



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MULTI-AGENCY PARTNERSHIP (MAP)

Thursday, November 22, 2018

Location: MOSAIC

The meeting was held on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish and Musqueam nations.

Attendees: Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC); Katherine Griffin (MOSAIC); Loren Balisky (Kinbrace); Emily Parsons (Kinbrace); Raul Gatica (Kinbrace); Fran Gallo (Kinbrace / Ready Tour); Mariana Martinez Vieyra (VAST); Sara Lopez (VAST); Ahmad Nakhaer (VAST); Kathleen Muir (VAST intern); Amos ALHassan (VAST); Ana Machado (PIRS); Yola Vargas (FBC); Nathan Wright (bc211); Teresa Fuller (MCC); James Grunau (JHS); Laura Brook (Journey Home); Gurinder B (DIVERSEcity); Peter Prediger (Inasmuch); Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch); Richard Belcham (Inasmuch); Savleen Kaur (Options); Patricia Mahecha; Motoi Matsukura (Purpose); Franklin Amabfoku (Purpose); Vicki Chiu (MJTT); Rainer Nicdau (MSDPR); Claudia Buendia (MSDPR); Mia Morin (Vancity); Eleanor Wong (Vancity); Carl@ Campodonico (Qmunity); Laura Brett (Covenant House); Adeline Yu (Fraser Health New Canadian Clinic); Huguette Hayden (La Boussole); Louise Chaynes (La Boussole/UCI Refugee Cttee); Omar; Jenny Moss (MAP)

Apologies: Saleem Spindari, Ronnie Law (MOSAIC), Khim Tan, Iris Solarzano,

Welcome: Co-chair Mariana Martinez Vieyra, VAST

- **Acknowledgements and thanks**

Mariana acknowledged publicly and thanked the Coast Salish Nations of Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish on whose traditional territories we met.

Mariana also thanked our funders: Vancity and the Provincial Ministry of Jobs, Trade & Technology, for their generous support to MAP.

Mariana thanked MOSAIC for providing our meeting space

- **Introductions**

There was a round of introductions from the members present

- **Outline of Agenda** – the agenda as presented was approved

- **Review of October Minutes** – approved

Presentation: A toolkit for improving media coverage of the refugee crisis

Presenter: Alia Dharssi: Journalist and researcher, The Discourse.

Introduction: Alia Dharssi is a journalist and researcher who has written widely about immigrant, refugees, human rights and global development for Canadian and international media, including the Guardian, the National Post, the Thomson Reuters Foundation and Al Jazeera. In 2016, she wrote a six-part series on Canadian immigration policy that was published in Postmedia newspapers across Canada. This year, as Sustainable Development Reporter at The Discourse, she co-produced a toolkit for journalists and refugees to help improve coverage of the refugee crisis. It includes information to help refugees preparing to share their perspectives with the media, as well as best practices for journalists who report on refugee issues based on input from over 30 newcomers, settlement workers and academics.

[\(Alia's presentation is here\)](#)

Alia's presentation aims to share a project completed at [The Discourse](#) which focuses on slow journalism – producing stories of interest to the public.

The Discourse is engaged with refugee issues because it is said that Canada makes a big contribution to world in terms of refugee protection so it's a story of interest.

At the Discourse they started to engage with refugees and hear that they were only interviewed at times of crisis – so the Discourse started working with Options and PIRS to invite refugees to discuss; including refugees from all over the world.

It was obvious that they needed to publish more diverse stories – and from more countries, not just Syria, not just govt/private but also claimants. Likewise, it is important to look beyond crisis to solutions and resettlement challenges for refugees.

The refugees and settlement agencies they spoke to had a lot of questions about how journalism works – and they wanted to follow up stories and an ongoing engagement.

There were all sorts of new challenges in terms of doing journalism with vulnerable groups, so the Discourse worked to produce a **Toolkit** which is available online.

The toolkit contains two sections:

a) Best practices for journalists

b) Tips for Refugees

The following are 10 tips for Refugees:

1. Ask the journalist questions before agreeing to an interview
2. Be prepared to have your image and words recorded
3. Ask to see journalist's principles and practices and ask what kind of story they are working on.
4. Look at what that media outlet has covered in past to understand their leanings
5. Tell reporter beforehand if they don't want to be identified (to protect themselves and family back home) and ask what the reporter will do to protect their identity.
6. Be prepared for hate mail etc. as story can go around the world.
7. Be prepared to verify your story – back it up with documentation.

