



Supporting People and Families through Systemic Therapy and Community Development

Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Aurora Family Therapy Centre staff, board of directors, stakeholders, and clients were engaged in a three month multi-phase strategic planning process with the intent to develop a new plan that would guide their choices, actions, and growth over the next three to five-year period.

Mission

The Aurora Family Therapy Centre is committed to providing systemic therapy to strengthen family relationships, individuals, and communities through cross-cultural and trauma-informed care.

Vision

Contribute to healthy families, healthy individuals, and healthy communities through respect, inclusivity, and integrity with our values.

Aurora Family Therapy Centre will be recognized as a Centre of Excellence in providing cross cultural therapy from a systemic lens with a special focus on psychological trauma & recovery and community development.

Values

Inclusivity: welcoming those of all race, colour, ancestry, nationality or place of origin, ethnic background, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital and family status, source of income, political belief, physical or mental disability, or social disadvantage.

Holistic and Systemic Approaches: attending to all dimensions of the human condition, including intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, relational and social well-being.

Respect: Enacting relationships based on reciprocity and a fundamental understanding of dignity, self-determination, and human rights.

Adherence to: Professional standards, best practices and relevant codes of ethics.



HISTORY / BACKGROUND

Aurora Family Therapy Centre was founded in 1972 as **Interfaith Pastoral Institute** housed within the Faculty of Theology at the University of Winnipeg. In 1993 the Centre's name was changed to **Interfaith Marriage and Family Institute**. Yet another name change occurred in 2005 resulting in **Aurora Family Therapy Centre Inc.** In April 2016, Aurora and the Master of Marriage and Family Therapy (MMFT) Program separated into individual entities with the Faculty of Education assuming administrative responsibility for the MMFT Program.

In its 45 year history Aurora has been led by three Executive Directors: Dick Dearing, Marilyn Boyd, and for the past 7 years, John Smyth. Together with his staff and Board, John's leadership has established responsiveness and commitment to the community, stability and resilience during times of change and crisis, and an innovation-orientation to guide the centre into its future.

For the first 30 years of Aurora's (Interfaith's) existence, the family therapy centre was the only operating program. Growing out of the principles of interfaith service (inclusivity, accessibility, service to those across all faiths, and cross-cultural work), Aurora began to diversify its services by offering programs through support from a number of external funders including Manitoba Family Services (Child & Family Services Project 9000), Manitoba Justice (Homicide Bereavement and Unresolved Loss), the Winnipeg Foundation and Thomas Sill Foundation (Horses Helping People), and First Nations Inuit Health Branch (therapy services for Indigenous communities). In 2007, recognizing the large gap in services that existed for marginalized immigrants and refugees within our community, Aurora began the Therapy Program for Immigrants and Refugees administered through the Province of Manitoba, and funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now IRCC). The funding for this program ended in 2014 and was resumed in 2016 through support from the United Way of Winnipeg as the Newcomer Therapy Program with time limited funding expiring March 31, 2018.

Aurora considers mental health services accessibility to be a global health equity issue. Keeping in line with our values and proposed strategic directions, Aurora is continuing to develop programming in the area of Newcomer Mental Health. In accordance with *best practices* as identified by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2016 *Bridging the Gap* Report), which advocates for formal mental health services to be delivered in collaboration with community based agencies, Aurora believes that providing mental health services to Newcomer communities is a specialty that requires relationships of trust that supersede the stigma of mental health within the community. Further, we believe that working cross-culturally in a way that supports decolonization requires the service provider to undertake the responsibility of adapting to the world view of the participants, rather than continually expecting marginalized groups to abandon their own values and ways of being in order to privilege those of the dominant culture. This requires a major paradigm shift which Aurora has worked to accomplish and embrace through the provision of community-based programming in the Newcomer Community Development Program. These relationships – through our community discussion groups, recreational programming, and summer youth enhancement program – have created relationships of trust with communities and their leadership which have allowed access to some of the most marginalized and affected community members. This combination of community focus and trauma-informed care is responsible for the success of all of our

programming and the positive participation we experience in mental health care with Newcomers.

