

MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 24, 2021 - 9:30AM – 12:00 PM

Attendees: Jenny Lam (Options), Iris Solorzano (Options), Ana Yancie Parada (Options), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Jordan Bryan (IRB), Xania Labreche (IRB), Efrat Arbel (UBC Law), Mahak Mahmoodi (Red Cross), Gary Sidhu (CBSA), Kamal Khella (CBSA), Eric Johannsen (CBSA), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Vanessa Roth (JHC), Barry Growe (JHC), Adrienne Bale (DIVERSEcity), Julia Wu (bc211), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Salih Arif (MOSAIC), Sara Rahnema (MOSAIC), Liam McQuillan (MOSAIC), Lucia Hernandez (MOSAIC), Jerry Wu (Vancouver SWIS), Jaswinder Sandhu (PICS), Khamal Bharya (PICS), Wen Ren (LMNH), Maria Cervino (Kiwassa NH), Masha Rademakers (Impact North Shore), Alex Kang (MUNI), Joni Rose (MUNI), Mariam Bouchoutrouch (PIRS), Cathleen Cashin (Covenant House), Ana Czarkowski (Connective), Samantha Poirier (Connective), Khalil Al Zahran (Rainbow Refugee), Jimmy Chan (MSDPR), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch), Sarah Mills (Inasmuch), Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Derek Chu (Kinbrace), Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace), Adriana Zepeda (Kinbrace), Fran Gallo (Kinbrace), Masi Allahverdi (Ready Tour), Diana Barry (Vancity), Mohsen Eslami (SOS-ISSofBC), Sadiq Mohabi (SOS-ISSofBC), Sara Lopez (VAST), Huda Bolbolan (SVNH), Patricia Lim (LABC), Tyler Lee (PCRS), Carlos Sandoval (PCRS), Richard Soo (Eastern Catholic Church), Alan Huang (SND Division), Imtiaz Popat (Sehat/FH), Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Theresa Tang (MPFC), Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank), Richard Soo (ECC), Arman Zamani (Burnaby NH), Ines Ghazzi (Le Relais), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Welcome from Co-Chair: Thanh Lam

MAP acknowledged that our work is carried out on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and occupied territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations (Vancouver), and also in the territories of the Hunkamin and Squamish (Burnaby) and lastly in the lands of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, and Tsawwassen First Nations (Surrey).

She thanked our funders: the **Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI)** who make MAP's work possible

Thanh thanked **all volunteers to MAP** for their generous support and hard work over the last year. This includes:

- *MAP Executive and Housing Working Group Co-chairs*
- *Information Working Group*
- *MAP Emergency Task Force*
- *MAP BCIHC Support Program Advisors & Resource Persons*
- *MAP BCIHC Support Program Interpreter Pool*

Plus everyone who has provided presentations at MAP Meetings

Thank you!

Thanh welcomed participants from **34 MAP member agencies** and invited first time participants to introduce themselves:

Mohsen Eslami – NEW Manager at SOS (ISSofBC). He used to attend MAP 10 years ago but has most recently been working in other ISSofBC programs.

Ines Ghazzi – Le Relais – Providing assistance to francophone newcomers.

Tyler Lee (PCRS) – New manager at Newton Youth Hub

Mariam Bouchoutrouch - ED of PIRS, also used to attend MAP and just returned to participate.

The **Agenda** was outlined.

The **March 24, 2021, meeting Minutes** were approved.

Presentation Part 1: CBSA Updates & MAP BCIHC Support Program

Presented by:

Gary Sidhu, Manager: Detentions Operations - Gary has been with the Agency for 10 years and has spent 1 year at the IHC as a Manager.

Kam Khella, Manager at the IHC. Kam has been with the Agency for 17 years and has been at the IHC for 1 year.

Eric Johannsen, Acting Manager at the IHC. Eric has been with the Agency for 9 years and has spent 2 years at the IHC.

