

The Use of Art Therapy to Support Immigrants in their Acculturation Process

by

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Abstract

Immigration to Canada is ever growing. Relocating into a society where there are different cultural norms and expectations can be difficult and thus create stress in an individual as well as in their family. For this project, I developed a guide for a program using art therapy and expressive arts approaches to support adult immigrants in their acculturation processes. The paper also includes a review of literature that explores how art therapy may be used to help immigrants adapt and acculturate into their new society, including how art therapy offers a culturally sensitive approach to therapy, minimizes the need for verbalization, and facilitates guided self-introspection.

The knowledge gained from the proposed program will enrich my practice and allow me to plan future programs and session for immigrant clients.

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The Use of Art Therapy to Support the Acculturation Process of Immigrants

Relocating to another country where there are often unfamiliar cultural norms can create stress and mental strain for immigrants. Coupled with possible language barriers, immigrants may find themselves struggling mentally and emotionally. Acculturation is the process in which one adapts and adjusts to a new culture. It is the term given to how an immigrant integrates into their new host society.

The purpose of this project is to develop a program that with the use of art, can support immigrants to begin to express and work through the stressors they may feel when adapting to a new culture. It is hoped that through this process positive acculturation may be supported. Art therapy has the potential to help immigrants overcome many cultural barriers since art is a part of virtually every culture in some shape or form. Art allows the expression of emotions and feelings without the need for written or spoken language.

This paper includes a guide for a seven-session program, including an outline and theme for each session. The outlines and themes are suggestions and it is important for the therapist to adapt the program to meet group members' interests and needs. The themes decided would follow the common issues experienced by immigrants such as the forms of acculturation (assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization), mental health, socio-cultural adaptation, acculturative stress, self-perception, identity, and resilience.

The paper includes a literature review to provide context and foundations for the program.

Situating Myself

As I was nearing the end of the educational leg on the journey to becoming an art therapist, I started to appreciate how much art therapy could benefit so many different populations. I was approached by an immigrant services organization to see if I would consider facilitating a parent/child group to immigrants who were new to Canada. I was excited, but nervous as well, as I didn't have a lot of experience working with new Canadians. The timing of this offer happened to coincide with the time I was searching for a topic for my final project, so I decided to use the opportunity to gain both education and experience.

Pursuing this opportunity has allowed me to gain considerable insight on the need for support for new Canadians. It has also opened my eyes to the necessity for one to educate themselves as much as possible on the needs of one's clients. I was unaware of how much this project and working with this unique population would so positively affect my career and my personal life.

Literature Review

Many people move to Canada with the intent to enjoy the quality of life the country has to offer. When one moves to a new country that offers new cultural norms and traditions, one may feel excitement, but also discomfort, and possibly marginalization. Art therapy can be one tool used to help support immigrants as they transition into their new society. This review explores literature about immigration, acculturation and related processes, and the possibilities of art therapy to support immigrants in their acculturation processes.

Immigration/Culture/Acculturation

Immigration has supported population, economic, and cultural growth in Canada for over a century. Permanent and non-permanent immigration accounts for over 80% of Canada's population growth. For many years the bulk of immigrants to Canada originated from English speaking, European countries, but the statistics from 2016 show that immigration from Africa surpassed European immigration and this trend continues today (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019).

People are often moving not only from place to place within their own countries (migration) but also moving to different part of the world (immigration). The reasons for immigration can include, but not be limited to, work incentives, political reasons, for an improvement in quality of life, or to be closer to family. Whatever the reason for the move, there will be challenges for those who must adapt to a new society where they may have to learn a new language but most definitely learn about, and possibly adapt to, new cultures and traditions.

Oxford defines culture as “the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group” (Oxford Learners' Dictionary, 2020). Every society has what they consider typical and acceptable customs, beliefs, behaviour, and social norms, and it is these norms that make up their culture. Hiscox and Calisch (1998) emphasise the importance of culture by discussing its connection to one's heritage and ancestors and that culture includes “attitudes, forms of emotional expression, patterns of relating to others and ways of thought.” According to Thomas and Schwarzbaum (2006), culture is one of the most significant foundational elements in developing an identity. It is, then, understandable that when one immigrates from a place that differs in cultural practices there will be a change in how one

perceives themselves, and how they fit into society. “Migration [Immigration] is equivalent to a rupture from one’s culture, one’s self-concept, and what it means to be in this world. Since the concept of self is closely tied to one’s role in society, a change of culture implies a redefinition of one’s role, one’s relation and identification with society, and with oneself” (Lemzoudi, 2007, p. 3).

