



MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 27, 2021 - 9:30AM – 12:00 PM

Attendees: Jenny Lam (Options), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Bridget Bell (IRB), Stephanie Strong (IRB), Franck Housokou (IRB), Melissa Tseu (IRB), Azadeh Tamjeedi (UNHCR), Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health), Iris Solorzano (Options), Savleen Kaur (Options), Patricia Castillo (Options), Ana Yancie Parada (Options), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Vanessa Roth (JHC), Doug Peat (JHC), Barry Growe (JHC), Jaque MacLean (IRCC), Luis Pinto (IRCC), Dina Ganon (IRCC), Mahak Mahmoodi (Red Cross), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Tracy Tang (MOSAIC), Jackie Sarvini (MOSAIC), Mssko Wakil (MOSAIC), Lucia Hernandez (MOSAIC), Anoop Gill (QMUNITY), Kanta Naik (SWIS-Abbotsford), Inas Elmenbbawi (SWIS-Richmond), Winnie Lee (ICA), Andrea Canales (DIVERSEcity), Theresa Tang (MPFCS), Jaswinder Sandhu (PICS), Geeta Bhardwaj (Archway CS), Wen Ren (LMNH), Alan Huang (SND), (Sabrina Dumitra (AMSSA), Masha Rademakers (Impact North Shore), Kathleen Cashin (Covenant House), Nazanin Moghadami (Rainbow Refugee), Khalil Al Zahran (Rainbow Refugee), Asuka Hirai (VIRCS), Paige Levirs (MSDPR), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch), Sarah Mills (Inasmuch), Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Derek Chu (Kinbrace), Adriana Zepeda (Kinbrace), Wilfred Thariki (Kinbrace), Mohammed Zaquot (Kinbrace), Chantal Spade (Kinbrace), Fran Gallo, Mahi Khalef (SOS-ISSofBC), Katya Quintanilla (SOS-ISSofBC), Mojgan Radfar (SOS-ISSofBC), Sadiq Mohabi (SOS-ISSofBC), Alejandro Pantijo S (SOS-ISSofBC), Julia Wu (bc211), Sara Lopez (VAST), Rawan Moon (VAST), Jhevoi Melville (VAST), Mariana Martinez V (VAST), Luisa Figueroa (PCRS), Wazhma Wakil (Umbrella MHC), Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank), Wen Ren (LMNH), Arely Rodriguez (LMNH), Maria Cervino (Kiwassa NH), (Richard Soo (ECC), Samantha Poirier (Connective), Amina Osman (Jumpstart Refugee), Jenny Moss (MAP) Guests: Jaque MacLean and Luis Pinto (IRCC)

Carrie Tennant and Deanna Gestrin (Vancouver Youth Choir KINDRED Project)

Regrets: Adrienne Bale (DIVERSEcity), Joni Rose & Alex Kang (MUNI), Monika Isak (Archway), Ann Ball (New Hope). Ana Maria Bustamente (Burnaby Family Life/BLIP)

Welcome from Co-Chair: Jenny Lam.

Jenny acknowledged and thanked the hə́ŋqəmiŋə́m (**HUNKAMEENAM**) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (**SQUAMISH**) peoples from whose unceded lands she was hosting the meeting.

Given the connection between the lives of displaced refugees and indigenous peoples here in BC, MAP wishes to publicly acknowledge the tragic news coming from St Joseph's Mission Residential School in Williams Lake. Thanh read a statement by Phyllis Webstad, residential school survivor whose story inspired the creation of Orange Shirt Day.

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

Jenny welcomed participants from **34 MAP member agencies.**

First time introductions:

- Alejandro Pantojo Sanchez (Settlement worker at SOS-ISSofBC)
- Ana Yansie Parada (Works with the Migrant worker program at Options, and will be part of the IHC NGO team)

- Stephanie Strong (IRB)
- Melissa Tseu (IRB)
- Anoop Gill (QMUNITY, Co-ED)
- Khalil Al Zahran (Rainbow Refugee Program Coordinator)
- Luisa Figueroa (Youth Settlement Worker at PCRS)

Jenny covered meeting protocol including muting, chat box use, the meeting is recorded for Minute taking. The **Agenda** was outlined, and breakout rooms described: 1) IRCC 2) Settlement 3) Housing Agency Updates were added to the CHAT and distributed later the same day.

