



## MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 22, 2020 - 9:30AM – 12:00 PM

**Attendees:** Jenny Lam (Options), Richard Belcham (inasmuch), Barry Growe (JHC), Glenn Matsui (IRB), Andrew Bauman MCC, Gerardo Munarriz (MCC), Kevin Barkowsky (MCC Food Bank), Mahak Mahmoodi (Red Cross), Savleen Kaur (Options), Iris Solorzano (Options), Heather Forsyth (Options), Jacqui Sarvini (MOSAIC), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Lynda Truong (MOSAIC), Adrienne Bale (DIVERSEcity), Garfield Hunter (DIVERSEcity), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Paige Levirs (MSDPR), Valentina Stanciu (MSDPR), Michelle Murray-Schlitt (inasmuch), Tammy Johnson (inasmuch), Roberta Bower (inasmuch), Devinder Chattha (PICS), Jaswinder Sandhu (PICS), Wazhma Wakil (Umbrella MH), Nazanin Moghadashi (Rainbow Refugee), Ana Maria Bustamente (Burnaby Family Life), Joni Rose (MUNI), Alex Kang (MUNI), Robyn Uhl (MUNI), Carillon Kinley (IRCC), Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Ryan Reid (Kinbrace), Fran Gallo, Sophia Underhill (Ready Tour), Jhevoi Melville (VAST), Sara Lopez (VAST), Mariana Martinez V. (VAST), Masha Rademakers (NSMS), Nicole Barwich (PCRS), Sabrina Dumitra (AMSSA), Malaz Sebai (JumpStart Refugee Talent), Ann Barnard Ball (New Hope CS), Mahi Khalef (SOS-ISSofBC), Julia Wu (bc211), Diana Barry (Vancity), Kathleen Cashin (Covenant House), Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), James Grunau (JHC), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Vanessa Roth (JHC), Doug Peat (JHC), Anastasia Gaisenk (PIRS), Valerie Lai (PIRS), Mainu Ahmed (Muslim Food Bank), Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank), Alan Huang (SND Division), Richard Soo (ECC), Inas Elmenbbawl (Richmond SD), Winnie Lee (ICAV), Jenny Moss (MAP)

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**Welcome from** Co-Chair: Richard Belcham

**Richard acknowledged and thanked** the Sto:lo peoples from whose traditional unceded territories he was speaking, and all unceded territories on this, Earth Day.

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

Richard welcomed participants from **35 MAP member agencies**.

*First time introductions:*

- Heather Forsyth – is a new practicum student at Options. She is taking her MSW at Wilfrid Laurier
- Inas Elmenbbawl – is a SWIS worker at Richmond School District
- Lynda Truong – new practicum student at BC CHARMS project (MOSAIC)
- Jaswinder Sandhu – new settlement worker at PICS

- Anasatasia Gaisenok – new at Pacific Immigrant Resource Society (PIRS) as Program Manager
- Malaz Sebai – Jumpstart Refugee Talent – taking over as Director from Masa, for BC area
- Nicole Barwich – with PRCS Reach program for youth in Surrey – here for Kai and Vicki.

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

The **March 25 Minutes** were approved with the addition from the Immigration Research Board.

There was one announcement:

**Loren Balisky (Director of Engagement at Kinbrace Community Society)**

Embarking on a research project: **Changing the Way we Welcome Refugee Claimants** – funded through a Vancouver Foundation change grant.

While recognizing the creep that happens even in small organizations in the way refugees are welcomed the project will investigate what things were the most affirming for claimants on arrival and settling in? Beneficial and human responses.

(See attached slide for project goals)

RFP launched today for researchers: [CLICK HERE](#) to see the RFP – please share widely to researchers with experience with refugee claimants.

Loren hopes MAP members will help connecting refugee claimants to the research – but later.