Acculturation

The term acculturation refers to “the cultural changes that surface through the contact between groups of different cultural origins” (Lemzoudi, 2007, p. 3). All beings form and develop social norms based on the culture in which they are raised. These social norms include “attitudes, forms of emotional expression, patterns of relation to others, and ways of thought (Calishch, 1996, p. 64). Acculturation also refers to the ways in which members of a cultural group may change following intercultural contact and become involved in the larger society in which they now live (Lopez-Class, Castro, & Ramirez, 2011). It has been suggested by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (as cited in Castro, 2003, p. 8) that acculturation not only affects the immigrant, but also the host society into which the immigrant moves.

Regardless of the reasons for the immigration, the immigrant’s cultural background, or the process of acculturation, all these changes in an immigrant’s life can create conflict within themselves and their families, as expressed by Lemzoudi (2007).

[Immigration] involves a time of transition, adaptation and acculturation where one often leaves behind the world they know for the unknown, with hopes for a better future for either themselves or their children. . . the transition can be difficult and may have repercussions on their psychological well being. This transition time or acculturation

process implies the redefinition and construction of a cultural identity that functions as an anchor to relate to oneself and to the outside world. (p. 2)

Thus, immigrants may be developing a new identity. This identity may be a combination of the culture in which they have been raised, and the new culture into which they have moved. The ecological systems theory suggests that we are influenced throughout our lives by the different environments we encounter (Marsh, 2020). The relationship with these different environments will inevitably influence behaviour, and ultimately affect mental health.

New immigrants often find themselves faced with two cultures which may clash, creating stress within themselves, their family, and their home. Choices may have to be made as to which values they choose to keep from their original culture and which values they elect to embrace from their new society. The migration process through different cultures “allows individuals to compare these cultures, to become conscious of their representations and values and consequently, it also provokes them to distance themselves from both” (Lemzoudi, 2007, p. 3).

Why is Acculturation Important?

Humans have a basic need to be accepted and wanted for who they are. But to be accepted for who they are, they also need to figure out who they are, what they stand for, and to develop their own identity. Forming an identity “requires an integration of past experiences, current personal changes and societal expectations for one’s future into one’s self-concept” (Stroufe, Cooper, & DeHart, 1996). Immigration greatly affects each of these experiences and expectations, thus affecting identity.

Relational strain can develop within the family. Introducing and accepting new values and the rate of acculturation are just two examples of what can cause this strain. The young

people tend to acculturate more rapidly due to constant exposure through school and work for example. The older generations may fall behind in the process as they may not be exposed to their new society as often as the youth. Thus, an acculturation gap can occur when family members adjust and assimilate at different rates, possibly creating tension and conflict within families (Chud, 1982; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Quin, 2006). There is also the tradition of family roles and patterns of interactions changing due to situations such as a language barrier or availability of work. This change can be stressful for all family members (Foner 2005; Suarez-Qrozco, 2005).

When searching for and developing their identity, immigrant youth are at risk for joining a delinquent group in order to deal with the stress of finding ones' self and obtaining a sense of belonging. Immigrants may suffer mainly from depression, feelings of hopelessness, as well as anxiety and fits of rage connected to identity loss (Legendre, 2000; Wertheime-Cahen, 1998).

Referring to Maslow's self-actualization theory as presented in Figure 1, to obtain self-actualization, or one's best self, one must first have basic needs met, two of which are the sense of safety and acceptance. For one to feel a true sense of safety and acceptance would be to feel comfortable in one's surroundings, and an understanding of where one fits into their surroundings.

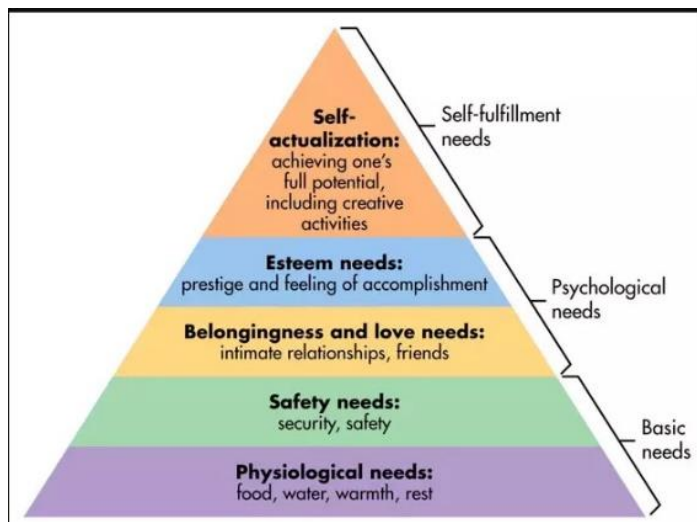


Figure 1 (McLeod, 2020)

Why Art Therapy?

