

RESOLVING IDENTITY DILEMMAS AND CONFLICTS IN SCHOOLS – A SWIS Regional Perspective (Ontario)

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About SWIS: Supporting Identity, Belonging, and Integration

SWIS (Settlement Workers in Schools) exists to support the successful settlement, identity development, and integration of newcomer students and their families within school communities.

Core Goals

- Enhance student well-being and belonging by addressing cultural, linguistic, and social identity needs.
- Support families in understanding school systems, helping them navigate unfamiliar environments.
- Connect families to community resources that reinforce healthy identity formation and reduce stress.
- Foster inclusive school environments that recognize diverse identities and reduce conflict.

Why Regional Coordination Matters for Identity & Conflict Resolution

Challenges Across the Province

01.

Newcomer students face identity dissonance when balancing home culture with Canadian school culture.

02.

SWIS service delivery varies significantly, creating inconsistent supports for students experiencing cultural conflict.

03.

Limited opportunities existed for collective learning on identity-related issues, trauma, racism, and conflict resolution.

Role of Regional Coordination

The Ontario SWIS Regional Coordination initiative strengthens the sector's ability to address identity challenges by:

- Aligning service standards across the province
- Connecting agencies and educators to trauma-informed, culturally responsive strategies
- Ensuring newcomer identity, belonging, and conflict resolution are shared priorities
- Building a unified provincial voice advocating for inclusive school environments



Key Functions Supporting Identity Formation & Conflict Resolution



01

Sector Collaboration

- Bridge communication between SWIS agencies, school boards, and government partners to address school-based identity conflicts and emerging trends.

02

Knowledge Exchange

- Share promising practices on cultural mediation, identity dilemmas, anti-racism, trauma-informed supports, and conflict resolution.

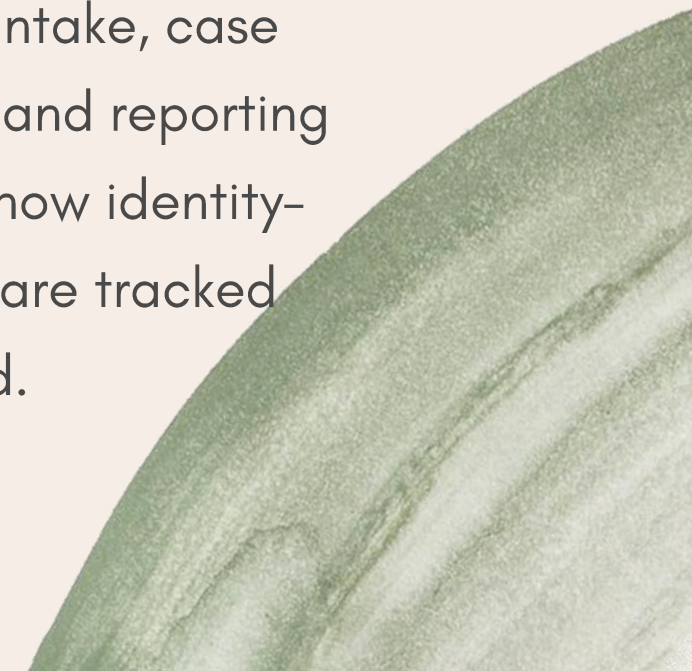
03

Capacity Building

- Support professional learning and peer mentorship so settlement workers feel confident addressing complex identity-related challenges.

