



MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 21, 2019 9:30AM - 12:00PM

Location: MOSAIC: 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

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

Attendees: Mariana Martinez Vieyra (VAST), Richard Belcham (inasmuch), Alissa Cook (inasmuch), Tammy Johnson (inasmuch), Saleem Spindari (MOSAIC), Mia Morin (Vancity), Claudia Buendia (MSDPR), John Bethell (MSDPR), Valentina Stanciu (MSDPR), Sarah Ngo (IRCC), Vicki Chiu (MJTT), Fran Gallo (Kinbrace), Sophia Underhill (Kinbrace guest), Gerardo Munariz (MCC), Teresa Fuller (MCC/FUSMC), Tony Bernardo (IRB), Wendy Abassi (IRB), Katherine Griffin (MOSAIC), Zarghoona Wakil (MOSAIC), Kuol Biong (MOSAIC), Sabrina Dumitra (AMSSA), Richard Soo (East Catholic Church), Brad Kinnie (Journey Home Community); Vanessa Roth (JHC), Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC), Julia Wu (bc211); Fiona Stevenson (DIVERSEcity), Jenny Lam (Options), Khim Tan (Options), Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Wazhma Wakil (Umbrella HCC), Meaad Alharbi (SOS), Maria Cervino (Kiwassa NH), Mercy Mactribouy (Belkin CCMS), Alexandra Lane (Carnegie Outreach), Pedro Ramirez (REACH CHC), Patricia Mahecha (Strathcona HS), Amira Halperin (UBC), Ali Mustafa (Independent), Debbie Boehm (Freedom for Immigrants USA), Jenny Moss (MAP), Moe Z (MAP Volunteer)

By phone: Devinder Chattha (PICS), Winnie Lee (Inter-cultural Association of Greater Victoria), Sara Lopez (VAST), Iris Solorzano (Options), Alvaro Moreno (Victoria Coalition for Survivors of Torture)

Regrets: Bridget Bell (IRB), Arran Smith (Canadian Red Cross), Ryan Reid (Kinbrace) Dustin Lupick (HSABC), Gulalai Habib (Kiwassa), Bahar Taheri (BC Refugee Hub)

The meeting was called to order by **MAP Co-Chair: Mariana Martinez Vieyra (VAST)**

- Mariana acknowledged the indigenous territory where we met, and thanks were expressed to Vancity and MJTT for the funding that supports MAP.

Welcome and Introductions, including our participants on videoconference.

- **The agenda was approved with the addition of a request to include:**

ANNOUNCEMENT: Request for support to CARES for Equitable Health briefing document: Building Ties with the Health System. **ACCEPTED**

- Review of **October 24, 2019 Minutes** – **approved** with the granting of a request by Bridget Bell (IRB) to delete the statistics shared at the meeting. For the foreseeable future statistics will be shared verbally but not in writing.

- **Announcement:** Request for support to CARES for Equitable Health briefing document: Building Ties with the Health System.
Presented by: Zarghoona Wakil, (MOSAIC)

Zarghoona outlined the work of CARES for EH (Community Alliance of Ethnocultural Services for Equitable Health Committee) and the recommendations contained in their Briefing Note: Building Ties with the Health System for better services for newcomers and refugees. (attached)

Many agencies and individuals have already signed on by sending their names (and logos) to the committee via Omar at info@bchealthcoalition.ca. MAP members are encouraged to read the letter and sign on too.