**Presentation: What we learned from the Emergency Planning Survey**

Presenter: **Richard Belcham / MAP Co-chair**

**(SLIDES ATTACHED)**

Richard reminded everyone of material covered last month and noted:

- Goal is to establish a plan for if and when there is a need to respond to a sudden arrival of claimants. No evidence at this time that there will be an increase.
- 7 steps of the process: we have completed the survey, so we are now at the point of mapping of resources and gaps from our survey results and conversations with MAP members today. This will also include suggestions as to how to coordinate a response and how to manage communications externally.
- For planning purposes ONLY we decided to double the numbers of refugee claimants received before the pandemic (so assumed arrival of 6,000 claimants) and that 4,000 arrive in first 6 months.
- 30 responses to the survey request

## **Key themes from the survey results:**

### **OVERALL HIGHLIGHTS**

- Incredible range and depth of services and support given to RC's - despite challenges!
- Gaps exist - especially for self-navigation of services – how can we empower RC's to help themselves.
- Communities want to be involved - involvement is key for dealing with an increase
- Government support can help to build flexible systems
- Members pleased MAP is addressing this issue.

### **CAPACITY AND SERVICE LEVEL:**

- Some double counting exists but we are serving a large number of claimants
- Discrepancies exist, but shows our planning total is realistic
- Service from downtown Vancouver through the Fraser Valley

### **HOUSING:**

- Limited options available at all points - emergency shelter, transitional, supportive housing
  - Emergency shelter space is limited:
    - Lack of space dedicated to refugee claimants
    - No dedicated space for single men or large families
    - Shelter can have a detrimental health effect
  - Community programs in place that could be expanded
  - Suggestions include rental subsidies, modular housing, utilizing student accommodation, pulling in industry connections like Meanwhile Spaces etc.
- HWG will be a big asset in helping face many challenges.

### **SETTLEMENT & ORIENTATION:**

- Incredible range of services being delivered by member agencies
- Relies on settlement workers, outreach workers, community workers and volunteers
- Support exists generally from arrival through to PR status
- Help with the big things as well as the small details – really important human element.
- Referrals are key
- There's a need for additional settlement workers if a sudden increase happens.
- Suggestions include using volunteers for community-type settlement work, self-service online tools, need for access to documents, flexibility on how to provide settlement like group sessions, dedicated resource centre – important in Vancouver and FV.

**DONATIONS:**

- Very generous communities across BC
- Many agencies provide grocery gift cards, phone cards, clothing, toys, hygiene products etc.
- Strong donor bases available in case of greater need
- Faith-based groups are good supporters
- Challenges of storage and distribution of donated items
- Ideas include: centralized lists of needs and donors – possibly via an app; community donation drives, community sponsorship groups, ensuring donors know their donations go direct to help - not just to overheads

**LEGAL SUPPORT:** (very challenging area)

- Most agencies only make referrals for legal support to: Legal Aid BC, private lawyers, legal advocates, legal clinics.
- Sometimes the responsibility is on refugee claimants to do more legal work
- Gaps in coverage for those who are not eligible for legal aid, for appeals and PRRA, and H&C applications, as well as language barriers.
- Gaps in SOGIESC persecution expertise as well as trans competent services.
- Challenges include limited or restricted legal aid funding, no refugee claimant lawyers outside Metro Vancouver
- Ideas for expansion included creating a list of Legal Aid lawyers, using UBC Law Students Legal Advice program, provision of more community based legal aid workshops, and more pro-bono lawyers in different regions.

**FOOD SUPPORT:**

- Many agencies provide food support across BC including: Emergency hampers, grocery cards, regular food hampers, vouchers, grocery basics in transitional houses, partnerships with food companies and shelter-provided meals.
- Gaps include community meals from agencies are often just once in a while and there may not be options for individuals who have dietary restrictions.
- Food banks can be difficult to access for those that rely on public transportation or have disabilities.
- Claimants may have challenges getting registered at a food bank due to lack of id. And there may be lack of options for those with dietary restrictions.
- Lots of ideas around expansion via partnership with grocery stores, faith groups and community groups

**ELL LEARNING SUPPORT:**

- Lots of conversation circles, but much less available in structured lessons
- Some real expertise in sector with focus on Canadian culture

