

Sprout Alumni Impact Story

“CONCEIVE. CULTIVATE. CONNECT.”

Immigrant Youth Canada: A Globalization/Culture/Human Rights Project by Tinashe Mafukidze



Meet Tinashe Mafukidze - a 25 year old project consultant currently living in Toronto, Canada. Many people today have some kind of immigration story or may easily know someone who does. Tinashe joined the Sprout e-course in June 2009 when she noticed a lack of resources available for Canadian immigrants and refugees.

Tinashe explains that, “being a youth is a often a challenging period in general and added to this, being an immigrant youth can be an isolating experience because of the social and psychological challenges accompanied by the settlement process”. Some of the specific challenges that these young people deal with include: Culture and identity shock, lack of information about available resources, inadequate resources, barriers to academic opportunities (financial, lack of information or immigration status).

In order to make an impact covering all of these challenges, Tinashe created an online platform for immigrant youth to have access to a variety of resources (education, financial, general info. etc.). Immigrant Youth Canada (IYC) is not a service plan, but an information centre to aid young immigrants and Tinashe believes that the “approach provides innovative opportunities and much needed resources to help youth. We also confront the challenges and the social, health, education, employment barriers immigrant youth face in integrating and fully empowering youth”. The site works by providing a place to share and connect as well as an information and research centre to help overcome common challenges.

Currently, the project is in a 6 month pilot program in order to fully complete her research and needs assessment. This pilot program has been created with help from different volunteers and partners at zero cost. Tinashe has partnered with professors at two different universities in Ontario that teach settlement issues and research immigration trends in order to analyze the results that she is receiving during the pilot. During this time, there are roughly 100 members that have already signed up as members of the pilot website as well as developing partnerships with Volunteer Ontario and the Non Profit Association of Ontario. To date, the online platform has served as a major resource space for youth as well as providing an opportunity for agencies to connect with young people (such as settlement or labour issue agencies). The project has created a dialogue with these specialized organizations as well as other community associations.

Looking towards the future, Tinashe has recognized several potential funders and is hoping to make an impact on the government in order to secure funding. With the consistent growth of website memberships, she is continuing the ongoing engagement of youth in the online network and can see many opportunities to replicate this project and scale it into a national project. With the help of her knowledgeable volunteers, Tinashe believes she could easily disseminate this information hub in every province across the country at very little cost.

Referencing her experience with the Sprout e-course, Tinashe explains, “It was very important for me to understand how to identify and deal with various stakeholders, volunteers, and how to engage people in being interested in this project. I come from a project management background but it was in a corporate environment. Sprout gave me experience with social management issues and frameworks for successful implementation in a non-profit setting”.



Immigrant Youth Canada: An Interview with Tinashe Mafukidze

Moving to a new place can be a scary situation at the best of times. Imagine the obstacles and cultural pressures of moving to a new country; away from family and friends in an unfamiliar place. Tinashe Mafukidze realized the lack of resources available to young immigrants in Canada and decided to join the Sprout program to initiate an online information platform in her current city of Toronto. Recently, we were able to chat with Tinashe about her progress and experience with Sprout.

Could you please explain your Sprout project idea?

I created an online platform (Immigrant Youth Canada) for immigrant youth to have access to different resources (education, financial resources etc). This project is not a service plan, but an information centre to aid young immigrants. We empower youth with valuable information and a platform that will support them in fully engaging and participating in the Canadian way of life while upholding your own values and culture.

At what stage of implementation is your project?

We are in the later stages of a 6 month pilot project that is being carried out at zero cost. After the pilot we will be able to analyze this data to realize the full potential and make any changes before a bigger implementation.

What types of challenges do young immigrants or refugees face?

Compared to adults, immigrant youth face unique challenges – most notably, a lack of information and knowledge about their new home, getting used to the school system in Canada and balancing the cultural values and behaviour expected of youth in their home country with those of their new country. Ignoring these issues only creates a fragmented society and generations of youth who are not fully engaged and disconnected with their communities.

How many participants are included in the pilot phase?

We have roughly 100 youth who are active members of the current ranging in age between 15 and 30 years old. We have also partnered with Volunteer Canada, the Non-profit Association of Canada, Ceirs – a research body, and 2 faculty members from York University focused on researching immigration trends and settlement issues.

Do you have any future plans for IYC?

After the research is completed for the 6 month pilot phase, we will be looking to secure some funding in order to improve scalability across Canada. I already have some potential funders and partners in mind that have expressed an interest in the project. Even with minimal funding I believe we would be easily able to disseminate this information and platform in every province across the county.

Has the Sprout E-course prepared and supported you in the implementation of your project?

Yes it was really, really helpful. When I started I had a vision, but didn't know about the process to go about achieving this. It helped me break down the project into manageable and achievable parts. Sprout gave me experience with social management issues and frameworks for successful implementation. I also got to meet a lot of like-minded people in the program which also ties into having replicable projects. I feel like I connected with a lot of valuable resources in the form of people that I can still call upon in the future.

For more information on this project, visit: <http://projects.tigweb.org/iyc>

Immigrant Youth Canada

Tinashe Mafukidze is a 25 year old project consultant that has recognized an absence of resources and opportunity available for immigrant youth in Toronto, Canada. Tinashe explains, “Whether they came by themselves or with their families, these youth left behind friends and relatives, and a familiar social system. Compared to adults, immigrant youth face unique challenges – most notably, lack of information and knowledge about their new home, getting used to the school system in Canada and balancing the cultural values and behaviour expected of youth in their home country with those of their new country”. In response to this, Tinashe started Immigrant Youth Canada (IYC) – an online information centre providing youth with a space to share and connect, educate themselves on common challenges and researching local opportunities. Using an online framework has allowed Tinashe to provide a free resource and illustrate a great example of sustainable outreach.

