



MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 27, 2020 - 9:30AM – 12:00 PM

Attendees: Jenny Lam (Options), Richard Belcham (inasmuch), Glenn Matsui (IRB), Felix Kongyuy (Baobab), Kanta Naik (SWIS/Abbotsford), Inas Elmenbbawl (Richmond SD), Rebecca Avendano (Richmond SD), Jerry Wu (Vancouver SD), Cecilia Tagle (Vancouver SD), Mahak Mahmoodi (Red Cross), Savleen Kaur (Options), Patricia Castillo (Options), Salih Arif (MOSAIC), Heather Forsyth (Options), Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC), Jacqui Sarvini (MOSAIC), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Lynda Truong (MOSAIC), Irene Koh (DIVERSEcity), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Paige Levirs (MSDPR), Valentina Stanciu (MSDPR), Joni Rose (MUNI), Michelle Murray-Schlitt (inasmuch), Tammy Johnson (inasmuch), Roberta Bower (inasmuch), Peter Prediger (Inasmuch), Devinder Chattha (PICS), Jaswinder Sandhu (PICS), Raminder Kang (PICS), Devinder Chattha (PICS), Wazhma Wakil (Umbrella MH), Cuahtemoc Resendes (Umbrella MH), Nazanin Moghadashi (Rainbow Refugee), Melissa Johnston (IRCC), Derek Chu (Kinbrace), Adriana Zepeda (Kinbrace), Mohammed Zaquot (Kinbrace), Ryan Reid (Kinbrace), Fran Gallo, Sophia Underhill (Ready Tour), Jhevoi Melville (VAST), Masha Rademakers (NSMS), Nicole Barwich (PCRS), Bahar Taheri (BC Refugee Hub), Katya Quintanilla (SOS-ISSofBC), Mahi Khalef (SOS-ISSofBC), Diana Barry (Vancity), Kathleen Cashin (Covenant House), Abeer Hatab (REACH Clinic), Dustin Lupick (HSABC), James Grunau (JHC), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Vanessa Roth (JHC), Patricia Mahecha (JHC), Nico Disini (JHS), Maria Cervino (Kiwassa NH), Tess Acton (Lawyer), Amina Osman (Jumpstart Refugee Talent), Muna Zaidalkilani (VCST), Yola Vargas (Independent), Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank), Richard Soo (ECC), Monique Gagne (UBC), Elmira Tayvar (UBC), Angela Bonita (MAP IWG), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Welcome from Co-Chair: Jenny Lam

Jenny acknowledged and thanked the Hunkameenam and Squamish peoples from whose traditional unceded territories she spoke, as well as other traditional territories where our members were located and work.

Jenny also **acknowledged the generous funding from Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI)** that makes MAP's work possible.

Jenny noted with sadness that **MCC Vancouver office** has had to shut its doors and added this message: MAP would like to acknowledge publicly the loss we all feel at the dissolution of the MCC Vancouver Office. Over 30 years of dedicated work with refugee claimants MCC was also a founding member of MAP's predecessor: the Vancouver Refugee Council with fellow members Inland Refugee Society, SOS and others. Our thanks go out to MCC's representatives to MAP:

Gerardo Munarriz and Andrew Bauman, as well as past staff and volunteers who accomplished so much to put refugee claimant support services where they are today. Thank you.

Jenny welcomed participants from **37 MAP member agencies**.

First time introductions:

- Muna Zaidalkilani– Victoria Coalition for the Survivors of Torture- in Victoria, and Burnaby Neighbourhood House - as coordinator and settlement worker with Migrant workers.
- Rebecca Avendano – Richmond SD – Manager for Welcome Centre at Richmond SD and SWIS team
- Monique Gagne – researcher at UBC – School of Population & Public Health in the Human Early Learning Partnership – undertaking research on the wellbeing of refugee children and attended the meeting as a guest.
- Abeer Hattab – middle eastern Cross-Cultural health promoter at REACH Clinic

Jenny outlined the **Agenda** and encouraged participants to add their agency update details to the chat for later sharing.

The **April 22 Minutes** were approved.

Announcements:

1) **Tess Acton** (Vancouver Law) is joining the **BC Immigration & Refugee Legal Clinic** (at ISSofBC) on June 7 as new refugee lawyer.