The Canadian Art Therapy Association (n.d.) defines art therapy as a combination of the creative process and psychotherapy that facilitates self-exploration and understanding. Art therapy uses imagery, colour, and shape to assist the client in expressing thoughts and feelings that would otherwise be difficult to articulate. Art making can be seen as a spiritual path and “therapists . . . begin to see a relationship between spiritual and psychological well-being.” (Allen, 2016, p. 272). With the making of art, an expanding of consciousness and a grounding in everyday reality can be achieved.

As described by many authors, art therapy is unique in that it is not limited to language and conversation. The concerns “related to cultural identity loss and migration are mostly communicated symbolically [which] substantiates the use of art therapy as a way to explore these issues more adequately than through verbal therapy only” (Lemzoudi, 2007, p. 7). Art therapy can allow a connection to be made between “host and minority culture representations and allows contradictory elements to co-exist and be integrated” (Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, &

Heusch, 2003). The images created in art therapy “can express, describe or reflect inner processes, allowing us to access the emotive reactions and sometimes painful experiences stemming from cultural and migration-related issues” (Lemzoudi, 2007 p. 2). Wertheim-Cahen (1998) claim that creative arts therapies offer a non-verbal approach that is more appropriate than therapies in which language is the main means of communication.

Sit (1996) asserts that art therapy may heighten one’s sense of self-awareness and thus assist the integration of cultural identity within one’s self-concept during this difficult time. She also suggests that art therapy was found to be a beneficial approach in facilitating adjustment and integration of immigrant children experiencing such difficulties. She states that self-esteem can be improved as a result of the creation of images and objects that provided opportunities for expression of feelings through verbal and non-verbal means. Mauro (1998) found art therapy can be used to strengthen a sense of identity, allowing the clients to form a more genuine and less disconnected view of themselves and their social context. Mathews (1998) also claims that the freedom allowed in the art therapy process assists in the progression in understanding the acculturation process.

Children may develop anxiety and fear caused by strict and controlling parenting related to acculturation gaps (Lee, 2013, p. 127). It is important to maintain communication within the family so they can discuss their concerns, fears, joy, and excitement of becoming a part of their new society. Authors Linesch, Aceves, Quezada, Trochez, and Zuinga (2012), when working with Latino immigrant families in the United States, discovered that family drawings can facilitate communication about their acculturation experiences and the complex nature of acculturation.

Although children may be quite resilient, some who are new to Canada may benefit from the assistance of art therapy to adjust fully. Rousseau et al. (2003) believed that culturally focused creative expression can enable children to recreate a sense of coherence and meaningfulness in their world in relation to their entire transitional experience. It has been suggested that the therapeutic use of drawing and storytelling helps immigrant and refugee children adjust to a bicultural existence, moving between and within their host cultures and cultures of origin (Lee, 2013; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000; Rousseau et al. 2003). Children may express feelings of conflict in their day-to-day being, but when art is introduced, “they experienced enjoyment and pleasure in art making” (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

Art therapy has the ability to promote concentration, increasing self-esteem, and improving health and well-being, and it contributes positively to the overall quality of life (Kapitan, 2013; Wilkinson & Chilton, 2013). Wertheim-Cahen (1998) claims that the aim of art therapy is to help those who are new to a country cope with their present situation, prevent pathological developments, enable them to express themselves, and to engage their own creativity and fantasy.

Role of the Art Therapist

In the last few decades mental health professionals have acknowledged the importance of cultural factors in mental illness (Paniagua, 2000), and art therapist consider cultural factors in their work. Cultural competency is included in art therapy organizations standards of practice and educational standards.

Art therapists today are more aware that they are working with cultural differences now that it has become more highlighted and discussed. When working with a client from a cultural

or ethnic background that differs from their own, it is fundamentally essential for the therapist to self-assess their own cultural values, biases, and norms which influence cultural sensitivity.

Hays (2008) coined the acronym “ADDRESSING” as a reminder of the complexities of working within multicultural therapy.