UPDATES:

- Non-contact visits at the IHC have resumed – Omnicron virus delayed re-opening.
- Canadian Red Cross has visited and interviewed a sampling of detainees.
There were no recommendations from them regarding policy or procedure, only some minor requests from detainees – all of which have been accommodated.
- Legal aid clinic is new – provides legal services free for detainees – for questions in addition to other legal support. Operates by phone on Wednesdays from 1pm – 4pm.
- The IHC now has a new Chaplain – they started as a volunteer and hoping they agree to the paid position part time soon – Orev Katz – they are very experienced with federal corrections and youth at risk – they have been working for 5/6 months already at the IHC with lots of positive outcomes.
(NOTE: Orev also assisted MAP with editing the BCIHC Support Program MOU for gender equity)

MAP BCIHC Support Program – working quite well on CBSA end – started a few weeks ago. (March 3)

At first there was a reluctance to sign up but now CBSA has changed procedure so that the guards ask each detainee if they want to sign up.

Benefits:

There have been positive comments from detainees – the service provides a safe space for detainees to speak to someone outside of the CBSA/legal world.

Challenges: there have been some phone delays and no-shows which left the settlement workers waiting on the line. New instruction: Please email using central channel within first 5-10 minutes and staff will check and attempt to connect the client.

Resuming in person contact visits too – not just family but community and professional visits too – so once we have the start date we can start in person MAP services too.

QUESTIONS:

Q: Please provide some statistics as to number of detainees and their profiles currently?

Response:

- 14 detained currently at the IHC and 7 at Provincial facilities
- 1 female, rest male
- Variety of nationalities:
 - 5 - India
 - 4 - Mexico
 - 1 - Pakistan
 - 1 - Cameroon
 - 1 - Bangladesh
 - 1 - Cuba
 - 1 - USA
 - 1 - China

Numbers still quite low – CBSA were expecting an increase with border now open. There was an increase (up to 40 detained at the IHC and 10 at the Province) in November, but the numbers have since dropped. Alternatives to Detention program is being actively used - either on arrest or via Minister Delegate Review or through detention reviews.

There are 18 or 19 in the CCMS program of the ATD right now.

Question: Masi – Ready Tours – is there an update on when they can happen at the IHC?

CBSA Response: Bridget Bell (IRB) spoke with Gary a number of times – and the IHC has received brochures and laptops ready to go.

Bridget has recently switched assignments, but she is still involved with the Ready Tour and has assured CBSA that the mechanism will be put in place soon to start. She is also in regular contact with Kinbrace.

Question: Loren - Kinbrace – what is the breakdown of detainee population by immigration status? How many refugee claimants are there?

CBSA Response: Claimant population: 2 outstanding right now – rest are past determination stage.

Jenny M comment: Appreciates the responsiveness and excellent communication with CBSA – especially Pavi who is the coordinator on the IHC end. It makes a lot of difference in the early stages to be able to iron out wrinkles in the system together.

Gary agreed – and also appreciates the effort by settlement workers in supporting the needs of detainees.

Thanh thanked the CBSA team for their presentation and collaboration with MAP.

Presentation Part 2: MAP BCIHC Support Program

Presented by: Jenny Lam Program Team Lead and:

Jaswinder Sandhu – PICS / MAP BCIHC Support Program Team Member

Efrat Arbel – UBC Peter Allard School of Law (Advisor)

Sara Lopez – VAST (Advisor)

Jenny Lam (Options / MAP Co-chair) introduced the long-awaited program that right now takes place via phone on Thursdays where one hour of settlement support in first language is provided to detainees.

Presentation covered:

- What is the MAP BCIHC Support Program?
- History of the Program's development
- Agencies involved and Program Resources.
- Orientations / Training

- Volunteer Interpreter Pool

We are very much in need of more interpreter volunteers – especially Punjabi and Spanish – but any languages are very welcome.

- Statistical report of the program to date

(See slides attached)

Statistical report: this just represents the 2 months of service to date, so we cannot draw any real conclusions yet. But the settlement workers do send in a non-identifiable report from their calls which helps us refine and resource our program by illustrating trends/gaps/needs.

Highlights:

- 19 unique calls to date + a number of follow up calls and referral
- Large number of calls are from refugee claimants – as they are the ones who benefit a lot from our service as it provides information for when they are released and are making their claim.
- Most popular service requests: legal aid and referral to legal information, counseling
- Support from VAST with counseling sessions for those in detention most appreciated.