The **November 25, 2021, meeting Minutes** were approved with no corrections.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **IRB Update – Bridget Bell (IRB-RPD)**

December 2021 referrals to the IRB:

146 principal claims (217 total)

41: Iran

31 India

17 Mexico

4 Ethiopia

6 Colombia

Rest - other

November referrals: 149 principal claims

October referrals: 141 principal claims

Numbers are fairly even over last few months.

Operations: Normally schedule hearings 2-4 months in advance. You will have received a Notice through MAP of the current possibility of fast-tracking claims. You can ask for **short notice** via the email supplied in the post so that the claim can potentially be scheduled in next 2-4 weeks. Please reach out.

- **BC State of Emergency ceases - refugee claimant housing report
Mahi Khalaf (SOS-ISSofBC)**

During BC's state of emergency (for the flooding) – mid December - claimants were invited to stay at IRCC managed hotel – SOS were engaged to coordinate housing and settlement.

Total 30 claimants from mid Dec – 18 January

14 single units

5 family units

Provided both settlement and housing support. Worked very closely with inasmuch, JHC and Kinbrace as well as some emergency shelters.

Main challenge is housing singles – forced to refer some to shelters as there was no availability.

SOS worked very closely with community partners and with IRCC as well as with MUNI – grateful for the experience to work so closely with community partners and IRCC and the Province.

- **MAP's partnership with AMSSA's Provincial Refugee Resource Network proposed project – Thanh Lam, MAP Co-chair**

MAP has received an invitation to participate on provincial wide partnership for refugees bringing the unique needs of claimants to this new forum. This new forum will engage many folks and hope that MAP members will join with their voices as well as claimants. This is in its early stages so we will send regular updates:

Sabrina (AMSSA) – wanted to stress this is a submitted proposal – still waiting for the outcome from the funder for BC Refugee Readiness Fund. It will be a partnership with many organizations supporting refugees arriving including MAP. AMSSA will update us once we know the outcome.

Mariana (VAST) – Hopeful that the network gets started and I hope that MAP member agency and people with lived experiences can bring their voices to the forum.

Thanh – agreed – this is proposed to be an accessible space - one that will help make knowledge-sharing accessible.

- **Invitation to join MAP's Information Working Group
Savleen Kaur (IWG Members / Options)**

Savleen described the **responsibilities of the** IWG and the 2021 program accomplished:

Public Education: In Focus events, World Refugee Day

Interviews and updates to MAP website

2021: 4 In Focus events and a series for WRD.

Savleen shared the **planning roles**: the talented team organized events from start to finish and the members gained much experience as a result.

2022 program will begin with an In Focus event in March on the crisis of refugee claimant housing.

Meetings: bi-weekly on Thursdays at 4pm – 5pm

Each person has a role

Right now we need more members – if this meets your goals please contact Jenny at info@mapbc.org

And see more about MAP IWG events at: <https://mapbc.org/about/events/>

- **Call for Nominations: MAP Co-chair 2022 - 2024 – Jenny Lam**

Jenny will reach the end of her term in June 2022, so it is time to nominate new candidates who can shadow the MAP Executive until June.

Jenny described how much she learned about refugee claimants through this experience.

Responsibilities: - chair MAP Meetings on alternate meetings

- special projects: Thanh involved with BC CHARMS and Jenny on NGO Project at IHC

- represent MAP in an official capacity with government and publicly

But the coordinator provides a lot of support to the role.

Jenny Lam asked Jenny Moss to outline the **Nomination and Election process**:

Anyone who belongs to an agency who is a MAP member at **PARTNER level** may be nominated, or nominate themselves, and any member can make a nomination.

The nominator must:

- a) provide some background information about the candidate relevant to this position
- b) describe why/how the person is a good candidate
- c) mention any particular skills that the candidate will bring to the position.

We will receive nominations up until midnight Friday February 18. Afterwards we will advise all members and proceed to voting/acclamation at the February 24 Meeting.