A – Age and generational influences

DD – Developmental disabilities and Disabilities obtained in later life

R – Religion and spiritual orientation

E – Ethnic and racial identity

S – Socioeconomic status

S – Sexual orientation

I – Indigenous heritage

N – National origin

G – Gender

The above acronym addresses cultural identity as being more than just an ethnic or racial identity and emphasizes the necessity for achieving effectiveness of psychotherapy across a diversity of patients. Leong (1996), proposed an integrative model for cross-cultural psychotherapy in 1996. Leong suggested the three key dimensions of human personality and identity are “Every Man Is Like All Other Men [sic]”, “Every man is Like Some Other Men”, and “Every Man is Like No Other Man.” Leong’s main idea was that regardless of culture, all human beings share common characteristics, however generalization or assuming based on

cultural stereotypes is inappropriate, and we should see each client as a unique individual. Sue and Zane (2009) caution that therapists should be wary of premature adoption of a modified treatment simply because an individual is from a particular cultural group.

It is crucial that an art therapist who is working with immigrants take the time needed to familiarize themselves with the client's social, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and other culturally defining characteristics (Aponte, Rivers, & Wohl, 1995). It is by learning about all these parts of the client that the therapist can work to create a positive and culturally appropriate therapeutic relationship.

The therapist who is working with immigrants must be aware that not all cultures view mental health in the same way as does the Westernized world. Art therapists may find that ethical principals based on Western philosophies and worldviews will not apply to the work they do with culturally diverse clients. Western attitudes tend to emphasize individualism, autonomy, and boundaries between people, values which differ greatly when applied to cultures oriented toward collectivism, interdependence, and interpersonal connections (Pettifor, Sinclair, & Falender, 2014).

Canada continues to welcome immigrants and refugees. As Canada becomes more ethnically diverse, so must its therapists. As therapists, we must practice cultural humility by not only remaining humble and flexible, but also by recognizing the value in all persons and cultures, as well as advocating for all. It is felt that "there is a need for culturally sensitive therapists to deal with the specific issues that [are an] alternative and less threatening form of therapy to verbally based treatment" (Sit, 1996, p. 75). Art is a universal medium that is used in

all cultures therefore, art therapy may not be seen as a Western-style psychotherapy, thus affording non-western cultures an option for mental health support.

Promoting Positive Acculturation
Group Art Therapy Program
by
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Introduction

Relocating into a society where there are different cultural norms and expectations can be difficult and often creates stress in individuals as well as in their family. Art therapy offers a culturally sensitive approach to therapy that may be used to help immigrants adapt and acculturate into their new society. It minimizes the need for verbalization and facilitates guided self-introspection.

The following seven-session program was designed to support immigrants in their acculturation processes. Each session includes an opening, main, and closing activity that was designed with the goal of promoting positive acculturation. The activities are founded in art therapy to support exploration and expression with an integration of expressive arts throughout. When possible, the original source for any of the activities has been noted, however, many were introduced to me during my time at WHEAT institute, are in popular use, or are activities I have developed over time.

Role of the art therapist

An important role of the therapist is to safely facilitate the group in a way that allows for adaptation in response to the group members' needs and interests. Art therapists are trained to observe the individual and support the participants by encouraging self-reflection and self-expression. After each session, evaluation should take place and changes may need to take place to provide the support needed by the group.

Program Plan

When planning any group, it is important to have a general plan created, which is what I have done, however, it is even more important to be able to pay attention to the group and how

they are reacting to the activities. Perhaps some activities are not culturally appropriate for a particular group or group members; perhaps more time needs to be spent on a topic or activity, more exploration of emotions and feelings is necessary, or perhaps the activity simply didn't have the intended results. Continual check-ins with the group are important. No matter what happens, it is imperative not to rush, and to go where the groups leads if safety and security is maintained.

Forming a Group

In my experience, working with an immigrant serving agency supported many aspects of offering a group. There are immigrant service organization in most major Canadian cities. These organizations are familiar with the needs of their clients and can be a great resource when planning an art therapy group for new Canadians. They can help with a variety of details such as identifying possible participants, distribution of advertising, funding options, space in which to hold the sessions, as well as access to interpreters. These organizations may be looking for new ways they can help the people with whom they work and may appreciate collaborating with outside agencies to provide the support needed by many new Canadians. Working together with these organizations greatly benefits the quality of programming that can be offered to the immigrant population.

This program can be adapted and used with a variety of populations; however, the following is a list of considerations that should be contemplated when forming a therapy group designed to help with the acculturation process:

- How long have the participants been in Canada? Will the direction of the group vary depending on the length of time the participants have lived in Canada? Will

the group be made up of those who are new to Canada, or those who have been here for a number of years? Or mixed?

