

PROFILE:

MARYHILL AND CENTRAL & WEST INTEGRATION NETWORKS

HISTORY

Since 2001, Maryhill Integration Network (mIN) has been developing services around the needs of Glasgow's new communities, including Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Migrant Workers.

Maryhill Integration Network (mIN) became a registered charity in March 2006 and is an independently constituted unincorporated voluntary organisation. mIN has an Executive Committee consisting of the Network office bearers and members of the network.

In September 2009, Central & West Integration Network (C&Win) was started under the umbrella and co-ordination of mIN and both Networks aim to bring together public, voluntary and community organisations with local people to promote harmony, equality and respect.

ABOUT US

Members of the Integration Networks work in partnership to develop projects and services that meet the needs of the local community. These aim to build bonds and links within and between new asylum, refugee, migrant worker and indigenous Scottish communities to encourage cross-cultural understanding and celebrate diversity.

The Networks understand that integration is not possible by working with only a particular group within the community and so encourages participation from people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities living within the Greater Maryhill, Central & West areas of Glasgow and beyond.

The Networks brings communities together through, art, social, cultural and educational groups and projects, offering people a chance to learn new skills, meet new people, share experiences and take part in worthwhile activities to improve their communities.

A Member's Story from mIN Newsletter #18

I left Eritrea in 2008 to find a place that will give me a home for the future. I passed through many

countries before I came to Glasgow, a place that I believe will help me achieve my goals. Back home I left my husband and two children, for the sake of our family's safety. I have struggled and suffered to be reunited with my family but with the help of this country I am now living with my husband and son. We are expecting my daughter to join us soon. Scotland has given me a new life and we are all studying to improve our English. I believe one day we will be able to repay our host country.

CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS

Framework for Dialogue Group (FfD)

Framework for Dialogue (FfD) is a forum for asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow offering them the opportunity to listen, discuss and have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect their lives. The Maryhill FfD first began in August 2004 with 8 members; now with over twenty members, the group continues to have a positive impact on the lives of new arrivals in Glasgow. We include stories and personal accounts from members of the group in our Newsletters in order to shed light on the experiences of refugees and Asylum Seekers in Glasgow.

Women's Groups

The Networks' currently leads two Women's Groups, 'Oasis' and 'Mother Theresa' groups. Each group is run by local volunteers and have developed according to the needs of their users. Projects have included; one to one ESOL support, arts and craft activities, trips to local Art Galleries, treatments with local therapists—including massage, relaxation and hair cuts! Both groups provide a crèche (childcare) to support the women that attend. Both the 'Oasis' and 'Mother Theresa' groups are involved in the events that the Networks organise

Tiny Songbirds

In partnership with AlbScott and Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama (RSAMD) Community Education Department, Tiny Songbirds, music

classes for babies and toddlers encourage children to play with music and sounds, offering them a chance to explore their creative sides whilst giving parents ideas for new ways to engage with their child in a relaxed and creative environment

Music and Theatre Production Project

One of the projects at the heart of Maryhill Integration Network is Music & Theatre Production. Since starting in 2005, Maryhill Integration Network has been developing this project, which now incorporates, dance, music and song writing classes for members of the local communities, including adults and children. Past performances have included, Black History Month, Refugee Week, 16 Days of Action to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Festival of Spirituality & Peace. Alongside these larger city-wide events, mIN also participates in smaller, local community events including family days, training events and awards ceremonies. Each time the Music & Theatre Production Project perform, new audiences are engaged and encouraged to address the issues raised throughout the performance. Through these events, mIN is able to showcase its strengths, promote integration and change attitudes.

Costume Design Project

Another of the ways in which mIN explores art is through its International Fashion Show. With participation from service users, volunteers, and professional models and artists, the Fashion Show Display costumes that are owned, designed or made members of mIN. The show incorporates music and dance from across the globe to bring a colourful and exciting display the richness of culture and diversity in Glasgow. For Refugee Week 2010, Albanian-Scottish Association (AlbScott) organised a Contemporary Costume Making Project with the 'Mother Theresa' Women's Group. The idea was to create costumes by fusing designs and details from traditional costumes by using materials from around

the world. In combining different styles and fabrics, the costumes represent the fusion of cultures that can be found within Glasgow, also reminding us that we are all 'cut from the same cloth'. This project has been widely displayed and exhibited as "Weaving Across the World" at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and St. Mungo's Museum and throughout various community events in the city.

Writers Group—Cookery Book Publication

The Creative Writers Group has been successful in publishing many books including poetry, stories and also recipes! Our most successful book has been '*Heart of the Home*'—*International Recipe Book*. It was launched during Refugee Week 2009, and has now completely sold out. We hope to print more, as many people have been inspired by the recipes and stories included in the book which bring to life the various cultures and characters in the Network.

