



MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, NOVEMBER 24, 2022 - 9:30AM – 12:00 PM

at ISSofBC, Victoria Drive, Vancouver

- **Attendees:** Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Jennifer York (ISSofBC), Prabh Sangha (Lehal Law), Mina Khadabakhsh (ISSofBC), Frank Cohn (VAST), Shivanny (VAST), Ana Yancie Parada (Options), Patricia Castillo (Options), Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Wilfred Thariki (Kinbrace), Salih Arif (MOSAIC), Jordan Bryan (IRB), Doug Peat (JHC), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Joni Rose (MUNI), Samuel Chan (MUNI-BCSIS), Cynthia Pao (MSDPR), Bianca Lomeda (MSDPR), Julia Wu (uwbc211), Pedro Ramirez (REACH), Giselle Castillo (UMHC), Richard Soo (Eastern CC), Naomi Morgan (Surrey Libraries), Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health), Shiva Babu (Impact North Shore), Katya Quintanilla (SOS), Mervi Mora (SOS), Fabiola (SOS), Sadiq (SOS), Gulalai Habib (Burnaby NH), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch), Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch), Anastasia Gaisenok (PIRS), Maria Cervino (Kiwassa NH), Jerry Wu (VSB), Angela Kim (SUCCESS), Luke Lin (SUCCESS), Çağrı Koçyiğit (Rainbow Refugee), Andrea Galbraith (VPL), Ali Mustafa (Muslim Food Bank), Lizeth Escobedo (YMCA), Lisa Claxton & Jenny Moss (MAP), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Fran Gallo and Barry Growe (JHC) – remote.
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Welcome from Jennifer York, Manager of Refugee Programs at ISSofBC

Jennifer acknowledged that we were meeting on the shared, unceded traditional territory of the : Musqueam, Squamish & Tsleil-Waututh peoples whose history and culture we must learn in order to properly share the benefits given us.

Jennifer welcomed us all to ISSofBC's Welcome Centre and added as Manager of RAP and Refugee Claimant programs at ISSofBC, a founding member of MAP, she is very happy to attend and collaborate with other members.

MAP Co-Chair: Sireen El Nashar (standing in for Thanh who was unwell) **acknowledged the generous funding from Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MUNI)** that makes MAP's work possible.

There were representatives from **28 MAP member agencies**.

Members introduced themselves and their agencies, and we welcomed the following new members:

- Cynthia Pao – MSDPR – Community Integration specialist for Vancouver
- Samuel Chan – MUNI – BCSIS Program
- Giselle Castillo – Cross-cultural Health Broker at Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op
- Mervi and Fabiola – settlement workers at SOS-ISSofBC
- Andrea Galbraith – Information Librarian, Vancouver Public Library – Renfrew Branch

And those by teleconference prevented from being with us: Thanh Lam (MPNH), Fran Gallo and Barry Growe (JHC).

The **Agenda** was outlined with changes explained:

- longer break for networking: 25 minutes
- Agency Updates has been changed to time for agencies to raise issues for discussion. Updates are directed to the weekly bulletin.

The **October 27 Minutes** were APPROVED

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **IRB Update – Jordan Bryan (IRB-RPD)**

Please note: the following tabled statistics appear as though numbers have increased BUT this is only because a new way of extracting information is being used.

TABLE 1: Referrals to the IRB Jan – Nov (partial) 2022

VABC Referrals (month)	Principal	Total including associates
Jan	105	160
Feb	110	157
Mar	156	233
Apr	135	215
May	163	303
Jun	191	300
Jul	199	346
Aug	226	356
Sep	270	408
Oct	330	509
Nov (partial, to Nov 20)	135	204
TOTAL	2020	3191

TABLE 2: Countries of Origin

VABC Referrals (country)	Principal	Total including associates
IRN	560	977
IND	323	429
MEX	239	408
COL	198	363
CHN	83	124
AFG	68	108
TUR	53	83
Other	496	699
TOTAL	2020	3191

Jordan responded to a question from the last meeting regarding **current timelines for claims** to be heard by the IRB:

The IRB uses a number of scheduling priorities when setting hearing appointments so it's not possible to give an 'average wait time'.

Priorities include those detained, vulnerable, unaccompanied minors – these cases are always reviewed first

In addition there is a Task force for less complex and gender related claims.