Today Aurora is a progressive, non-profit family therapy centre that offers family therapy on a sliding scale; sees clients through services funded by Manitoba Department of Families and Department of Justice; provides community building groups for Newcomers to Canada; hosts a Psycho-Social Settlement Needs Assessment program for incoming refugees; provides summer youth programming for many newcomer communities; supports its own staff and other agencies through vicarious trauma and resilience programming; develops supportive relationships with community partners, and engages in advocacy for accessible community-based therapy services for all. Aurora is in the process of becoming a Centre of Excellence in providing cross cultural therapy from a systemic lens with a special focus on psychological trauma & recovery and community development.



CURRENT CONTEXT

SERVICES

Aurora has grown and evolved over recent years to provide:

- Individual, couple, and family therapy through a systemic lens on a sliding fee scale
- Community development with immigrants and refugees through a welcoming community lens
- Cross-cultural, trauma informed care for Newcomers
- Psycho-social assessment and referral for recently arrived government assisted refugees
- Increased capacity as a main practicum site for the Master of Marriage & Family Therapy Program
- Workshops and group sessions



FACILITY

Aurora is at a very exciting time in its journey. In 2016 Aurora moved out of Sparling Hall, where it had been for decades, and into the Rice Building. The new building is a much more suitable, safe, and accessible location for staff and clients enabling us to grow in our ability to provide an appropriate space for families and communities. As we continue to settle into the new space, we are devoting resources to enhance and build our welcoming environment.

FUNDING

Aurora is a registered non-profit charitable organization and provides services on a cost-recovery basis.

In addition to the essential in-kind contributions from University of Winnipeg, Aurora receives:

- United Way funding: core, multi-year (3 years)
- Provincial – Department of Families, Department of Justice (special programs)
- Federal – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) - Newcomer Community Development Program, Psycho-social Settlement Needs Assessment Program and Vicarious Trauma Initiative
- Therapy Fees

PRACTICUM

The Master Degree in Marriage & Family Therapy is the largest graduate program at the University of Winnipeg. As of the 2017-18 academic year MMFT program had:

- 191 Alumni
- 63 MFT students in practicum
- 52 MFT students not yet in practicum
- Practicum Supervision team comprised of practicing professionals with a background in Marriage & Family Therapy.

- Internal practicum sites include Aurora, University of Winnipeg Wellness Centre, and Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority services in Selkirk
- External sites include New Directions, St. Amant, Metis Child Family & Community Services, and Clinic (among others).

Practicum students receive a high standard of training due to the diverse clientele, diverse and experienced supervisors, diverse issues and programming, low student to supervisor ratios, and access to direct supervision.

Development
 Refugee Workshops Cross-Cultural
 Groups Respect Indigenous
 Families Community
 Individual Therapy
Aurora
 Relationships Resilience Immigrant
 Newcomer Integrity Building
 Connection
 Inclusive



AURORA MOVING FORWARD

This three to five-year time frame will be characterized by:

- Further stabilization and strategic growth
- Increased engagement of and with our key stakeholders
- Increased recognition and profile
- Continued innovation & application
- Research and knowledge sharing with multiple levels of stakeholders.

ALIGNMENT WITH PARTNERS

It is important to Aurora's on-going growth to maintain and increase alignment with its primary partners: the University of Winnipeg, the United Way of Winnipeg, and Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

The **University of Winnipeg's Strategic Directions as announced in 2015:**

1. Academic Excellence and Renewal
2. Student Experience and Success
3. Indigenization; Research Excellence
4. Knowledge Mobilization and Impact
5. Financial and Institutional Resilience

The **United Way of Winnipeg's Strategic Plan** (from 2016-19 Strategic Plan "Moving Forward: A better Winnipeg together"):

1. **Helping kids be all they can be:** "Children and youth are our future... The United Way's investment in a network of services supports mentoring, counselling and crisis intervention, and out-of-school programming."
2. **Moving people from poverty to possibility:** "A thriving community is one where everyone has an opportunity to earn a living, support their family, and live with a sense of dignity and achievement... United Way's investment in a network of services provides Winnipeggers with programs related to employment and life skills, financial literacy, social enterprise, and ending homelessness."
3. **Build Strong Communities and Healthy Families:** "Strong, lasting health in a community begins with personal well-being... United Way's investment in a network of service supports, counselling, parenting skills training, community development, neighborhood safety, leadership development, and life skills."

Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Strategic Outcomes (2016/17)

1. Migration of temporary and permanent residents that strengthens Canada's economy
2. Family and humanitarian migration that reunites families and offers protection to the displaced and persecuted
3. Newcomers and citizens participate in fostering an integrated society
4. Managed migration and facilitated travel that promote Canadian interests and protect the health, safety and security of Canadians

Program Themes IRCC - Call for Proposals 2015:

1. Needs assessment & referral services that provide formal identification of clients' needs and connect them and their family to available supports.
2. Information and orientation services that help newcomers settle in their community and integrate into Canadian society.
3. Community connections services that increase engagement of newcomers in their local communities and build connections with community members, public institutions, employers, and community organizations.
4. Support services offered in tandem with one or more core program components, which reduce barriers to access and enable participation of newcomers in settlement services.



AURORA'S FIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. **Sustainability:** Increase Immediate and Long Term Organizational Health and Sustainability
2. **Alignment:** Strengthen Relationships, Alignment, and Collaboration with Partners and Key Stakeholders
3. **Inclusion:** Increase Access, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency
4. **Training:** Enhance Master Degree in Marriage & Family Therapy Practicum Site
5. **Visibility:** Increase Profile, Visibility, and Recognition of Aurora's organization and programming

1. Sustainability: Increase Immediate and Long Term Organizational Health and Sustainability

Goals:

1. Seek and diversify new funding sources (for core and specific programs)
2. Get permission from United Way to seek and secure one corporate donor
3. Research and establish a fund at the Winnipeg Foundation
4. Increase grant writing/fundraising capacity
5. Seek funding to restore Indigenous services / programming
6. Increase staff therapist capacity

2. Alignment: Strengthen Relationships, Alignment, and Collaboration with Partners and Key Stakeholders

Goals:

1. Regular and continuous information sharing with partners and key stakeholders with a view to recognizing and taking action on synergies. University of Winnipeg, United Way of Winnipeg, IRCC, Province of Manitoba (Justice, Family Services), and many other key stakeholders.
2. Discern when collaboration should go beyond information sharing to the mutual benefit of the various parties.

3. Inclusion: Increase Access, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency

Goals:

1. Maintain and expand the Newcomer programs.
2. Create programs and services for Indigenous students and community members.
3. Diversity will be a factor in the selection and hiring of staff and recruitment of board members.
4. Maintain the sliding scale fee structure model.
5. Targeted outreach to underserved and under-represented groups (Indigenous, Seniors, LBTTQ, youth).
6. Create and offer Professional Development for all staff in cultural competency.
7. Provide group programming in multiple neighbourhoods.
8. Partner with ethno-cultural, community, and/or issue based groups in peer knowledge exchange.

4. Training: Enhance Family Therapy Practicum Site

Goals:

1. Collaborate with the MMFT Director to strive for continuous improvement. (Assess and refine; improve communication, processes, tools, etc.).
2. Develop job descriptions for supervisors and practicum students.
3. Maintain and update the Therapist Handbook.
4. Conduct performance evaluations of Supervisors.
5. Include student input throughout their practicum experience.
6. Improve standardization of practicum experience.