- Referrals to community groups
- Gaps include ineligibility for refugee claimants (e.g., to LINC), conversation circles being impacted by COVID19, digital literacy, lack of classroom space.
- Big opportunity for community expansion and volunteering and for govt-funded EL support to RC's (possibly IRCC)

#### **TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION:**

- Many agencies have language skills, about 50% offer translation or interpretation.
- Wide variety of languages in house but a desire for more
- Many referrals to MOSAIC services and Google Translate is very popular!
- Gaps include challenges around inter-agency referrals, costs, access to telephone translation, lists of qualified translators etc.
- Ideas include creating a volunteer network of interpreters and translators, database of settlement workers and the languages they speak, offer of "How to Simplify Your Language" guide. Tailoring your language to make it easier to read by RC's

#### **EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT:**

- Around half agencies offer these programs or refer: Resume review, employment readiness workshops, one-on-one training, interview practice, ELL around jobs, intro to Canadian workplace culture, certified courses (e.g., First Aid).
- Many agencies make referrals to established employment programs.
- Gaps include knowledge of worker's rights, mentorship of RC's, computer training for youth, support to women, credential recognition, limited transit-to-work options.
- Ideas: Govt fast-tracking of degrees, considering student loans or a guide for sector to use.

#### **EDUCATION:**

- Nearly all agencies work with SWIS workers (who have also partnered with MAP) who provide essential link.
- Some have created partnerships with universities and community schools.
- GAPS: Credential recognition – v. important area
  - RC's fear the school system, e.g., concerned that the authorities might report to Immigration.
  - Teenagers need more support
  - Collaboration between institutions.
- Ideas: More after school clubs, vocational training, support to parents on the school system

## **HEALTH:**

- Majority of agencies don't provide health, but there are some amazing agencies who do and are members of MAP.
- All help RC's navigate the healthcare system.
- GAPS: include health care providers' knowledge of IFH  
barriers for trans folks accessing healthcare,  
interpretation/translation  
delays in getting IFH.  
lack of vision/dental care – some agencies help.
- Ideas: IFH education webinars for agencies, more community health centers, complete List of IFH capable health practitioners

## **MENTAL HEALTH:**

- Many agencies refer to VAST, + other services available 1:1,
- Challenges: not enough mental healthcare  
waitlists,  
lack of IFH funding  
Cultural competency,  
trans and LGBTQ resources
- Suggestions: recruiting caseworkers to help with culture and language support, extending IFH & MSP coverage, Trauma informed staff training.

## **TECHNOLOGY:**

- Some agencies offer loaner laptops and cell phones.
- Some agencies offer training/advice/workshops in digital literacy.
- Offer of a digital literacy course.
- Community expansion could include experts and private companies, volunteer teachers and used equipment.
- Gaps included: need for cell phones more important – and they are expensive. Same with internet access cell phone plans and devices.
- Ideas: create a laptop lounge, self-help videos, allocated tech funding, partnership with tech companies; mobile versions of agency websites

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

- Very patchy transit services available across Lower Mainland
- Some agencies offer passes, some accompany or teach how to get to places, others do not.

- Gaps include COVID has meant volunteers can't help, overall lack of public transportation, business insurance on volunteer cars, general funding for transit, and car-centric nature of BC.
- funding for transit needed  
Ideas: advocacy with BC Transit, expansion of low-cost passes, partnership with ride-share apps, coordinated community van.

From the Chat: BC Transit now free for kids under 12.

#### **OTHER GAPS & IDEAS:**

- Vancity very engaged
- Faith-based groups very supportive to RC's and agencies
- Single website for claimants in multiple languages
- Create a Map to detail services for claimants + newcomer's guide specifically for RC's.
- Designated communication person to ensure information is accurate and consistent.
- Education for service providers and community about 'who is a refugee claimant' (as compared with sponsored refugees)
- (From chat: Arrival Advisor app (PeaceGeeks) is working towards having a very broad database of support services available to newcomers in BC.)