04

Systems Alignment

- Promote consistent standards for intake, case management, and reporting to strengthen how identity-related issues are tracked and addressed.
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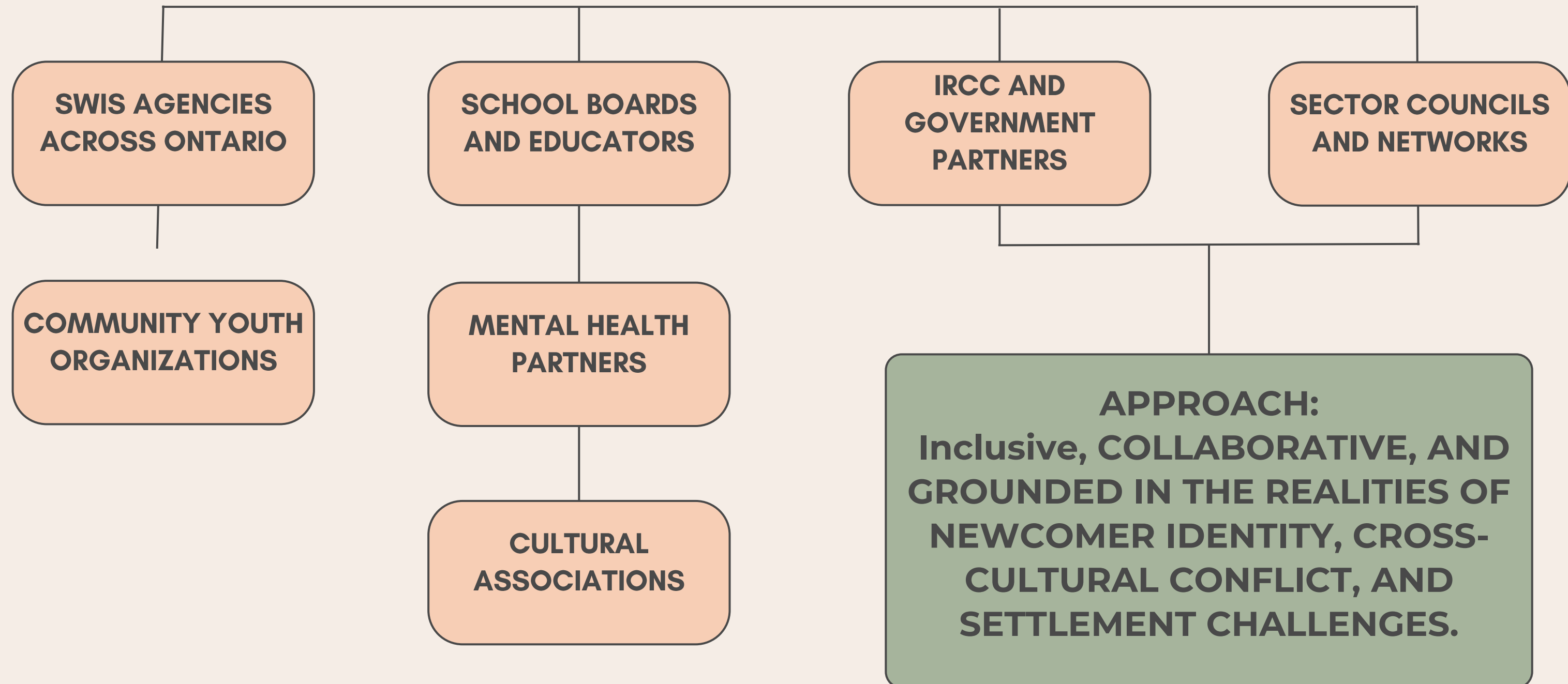
Regional Coordination in Action

Current Areas of Work

- Monthly provincial SWIS coordination meetings focused on identity, culture, safety, and conflict in schools
- Collaboration with 40+ SWIS organizations on consistent provincial approaches
- Development of shared SWIS resources including Best Practice Toolkit, emphasizing cultural humility and conflict mediation
- Hosting peer learning sessions and communities of practice to strengthen practitioner skill in supporting identity development



Ontario-Wide Partnerships Supporting Identity & Conflict Work



EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES STRENGTHENING IDENTITY SUPPORTS

1. Cross-Regional SWIS Learning Series (2025-2026)

Sessions on trauma-informed practice, cultural identity transitions, conflict mediation, and newcomer youth engagement*Over 200 SWIS staff from across Ontario.

2. SWIS Standardization Project

Shared templates for intake, referrals, and reporting that capture cultural identity factors and conflict drivers. *Aligned indicators ensuring identity-related issues are recognized and supported early.

3. Strengthened Partnerships with School Boards

Joint strategy sessions to improve case management of identity-based conflicts.

Clarity of SWIS roles in supporting cultural transitions, peer conflict resolution, and family communication.

4. Peer Support Network Development

Regional mentoring groups building SWIS capacity to respond to identity dilemmas faced by newcomer students. *Strengthened support for smaller agencies and remote regions.



Impact Through a Newcomer Identity Lens

Tangible Results

- Improved collaboration and trust across SWIS agencies
- Consistent provincial understanding of identity-sensitive approaches
- Strengthened relationships with school boards addressing cultural conflict, bullying, discrimination, and belonging
- A stronger unified voice advocating for newcomer identity needs

"When we collaborate, we strengthen a system that supports the whole student – their identity, their well-being, and their future."



Early Outcomes: Shifts in Identity and Conflict Support Capacity

- More open discussions about identity-related challenges among agencies
- Shared resources on cultural conflict, belonging, and integration
- Coordinated provincial responses to emerging issues (e.g., global conflicts affecting student relationships)
- Stronger advocacy for mental health supports that consider identity, trauma, and cultural transition

NEXT STEPS

- EXPAND REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS FOCUSED ON CULTURAL IDENTITY AND BELONGING
- ENHANCE STANDARDIZED TOOLS CAPTURING IDENTITY CONFLICT AND SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES
- HOST PROVINCE-WIDE LEARNING SESSIONS ON NEWCOMER IDENTITY AND CONFLICT MEDIATION
- LAUNCH SWIS ONTARIO ANNUAL FORUM FOR CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION
- STRENGTHEN DIGITAL TOOLS THAT CAPTURE IDENTITY-RELATED TRENDS
- DEEPEN COLLABORATION WITH IRCC AND EDUCATION LEADERS TO INFLUENCE POLICY



**TOGETHER, WE BUILD PATHWAYS THAT
HELP NEWCOMER STUDENTS:
UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES, NAVIGATE
CONFLICT, AND THRIVE WITHIN THEIR
SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.**

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