8. Understand difference between 'on the record' 'background', 'off the record'
9. If you want to share your story try and find a media outlet or reporter who shares your viewpoint
10. Be prepared that talking about your story may be triggering.

Questions and Answers

Carlo: Suggested that claimants have a counselor in support because talking about their life can be triggering and the reporters sometimes objectify claimants as 'illegals' or other stereotype.

Answer: Reporters don't have resources for this unfortunately. Before at the DISCOURSE a reporter with First Nations women did, but many wouldn't have these resources. In the Best Practices section for journalists we recommended that reporters suggest this to clients or their agencies. It's best to discuss this with the claimants so they can refuse if necessary.

Discourse encourages reporters to call claimants by their profession or another positive identifier.

Mariana: need to keep **connectors** (workers who make referrals to journalists) accountable. So that they act responsibly when making a referral. Don't use a claimant if the experience is not going to be positive for the individual.

Claudia: (MSDPR) Referred participants to a publication titled 'Inside Stories' – focussed on long term settlement – in different Vancouver neighborhoods – and asked the question: Where do you feel you belong? It was very emotional and triggering but the reporter made connections earlier and used pictures not video – not necessarily of the person but objects or places connected to the story.

Question: Louisa (Covenant House) As a settlement worker she is concerned about how to speak to their donors about Covenant House clients. So they are very grateful for the toolkit.

Franklin (Purpose) How would claimants know about reporter's best practices? It must be our responsibility as settlement agencies to take this on.

Answer: Agreed, we have also talked to IRCC, and furthermore we want to translate materials to make them more accessible.

Question: Loren (Kinbrace): You talked about Principles & Practices – journalism seems to be predicated on provocative soundbites. Do you have any comments on how we can break that soundbite process? How to navigate it without getting in the way?

Answer: yes, there is a lot of polarization currently, and social media makes it worse. You don't have any control once you've shared your story as journalists will edit as they care to. That's why its very important to know what kind of outlet your talking to and how they treat sensitive material. Is it someone who will make a deeper dive or just glossing over the subject? CBC and Globe & Mail good, though US media creeps over social media

make the atmosphere more polarized.

Question: Huguette (La Boussole / UCI) – she has been approached several times to find refugees to speak. She's always concerned about confidentiality so never connected anyone. She knows there's a need for public education, but they have had bad experiences of people being picked up after speaking to reporters. How can we trust the media?

Answer: it's very difficult – some journalists are more worried about deadlines than ethics. You must discuss with reporter upfront about security concerns – then if you feel comfortable you can make an introduction.

Why ask for documentation?

Answer: To verify the story – some information that's lodged with the government can be checked (e.g. country backgrounds) because it's public. Even social media may ask for verification.

Mariana (VAST) IMPORTANT! - extra care should be taken when interviewing a claimant in the pre-determination phase prior to their hearing/decision.

Answer: It's very important for us to explain these factors to journalists.

Carl@ (Qmunity): Reliable sources may not include social media – and can do damage to claimant's case.

We should develop education for claimants because they don't know when to say no. But they need support.

Mariana – agreed. It's not always because claimants don't know the risks, but also because they may feel pressured to speak – out of gratefulness etc.

Question: Katherine (MOSAIC) What about self-publication style of stories from agencies – are there any tips for agencies themselves?

Answer: be careful to manage expectations about your following – may not reach a big audience – ask yourself if self-publishing is the best way or using a different platform.

Alexandra (MOSAIC) – there exists a power imbalance – we need to be very aware of this when we are encouraging the client, and consent piece. Can we see the story before it's published?

Answer: You can't see whole story, but you can ask about it's direction or check on security of your identity etc.

Agreed that the power imbalance is SO important – we must not push refugees.

Why can't see story before?

Answer: Because reporters must be free and have their own control so that they are not seen as biased. They have many time constraints too.

Mariana: can you add interpreters to best practices rules?

Huguette (La Boussole/UCI): Interpreters may add to the story themselves – so this is a very important question about how to involve interpreters.

Answer: we haven't worked on this much – but in our workshops we excluded people who couldn't speak English in order to not run into this problem. Connectors must make that clear to the interpreters.