Outreach Work in Schools—Music and Environmental Projects

mIN has successfully co-ordinated a range of outreach projects in primary schools, using of music, dance and arts & crafts activities to break barriers and promote cultural diversity. In November 2009, mIN collaborated with a group of students from RSAMD under the guidance of Community Music Co-Coordinator, Mary Troupe. The project, *Let Glasgow Flourish!*, was inspired by Glasgow's coat of arms. All the children and teachers reported on how much they enjoyed working with the team of music students to develop musical and visual ideas. We would like to record our thanks to all the participants in this project, especially to mIN sessional worker Caroline Wilkie. In 2010, mIN and C&Win worked with a variety of schools locally and city-wide to promote the idea of cultural integration by looking at topics such as Indian and African Culture and also environmental awareness. The work that the Networks do with schools helps to introduce children to the idea of integration and

the ways in which they can work together, using the arts, to make their communities more safe, happy and vibrant.

RECENT EVENTS

Refugee Week in Glasgow

The 2010 theme for Refugee Week was inspired by the idea of 'Journeys'. For this event, mIN and C&Win put together a varied programme for its members and the wider public to share and celebrate the different paths that we have travelled in our lives, and remind us also that for many, journeys are not a question of choice. Including:

'Back and Forth'—mIN Music and Theatre Production and Barrowland Ballet perform at the Tron Theatre.

'Weaving Across the World'—AlbScott's Fashion Show with models from the 'Mother Theresa' and Oasis Groups.

'Journeys from the Sea'—Clan Macondo present Music, Dance and Poetry from the African Diaspora in South America.

'Our Journey So Far...'—Family Open Day to celebrate the official launch of C&Win.

'Thrive and Grow'—a healthy living event at Kelvingrove Museum

16 Days of Action to Eliminate Violence Against Women

This year the Networks organised two community events in different areas of Glasgow to bring people together and raise awareness of the issues surrounding this international campaign. In addition the Networks worked in partnership with a local organisation called WISE Women that facilitated a three week course in women's personal safety.

Children's International New Year Party, Glasgow

Each year the Networks are able to access funds to organise an event for the children and young people who attend the activities and projects run by the network. Working with children and young

people is a key area of work for the Networks, helping to promote the idea of Integration

Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival, Glasgow

Both 'Oasis' and 'Mother Theresa' Women's Groups use arts based activities to promote social inclusion and to encourage healthy relationships between members of the groups and towards themselves. Using art as a tool for improving health and well-being brings people together to share their experiences, as well as encouraging confidence and self achievement. These therapies help people to move on from past experiences and open new pathways of friendship, learning and self discovery. For SMHAFF (Scottish Mental Health, Arts and Film Festival), mIN and C&Win - in partnership with AlbScott - exhibited the work of the Costume Design project and held a day of workshops in fashion design, finishing with a Fashion Show including members of the local community, mIN and C&Win volunteers and staff.

Festival of Spirituality and Peace 2010, Edinburgh

For the closing ceremony of this renowned festival, mIN performed an extract from 'Back & Forth'. mIN and C&Win are committed to reaching new audiences and are happy to travel out with Glasgow to attend events that not only help to raise the profile of the Network but also help to raise awareness of the issues surrounding refugees in Scotland.

A Member's Story from miN newsletter #17

Today I came back from Brand Street. [the UK Border Agency] I normally go there to sign, like every other Asylum Seeker. I have to take my... boys with me every time I go to sign. Both of them hate going there; especially on the days that they have to miss football, they say to me 'Mum, why do you drag us there with you?' The younger of the two... feels ill for a couple of days after each signing; I can see him

getting depressed. I try and explain the reasons why we have to go and sign, but being young, he doesn't understand. Earlier today my son fell in school and broke his toe so he couldn't come to Brand Street with us. When my older son tried to explain this to the officials there they did not believe him. Being young and scared of officials he tried his best, but neither he nor I were believed. I was shouted at and was told to bring the whole family tomorrow! I didn't lie, I only told the truth. I wish they would believe us when something happens to our young ones! Believe them when young children like my son tell them what happened to their family—children don't lie!

INTO THE FUTURE...

The Networks have shared many successes this year, however, due to funding cuts in the local council, the future is unsure and it looks as if we will be merging with other Networks in Glasgow to form larger strategic Networks across the city. Whatever happens with the Networks, we plan to continue the valuable and varied work that we have developed to help the communities in Glasgow that are most in need. Through the arts, we are able to communicate most effectively with new communities in Glasgow and attract new members to join the Networks' projects. Our aim will always be to break down barriers of isolation and fear and encourage people to come together for the common good of all— with this we hope to continue future work and develop our services to meet the needs of all that we can and to further raise the profile of the charity to reach national and international audiences.

To learn more about the Maryhill and the Central & West Integration networks, please visit our website <http://www.maryhillintegration.org.uk/index.html>



Planning: The group organised a successful event to raise funds for destitute Asylum Seekers before Christmas. Photograph by Karen Gordon