- This program was designed with adults in mind. Although the age range could vary, depending on the group, keeping the population similar in age would allow for a sense of unity and support due to similar experiences and current stages of life. Also, consider factors in participants' identities that may inform the program, for instance educational backgrounds, marital status and family arrangements, employment, country of origin, cultural connections and so on. -
- How will language play a role? Group formation can be based on the common language spoken or fluidity of English. How much English do they currently speak? Is an interpreter necessary? What if they speak the same language but are from different countries?
- Another consideration would be gender and gender identity. Consider the implications of a group made of all male, all female, or both. Is there a place for LGBTQ+ clients? As the therapist, will your gender identification affect the process?
- Ideally the group should consist of no more than eight people in order to allow for a more intimate group, but also have enough participants that if some were unable to attend, there is still a good number of people left for beneficial discussions.

Setting up a Schedule

This program has been designed to run for two hours once a week over a seven-week period. Each session would begin with an opening activity designed to encourage participation,

lessen reluctance, and encourage interaction between clients. The bulk of the time will be spent on the main activity, the intention of which is stated in each section. Finally, the session would end with an activity that will allow the clients in the group to have a sense of closure.

It is important to keep in mind that if the time seems rushed for some of the activities, adjustments to time may be necessary. Any change in schedule should be discussed as a group so that it can be developed in a way that works best for everyone involved.

Language Considerations

Because language may be a barrier in understanding each of the above important fundamentals of therapy, interpreters may be needed to translate the information. This is an area in which local immigrant services may be of help. Organizations may have access to people who are willing to volunteer their time as interpreters. [There are also companies that offer interpretive services over the phone or through video conferencing.]

Space and Supplies

The space used for this program should be large enough to hold the number of participants comfortably. The group will be coming together often for sharing, however, when working individually, it is important that each participant has their own space and a chance for privacy. Comfortable seating options should be provided, and if possible, a variety of seating such as couches, various chairs, and floor pillows is beneficial.

A supply list is provided at the start of each section, however there should always be a variety of art supplies available to allow for individual expression. Found objects from nature and various crafting supplies can accompany the basic supplies such as paper in a variety of sizes and textures, glue, magazines/collage items, markers, crayons, pastels, paints and other supplies.

Ethical Considerations

As with any therapy session, the first session should always include formalities such as signing informed consent, a group discussion around confidentiality, as well as establishing group expectations. It is imperative that all participants understand the importance of confidentiality as well as establishing what is expected from each member. It is also important to note that confidentiality cannot be assured, so participants need to be mindful of this as they share their experiences. One's expectations may include starting and ending on time, allowing others to speak uninterrupted, treat each other with respect, etc. It should also be noted that extra/one-on-one supports should be available for those who may need it, should something challenging come up for them personally.

Program evaluation

A post-participation questionnaire has been included at the end of this document (appendix A). It is important to have feedback from the participants in order to continue to develop future programs.

Day 1:

Intention for the session: This activity will help the participants introduce themselves and provide an opportunity for self-exploration. It will begin the creative art process without the pressure of having to create something from scratch. The purpose is not only for participants to introduce themselves and provide the group with some of their history, but also to contemplate feelings and memories.

Supplies:

- Long ball of yarn
- Variety of magazines including magazines that show a variety of cultures
- Medium/Large paper
- Glue
- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons

Opening: “Yarn Toss”

- Everyone stands in a circle
- Starting with the therapist, a ball of yarn will be tossed around to each other
- The person with the yarn states their name and where they are from
- Each person holds a piece of the yarn as they toss the ball to the person across from them (not beside them)
- Once complete the group will look at the “web” that was created and discuss how the group will be building a web of trust and security as they all work together. It is important for each of them to hold up their part of the web so everyone can maintain this trust and security as a group.

Main Activity: “Magazine Mural” (Kalmmer, n.d).¹

- The clients will be provided with a variety of magazines (representing a variety of cultures as much as possible – perhaps each person could bring some items of their own as well)
- The clients will be given time to pick 10 - 15 pictures or words that represents themselves
- Time will then be given to the group to arrange and glue their pictures into a mural. Other items can also be provided at this point to embellish their mural.
- The group will gather back together and discuss what they have created, using the following questions as a guide:
 - How would you describe yourself at this moment?
 - What part of the mural do you think represents you the most?
 - Have there been changes in how you would describe yourself over the past few months? How do you feel about these changes or lack of change?
 - Is there a part of the mural that arouses more emotion than another?
 - Is there something you wish you could add or take away from your mural?

Closing: “Body Shake” and “Butterfly Goodbye”

¹ Klammer, Shelley. (n.d.). 45 Expressive arts facilitation ideas. Retrieved August 2019 from www.expressiveartworkshops.com

- While remaining in the established circle, and standing, participants would shake out each of our body parts, from top to bottom (e.g., feet, legs, hips and so on).
- This movement would allow each member to “shake off” any excess heavy feelings that they may have from the previous exercise and allow them to each leave the session feeling energized and positive.
- While standing in a circle, the group members will reach into the circle with one hand (generally all right hands or left hands, but both can work as well).
- Everyone links their thumbs and pinkies together.
- Members count down from three – when they reach one, they throw their hands into the air and move their fingers to represent butterflies flying away.
- This activity can also be done individually if social distancing is necessary or if participants are not comfortable with touch.