Jenny Lam then introduced one of the agency team members:

Jaswinder Sandhu (PICS)

Jaswinder works for PICS which has served the South Asian community for over 20 years with a number of settlement/employment/health/seniors' programs.

Jaswinder has been a settlement worker for 10 years. She was grateful for this new opportunity and thanked her managers for the opportunity and training.

She approached the interviews with a non-judgmental approach which helped the clients open up and share their concerns and how they wanted to integrate into Canadian life and ways of doing things.

The services they asked were for:

- a) an affordable rehabilitation centre (to facilitate a release)
- b) find a lawyer – Jaswinder helped the client with the call to Legal Aid
- c) MSDPR support for financial aid

Challenges:

- Remote service is hard when calls dropped and when communication is challenging
- Clients have financial constraints – cost of appropriate rehabilitation centers is exorbitant
- Needs assessment – sometimes it is challenging to encourage the clients to talk – sometimes very slow and they ran out of time. – and it's a challenge to communicate sometimes when it is remote

Jaswinder thanked MAP for support. She is looking forward to serving the clients in person in the future!

MAP invited 3 individuals to be 'Advisors' to the program – they have helped with trainings, resources, and program guidance. They are:

Chris Ghirardi – duty counsel lawyer and head of the legal clinic at the IHC

Prof. Efrat Arbel – Peter Allard School of Law, UBC

Sara Lopez – VAST Intake Counselor

Efrat and Sara provided their opinion on the program and its value to detainees:

Efrat Arbel: She wanted to focus on her appreciation to everyone for the hard work in designing, launching and running the program; and the broader importance of this program and its long-term impact.

Efrat described her background in prison law and also working with refugees. Detention lies at the

crossover between these two areas and has been her life's work.

We know that the day to day lived experience in detention is profoundly difficult and traumatic for persons there. Having access to these kind of programs as well as the legal clinic is fundamental for those who are looking for support and answers.

The SUPPORT program provides the foundation to help detainees access the legal clinic. For those who don't have language to easily access the legal aid that they need, and to navigate detention provisions, the Support program helps make this possible. The voice of NGO's is extraordinarily valuable – as a lawyer this program helps us enhance the support provided legally, and helps detainees towards release.

Comment: Sireen (Zaytuna) added it's very important to have this personal touch and personalized approach – she provided a simple example of helping a detainee gain some better services he needed. Efrat concurred– the confusion for detainees about their situation means that this program is very important for them.

Sara Maria Lopez (VAST) and Program Advisor MAP BCIHC Support Program

Sara has lived experience of detention and she stated that it is incredibly important for detainees to have someone to talk to, especially in first language. Detainees are unsure of what comes ahead, they are experiencing trauma from before, and in, detention. The mental health cost is enormous. Their freedom has been removed and the detainee is under the control of guards and rules with no idea of what is going to happen. Even if the settlement worker is just really listening this is a huge help. Sara echoed her colleagues that this program is important and appreciated.

Jenny Lam thanked all the speakers and asked if there were questions:

Fran – commented that the immigration status of detainees is often fluid. Many may need to make a claim given different circumstances or have made a claim and failed. They may change from one status to another.

Thanh thanked the Team for the presentation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **IRB Update**

Jordan Bryan (jordan.bryan@irb-cisr.gc.ca 236-330-0760) has recently stepped into Bridget Bell's role on assignment as Temporary Registrar at the IRB-RPD. In her introduction she described her work with public service for more than 20 years, mostly with the IRCC, before moving to the Immigration Refugee Board. Worked with all streams of refugees and mentioned Kosovo response in 1999, and on H&C applications. Jordan also worked with survivors of abuse at Residential Schools. (Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat).

Her substantive position is as Deputy Registrar with the Immigration Division, so she is accustomed to conversations about detained persons, the IHC and persons' vulnerabilities.