VOTING

Eligible to vote: any agency in good standing with MAP as a Partner or Participant – one vote per agency
A majority of votes is sufficient to decide the election.

Presentation from Department of Immigration & Citizenship Canada

Canadian Refugee Protection Portal

Presenter: Luis Pinto: Case Processing Agent, Refugee Intake Unit, IRCC

College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants

Presenter: Jaquie MacLean: Manager, Domestic Network, IRCC.

Jenny Lam introduced the 2 speakers:

Luis Pinto joined Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada in late 2020 at the refugee unit at the IRCC office on Hornby St in Vancouver. He has gained a lot of experience in this time through reviewing refugee forms, scheduling refugees for appointments at IRCC, responding to inquiries and more. Luis has successfully mentored co-workers who have joined IRCC since he started.

Jaquie MacLean moved to the Vancouver region six months ago to continue her work for Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada as Manager of immigration programs in the BC/Yukon region. Before that she worked for IRCC overseas in Mexico, Sri Lanka, China, India and Jamaica, after having completed a career starting in Saskatchewan, but also in Ottawa and Alberta.

Please see the slides shared by IRCC attached.

Luis: The Canadian Refugee Protection Portal (CRPP) was launched Oct 6, 2021

Designed for persons inside Canada who want to apply for protection with or without a representative.

Applicants need to fill out a questionnaire and submit supporting documents through the portal.

Can apply for themselves and dependents inside Canada.

Can authorize a representative to submit documents on their behalf (one or the other)

It's a secure and confidential account.

Created by following federal departments: IRCC, CBSA & IRB.

CRPP is the new unique way of submitting a claim – so anything before Oct 6 went the old way and afterwards only through portal.

COVID meant it all had to go virtual – so there was a gap in taking applications when uncertainty about infection – then resumed but the need to modernize technology was obvious and made. Very efficient and a green initiative too.

Reasons why the portal was created:

- Because of the pandemic it was essential to avoid human-to-human contact
- to allow for more efficient communication between main federal departments involved.
- greener footprint as almost everything is done online.

Purpose of the Portal:

- to make refugee protection intake process more efficient – ensures that all documents are submitted correctly and less need for back and forth communication, and so decisions on eligibility can be made faster. IRCC can contact clients through the portal to ask for additional documents.

New claimants are then scheduled for appointments at their nearest office – unfortunately here it is in Vancouver which has been hard for those affected by flooding, but claimants must come to office for fingerprinting, attend their interview and receive their protection documents.

How it works: claimants or representatives upload 2 forms: BOC and Use of Representative (if needed) + questionnaire

Can also send other docs (e.g. travel docs) if needed through the portal.

The questionnaire does assume knowledge of English or French and some computer literacy – and a representative can provide that assistance as long as they identify themselves.

Note:

- Replaces e-post
- Priority may be given to certain groups, e.g. those coming from Afghanistan – fast tracked
- Please provide as much information as needed at this stage to shorten the process.
- Interpretation provided at eligibility interviews, not at biometrics, but can have someone come with them to help
- Use of authorized representatives (see next presentation)

Questions:

- Will the portal be used after COVID?
Yes – this is a long term modernization program.
- Will there be an update to correct inefficiencies/errors in the portal, and will there be a shut down in that case?
IRCC will advise MAP of any shutdowns, however the Portal has its own IT team continually working on issues. Please report technical issues via the e-form and via an email Luis will provide to MAP about any problems.
- How frequently are the biometric and eligibility interviews being scheduled for the same day?
This usually happens for out-of-towners when biometrics are scheduled for the morning, and eligibility interviews in afternoon.
- Is there a way to expedite first time work permits?
Includes many units and other departments and we have passed this question on to the unit that processes work permits.

Jaquie MacLean: College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants

Jaquie worked overseas for 9 years and so recognized need to educate public about who can provide immigration advice: only certain people can:

- lawyers or paralegals registered with Law Society and in good standing
- regulated Citizenship or Immigration consultants registered with the College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants.

Jaquie encouraged MAP to obtain a presentation/update from the college soon.

Jaquie recently met with the College to discuss their work with claimants – College includes lawyers mostly, but legal aid doesn't cover enough time, so the College is looking at other options including pro bono, or reduced fee lawyers.