Mariana thanked **Alia** for a very interesting presentation.

Request for support from members to the MAP Submission to the Federal Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship. – Jenny, MAP Coordinator

Jenny explained that following a meeting with Hon Jenny Kwan, NDP critic on Immigration and member of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship, it was suggested that MAP make a submission especially around the issue of housing for claimants and also the request to be consulted as a group in Western Canada. To date there have been submissions from VAST, Collingwood Neighborhood House and ISSoBC from the west.

The Standing Committee is accepting submissions up until November 30th. Jenny Kwan recommended MAP collect supporting submissions too, all of which must be submitted to the Standing Committee via an online portal, and a copy should be sent to Jenny Kwan, so she can support our case.

Jenny distributed the letter from Hon. Jenny Kwan with details of the Standing Committee and submission procedure, as well as a template for agencies to follow if they wished to support MAP's submission. Jenny collected names of agencies and individuals interested. She will email each one with the same documents and more information.

Break

Quantitative and qualitative update on Refugee Claimants in the Lower Mainland Bahar Taheri, BC Refugee Hub

Mariana communicated that Bahar was not able to attend MAP, here is her update:

- 1) the Nov 1st webinar video has been posted on the hub along with the PowerPoint decks and resources
- 2) The referrals inventory for all BCSIS funded programs that refugee claimants can access in Fraser Valley, Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island has been finalized and will be posted on the hub next week (week of Nov 26)

Regional input for Canadian Council for Refugees Fall consultation Nov. 26 – 28

Canadian Council for Refugees is a national non-profit umbrella group outside of the government and representing refugee interests. Many MAP agencies are members. CCR is very active in presenting issues to govt.

Anyone can belong as an individual or a group

- MAP co-chairs will be there and many other MAP agencies
- The co-chairs want to bring the opinions of MAP

What issues would you like us to bring forward?

- Fran mentioned there are interesting workshops for anyone who wants to go, and that CCR wants to hear from us in the west.

- Please contact Jenny if you want to send a message to CCR.

MAP Housing Working Group Report and Discussion

Presenters: Loren Balisky & James Grunau (HWG co-chairs)

Background:

The HWG is working on **Towards a Housing Solution for Refugee Claimants in BC's Lower Mainland.**

The Province has funded us in response to the Forum last May

We are about halfway through time allotted by Province (Sept '18 – March -19) and we have built a solid foundation.

Updates on the project:

1. Loren:

- We are starting our **asset mapping research** regarding claimants: this is new to Canada, never done before.
- HWG wants to put all this information in an accessible place – doing a scoping exercise right now with the winners of the RFP as the **Asset Mapping Committee** has a recommendation as to who should take on the research.
- You will all be key participants to that research – thanks!

2. James:

- focussing on immediate housing solutions:
- **Alice Sundberg** has been hired to determine what is happening right now with housing referrals for claimants – she has met with MAP members around immediate pathway and longer-term pathway to housing.

The challenge is with the closing of Inland Refugee Society we know there's a gap – how can we address it?

We need to look for another funding source and champion to continue the work.

3. HWG is also looking at a long-term solution in terms of a welcoming center for RC. The idea is a 'landing space' with short term shelter (2-4 weeks)

- modular housing setup
- supported pathways to permanent housing in welcoming communities. We need to build supporting communities for RC's to move out to – more transitional housing.

Loren – introduced a **discussion exercise** to gather more opinions from MAP

Participants discussed in groups of 3 what were their hopes for a Welcome Center for RC's. The following **ideas** were gathered:

- A Reception center – with good flow out
- RC's be involved in design
- Thinking about ISS Welcome center – it's best to duplicate it for RC's
- Sometimes when the plan gets too big it gets complicated:
 - Who would be the leader?
 - Funding source?
 - Modular housing concept worth following in different cities
- Create an APP to login and learn about whole process including how to find employment and legal pathway as well as housing

- Integrating into communities important – educating local communities to accept claimants as equals.
- Consider approaching Bitco – other partners
- Provide 1 hub and transportation to appointments
- The Center should be seen as part of a pathway or solution.
- Must be a safe place for LGBTQ community and survivors of violence
- Must have universal bathrooms
- IRB to relocate their offices to affordable smaller centers
- IFH-accepting clinic, center with language support, play, art, intentional human-centered