PRESENTATION: Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Overview

Presenter: John Bethell, Manager of Community Relations & Service Quality

Claudia Buendia, Community Integration Specialist

The presentation is attached. Claudia described the current service provision at MSDPR including eligibility, application process, benefits applicable etc. John provided an overview of current discussions and new projects and provided the following resources for MAP members:

Rent bank news release <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019SDPR0043-001206>

Find out more about SPARC BC: <https://www.sparc.bc.ca/>

TogetherBC, B.C.'s first poverty reduction strategy:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/togetherbc.pdf>

Homes for B.C., a 30-point Plan for Housing Affordability in British Columbia:

https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/homesbc/2018_homes_for_bc.pdf

Building BC: Rapid Response to Homelessness program:

<https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services/Building-BC/rapid-response-homelessness>

The new **Office of Homelessness Coordination** is working across government and with community partners to deliver a co-ordinated response to homelessness. The office's approach is based on four pillars:

- Prevention, to make homelessness a rare occurrence;
- An immediate response, to make the experience brief;
- Stability so that homelessness is a one-time occurrence; and
- Working together to co-ordinate actions on homelessness.

With BC Housing and other partners, the office is helping to co-ordinate the second provincewide homeless count, to be conducted in spring 2020.

A map showing the location of all announced provincially funded housing projects in B.C. is available online:

<https://www.bchousing.org/homes-for-BC>

Q & A

Q: Why does the child tax credit cease after three months?

A: There is a three-month limit on the benefit. The system only allows for three months' benefit at a time – applicant needs to ask for an override to continue receiving.

Q: MSP - What is the client's responsibility (after the client/service provides necessary information e.g.: work permits and SIN number to start MSP healthcare? What more can be done to make sure that MSP is provided?

A: MSDPR can only provide 42 days – once client is in the MSDPR system he/she needs to fulfill ID requirements through ICBC, including photo ID.

Note: Claimants facing any problem with ICBC regarding MSP papers, their coverage and photo ID that results in them being turned away, please report to Claudia so she can bring to John's attention.

Q: Families who are not eligible for a positive decision by the Protection Division, are they eligible to get income assistance from ministry?

A: Failed refugee claimants going through an appeal process or who have an enforceable deportation order or are going through the risk assessment, can be eligible for assistance.

NOTE: If they are not failed claimants (new PRAA system clients) they would not be eligible. But the ministry will have to look at each case because sometimes clients misinterpret their documents.

Q: In the case of families who have been here for more than 18 months and are not eligible to get Child Tax benefit because their refugee status has not been decided; Are they eligible to get the family bonus?

A: Yes, the ministry can extend it beyond the 12-18 months but still the ministry has to check to prove that the family have attempted to apply and what's caused the delay.

Q: What is the right amount of exemption/ deduction for working families of two, is it \$400 or \$600?

A: The ministry's table of deduction is available on the website and can be checked for individual cases.

Q: (PWD) Disability Benefit – what about mental disabilities? These clients are not getting approved.

A: That's on a case by case basis. What sometimes happens is that the doctor isn't checking moderate or severe disability in the application. The ministry needs to know in detail what the limitations are, so it's best to describe the worst day of pain and struggle. Mental same as physical conditions.

Q: Where can I refer Refugee Claimants to fill section two and three of the PWD application?

A: You can send them to Zaytuna Services Society in Surrey if they need help in section one and speak Arabic.

Q: Is there any likelihood of an increase in the shelter portion?

A: In a short answer, yes. They are looking at new rates, the problem is that as soon as the rates are raised landlords put up the rent. So, the ministry is trying to figure out a way to coordinate with other ministries to create policy to avoid this. However, it still doesn't mean it would be an increase for everyone.

Note: MSDPR are now providing training on Social Assistance and PWD for MAP members. Please contact Claudia at Claudia.Buendia@gov.bc.ca to arrange.