Day 2:

Intention for the session: There can sometimes be a loss or questioning of identity when a major move has taken place. By exploring their own names, this activity will help the clients explore their own identity and build confidence.

Supplies:

- Paper
- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons

Opening: “Line-Up”

- The group is asked to line up based on an assigned category.

Examples of categories may be:

- Age
- Height
- Initials
- Eye colour
- Hair colour
- Birthdate
- Country of origin
- Number of siblings

- While trying to organize themselves, communication is promoted which allows the group to get to know each other a bit better.

Main Activity: “Name Game” (adapted from Klammer, n.d.)

The session can start with a discussion about how/if their identity has changed with this major move. Do they still feel like they are the same person they were before they moved? If there has been a change, do they feel it has been for the better or worse?

- Everyone will find a comfortable spot in the room.
- Participants will be invited to close their eyes or lower their gaze. They will then spontaneously touch a place on their body and quietly say their name to themselves.
- The clients will be asked to spontaneously create a sentence in their heads that begins with their name – the sentence can be in English, or their first language.
- They will quietly repeat the sentence a few times to themselves but add a movement or rhythm to the sentence.
- They will then move to a piece of paper, write down their sentence and add an image to the page.
- When everyone is finished, they will join in a circle. Taking turns, each participant will say their sentence – beginning with their name. (An interpreter can help with the translation if necessary).
- Go around the circle 4 – 5 times asking each client to say their sentence a little louder and with more confidence in each progressive round.
- After the group energy has built, stop. Allow for a moment of silence

- While continuing in silence, have each participant represent what they are feeling at this moment on a piece of paper, using whatever medium they choose
- Gathering again as a group, discuss the feelings that were aroused when saying their own name and sentence.
 - How did it feel to get louder?
 - How did the silence feel after?
 - What were your thoughts and feelings during this time?
 - Did this activity help you build confidence in your identity?

Closing: “Expressive Sounds”

- In keeping with the sound making of the main exercise, this day will close by everyone saying one word that sums up the time spent together for them and make an action to go with the word.
- The word can be a feeling, something they discovered, or other.... Once they say/demonstrate their word and movement, the rest of the group will repeat the word and mirror the movement.

Day 3:

Intention for the session: The purpose of this session will be to explore the wishes of each of the individuals to make them more tangible on an emotional level. This activity has been planned for the middle of the sessions as it will hopefully become a transition point in the therapy

Supplies:

- Medium/large paper
- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons

Opening: “Breathing Exercises”

- The purpose is to help the participants relax and become present in the group, as well as giving them a tool to use when/if they become stressed or anxious in their everyday lives
- The group will be lead in a basic meditation where the focus is on breathing
- It would not be necessary for participants to close their eyes, as it may uncomfortable for some who have experienced traumatic events in their past
- A specific breathing exercise may be the “4-7-8” where participants breath in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and breath out for 8 seconds

Main Activity: “Wishing” (based on an activity from Kalmmer, n.d).

- Each client will be provided with a piece of paper and asked to choose a medium to use such as paint, markers, or crayons.

- A brief discussion will take place around the topic of wishes and how, although they may seem like a distant desire that may never happen, they are still worth exploring.
- Each client will be asked to use the provided items to represent a wish they may have for themselves (and possibly their family) now that they are starting a new chapter in their lives. They may have more than one wish, but it would be best to focus on only one or two at this time.
- After they have represented their wish, they are invited to take a moment to question what their wish will do for them on an emotional level – encouraging them to detail how they would feel if their wish came true.
- Ask them to think into the future and envision the emotional feeling of their wishing being fulfilled. How does this fulfillment feel in their body?
- Each client will be invited to discuss how the fulfillment of their wish makes them feel, and where in their body they feel this emotion.
- Assuming the fulfillment of the wish is positive, how could they imagine and create the feeling of their wish fulfillment in their bodies more often? How can they start making this wish come true in a material form?

Closing: “I am”

- This activity will invite everyone to feel inspired or positive before leaving for the evening.
- As a closing, the group will gather in a circle and one person will start with the statement, “I am . . .” and finish the statement with a positive feeling or drawing.