MAP Information Working Group Report and Discussion

Presenter: Richard Belcham & Jenny Moss

We have met 4 times: Jenny requested all IWG members to identify themselves:

Bahar (BC Refugee Hub), Richard (inasmuch), Carl@ (Qmunity), Sara (VAST), Katherine (MOSAIC)

Also: Azadeh (UNHCR), Thanh (MPNH), Farah (AMSSA),

Created Terms of Reference and acclaimed: Co-chairs: Katherine, Richard and Carl@

Work accomplished so far:

LOGO:

Richard explained the activities and discussions IWG went through to suggest colors and a tagline to the designer Katie Lapi.

The logo was unveiled in some of the various options we have:



RATIONALE:

The Triangle represents mountains in BC landscape

Interlocking triangles represent community and partnership

Each triangle flows back and forth into each other showcasing interconnectivity and transformation

The colors were suggested by IWG

Comments:

Mariana (VAST) not sure about the word 'for' in the tagline.

The thinking was explained by Richard as:

Although a little word, for is about helping refugee claimants get their voices heard, it's about action too – MAP is working to make changes and keep refugee claimants in people's hearts and minds. Although we're not an advocacy group, for shows that we are united in making life better for refugee claimants.

In this case 'for' is not to say that MAP directly works for RC's but stands 'for' them.

WEBSITE

The IWG is also updating the website and Richard showed the model (not yet public) that has been thought through.

The front page will feature stories of member agencies, current MAP projects, claimant

stories.

It has the standard sections: *About, News, Issues, Ways to Help, Resources, Contact, and a password protected Member area.*

COMMENTS:

- Flip the image on the homepage

Richard explained that because the image has to be cellphone friendly it is a responsive design and will adjust to the medium used.

- Put a disclaimer on MAP doesn't do advice, direct sponsorship etc.
- Change 'What is a refugee?' to 'Who is a Refugee?'
- Will the website be in French? Possibly – though there are many other languages we would need to consider too. Perhaps down the line.
- A suggestion was made to consider cultural sensitivity training

Website will portray MAP as a connector – will be clear on what we do and don't do; as well as MAP's long-term plans.

We will begin slowly and can add as we go.

OTHER IWG PROJECTS

We are also working on a PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN and plan to launch an event in early spring to counter the negative publicity claimants are receiving.

Our long-term goal is to secure more funding and roll out a strategy around public education.

AGENCY UPDATES

Rainer (MSDPR)

MSDPR outreach at SOS-ISS outreach is on Tues & Thurs

Claudia – is our contact as primary connection for MAP at ISS and Options

Raul (Kinbrace)

Kinbrace has finished renovations and rooms are available –

NOTE: there is a new process based on vulnerabilities: so primarily families.

Peter (inasmuch)

Open House Dec 1st for new house – opening up to 2 families, and also have a space for a couple on Dec 1st

inasmuch is on Mayor's Committee on Homelessness

Sara (VAST)

Getting through it at Options tomorrow morning (Nov 23)

Starting to work in Victoria as soon as possible

VAST Open House Dec 19 starting at 1pm

Fran (Ready Tours)

Dec 28 next Ready Tour date with vacancies.

They've had their first referrals from Chilliwack

Katherine (MOSAIC)

Tues/Thurs 6:30 – 8:30 English conversation group, mixed level, 20 members very welcoming till Dec 18th
Drop-in

Alexandra (MOSAIC Stream B FV)

- Next Tuesday FV MAP will hold its first meeting – 1-3:30pm everyone welcome. Looking forward to supporting RC's in FV
-First Aid / Foodsafe Dec 8th at MOSAIC in Surrey – in Spanish

Louise (La Bousolle)

La Bousolle has moved to 312 Main Street, 2nd floor in DTES
They provide employment information and settlement services to French community

Jenny (MAP)

Residential Tenancy Workshops with space available:
- Nov 29th at DIVERSEcity 2 – 4pm for clients and staff
-Dec 6th at Journey Home 10 – 12pm for service providers.

The meeting adjourned at 12pm and members completed Feedback Forms

Next Meeting: January 24th, 2019 at ISSofBC, 2610 Victoria Drive, Vancouver

MAP gratefully acknowledges the funding provided by Vancity and the BC Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology, without which our work would not be possible.