Xania Labreche (Deputy Registrar) provided the update for the **IRB-RPD Western Region – Vancouver: For the past year (April 2021 – March 31) received:**

1,424 principal claimants (2,135 in total with associated claimants)

Past 3 months: (Jan – March 2022 referrals from land border and/or inland office)

360 Principal claimants (524 in total)

Top countries: (Jan-March 2022)

Iran – 91 principal claimants

India – 64

Mexico – 45

Colombia – 19

China – 18

- **Joni Rose (BC Government – MUNI) – Announcement on IHAP Funding**

Joni shared a statement regarding the designated Federal funds for Refugee Claimant Housing –

Due to the unprecedented federal response to the Ukrainian Arrivals: CUAEIT program – never before has the Canadian government provided unlimited temporary resident visas in such a way.

Numbers: 156,000 applications received nationally – 17% – 20% expected to come to BC (26,000 – 31,000) individuals thought to want to come to BC.

Absence of a government housing plan beyond first 2 weeks' hotel stay necessitated the BC Government to pass the remaining (about \$5m) IHAP funds to the Ukrainian response and away from refugee claimants. Passed to Ukrainian housing needs

Government is committed to supporting claimants through MAP and the BC CHARMS project through to March 31, 2023, and recognizes the housing needs of refugee claimants and continues to advocate for them with government colleagues. Government also values the work, collaboration and expertise at the MAP tables and will continue to ask for advice as to how to support refugee claimants in BC.

Questions and comments:

Loren (Kinbrace) - This money was allocated to claimants and although Ukrainians have dire need – this is a very discouraging announcement.

Response: appreciate this completely – the BC government is in a very tough position currently.

Jenny Moss (MAP) - We are also getting reports of increased numbers of claimants arriving – especially from Latin America. It seems short sighted to move this much needed resource away from claimants when the need is easily documented. This issue will be taken up at the MAP Housing Working Group.

Response: duly noted and the message will be conveyed to government colleagues.

Mohammed (Kinbrace) - Not just numbers, but different cases including the families who are being separated in different shelters. Also, very challenging to move claimants out of transition housing to rental housing as the market is too expensive, Claimants are seeing no support for them as the funds are being moved elsewhere.

As a refugee claimant and SWO – we keep repeating that shelters are not equipped to house claimants – but there is not a substantive response from government.

Response: the government is aware that shelters are not appropriate – thank you for mentioning this.

Derek (Kinbrace): is this funding to be used for temporary housing, or more permanent housing that could be re-purposed for claimants in the long term if Ukrainians go home?

Joni will check – to see if there is an answer. And to include in Minutes of this meeting.

This has been raised – if we can look at the RC population within this project.

Brad (JHC) – echo colleagues' disappointment, appreciate Joni's predicament but we need to raise our voices beyond our internal discussions. We had felt that accessing those funds was made very difficult for us, and if the requirements had been different those funds might have been used for claimants by now. Brad challenged MAP members to embark on writing letters and expressing our feelings to government.

Response: Joni acknowledged this course of action.

- **Kinbrace: Removing Barriers Preventing Refugee Claimants from Achieving Financial Mobility – Mohammed Zaqout**

Recently Kinbrace received grants from Mariam Assefa Foundation/SPARC BC /Vancity to start a project to remove barriers for RC's in achieving meaningful employment and financial viability.

Barriers identified: discriminatory notions about refugee claimants

lack of targeted opportunities, including volunteering

upskilling or reskilling needs - the program will provide this – often RC's ineligible.

Hoping to start the project with an **Advisory Committee** – a network of peoples to provide information, bring feedback and expertise.

Project will include:

- **Roundtables of refugee claimants and employers** to share stories and discuss ways to help claimants grow and find employment; possible mentorship, ways to help employers hire claimants.

- **Opportunity and Connection Pool** – centralized location where claimants can find work and volunteer opportunities in one place specifically available to refugee claimants.

- **Recertifying/upskilling program** – we have seen many claimants who need to attend programs to gain skills. These courses are often not open to claimants.

Kinbrace has made some excellent connections with organizations and universities to provide these upskilling experiences

- **Website** – with success stories and ways to connect employers and employees, with stories, opportunity posts that are vetted and appropriate. Working with employers to discuss work conditions and opportunities to provide a pathway (or incubator) to link claimants with refugee claimants.