5. Visibility: Increase Profile, Visibility, and Recognition

Goals:

1. Through a variety of methods including website, Facebook, Twitter, presentations, articles, and hosting gatherings, Aurora will increase its' profile, visibility, and recognition factor:
 - a. within the University and surrounding community,

- b. within specific populations and issue groups,
 - c. with the media,
 - d. with the general population, and
 - e. with partner organizations.
2. Develop and share best practice models for cross-cultural, trauma-informed care, and community development at the local, regional, and national levels.
 3. Explore video production as a potential to market and increase visibility.
 4. Undertake research and enhance capacity within the field through innovative work



ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Aurora began to undertake the strategic planning process in 2016, and has been steadily working towards integrating these goals into the daily operations. Many of the goals are progressing and several have been accomplished since beginning this project. These strategic directions will continue to guide our work and we would like to acknowledge the following accomplishments to date:

1. Continued to settle into new space.
2. Supported the MMFT Program in applying for and acquiring COAMFTE accreditation.
3. Held the Fall 2016 and 2017 AGMs in an Open House format to also serve the purpose of inviting people to come and see the new facility.
4. Established a new partnership with Indigenous Student Services at the University of Winnipeg to provide free counselling to Indigenous students and their families.
5. Secured a new part time (now full-time) administrative/financial support staff
6. Hired a new part-time (.6) Family Therapist.
7. Updated the intake process in order to reduce the administrative delay in clients receiving services.
8. Secured first \$75,000 private donation providing leverage to seek three more matching (minimum) donors.
9. Created Psycho-Social Settlement Needs Assessment program, secured funding for successful pilot project and expanded to serve all Government Assisted Refugees arriving in Winnipeg resulting in the funding and hiring of 6 EFT staff.
10. Partnered with 8 Ethno-cultural communities to create and deliver Newcomer Summer Youth Enhancement program that served approximately 1000 refugees per week over the summer months of 2017.
11. Aurora Executive Director selected and participated in the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma with a global cohort.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

PARTICIPATION

1. Online Survey
2. Annual Client Feedback via telephone interviews
3. Four focus groups of Newcomer Community Development Program clients (with interpreters)
4. Special meeting with UW Leadership - consultation for alignment, endorsement, and collaboration
5. Special meeting with Practicum Supervisors
6. Special meeting with all Aurora Staff
7. Special meeting with the Aurora Board of Directors
8. Joint staff and board all-day meeting for integration of data and collaborative planning.

RESULTS

Online Survey:

- 300 plus respondents (in approximately 10 days)
- 80 current MFT students (in and not in practicum)
- 77 Alumni (out of 180 total alumni)
- 35 partner / community agencies
- 43 past and current staff and Board members

On-line Survey showed:

- Respondents have a high level of awareness of core services and a lower level of awareness of special programs (newcomers, groups for those who have lost loved ones to homicide, and CFS involved).
- Overall the feedback was very positive, though some concerns, barriers / gaps, and hopes were expressed.
- Not all of the respondents are up to date with recent changes (AGM open house style will help with that, highlighting a PR and communications issue).
- Positive feedback indicated:
 - Safe space, caring, respectful
 - Inclusive, approachable, affordable
 - High quality training and services
 - Helpful, knowledgeable
 - Vital, resilient, amazing, dynamic
 - Open to learning
 - Growing, in transition

Newcomer Focus Groups:

- 83 responses in total
 - 33 youth
 - 50 adults
 - 100% rate programs high, 100% would participate in future

Adult Newcomer Responses Indicated:

- Came to make friends, learn about Canadian culture, share personal stories, learn about other resources
- Report being more comfortable around other cultures, having responses for dealing with racism
- In a word – Gratitude
- Participants wish groups to continue, offer them for different ages and stages, combining learning with social / fun activities is helpful
- Participants reduce isolation, have better decision making capacity, relieve stress, and improve mental health
- Learn and practice English
- Helpful in covering transportation costs and space for kids to play

Themes that carry across all stakeholder groups:

- Maintain high quality (training and therapy services)
- Maintain sliding scale fee model
- Regain accreditation for the MMFT Program
- Maintain and increase inclusion, access, and cultural competency
- Grow at a manageable pace (increase admin capacity / resources)
- Improve profile and visibility
- Continue innovation orientation
- More groups (after regular work hours, different locations throughout city)
- Increase services to Indigenous community, LGBTTTQ, people with disabilities, and newcomer communities
- Provide more training to service providers