

The IRCOM Model: Housing & Wrap-around Supports for Newcomers in Winnipeg

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The Project

- Funded by the Winnipeg Foundation and the Manitoba Research Alliance, through a Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Grant
- *Beyond Bricks & Mortar: Housing & Community Supports in Manitoba*
 - Includes longitudinal studies at Welcome Place and West End Commons.
 - Examining the impact of quality, affordable, and stable housing.

Year One

- Purpose
 - ▣ Understand the history and nature of IRCOM's model
 - ▣ Learn about current and past tenants' experiences
- Methods
 - ▣ Community-based participatory research
 - ▣ Literature review, internet searches
 - ▣ Meetings with a research advisory committee
 - ▣ Interviews with current and former staff
 - ▣ Interviews with current tenants (20)
 - ▣ Focus group with past tenants (8)

Year Two



□ Purpose

- Expand upon previous findings and analyze the progression of families' settlement process
- Assess current and future housing situations

□ Methods

- Second interview with current tenants
 - Includes those who moved out after first interview
- One-on-one interviews with previous focus group participants (past tenants)

Research Participants

Year 1

- 20 interviews with current tenants
 - ▣ Interpreters required for 11 interviews, 4 languages
- 1 focus group with 8 past tenants
- 12 interviews with current & former staff:
 - ▣ Purpose: to glean a historical record of the organization

Year 2

- 10 interviews with current tenants
- 6 interviews with recently moved past tenants
 - ▣ Interpreters required for 10 interviews, 4 languages
- 5 interviews with past tenants (from focus group)

Benefits of Living at IRCOM

- Programs and workshops provide valuable information and are easy to attend
- Children meet friends and can play freely
- A strong sense of community
- Good sized apartment with affordable rent and prompt maintenance assistance

“These people who are working at IRCOM are doing excellent work. They are not doing this for money, rather it’s really for community service. It’s about assisting people and covering the gaps in people’s lives to meet their needs.” – through translation

Challenges Living at IRCOM



- Cockroaches, bed bugs, and cleanliness of shared spaces
- Noise and control of children playing
- Programs too full
- Parking is difficult to find
- Frequent smoke alarms

Challenges Living Away from IRCOM

- Cost and space limits
- Length of time it takes to get things fixed in Manitoba and Winnipeg Housing complexes
- Isolation, loneliness, and lack of community
 - ▣ “[At IRCOM] there is life. You see people. Here, nothing.”
- Children’s boredom
- Accessibility of services and amenities

Lasting Impacts of IRCOM

- Building confidence and independence
 - *“When you go out from [IRCOM] you will not be afraid. I can get a job. I can get, if I want, a mortgage.”*
- Helps newcomers to settle; provides continued assistance
 - Programs and workshops help understand Canadian society (i.e., laws and customs)
- Affordable rents and information aid in preparing to buy a house
- Establishes social networks and connections

What would your life be like if you had not moved to IRCOM?

- Loneliness and confusion, especially in the first few years after arriving

“It would be miserable. It would be more suffering. I [would] never go out from the house maybe or I ask them to take me back.”

“I never [would have] moved from the first stage as a refugee. I [would] stay in that stage forever because I don’t know [anything and] who will support me?”

Moving Forward



- Last round of interviews beginning in winter 2017
- Final report to be completed by summer 2018
- First round findings report available at --

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/ircom-model>