Derek added – this is a sector-wide project, not just Kinbrace – all RC's should be able to access the program and apply for scholarships.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE – please volunteer – please connect to Mohammed with your ideas and/or to join: 604.446.4431 and mohammed@kinbrace.ca

Kinbrace is also looking to Employment associations –or if you have contacts with employers – or if you have a side business yourself – please be in touch.

Mohammed added that he will be in touch with ministries concerned also

BREAK – Participants attended one: MAP BCIHC Support Program, Settlement or Housing breakout rooms.

Report back on MAP Strategy Meeting – what comes next?

Loren: the situation: this year a co-chair wasn't nominated from MAP membership as usually happens, regardless that there was lots of recruitment. As a result, there was lots of concern about MAP's future. Some of us pondered exactly what's going on in the MAP community when the 2-year overlapping procedure for co-chairs has worked so well in the past?

We discussed this in the last meeting and **Brad and Loren** as past co-chairs stepped forward to help with guiding this discussion toward a solution.

RCs benefitted so much from MAP – so it's worth the personal investment of time to work on a solution.

We invited members by email to attend a meeting on **April 14** to discuss the lack of a co-chair and underlying reasons:

16 attended – Loren Balisky, Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace)

Brad Kinnie (JHC)

Thanh Lam (MPNH/MAP Co-chair), Jenny Lam (MAP Co-chair/Options)

Diana Delgado (Options)

Saleem Spindari (Muslim Food Bank)

Mahi Khalaf (ISSofBC)

Kelly Rader (Inasmuch)

Alexandra Dawley (MOSAIC)

Fran Gallo

Gulalai Habib (BNH)

Sireen El Nashar (Zaytuna CS)

Sara Lopez, Mariana Martinez V (VAST)

Jenny Moss (MAP)

Representative group – long term members as well as new faces.

- Thanh stated the issue
- History of MAP documented (see attached chart) so everyone understood MAP's journey.
- Group discussed and reflected on problem of no nominations, what are you seeing/sensing?

Brad (JHC) described the discussion:

- Everyone was very appreciative of the achievements of MAP and the many people who had committed and invested in the network.
- There were also some hard questions and honest dialogue about some of the issues that had brought us to this impasse. In fact, this served as a release for members' concerns matched by the appreciation for the value of MAP and a desire to see it flourish and move forward.
- There is a recognition that the co-chair structure is not working given their capacity as volunteers. Over the last 3-4 years the work has grown to the point that it cannot be handled in this way.
- One of the most important pieces of this is the load of decision-making. The co-chairs feel it's too difficult to hear everyone's opinions and yet decisions must be made.
- There was discussion around big projects MAP is involved in:
 - MAP BC CHARMS
 - MAP BCIHC Support ProgramThese necessitate many meetings that are more than the co-chairs can handle.
- We questioned whether the co-chair model was the best model for MAP?
- Last Strategic Plan for MAP was in 2018 – is it time to hold a new one?

Next steps:

- Minutes of the April 14 Meeting will be distributed (went out May 4, attached again)
- Together with an invitation to attend an in-person meeting on **May 19** in person at Journey Home at 3pm – 4:30pm to work on solutions.

- What do we do in the interim? Support for Thanh when Jenny Lam leaves – we need to come up with an interim solution too.

Loren encouraged member agencies of MAP to attend to assist with this process.

BC CHARMS Update (Marzieh Nezakat & Liam McQuillan – MOSAIC)

Marzieh Nezakat (Mgr. BCSIS program at MOSAIC)

Firstly, wanted to acknowledge the support of the BC Government in supporting the BC CHARMS project that will make a tremendous difference in the lives of RC's seeking housing. But at the same time, she echoed the concerns of her colleagues in hoping the government pays attention to the housing crisis that refugee claimants are suffering currently, and hopefully will work to alleviate it.

Marzieh introduced **Liam McQuillan** – new Coordinator of BC CHARMS at MOSAIC. He has housing, securities, analysis and marketing experience from Ontario.

