



ROOTS 'N SHOOTS

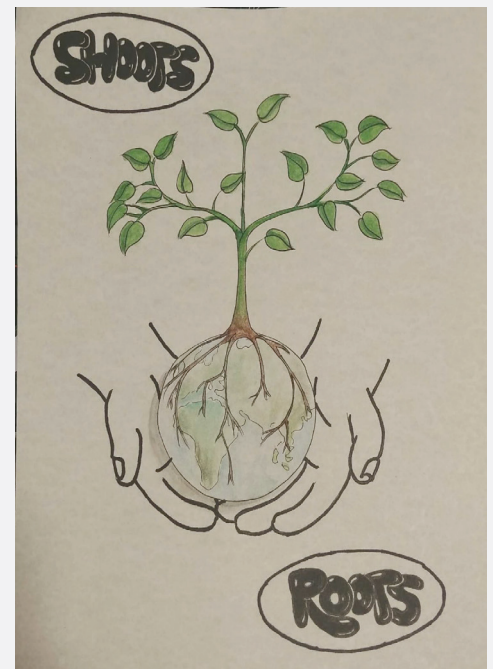
Roots 'n Shoots is a cooperative board game and facilitated workshop process to address stigma and discrimination towards newcomer students in high school. The game helps youth reclaim their languages and cultural identity, while building bridges with local people and places. It can be offered anywhere belonging matters - in schools, community centres, neighbourhood houses and more!

ORIGIN STORY

Zainab Ibrahim joined the Refugee Livelihood Lab at RADIUS to make a difference for her community. Through this process, she began exploring how youth with refugee experience felt about school, and noticed a heartbreaking pattern. Youth were struggling to learn English, yet embarrassed to speak their own languages. They shared how they would avoid saying words in their mother tongue, hide their cultural foods, and feel ashamed of their parent's presence in the school. Many felt torn between intense pressures to fit in, versus maintaining their own cultures.

Stunned at this pattern that crossed generations, Zainab reflected on her own painful experiences struggling to feel at ease in her identity and make new friends after she arrived from Iraq as a refugee 10 years ago. Sitting in that moment, Zainab had a vision for the path forward.

What if belonging was not either/or, but both/and?



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This game is so much fun, I got to laugh, be introduced to different cuisines, and hear first person rather than getting it from different sources. As an Indigenous person, I felt empowered by the opportunity to present my reality to others and correct many wrong assumptions about my beautiful community

- Student Player

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HOW IT WORKS



Hanan rolls the dice and gets the vocabulary category. Her eyes light up and she laughs remembering phrases in Arabic that have no direct English translation. She declares, “shako mako!”. Her friend Rosy giggles trying to pronounce it.



Hanan then has to teach five facts about this term to her partner in 30 seconds. Once the 30 seconds over, Rosy has to remember all the facts to help Hanan get a full point. Rosy recalls the facts, “It means what’s up; is used among Iraqis only; it starts almost every conversation; It’s slang; It can mean what is new.”



After taking turns sharing facts about their language, food, culture, and places, all participants participate in dialogue about how this relates to real life. The dialogue is facilitated by two former refugee youth who discuss concepts such as belonging and migration. The teacher is surprised hearing normally quiet students sharing their personal journeys. Many participants comment that this game builds a sense of community and is super fun. During this process, Hanan shares she had been thinking she is not as cool as her Canadian born class-mates. They don’t have accents and seem to have it all. She says that playing this game makes her feel empowered because it gives her an opportunity to highlight her knowledge and expertise.



One participant reflects, “I feel bad that I had such limited and biased information about my friend’s cultural background. This game helped us get to know each other deeply without being awkward about it.” Some participants mention how they usually spend time together, but they have never engaged in conversation about racial discrimination, stereotypes, and fitting in.

IMPACTS AND LEARNING

For Zainab, the learning process of design is as important as the game itself. She engages a team of artists drawn from local schools to create each board. As they develop the game together- they learn more about what it takes to support a sense of pride, identity and belonging in the school community.

Hosna Haded is one of these artists, she says, “*Playing this game helped me shed light on other sides of my country, Afghanistan. It helps me break down stereotypical representation of my culture, people and land.*”



Get In Touch If...

- You are a **teacher** who wants a curriculum linked experience that gives students of various backgrounds an opportunity to get to know each other
- You are a **student** who wants to create safe and brave spaces where all cultures are valued
- You are a **funder** interested in helping scale this game through a managed replication process, where members of each expansion city in Canada can work alongside refugee and immigrant youth to design new connection points between cultures and places

“ We need to de-shame connecting to your roots. At the same time, we need to support growing ‘shoots’ in a new culture ”
- Zainab Ibrahim

CONTACT:

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