2) **Felix Kongyuy** (Baobab Inclusive Empowerment Society) – announced the **Needs Assessment of Blacks in British Columbia** survey. This survey aims to capture the experiences of people of African descent in the province. So far heard from close to 800 – but want a total of 1,500. So please reach out and help connect people to the survey and upcoming focus groups. It hopes to uncover ideas to change racism and discrimination in BC by hearing the voices and also making changes in policy based on proposals that will come out of the survey regarding issues such as immigration, education, mental health, housing, democratic participation among other issues. Connect to Felix if you have questions or would like to participate in one of the focus groups: biesbaobab@gmail.com

Survey can be found at: <https://do250.com/p/black-in-bc>

3) Glenn Matsui (IRB) – Immigration and Refugee Board Monthly Report:

We continue to see low numbers due to the pandemic, closure of borders and the reduction of international travel. As mentioned previously all are hearings are done using MS Teams platform and only exceptions are considered for in-person hearings.

Overall Iran, Mexico and India continue to be the top countries for referrals, inventory and case finalizations. Roughly these 3 countries make up about 60% of the region's work.

So far this year, April – May (27) we have finalized close to 125 files.

4) Information Working group: WORLD REFUGEE DAY EVENTS 2021

This is a 6-event program from June 15 – 20 to mark the 71st anniversary of the UN Convention and for us to celebrate the strengths, talents and accomplishments of refugees in our communities.

Information and Registration for the events can be found here <https://mapbc.org/world-refugee-day-celebrations-2021/>

- **Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)** described **Looking for Home:** a roundtable discussion between refugee claimants, MAP Housing Settlement Workers and BCNPHA member housing providers.
June 15 at 1pm - Limited registration to allow for relaxed conversation: those directly involved in providing housing and any refugee claimants past and present are welcome.
- **Richard Belcham (inasmuch)** introduced **the Power of Stories** – a literary event in coordination with Vancouver Public Library. 3 prize-winning authors of books about refugee journeys will discuss. The event will be preceded by the City of Vancouver Proclamation of World Refugee Day.
Thursday June 17 at 7pm – everyone welcome. <https://mapbc.org/the-power-of-stories-a-conversation-on-refugees-and-literature/>
- **Thanh Lam (Mount Pleasant NH) and Savleen Kaur (Options) – Stories Told & the Memories Left Behind**
Noon-hour storytelling event. 3 former refugees who will talk about objects from their past that have significance in their journeys and their lives still, and discuss with their hosts Thanh and Richard.
Friday June 18, 2021 at 12:00PM PST.
<https://mapbc.org/world-refugee-day-celebrations-2021/>
- **Michelle Murray-Schlitt (inasmuch) - Writers Workshop with the Shoe Project** -
Open to refugees, refugee claimants and protected people with Upper intermediate to Advanced English. Please pass on to clients and friends – only 12 spots available.
Saturday June 19: 10-1pm
<https://mapbc.org/world-refugee-day-writing-workshop/>
- **Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC)** – world premiere of the film **After Arrival**
The documentary explores the experiences of three LGBTQIA+ community leaders who came to Canada. Following there will be a panel discussion with the 3 leads moderated by Alexandra Dawley: Kristi Pinderi, Dennis Juarez and Norma Lize. The event will close with the music video 'Freedom' by Diamotims in honour of BLM/LGBTQ rights.

Saturday June 19, 7pm

<https://mapbc.org/after-arrival-film-premiere/>

See the trailer: <https://vimeo.com/530531460>

- **Angela Bonita – UNITED: an afternoon concert of Music & Poetry.**

MAP's classic World Refugee Day Concert – join us to celebrate art and creativity.

Poets: **Rawan Moon, Afshin Passikhani** accompanied by his daughter **Sadaf**

Musicians: reggae artist **TamanyaWaka** and concert violinist **Sari Aresh**

Sunday June 20, 2pm

<https://mapbc.org/united-an-afternoon-of-music-and-poetry-for-world-refugee-day-2021/>

Presentation: Settlement Workers in Schools program

3 School Districts share their experiences.

Kanta Naik – SWIS Liaison officer Abbotsford School District

SEE SLIDES ATTACHED

Of note:

Anyone registering does so at school board office – SD form covers all information about the family, eligibility for funding, their needs and which immigrant category they arrive under.

Form ensures that the student/family get referred to SWIS office.