Liam: The BC CHARMS project is a database with a number of sub-projects for refugee claimants only, province wide.

Updates:

- Workflow for database finished – just waiting for final approvals.
- Final demo this week to BC Government to provide final go-ahead
- **Launch mid May**
- Training sessions coming up in May:
- We will invite MAP members for in person meetings at MOSAIC so that the agencies who will be using the system can see the kit demonstrated and learn how to use it – (onboarding)
- After first round of recruitment and feedback MOSAIC will go farther afield to find users.

Database will be very useful to everyone to find more housing vacancies, and getting those vacancies filled. Please email Liam or Marzieh if you are interested in learning more.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2022 – Jenny Moss (MAP Executive)

WRD is held on June 20 annually to celebrate refugees – their strengths and skills and resilience and highlight their contributions to their communities.

In the past we have been sponsored to provide celebrations at Vancouver Public Library, then we had 2 years online, but we are happy to be back in person again. We have a great program envisioned which will happen with your help as volunteers and supporting agencies!

- **Wednesday June 15 – 7pm**

Storytelling event at the **Alice McKay Room, Vancouver Public Library Central Branch** with **'The Shoe Project'** – an organization with great ties to MAP that supports newcomer women in writing and sharing their various stories.

This year we have 5 women sharing as well as music before and after the event.

Need volunteers on the day of to welcome attendees etc. and beforehand to work on promotions and logistics

- **Surrey events** – discussing events on Saturday June 18 and/or Monday June 20 at the City Hall and or the Library:
- 'marketplace' of agencies to share their programs for refugees with the public, with newcomers and with one another. Surrey agencies will attend but everyone from the Fraser Valley as well as Vancouver,

Burnaby etc. are invited to attend.

- exhibitions of art created by refugees to be on display through June 20.

-Surrey Proclamation on Monday 20 also

We are happy to announce we have partnered with the **Surrey LIP under Lenya Wilks (DIVERSEcity)**, and we are very grateful to DIVERSEcity for helping create this partnership.

Options and MOSAIC are also central to the planning.

More volunteers are needed – please contact Jenny at info@mapbc.org if you would like to help:

Poster design

Promotions

Logistics

Day of volunteers.

PLUS: We have heard that the **City of Vancouver has the Proclamation** ready for June 20 and have arranged also to light up City Hall and Burrard Bridge in honour of the day. If any agency would like to host the event in person, please contact Jenny at MAP to discuss – or we can organize an online event to recognize Vancouver City partnership on this important day.

Suggestion: Huda Bolbolan (SVNH) – can we be mindful of the month which is National Indigenous Month – to include this in the planning.

Thanh added that this has been in our thinking – hence our Vancouver event is earlier in June, and we will make connections to link the two important themes where possible.

Adrienne Bale (DIVERSEcity) In response to Huda's comment I can say the Surrey Newcomers First Peoples guide has been translated which Lenya from the LIP has likely mentioned and would likely be available on World Refugee Day.

AGENCY UPDATES VERBALLY (updates from the CHAT below)

Some Agency Updates were added to the CHAT and distributed later the same day. (Attached again)

Imtiaz Popat (SEHAT Program at Fraser Health) provides outreach in the south Asian community where there is a lot of confusion around boosters and second boosters. Imtiaz has information in second language but really relies on settlement workers assisting in getting the message out about boosters, as well as children's vaccinations.

Mariam Bouchoutrouh (PIRS) offering community-based language classes open to all women regardless of immigration status including refugee claimants. In Surrey PIRS partnered with Muslim Food Bank to provide classes focused on Afghan refugees - More info: <https://pirs.bc.ca/programs-services/english-language-learning/> Ukrainian outreach support will be starting soon.

Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank) – offering a position in housing and homelessness support worker. To help those at risk including refugee claimants and will provide housing/rental assistance, counselling and direct case management for vulnerable clients.

Muslim Food Bank and Community Services Society: 1.866.248.3868 ext. 112

Jenny Moss: please send employment opportunities, classes, events, research to info@mapbc.org by Tuesday lunchtime to include in the Wednesday bulletin weekly.

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

Next Meeting: Thursday May 26, 2022, online.