- After their statement, the rest of the group would respond with, “You are . . .” and repeat the positive feeling or object they chose”

Day 4:

Intention for the session: This activity will allow the clients to explore the many aspects of themselves and see how each of these parts can live together as one.

Supplies:

- Nesting dolls (a set for each participant)
- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons
- A variety of art supplies/found items/cloth that can be used for the nesting doll activity
- Glue, glue guns

Opening: “Name Movement”

- This is a great introduction activity and check in for everyone before getting started.
- Have everyone stand in a circle
- As each person says their name, have them make a movement that expresses how they are feeling at that moment or how their day went.
- The movement creates attunement, facilitates emotional expression and fosters interpersonal connection.

Main Activity: “Nesting Dolls” adapted from an activity by K. Wallace (personal communication, 2019)

- Each client will be given blank nesting dolls (5 dolls in total)

- They will be asked to explore the different parts of themselves. For example, who they were in their home country, who they are with their family, who they are at work or in public, who they were as a child, who they are in this group, who they are or hope to be in the future, etc. The examples are limitless
- They will design each doll to represent a different part of themselves. They can use all the dolls or just some, but are encouraged to use at least 3 of the dolls
- At the end, they will come back into the circle and we can discuss the different parts of ourselves.
 - The discussion can include topics for exploration such as
 - Size of each part
 - How each part was represented
 - Is there a part you would you like to reduce, let go of, or hide?
 - Are there parts that you wish were larger or smaller?
 - Have any parts changed in size or representation since you move?

Closing: “Pass the Imaginary Object”

- In a circle, beginning with one individual, they will pass an imaginary object to another person in the group.
- That person will receive/catch the object, make it into their own object, then pass onto another group member.

- This activity will continue until everyone has had a turn catching and throwing an imaginary object.

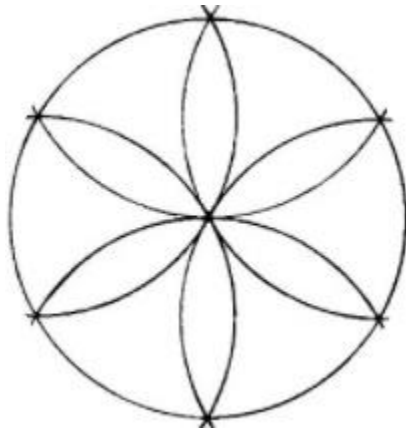
Also “Whoosh”

Day 5:

Intention for the session: This is a great activity that will promote not only self exploration and expression, but also a sense of being part of a group and how, even with our own individualism, we fit together into society.

Supplies:

- Seed of life (one for every participant)



- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons
- A variety of magazines

Opening: “Object Role Play”

- Standing in a circle, have each person take on the role of an object from their everyday life. (e.g., Their bag, key, ring, plate, piece of clothing)

- As they are portraying this object, have them tell a story of what happened to them when they were using/wearing this object.
- They should speak as if they are the object
- Ex. “I am Barb’s hat, and when she was wearing me, this happened . . .”
- Great activity for each member to “bring in” a part of their home/everyday life to the circle

Main Activity: “Group Seed of Life”

- Provide each client with a pre-made seed of life.
- Have each client decorate, colour, or paint each section of the seed in a way that represents them. Perhaps they will use words, colours, pictures, collage, etc. (no limit of ideas).
- Once everyone has finished their own individual seeds, have them gather as a group and one by one lay their seeds on the ground, but have them overlap each seed, so in the end there is one large collaged picture.
- Continue to allow each member to move their seed, and other’s seeds if necessary and with permission until everyone is happy with the arrangement of the seeds.
- Discuss any thoughts, feelings, or emotions around the activity such as discussing what each part of the seed represents to them, was it easy to add your seed to the group art piece?

Closing: “Rhythm”

- With everyone standing in a circle, one person will begin a rhythm with their body, such as clapping hands, stomping feet, or making a noise.

- The next person will add to that rhythm or sound.
- This participation will continue until everyone in the group is making a sound.
- Once everyone is making a sound, the group will try to stop at the same time.
- The idea is to get everyone moving and making noise and having fun to end the group.

Day 6:

Intention for the session: This activity will allow the clients to explore who they were when they were in their homeland, and who they are now in their new country.

Supplies:

- Masks (can be 3-D or paper)
- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons
- A variety of art supplies/found items to help decorate the masks
- Glue, glue gun

Opening: “Rhythm Warm-Up”

- Everyone should position themselves in a circle where they can see the therapist/facilitator as well as at least one other person.
- The facilitator will put their hands together in front of them and wait for the group to do the same (if they don’t catch on, the facilitator can give a verbal or physical “hint”).
- Once everyone in the group has their hands together in front of them, the facilitator will start to rub their hands together slowly and wait for the group to mimic.
- Suddenly the facilitator will stop rubbing and hold their palms out.
- Pointing to their ears and eyes, the facilitator will signal that everyone is to watch and listen.
- The facilitator will do a series of snaps, claps, movements and the group repeats.
- This activity builds listening skills, physical coordination, rhythm, and empathy.

