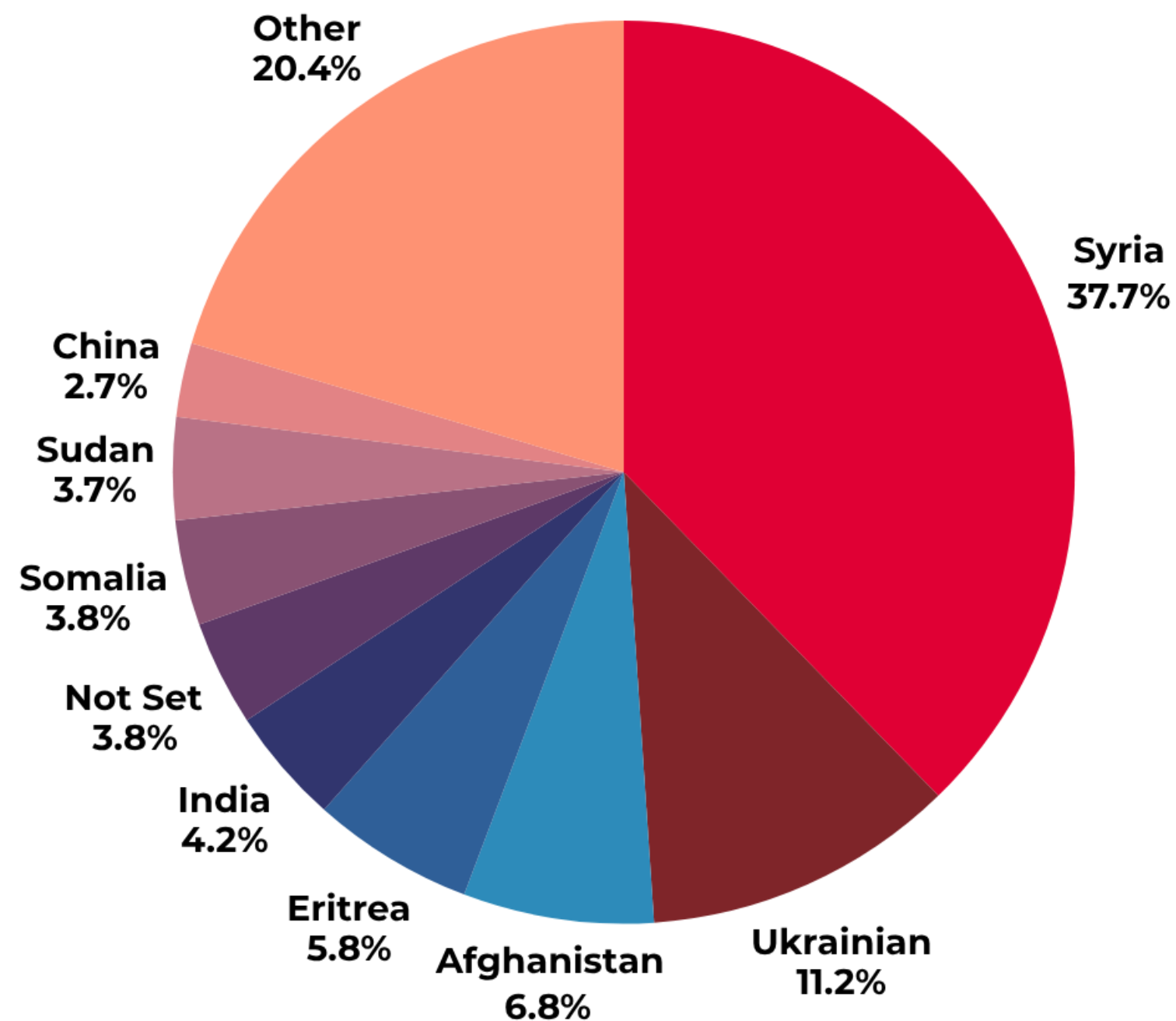
Individuals

1505

Families

Who We Work With

Countries of Origin





ROLE & CONFLICTS

SPECIFIC TO SWIS

.....

Role Identity Challenges

Outside Organization

VS.

**Part of the School
Staff Team**

**Broad Settlement
Guidance**

VS.

School Based Role

Emotional Support

VS.

Caseload Demands



Role Identity Challenges

**Crisis & Language
Support**

VS.

Program Delivery

Language Brokering

VS.

**Professionally
Boundaries**

**Client Advocacy &
Support**

VS.

**Maintaining
Relationships**

Family Needs

VS.