In reality waiting is part of the capacity issue the IRB is continually facing.

More information can be found at: [Refugee Protection Division approach to scheduling - Immigration and](#)

[Refugee Board of Canada \(irb.gc.ca\)](http://irb.gc.ca)

Question: legal representation for detainees as LABC also copes with capacity issues

Jordan will come back with an answer to this one.

Sireen thanked Jordan for the report

- **Information WG Report: IN FOCUS events in November**

Jenny provided information about the upcoming In Focus event at Renfrew Library (VPL) in east Vancouver on Nov 28: Seeking Asylum – Law and the Journey of Refugee Claimants. This is the second in a series of dynamic presentations from a refugee claimant, a lawyer and a settlement worker.

PRESENTATION: Options to PR

Presented by: Prabhpreet Kaur Sangha, Immigration Lawyer

Speaker introduction: Prabhpreet Kaur Sangha was raised in Surrey and pursued an undergraduate degree at Simon Fraser University. She earned her Juris Doctorate and Certificate in Dispute Resolution from Willamette University located in Salem, Oregon. She was called to the British Columbia Bar in December 2019. She practices solely immigration law with focus on victims of family violence and abuse, refugee claimants, and enjoys appealing refusals to Federal Court. She was a Board of Director with SABABC and is a current member of SALCBC. She has appeared on local television and radio to discuss legal issues. Prabhpreet's parents immigrated to Canada and as a first generation Canadian she understands the hardships that immigrants encounter on a personal, financial, and emotional level. She is passionate in uniting individuals with their families and representing individuals in vulnerable situations.

Please see SLIDES attached for the presentation content

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

- Kinbrace: a suggestion that MAP should start a conversation re: misinformation and misnomers about Internal Flight Alternative. Also there are situations where a refugee claim is made after a visa has expired for good reason: e.g. sudden change in security in home country.
- Clarification requested re: what kind of waiver might be signed at the detention centre?
Response: A person's right to H&C/TRP application process
- Loren (Kinbrace): Top assistance MAP members can provide to support the refugee claimant:
1) settlement agency should consider sitting with the client in their interview with lawyer to help with letters/forms etc
2) write letters of support – this really helps.
- VAST: – to build on Kinbrace's first statement – Canada has a responsibility under international conventions on torture and refugee protection: there is a grave likelihood of torture on return to certain countries.
- Extend the time needed to complete forms for the Basis of Claim application (15 days currently) (see Jordan's notes later)

BREAK: Members enjoyed the networking opportunity!

MAP Update on Strategic Planning - Brad Kinnie (JHC / MAP Advisory Council member)

Brad reminded attendees that the MAP Strategic Planning survey is due Nov 24. Thanks to all those who have already returned completed surveys. The information is invaluable.

Next steps:

- Based on the information from the survey the MAP Advisory Council /MAP Exec will meet with Angie November 29 to discuss '**MAP's Vision and Values**'
- All this information will be incorporated into a **Strategic Planning session** with members and stakeholders on **Friday January 13** to:

Gather insights from the Membership in relation to the SOAR analysis that can inform the Advisory Committee to assist with decision making/prioritization

Present the results of the survey to ensure all voices are heard.

Outcome: Understand the perspective of the membership as a whole and what they see as the strengths, opportunities and aspirations for MAP BC. This foundational information will inform the Results and Goal discussion in the pm

Q: *Is the Strategic Planning Day an in-person event?*

Yes, it will be 'in person' at Journey Home Community in Burnaby.

Housing Working Group Report

Note: The HWG decided that henceforth the report to MAP membership at the general meeting will widen to include other critical issues being discussed and worked on. So, the report is re-named although the BC CHARMS section continues to be a top priority.

Doug Peet (HWG Co-chair)

Marzieh is away at the CCR consultation

Doug encouraged other MAP members interested or involved in refugee claimant housing to consider joining the HWG. Please contact Jenny or one of the co-chairs for more information.