Main Activity: “Mask Making”

- Give each client a mask of their own.
- Using collage, paint, crayon, etc., have each client create a mask that represents who they are at this moment.
- Have they grown or changed over the past few weeks?
- Have they embraced new cultural norms, or have they held on tighter to the norms with which they are familiar?
- Are there parts of them they are still exploring?
- Are there parts they keep inside (maybe show inside the mask) and others they show to the world (outside the mask)?
- Once complete, return to the circle for discussion on thoughts, emotions, and realizations from this activity.

Closing: “Fluid Sculpture”

- Often used as a warm-up, this activity can also be used to close a group and give a sense of community
- Starting with one person, they will enter the centre of the circle and make a repetitive movement or sound.
- Each person will randomly join the person in the centre and “add” to their sculpture by making their own repetitive sound or movement.
- This activity will continue until everyone has added to the “sculpture.”

Day 7:

Intention for the session: This exercise will help the clients relax and reconnect with their inner wisdom and will give them strength to continue on their journey in their new country.

Supplies:

- Medium/large paper
- A variety of marking mediums such as paint/markers/pastels/crayons
- Small boxes (optional)

Opening: “Emotional Recall with Food”

- This activity fosters connection, creativity, and allows clients to experiment with the power of positive imagination as a technique of self-support
- While in a circle, the facilitator will begin the activity by picking up imaginary fruit, cake, or treat.
- The facilitator will give it to their neighbour and say “Here, I give you a wonderful bunch of [grapes], enjoy them!”
- The neighbour will then pretend to accept them and eat them
- They, in turn, will now “pick up” and pass on an imaginary fruit, cake, or treat and repeat the exercise with their neighbour, and it will continue until everyone has had a turn

Main Activity: “Wise Woman”

- Everyone should find a comfortable position in which they can close their eyes or lower their gaze.

- The following instructions will be given:
 - “Take several deep breaths. Begin to imagine that you are taking a walk in a peaceful place. Hear any sounds around you as you walk. Feel the breezes. Smell any flowers as you go. Of in the distance you begin to see what looks like a building and an old woman in front of it. As you come closer to her, you notice what she is wearing, the colour of her skin and her hair. Her face is shining as she watches you coming toward her. You realize that she is a very wise woman and that she has a message for you.
 - “Ask her a question and see what she tells you. Now she is reaching behind her to give you a box. She is giving you a box with a present inside. You have received a gift from this wise woman. Open the box now and see what your present is. Once you see it and take it, you slowly begin to walk away from her, back down the path. You may look back again to see this wise woman but continue on your journey.”
- Invite participants to draw a picture of the encounter with the old, wise woman or as an option, give each a box of their own, in which to place a gift that the old woman gave them.
- Explore the thoughts and feelings around this exercise: Who was the wise old woman? What did she give you? How can it help you on your journey?
- Exploration of thoughts and feelings around how everyone is feeling about this last time together as a group can also take place. With what “gifts” are they leaving this group?

Closing: “The Magic Box”

This activity is a wonderful way to end an individual session, but in this case, also a group that's been held over several weeks. It will allow the participants to reflect on the past sessions and take with them any positive feelings or events, but also leave behind any negative emotions or anything they'd like to leave behind.

- At the end of our final session, the group will gather and enact taking the lid off a magic box.
- This box can hold anything and will allow each participant to take anything out of it they need, but also leave anything behind.
- Everyone can reflect on the past few weeks and the sessions we've had and leave anything in the box they want to leave from the sessions, but also take anything they would like to keep with them.

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APPENDIX**Feedback**

I want to thank you so much for taking part in our art therapy group! By answering the following questions, you are helping me to adjust and develop any future group sessions.

Thank you for your participation.

Did participating in this group help you develop your self-perception/identity as a new Canadian? (please circle the suitable number) Please explain.

(helped greatly) (helped somewhat) (didn't help at all)

1**2****3****4****5**

What art-based activity did you find the most beneficial? Why?

What art-based activity did you find the least beneficial? Why?

Did participating in this group help you deal with any stressors you have experienced as an immigrant? Please explain.

Were any of the activities or art directives not culturally appropriate for you? Please explain.

Is there any other information you would like to add?