School Expectations

APPROACHES & BEST PRACTICES

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Approaches & Best Practices

**Building Strong
Relationships**

**Strength-based &
Family-Centered**

**Clear & Consistent
Communication**

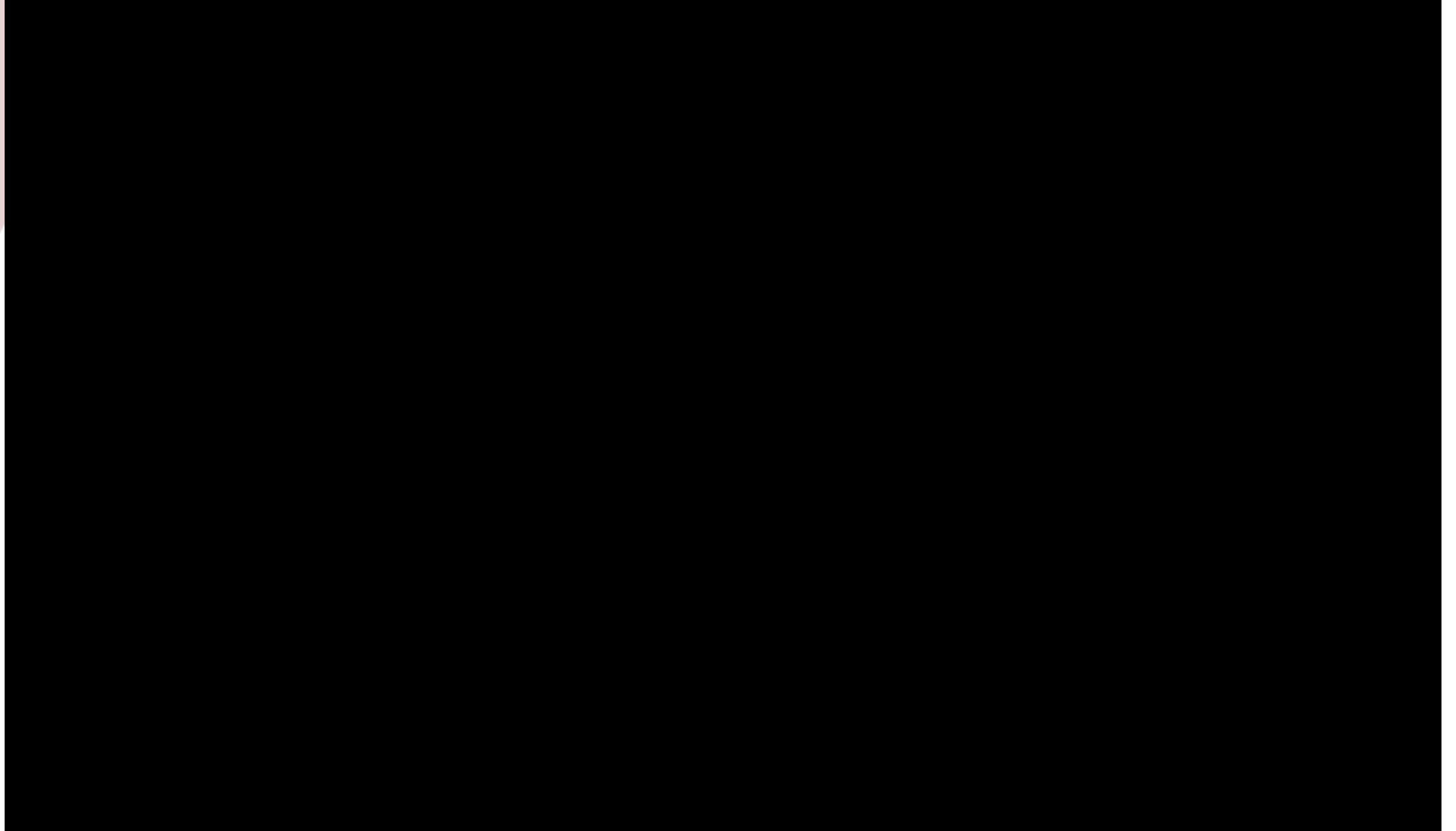
**Professional Learning
& Staff Support**

**Wraparound Support
& Partnerships**

**Professional Well-
Being**

**Place Based & School
Engagement**

**Amplifying First Voice
and Feedback**



Thank you!

**For more information,
check our website here.**

<https://ymcahfx.ca/>

Leah Stevenson

Project Lead Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) New Brunswick
Multicultural Council (NBMC)

I've been part of NBMC for over five and a half years. I began my journey as a Settlement Coordinator within the Rural Settlement Network before moving into my current role as Project Lead for the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program. In this role, I oversee five rural sites across New Brunswick and serve as Co-Chair of the Provincial Youth Committee. I'm also a member of the Advisory Committee for the Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project (IRMHP).

My work is driven by a deep passion for youth empowerment, education, and inclusion. I'm committed to amplifying the voices of young people as changemakers and future leaders, fostering a sense of belonging for newcomer families, and helping shape a more inclusive New Brunswick.