They will provide courses for consultants on how to represent refugee claimants. more info soon.

Lots of info on [IRCC website](#) about who can be a representative too.

NOTE:

- Ask for references and experience of anyone representing a client.
- If language is a barrier, organizations can help with explaining what their representative will do

Unethical behaviour: in India over 90% used representatives and only 7-8% of them used authorized reps who they paid.

Heard of many unethical practices – no receipts, exploited easily, told to falsely claim, or embellish their applications.

Encouraged agencies to encourage clients to seek representation from someone who is authorized and in good standing (check college website)

Over 6000 RCIC's – the RCIC may hire agents but only to do administrative work, not advise clients.

A lot of people will use friends and family but as Immigration gets more complicated it is more important to get the right advice. Clients can end up losing their application and cannot backtrack from that point, or at extreme could be deported. Best to get the right advice on correct way to obtain a visa to come to Canada.

QUESTIONS

(SOS-ISSofBC): from SOS point of view, with the start of the Portal our settlement workers have been asked to assist lawyers with literacy and technology concerns for their clients to be able to submit their forms. For example clients don't have emails or technical knowledge.

Question is to clarify expectations – especially about use of authorized representatives and who can help.

Response: Settlement workers are not to complete forms – unless the organization is doing free of charge, but you still have to indicate that you are doing this on their behalf:

- Always have to declare who is completing the forms (friend, family member or SPO)
- Always better if it is the person themselves

SOS: we don't do BOC but other generic forms we help with because claimants don't have help in their own language, and we do.

Discussion whether work is paid or unpaid (relates to provincial funding for services to claimants)

IRCC: form completion should be done by an approved Authorized Representative. Because otherwise your organization may be liable. It is a slippery slope, it's a grey area because anything you state then becomes your responsibility.

SOS – claimants are in particular need for assistance.

IRCC: Please raise with Avi Cheng at LABC and/or Michael Win at the College of Immigration and

Citizenship Consultants as requests like these of lawyers to SPO's puts them in a difficult ethical position. A line has to be drawn somewhere.

Mariana (VAST/CCR): The issue puts SWO's in an impossible position – the situation on the ground is that SWO's are paid to do the job of supporting claimants though they are not supposed to - but in many cases there are no options. (Consider IRPA 91)

SWO's should talk to their supervisors to clarify their position.

Canadian Council for Refugees is also voicing this issue currently.

Response – We should be able to turn to the college for assistance.

The college is willing to provide training to AR's to do the job properly

People are getting wrong information and encouraged to make a claim when they should not be.

Mariana – (to MAP members) please talk to your manager and follow guidance from IRCC

MAP will support with information

CCR is following the issues about the portal etc and meeting with IRCC continually. Please contact me as Co-chair of the Inland Protection WG at the CCR (mariana@vast-vancouver.ca) with your experiences and comments so CCR can connect with IRCC

Question: What are the penalties and what kind of enforcement is there of unauthorized representation?

Response: - contact college as they recently received new authorities regarding enforcement.

Comment: but college is not running settlement agencies, so it is immaterial, and SWO's are not paid by the clients.

Question: can multiple persons submit Authorized Representative forms for one client (lawyer & SWO)

Response: yes, this would be correct as anyone assisting, even if they are not paid, must declare themselves or they are acting as Unauthorized Representatives.

50 people went to breakout room for IRCC where further questions were raised.

Janny Lam thanked Luis and Jaquie from IRCC for their presentations.

BREAK

Presentation: Vancouver Youth Choir KINDRED project: Building connection and community through song

Carrie Tennant & Deanna Gestrin

Jenny introduced the presenters: **Carrie Tennant** is the founder and artistic director of the Vancouver Youth Choir. VYC is widely regarded as one of the finest youth choirs in the country, gaining international notoriety for their adventurous programming, their commitment to performing and promoting music from underrepresented communities, and their outside-the-box approach to live performance. Most important to VYC members, however, is the community they have created together - one of caring, support, and connection. **Deanna Gestrin** is a vocalist, music educator, and composer who has worked in a wide variety of community and educational settings. Deanna has taught music at secondary schools, at Kwantlen University, at the Native Education College, and has sung on various albums and television and film projects. As a mixed heritage member of the St'tat'imx First Nation, Deanna explores how contemporary music traditions overlap and connect with First Nations cultural knowledge and experience.