Bussed students receive extra help

Once registered they let family know what help will be provided via SWIS worker, ESL support and Archway CS who work collaboratively; as well as a wide range of contacts in health etc.

Principal is key so they are also informed by SWIS about students in need.

Able to help with special issues like vaccinations – so seamless wraparound system is important

Help all newcomer groups + TFW workers – especially those who come from vulnerable groups e.g. no English, uncertain status. Educate colleagues about regions and immigrant categories families come from, and current events in those countries.

Stresses the confidential nature of all information to everyone.

Children often suffer from insecurity and anxiety the parents are suffering – they hear too much at home. Kanta counsels principal to try to promote a supportive environment for these children.

Examples of specific help:

Created a 'Family Support Worker' position and hired an Arabic speaking Syrian refugee to provide this service. This both supported the need and sent a message that jobs were available to this community.

Enhanced help for claimants:

- Technology helping teachers encourage the use of apps e.g. – **Talking Points** – this app helps teacher connect with the family through a translated text service. SWIS workers have been trained also to be able to use this app to support families.

- **Community integration** – encouraging participation in the community - Lovely art program that was created over 2.5 months with community members and a local artist who created a mosaic and shared much information about their mutual history and culture. (Artwork is in attached slides)

Inas Elmenbbawi: Settlement Worker in Schools program: Richmond School District Rebecca Avendano – SWIS Supervisor Richmond SD

Shared video of SWIS team in Richmond

110 RC students in Richmond – small number probably due to housing costs. Most RC's are in BC Housing.

Work from a case management model similar to Abbotsford working directly with parents to support students

Youth SWIS component supports youth directly in secondary schools.

Definitely have specialized services for claimants – but use same model for everyone.

Inas mentioned fear and anxiety of claimants and the claim process they go through, which is now longer with the pandemic.

Some children anxious because of lack of schooling – and pandemic is delaying everything.

Work permit issue is very difficult – delays in claim and PR status that adds to anxiety

Role as SWIS worker is to bridge between school and family – information about the family background and country of origin to the school and for the family the expectations of school.

There needs to be continuous follow up for these students and their families.

Individualized service based on assessed needs.

1st video about SWIS Program in Richmond SD:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdJcxeztdak>

2nd video about local resources: <https://youtu.be/-34pBhO4H9w>

SD Youtube

channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDzZ_FHcST8LsUXVZ5kzfGA/featured

Jerry Wu: Manager: SWIS Program Vancouver School District

Cecilia Tagle: Settlement Worker

SEE SLIDES ATTACHED

Jerry mentioned he has been employed at Vancouver SD for 30 years working with first nations and disabled populations as well as immigrant populations.

SWIS program exists in 21 SD's following same program and in collaboration.

Cecilia continued = she has many years of refugee claimant experience

2 groups that work together:

SWIS (help family with issues outside school) + Multicultural Liaison worker (inside issues)

Together there are 42 staff with different languages and the support comes through language and cultural knowledge.

Specific questions related to refugee claimants:

What are the barriers that claimant families face?

They are at a big disadvantage in comparison to other newcomers because don't have access to

all the services available to immigrants and sponsored refugees.

Might be a permanent disadvantage that keeps them at a level of poverty for a long time
Even though they do get lots of support from many school departments: teachers, counsellors and support staff.

Very delicate sometimes because of fear of disclosing their stories – long process to build needed trust, compounded often by mental health issues and anxiety.

Really difficult for children/youth who overhear things and don't understand or feel same stress.

Sometimes parents also don't understand their children's situation and we have to help parents understand these new issues/processes for children adjusting to school and the language.

Help parents adjust their expectations and be supportive of children as they go through their own adaptation.

How has the pandemic affected refugee claimant families?

- Lack of technology and internet connection meant difficulties for school.
- Those without MSP and relying on IFH brought up many problems for those who don't understand the system.
- Housing a challenge as big families are living in small spaces and it is hard to continue studies at home.
- Some lost their jobs and had a very difficult time accessing social benefits.

Tips for registration at school

Newcomer Welcome Center in South Vancouver – though now all registration is online

Must go for an interview to show documents and meet the staff there.

See slide for documents needed that must be uploaded.

Overall structure and procedures

Jerry:

Multicultural Liaison team started in 1977 - have 23 staff with 9 languages (listen to stats)

SWIS team started in 2007 with 18 settlement workers with 16 different languages.