**Rural Settlement
Network**
Le Réseau d'établissement
rural



The New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC) is a bilingual, non-profit, umbrella organization that brings together over 20 member agencies across the province to advance immigration, settlement, and cultural diversity. Since its founding in 1983, NBMC has worked to build a more welcoming, equitable, and inclusive New Brunswick by supporting newcomers, strengthening member organizations, and promoting multiculturalism as a driver of social and economic growth.



The SWIS Role

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) play a vital role in bridging the gap between newcomer families, schools, and communities. They promote student success, family engagement, and school readiness while fostering inclusive learning environments.



Bridge Builders between
newcomer students, families,
and schools



Support academic, social,
and emotional transitions



Cultural interpreters
advocates, and mediators



Centre relationships and
trust-building in their practice

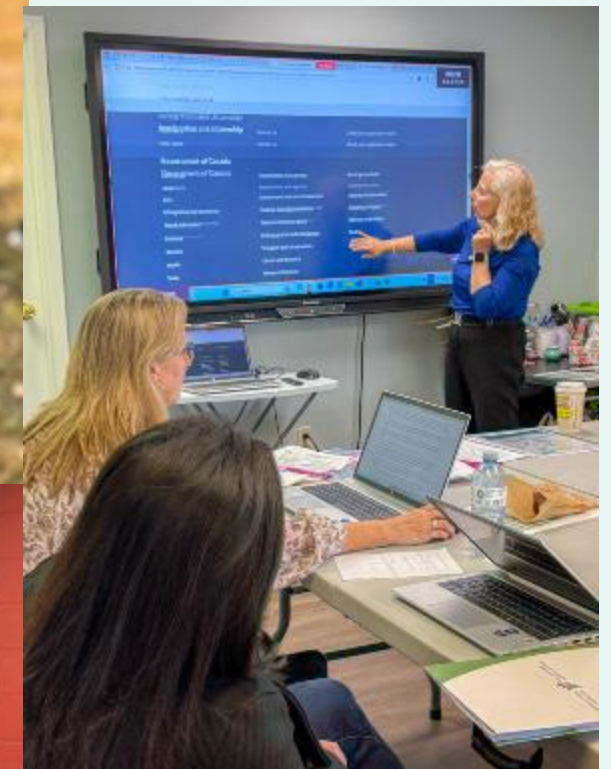


**Settlement
Workers
in Schools**
Rural Settlement Network



Identity Dilemmas in Schools

- Conflicting cultural expectations
- Balancing assimilation vs. cultural preservation
- Intergenerational tensions between youth and parents
- Students navigating dual or multiple identities
- Educators' assumptions and systemic biases



NEW BRUNSWICK
MULTICULTURAL
COUNCIL



CONSEIL
MULTICULTUREL DU
NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK

Rural/small towns:
limited newcomer services; social isolation

Northern communities:
intersection of Indigenous and newcomer
experiences

SWIS Clients

28 Schools
345 Students



**Settlement
Workers
in Schools**
Rural Settlement Network

Trauma-Informed Lens

Safety, predictability, and emotional regulation

Understanding survival responses in students

Recognizing pre-migration and migration trauma

Supporting regulation before problem-solving





Culturally Responsive Approaches

- ✓ Learn before assuming; ask before advising
- ✓ Honour language, culture, and traditional practices
- ✓ Build trust slowly and consistently
- ✓ Involve cultural brokers, community elders, and family voices

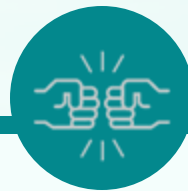
Explore Our Resources

Visit our Resource Hub and website for tools, guides, and support materials including our By-Stander Toolkit / Anti-Racism Toolkit.



**Rural Settlement
Network**
Le Réseau d'établissement
rural

Common Conflict Scenarios



- Family–school communication breakdowns
- Differing discipline or behavioural expectations
- Academic streaming, tracking, and perceived inequalities
- Cultural misunderstandings (gender roles, dress, religious practices)
- Trauma responses misinterpreted as “misbehaviour”

Practical Conflict-Resolution Tools



- Relational mediation (listening circles, restorative conversations)
- Perspective-sharing frameworks (“Tell me your story...”)
- Conflict mapping: focusing on needs, not positions
- Cultural translation for families and for educators
- Strengths-based reframing
- Identity-affirming activities to support student belonging

Reimagining Conflict as Opportunity

Conflict reveals unmet needs

Opens dialogue that might not otherwise occur

Fosters mutual understanding

Builds more inclusive, equitable school communities



Voices of SWIS

Relational Care in Action

SWIS support identity, belonging, and bridges of understanding

Their relational care work strengthens equitable, welcoming schools



Thank You!



**Settlement
Workers
in Schools**

Rural Settlement Network

RSN - SWIS

<https://www.nbmc-cmnb.ca/swis>

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