Carrie - The Vancouver Youth Choir is non-profit – serves 300 children/youth across lower mainland. Choir is very diverse and includes a large population of families who are newcomers to Canada. For a long time VYC wanted to start a newcomer choir but with the intention of sharing knowledge about indigenous culture and music – Carrie connected with Deanna to help start YVC Kindred spirit that got started last year, and today they want to spread the word to recruit new youth members.

Video shared: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIT1v8gN76k&t=52s>

Deanna joined the discussion. From St'atl'imx First Nation where this music would be called 'good medicine'. The 6 week program this year will run from March till May.

There will be two ensemble groups:

10 – 15-year-olds

16 – 22-year-olds

In the future they hope to include more learning about indigenous culture.

Kindred get the opportunity to perform at the Chan Theatre, UBC and many who are in Kindred go on to join the VY Choir on a permanent basis.

Please let all those who work with you know about this opportunity. Registration is via

<https://vancouveryouthchoir.com/choirs/vyckindred/>

The registration form is translated into 9 languages to make it easier for folks to navigate.

A PDF is attached to these Minutes with more details in multiple languages.

Report from BC CHARMS: Marzieh Nezakat (Reporting for Jackie)

Funded by MUNI this is a MAP project with 3 major pieces:

- **BC CHARMS Report Book: 'In Between Emergency, Transitional and Permanent Homes: Perspectives from Refugee Claimants and Service Providers'**
After 18 months of interviews and data analysis this qualitative report is available. Please write to Jackie if you would like a hardcopy at jsarvini@mosaicbc.org and the PDF version is on the [MAP website](#) and available for download:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/146AaE3S7OvY4vjCHP2Xu9gQPkv85IjLv/view>
- **Refugee Navigation Website** – final plan submitted to MUNI for approval – early May or late April to launch.
It will include all they need to get them connected with a Settlement agency. Simple and user friendly to support claimants in their first few weeks in BC.
Advisory Committee has reviewed content and a revised version has been submitted to the funder for approval.
End April/early May for website launch.
- **Housing Referral Database** – after 6-7 months of implementation stages we did external testing with a number of MAP members and received great feedback.

We are making the necessary changes and then we will begin recruiting users with the aim of a launch date of late April/early May.

- **Report from MAP Emergency Task Force**
Barry Growe (Journey Home Community)

Emergency planning started last year when MAP members considered what might happen if the land border was re-opened and many claimants might start to arrive who might put unusual demands on housing and settlement agencies.

A survey of agencies was completed, and a detailed and comprehensive report on the services that might be required and how they might be delivered was written by Richard Belcham

MAP formed a Task Force to examine Richard's report and transform it into a PLAN.
That will complete in February, and we have hired a writer to create a Plan.

The Plan has 2 sections:

- a) for MAP as a network – what we should or might do if there is a large increase in claimants.
- b) recommendations to individual agencies of what they might do in this situation.

So the following dates are important for your input:

First draft by MAP Meeting - March 24 – please return feedback by **March 28**

It's a short window but should take only 1.5 hours to complete and would be critical to the plan.

Thanh – we are pleased to welcome **Mona Hassania** who is known by many as a former Manager at SOS-ISSofBC and a counselor managing NIA Counselling.

Barry – at same time as release of the Plan there will be a survey with about 6 questions that the MAP Emergency Task Force cannot answer without your input.

e.g., If there was a sudden increase in the number of claimants, would you want to do your own media relations or would you want MAP in a centralized way to provide messaging – or a hybrid version.

There are about another 5 questions that must be answered - these questions will be sent in the next month – and then we will discuss some of these issues at a future MAP meeting.

In the final phase of preparedness, we want to get the emergency plan ready to operate – so the last issues MAP needs to prepare are:

- make decisions about leadership in discussion with government.
- are there resources?
- and agencies will also need to take steps to be ready to respond quickly and effectively.