4 staff focusing on youth

So in total Vancouver has 45 frontline staff to help newcomers with challenges in school or in the community. Largest group across Canada.

Access without Fear Policy in Vancouver – so if a child has no documents they can still come to school. Staff are trained to assist families and senior management understand even if documents are missing.

List of needed documents for registration is long but the district can work with documents missing as long as the family are helped by a worker from one of the 2 teams to support them.

Asked MAP members to help claimants connect with someone from SWIS team to help them with registration hurdles.

Jerry works closely with District Principals and has never in last 4 years turned away a refugee claimant child who wishes to attend school.

Important keyword: **Ordinary Resident** - is the student **ORDINARILY RESIDENT IN BC**? Want to know that the family will stay.

Jenny thanked all the speakers and questions were taken in the breakout room.

Break

BC Refugee Hub: Quantitative and qualitative update on Refugee Claimants in the Lower Mainland – Bahar Taheri.

For World Refugee Day – BC Refugee Hub has partnered with a group called **Unravelling Islam** (BC Govt convened on anti-racism) to panel discussions on 3 different topics with many speakers. June 20 – in the evening. More news to come.

Request for submissions – service providers success stories spotlight – best practices and major accomplishments to share broadly in programs/initiatives, best practices to support refugees. See info and submission document:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t9ccM1P62Ko7Ymp-hgQqpBfOOQPZJyai/view?usp=sharing>

Send completed WORD doc to Bahar at refugeehub@issbc.org

Monthly webinars and Statistical Bulletin starting up again after World Refugee Day

Report on BC CHARMS: Housing Referral Project – Marzieh Nezakat: MOSAIC

2 updates:

Report book will be published soon – storytelling approach with many photos is under review.

Database – after thorough scoping exercise BC CHARMS decided to customize an existing system – Social Solutions was found to be ideal candidate as they specialize in human services – will use Apricot 360.

Draft contract is waiting for funder approval to start customization in June. There will be 3 consultants assisting with building and testing: technical, privacy and security consultants.

More news in June.

Short presentation by Umbrella Multicultural Coop staff: SEE SLIDES ATTACHED

Cuahtémoc Resendes and Wazhma Wakil

COVID-19 Vaccinations: how to help your clients register and get vaccinated

MAP has been sending out vaccination updates and information regularly, but it has come to our attention that many vulnerable clients have barriers to getting vaccinated. Umbrella Multicultural Health Coop have experience in helping their patients access vaccination and shared some tips with MAP.

Providing team-based help to those who are undocumented to get registered for vaccinations including farm workers in the Fraser Valley. Cuahtémoc is the lead health broker on this team

and shared his experience and suggestions:

Working in the Fraser Valley with Spanish speaking temporary farm workers providing healthcare and speech therapy on a pop-up basis.

How they provide assistance about vaccinations:

- They always communicate via Whatsapp – constantly sending info about Covid and vaccinations.
- TFW don't have MSP so they cannot register online – but if they call 1-833-838-2323 they can be given a temporary health number for vaccination only. Only works by phone.
- Problem is many TFW's don't have a local number and the system doesn't work with overseas phone numbers. The person HAS to be present on the line with cross cultural health broker to get the temporary health number.
- Phone interpretation is not immediate – you need to navigate a number of menus all in English to get to an interpreter.
- Also the system cannot send a text message of confirmation to international number
- Some TFW's leave Canada before 2nd dose – trying to accelerate the process for them.
- Small farms have the most difficulty. The large farms are told when 2nd vaccinations will be available for them as a group, but smaller farms don't have this service.

Questions & Comments:

Thanh Lam (MPNH): thanked Umbrella for taking the time to help those for whom the system is not well designed and for sharing these issues with MAP so more people can get vaccinated.

For more help you can contact: info@umbrellacoop.ca or 604-553-0633

Question: How are Umbrella Mobile Clinics working since Covid?

Working virtually via DOXI or IAP (?)

Do you need volunteers? Yes, happy to take volunteers for virtual work.

Agency Updates recorded in the CHAT are attached.

The **Feedback Poll** was completed with close to 100% approval to all questions.

Adjourned early: Next meeting: June 24 – Supporting LGBTQI claimants at Rainbow Refugee and Beyond.