Break

- **Quantitative and qualitative update on Refugee Claimants in the Lower Mainland**
Presenter: Meaad Alharbi (SOS) for Bahar Taheri, BC Refugee Hub
 1. BC Refugee Hub had just released the comprehensive list of English conversation circles on their website and the link can be found on the front page of <https://bcrefugeehub.ca/> and if other agencies are offering English circles, please email refugeehub@issbc.org to be added.
 2. Webinar on November 26th with Rosa Arteaga from BWSS, titled: Supporting women with precarious immigration status; refugees and refugee claimants facing domestic violence and safety assessment.
 3. Two in-person training sessions: Dec 5 - Surrey and Dec 6 - Vancouver, titled: Evaluation of programs for Refugees. Focus on evaluation and capacity building. Open to any agency that supports and works with refugees and refugee claimants. To register, contact Bahar via BC Refugee Hub website.
- **Canadian Council for Refugees Consultation: November 28 – 30**
Saleem Spindari (MOSAIC) and Mariana Martinez Vieyra (VAST)
Nov 28 – 30th in Ottawa

Saleem:

We will bring MAP members' comments regarding issues pertaining to claimants to CCR, BC always participates fully.

- One of the sessions that Saleem (MOSAIC) will run is an open discussion with CBSA. So please describe any issues or questions that Saleem can bring forward.
- Another important discussion will be with the IRB.
- There will also be an Executive election: some of the members are running again and some are new. If you are a member and attending please look at the nominations and try to include voices of BC. If your organization is a member, or you are an individual member and you haven't renewed your membership with CCR, make sure to do so before the consultation starts so you can vote.

Mariana:

The Inland Working Group she co-chairs represents claimant issues.

There will be a special session on border issues and the new PRAA process (with Fran):

Fran:

The panel organized at CCR will include Martin Mendell, a senior manager at IRCC and others. The panel will describe the new PRAA hearings, as we haven't seen any of these hearings yet. In addition, Stephanie Valois (lawyer), Alexandra, Jennie Jeans, FCJ Toronto, will be on the panel. These sessions are very useful as government officials are responding to questions and concerns that CCR members have.

For this panel please send input by email to Mariana or Fran to prepare.

Jenny:

There will also be a local opportunity to bring claimant issues forward on Monday Nov 25th, at a meeting with Azadeh Tamjeedi, UNHCR rep. Register to attend with Jenny.

Q&A:

1. For Saleem – the growing issue of secession of status among refugees. Clients currently in the process of applying for their citizenship are receiving letters from CBSA of possible revocation of PR. These letters state that they might get their PR or refugee status revoked. It's an injustice. Canada is the only country that gives refugees PR status, but at the same time, they want to take it away from them. It's not fair and it doesn't make sense. Please request to cease this practice.

There was further clarification of the problem and an assurance that this issue will be taken to CCR.

2. MSDPR staff would like to see a sample of the new documents given to border crossers who will enter the new PRAA interview process – in order to compare. MSDPR will take this up with policy managers at the ministry.

SALEEM: A meeting took place in September with IRCC and their director general. When the issue of documentation was the Director General said that their understanding was that the provincial governments would use that document (pink form) as an accepted document for the purpose of applying for income assistance. And when IRCC was asked if they had shared that information with their provincial counterparts, the Director General said that was his understanding.

There is a lack of information and sometimes inconsistency in documentation resulting in different results re: work permits, welfare etc.

IRCC had promised to have things synchronized but it has been very challenging. CCR will bring this up with the appropriate government contacts.

For now, please make sure that applicants understand so as to not increase numbers of homeless people and vulnerability for applicants.

MARIANA: Suggested there be some kind of clarification on top of the Pink paper that says "this form makes you eligible to apply for social assistance and receive medical services". CCR will also be focussing on the Americas and Migration Flow.

- **Update on the MJTT project: Refugee Claimant Housing Referral and Management System**

Richard Belcham and Saleem Spindari

To recap MAP has been offered the opportunity through a MJTT-funded project to design a central intake and referral system for refugee claimant housing. At the last meeting we agreed on the criteria for application of a lead agency and on the Advisory Committee roles. MOSAIC won MAP's endorsement to be lead agency.

Since the last meeting, the proposal was submitted by MOSAIC to MJTT. There are some amendments and clarifications required; this will be done today, and the proposal re-submitted once it has Executive approval.