- At this point HWG is embarking on a **large research project about housing for claimants on arrival**. We encourage any potential researchers to join.
The question we are asking is: What housing do we need for claimants when they first arrive –
We will research who across Canada is funding/housing refugee claimants when they first arrive.
- Doug attended the recent **Housing Central Conference hosted by BC Non-Profit Housing Association**. There were great mentions of BC CHARMS and Meanwhile Spaces projects.
But at the same time when Doug asked about **the \$4.8 m that sits with provincial govt for refugee claimant housing** – the answer provided was nebulous – appears that the issue is that housing should not be provided for refugee claimants when there are Canadian citizens suffering homelessness. Doug underlined the point that access to housing should not be based on time in Canada but on vulnerability.
A **meeting on the subject with Dale McMann of BC Housing** will take place in the new year.
- **BC Housing RFP (due Dec 15)** out right now for housing subsidies – provides tops ups to rental in the market – one population eligible is newcomers including refugee claimants. Provides for 10 or more housing units that might continue in perpetuity (good for large families)
- **National Occupancy Standards** – not included in report card type standards, it is an ADVISORY only as recognized as inappropriate.
- Housing Working Group will take on this research based on a shared platform looking at what is happening in other provinces.

The data will then help us advocate here in BC for similar facilities.

e.g., there are hardly any family shelters in Vancouver as compared with Ontario
we also need to advocate for dedicated space for refugee claimants

Comments: we need to know the numbers of homeless people (someone has info??)

Response: Marzieh & Nikita are in Toronto currently and will investigate refugee shelters and learn from them

Frank (VAST) – we know that regular shelters are more harmful to refugee claimants

Julia (bc221) – more information is available on shelters being inappropriate, and also that refugees are often refused entrance by shelters. E.g., Fathers with children have nowhere to go

- **BC CHARMS report** is attached to these Minutes

Issues, concerns and updates raised by agencies

Note: This section is now for raising issues of concern for agency discussion and mutual help

1) Iris (Options) sent in an issue to discuss:

Options is seeing increased demand to complete Refugee claim forms (BOC).

Claimants are facing challenges in securing legal representation. Legal Aid is taking longer to assign lawyers, and lawyers are taking time to complete the forms. We have heard that lawyers are having issues finding interpreters.

Clients who have made the refugee claim at the border receive an appointment to return to CBSA with the completed forms mentioned above. If the clients still need to secure legal representation, they struggle to complete the forms by the time they need to return to CBSA.

Ana: added that it takes more than a month to get a Legal Aid lawyer – and sometimes they need to be re-assigned if not a good fit. This month Patricia has had to help claimants with their forms.

This is problematic as it includes the claimant's narrative – and this needs to be done by a lawyer to get it right

But without this step claimants cannot apply for financial assistance, housing or a bank account.

Response:

Prabh (lawyer): might be a good idea to ask for more time from CBSA

Katya (SOS) asked how much time on average a lawyer is dedicating to the forms for BOC?

Response:

Prabh: we usually have to do it again from scratch – so this takes a few hours.

Sometimes lawyers might do an amended BOC later on

2) Issue: Cagri (Rainbow Refugee) – helping a minor claimant: has anyone had any experience with an unaccompanied child going through the MCFD agreement?

Please email inland@rainbowrefugee.ca if you have any ideas.

Cagri also passed along that some of their clients have reported homophobic or transphobic environments or language at some agencies – please be aware.

3) Issue: Imtiaz (Fraser Health) – COVID numbers are up!

Please be aware that newcomers need information about vaccinations.

Don't shake hands, wash your hands frequently and wear a mask indoors.

4) Issue: Jordan (IRB) – on the theme of the 15-day BOC time limit – during the pandemic there was a 30-day extension (45 days extension for ports of entry) for the BOC.

Jordan will reach out to CBSA to clarify that they are following this guideline.

Please note: If within the timeframe there is no response from the claimant then the case is considered abandoned – but you can always ask for more time if it is needed – **PLEASE COMMUNICATE with the board.**

Prabh (lawyer) agreed – it is always very important to ask for more time or whatever you need.

Ali Mustafa (MFB) – has been waiting for security screening (15 – 20 months delay) for RC and PR applications.

Response: Prabh – you need a lawyer to write a letter, or get the MP involved.

Feedback: feedback forms were completed and submitted to gather member opinions on the meeting. Thank you!

CLOSING: We adjourned at 12:00pm - Next meeting Thursday January 26 location TBA