This often occurs without much warning. Be prepared!

We hope to finish within 2-3 months to be prepared for any eventuality.

AGENCY UPDATES VERBALLY (updates from the CHAT below)

IRIS (Options): For those who are working with those who have received protected persons status Options has opened classes for them: English classes that are occupation specific to them. Currently concerned with warehousing etc. Contact Iris at iris.solorzano@options.bc.ca

BRIDGET (IRB): In answer to a question earlier about numbers reported – the numbers shared by IRB are refugee claims reported to IRB, and do not relate to the number of those arriving into the country. IRCC does have a website where those numbers are recorded – please check there and inquire from them about these numbers.

IMTIAZ (Fraser Health): Many of the population are confused about booster shots – technical and language barriers to their understanding. Vaccine passports still problematic. It would be helpful if agencies could help explain these vaccine processes to clients.

There have been Vaccine clinics at places of worship, but now clinics will be offered in partnership with pharmacies starting in February and we will let you know when and where.
The clinics will be on a smaller scale.

Nazanin (Rainbow Refugee) our office is changing its location – it will not be at QMUNITY any more – we will let you know the location of the new office once we open but please don't send clients to the old office, always contact us virtually via: inland@rainbowrefugee.ca and support@rainbowrefugee.ca

A feedback poll was launched re: this MAP meeting – thank you everyone for your participation.

Adjourned 12:00 PM.

Next Meeting: Thursday February 24, 2022, online.

Agency Updates from the CHAT (previously circulated)

MAP & AGENCY UPDATES FROM THE CHAT – JANUARY 27, 2022

INFORMATION WORKING GROUP:

To join the MAP Information Working Group, or inquire, write to Jenny at info@mapbc.org MAP Events page: <https://mapbc.org/about/events/>

IRCC Questions: Mariana Martinez Vieyra (VAST)

Through the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) IP Working Group (the one focused on RCs) have been compiling issues/ concerns about the use of the portal and bringing them to the attention of the IRCC. Our last meeting was Jan 19 and more to come.

Please contact me, co-chair of the Inland Protection WG to raise concerns from the BC perspective. mariana@vast-vancouver.ca

VANCOUVER YOUTH CHOIR: Kindred Project

Carrie Tennant left these links:

Choir Registration page: <https://vancouveryouthchoir.com/choirs/vyckindred/>

The registration form is translated into 9 languages to make it easier for folks to navigate.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIT1v8gN76k&t=52s>

BC CHARMS: Marzieh Nezakat: To receive a copy of **BC CHARMS report: 'In Between Emergency, Transitional, and Permanent Homes: Perspectives from Refugee Claimants and Service Providers,'** Email BC CHARMS Coordinator: jsarvini@mosaicbc.org

Link to BC CHARMS Report book: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/146AaE3S7OvY4vjCHP2Xu9gQPkv85IjLv/view>

Chantel Spade (Kinbrace): Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) Info Session for current refugee claimants and those who have had a negative decision and considering an appeal. 02 Mar 2022.

Contact Masi Allahverdi to register (604) 362-1070 or masi@kinbrace.ca

Next Ready Tour for refugee claimants tomorrow Friday 28 January 2022. The next is 11 Feb 2022. Contact Masi Allahverdi to register (604) 362-1070 or masi@kinbrace.ca

Sara Lopez VAST: To refer any client to VAST, please follow these steps:

1. Go to the VAST website <https://www.vastbc.ca/>
2. Click on Make a Referral
3. Fill out the online form and save it.

Khalil Al Zahran (he/him) Rainbow Refugee خليل: Rainbow Refugee Society drop-ins resume virtually via zoom this year on weekly basis, You can contact us via email through inland@rainbowrefugee.ca and support@rainbowrefugee.ca

Lucia Hernandez (MOSAIC): We restarted **English Conversation Circles** again at MOSAIC, they are Monday and Thursday evenings in person. We encourage all Refugee claimants, Intl students and work permit holders to attend! Please email srahnama@mosaicbc.org

Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC): Food Safe and First Aid Trainings for Refugee Claimants at MOSAIC. Please email ttang@mosaicbc.org for the schedule.