**AIM:** that the survey results will generate lots of conversation and ideas in breakout rooms.

#### **NOTE:**

- Please do survey if still haven't – it remains live at: <https://mapbc.org/map-emergency-plan-survey/>
- Next steps will be to collate all the feedback and compile a Draft report to MAP members.
- Then working with MAP members, government and funders to work towards an implementation.

Richard thanked Barry Growe for his invaluable help in this planning as well as Alexandra Dawley for her help reaching agencies in the Fraser Valley, and MAP Executive support.

There were no questions

#### **Working groups were opened and participants were divided into 5 groups to discuss:**

How to solve the challenges we face? Brainstorm ideas and propose solutions.

Facilitators: **Richard Belcham / MAP Co-chair and Working Group leaders:**

- Coordination – Richard Belcham
- External Communications – Barry Growe
- Housing and Shelter – Brad Kinnie
- Settlement and Support – Jenny Lam
- Ideas and Innovations – Mahi Khalaf

**The individual groups then provided feedback to the main group on their 3 main points:**

#### **COORDINATION GROUP**

1. We need a specific coordinator for the response.
2. Need coordination of the informal community response.
3. Key enabling factor will be technology.

#### **COMMUNICATION GROUP**

1. Going to be a lot of fears in Canadian public that need to be addressed: job-loss, financial burden on governments, housing.
2. Reassure public that MAP agencies are here with a plan to help those arriving – it won't be chaos – educate the public about MAP member agencies and their work.
3. Need to communicate exceptionally well with RC's (website / newcomer guide) and the government (keep govt. well-informed on agency capacity and needs)

#### **HOUSING**

1. Multi-sector and multi-ministry collaboration necessary in relation to housing.
2. Educational need for landlords and housing providers about hosting RC's.
3. Strengthen the welcome to RC's through friendship so they can integrate faster to Canada.

#### **SETTLEMENT**

1. Collaborating with bc211 to have a robust and updated database and referral.
2. Building collaboration and networking between agencies and organizations
3. Increasing funding – that is inclusive of RC's.

#### **IDEAS & INNOVATIONS**

1. Centralized information system and network of sharing between organizations – about services and individual claimants – to reduce people falling through the cracks.
2. List of resources and services.



3. Case Management System online – with ownership and permission of clients to avoid duplication.

Richard thanked everyone for their knowledge and willingness to engage.

Going forward MAP will create a task force (or action group) to take this knowledge forward to recommendations.

## **Break**

**BC Refugee Hub:** Quantitative and qualitative update on Refugee Claimants in the Lower Mainland – provided by Maki Khalaf for Bahar Taheri.

- Webinar from March 17 on storytelling has been posted online under Training.
- Statistics for first quarter 2021 will be released at end of this month.
- Thanks for your response to the BC Refugee Hub feedback survey.
- Please share updates to Refugee Hub – updated weekly: [refugeehub@issbc.org](mailto:refugeehub@issbc.org)

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

- The project has all the documents needed to start design.
- Meanwhile working on PIA procedure – to ensure that all BC privacy law is upheld.
- They have identified a potential vendor and have had meetings which will allow for the implementation of the database soon.
- Report first draft is under review and will be published in the summer.

NEWS! BC Charms project included another deliverable that was to enhance housing supply for RC's – can announce that meetings have begun with housing providers that have been particularly useful.

## **Agency Updates concerning refugee claimants (please see CHAT notes for detail)**

- **Dr. Garfield Hunter:**  
**Update on research on LGBTQ Refugee Claimants and their Housing Journeys** – over last few months the team has been involved in research:
  - Surveyed 14 housing settlement organizations in metro Vancouver
  - 12 interviews with LGBTQ refugees and others in focus groups.Draft report sent to consortium (DIVERSEcity, Rainbow Refugee and MOSAIC) and next month they can make a presentation to MAP and their stakeholders.

- **Doug Peat (Journey Home)**

Vancouver Foundation has supported JHC with a large grant to support the Meanwhile Spaces project.

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

**Adjourned early:** Next meeting: May 27, 2021 online.