The budget had been submitted for the entire amount (\$1.2 m) without separating it into different fiscal years (2020 – 2022). This will also be adjusted and once approved by MAP executive it too will be submitted to the ministry.

As soon as approval is received from MJTT, then the bid will be posted on BC Bid for a couple of weeks then it becomes final if no concerns are raised after it's posted. MAP will also invite nominations for the Advisory Committee at that point.

Everyone will be updated through MAP bulletins so you know where the process is and how it's coming along.

Hearing from you! Sector dialogue based on the question:

What specific issue pertaining to refugee claimants do you think is important?

The following topics were suggested, Housing was taken for granted as #1:

- Refugee claimant housing at all stages
- Funding for mental health.
- Completing PWD form (Sections 2&3) for non-English speakers in a non-traumatic way
- Medical practitioners – education about refugee claimants.
- SWIS Workers – to formally include refugee claimants.
- Safe 3rd Country legislation
- Dental health.
- Trauma-informed medical services
- Transit costs.
- Regional issues for RC's in BC
- 'Bills for babies' – how to streamline MSP services application for newborns
- Financial literacy; where they go prior to opening up an account and learning about credit cards and how to use them wisely.

- Being careful of Immigration Consultants: exploitation of vulnerable minorities.
- Better channel of communication with Canadian Border Services Agency and ministries (e.g. when it comes to deportation orders). More updates to MAP.
- MAP BC and FV MAP to work closer together.
- Family shelters.

MAP Co-chairs will discuss these suggestions when planning 2020's goals.

Agency Updates

Catherine (MOSAIC)

- Conversation circle for next week is canceled due to the possible transit strike. But will continue on December 4th and 11th with Spanish, French and Arabic support.
- Rescheduling the job application prep resume workshops that were going to be next Thursday and Friday.
- And Katherine is always available to meet one on one with clients for employment related support.

Meaad (SOS)

- Refugee claimants' conversation circle classes every Saturday from 1 pm - 3pm.
- Also distributing the SIM cards with a free one-month plan from TELUS.

Brad (Journey Home CS)

- Hosting a Christmas celebration to kick off the season next Friday night.

Mariana (VAST)

- Open House in Vancouver at the Welcome Center, all invited: Tuesday, December 4th, Details to be sent by Jenny in the bulletin.

Pedro (REACH CHC)

- UPCC service starting – similar to hospital emergency care
- Dec 5th Open House for consultations – all invited to come and learn about the new system from doctors, nurses, social workers.

Tony (IRB)

(Permission was granted by IRB HQ for MAP to publish the following statistics. Thank you!)

October referrals:

First Scheduled Place of Appearance*	Principal & Associate	Principal Only	Top countries in each city (PCs)
Vancouver	335	194	Iran 79, India 37, Afghanistan 13, Mexico 10

Sireen (Zaytuna CS)

- Holiday pop up markets in Surrey in partnership with Vancity.
If you have any women entrepreneurs that would like to sell their products at the branch, they can participate. Contact Sireen at sireen.elnashar@zaytuna.ca

Julia (BC 211)

- Refugee claimant booklets are being updated. If you do have any suggestions to add, or things that need to be updated, please let her know by email Julia@BC211.ca

Fran (Kinbrace)

- Taking registrations for January 31 Ready Tour
- Good news! Kinbrace, CBSA and IRB initiated the detainee ready tours and had first one this week.

Jenny (Options)

- In partnership with VANCITY running basic banking innovation workshops and will have one in December.
- Partnership with VAST for support groups really positive.
- Helping claimants with their income assistance applications through MSDPR staff person (Valentina) very useful.
- Two upcoming hiring events for the claimants and will send more information through MAP.

Richard (inasmuch)

New website – check it out at www.inasmuch.ca

Feedback forms completed and adjournment at 11:50 am.

Next Meeting: January 23, 2020 host TBD

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