

MAP Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 23, 2023: 9:30AM – 12:00PM

at MOSAIC – 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

- **Attendees:** Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Saleem Spindari (Muslim Food Bank), Mainu Ahmed (Muslim Food Bank), Cavlan Erengezgin (Aspire Community Services), Ami Konaté (IRB), Thanh Lam (MPNH), Alejandro Pantoja Sanchez (SOS-ISSofBC), Harem Tahir (SOS-ISSofBC), Sara Lopez (VAST), Iris Solorzano (Options), Julia Wu (bc211), Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Adriana Zepeda (Kinbrace), Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Doug Peat (JHC), Fahad Altimyat (MSDPR), Sherman Chan (MOSAIC), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Salih Arif (MOSAIC), Miriam Jurigova (MOSAIC), Lucia Hernandez (MOSAIC), Sara Rahnama (MOSAIC), Inge Lewerentz (MOSAIC), Pedro Ramirez (REACH), Richard Soo (Eastern CC), Arely Rodriguez (Little Mountain NH), Namira Elshami (Umbrella Co-op), Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health), Andrea Galbraith (Vancouver Public Library), Duncan James (Covenant House), Gulalai Habib (Burnaby NH), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch), Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch), Jerry Wu (VSB), Shiva Babu (Impact North Shore), Mohammed (PICS), Lizeth Escobedo (YMCA), Raya Avazova (Le Relais Francophone), Glyn Townson (AIDS Vancouver), Seyar Zafer, Lisa Claxton & Jenny Moss (MAP).
Virtual: Fran Gallo (Volunteer – IHC Legal Clinic), Denise Beaupre (Volunteer – Kinbrace), Alan Huang (SND Div of Family Practice/Roots Clinic)

MAP Co-chair Sireen El Nashar welcomed everyone and introduced MAP Executive: Thanh, Jenny and Lisa.

She thanked **MOSAIC** for hosting and set up, and invited **Sherman Chan** to provide a welcome:

Sherman Chan, Director of Settlement Services. MOSAIC has been in existence 47 years and provides services for all newcomers, as well as conducting advocacy to create change in systems of support to newcomers. We appreciate working together and MAP BC is an important alliance for MOSAIC.

Some recent collaborative MOSAIC events:

- Hosting a Sudanese anti-racism forum in Abbotsford – funded by Canadian Heritage. MOSAIC is proudly supporting this project with the Sudanese community.
- With the Filipino community MOSAIC is hosting a conference to support international students
- Next week 'Moving Ahead' Alliance – there will be a national conference on case management and opportunities to speak with government and funders.

Marzieh (MOSAIC): focusing on refugee claimants she recently attended the CCR conference and working groups to learn as well as talk about initiatives in BC

MOSAIC was also invited by House of Commons Committee on Citizenship & Immigration hearing on Safe Third Country Agreement and provided information as to its effect on refugee claimants.

Acknowledgements:

MAP acknowledged that the meeting was held on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and occupied

territories of the x̣ṃəθkwəỵəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations to whom we owe recognition and our gratitude.

Sireen also thanked the **BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs** for funding MAP.

Sireen noted that MAP is thinking of all those affected by the **earthquakes in Turkey and Syria**, knowing that many are refugees who have family here too. Sireen encouraged all MAP members to support the relief efforts however they see appropriate.

Introductions: members introduced themselves and their agencies. There were 43 attendees from 28 agencies including 3 joining via teleconference.

We welcomed the following new attendees:

- Ami Konaté (IRB-RPD)
- Mainu Ahmed and Cavlan Erengezgin (MFB/Aspire Community Services)
- Raya Avazova (Le Relais)
- Duncan James (Covenant House)
- Glyn Townson (AIDS Vancouver)
- Alejandro Pantoja (SOS-ISSofBC)
- Harem Tahir (Housing worker at ISSofBC)
- Mohammed (PICS)
- Sara Rahnema and Inge Lewerentz (MOSAIC)

Sireen outlined the Agenda, and the January 2023 MAP Minutes were **APPROVED**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **IRB Update – Ami Konaté (Assistant Deputy Registrar, Refugee Protection Division – Western Region IRB)** shared the statistics on arrivals referred to the IRB in the last 13 months (to Feb 20)

TABLE 1: Referrals to the IRB:

VABC Referrals (month)	Principal	Total including associates
2022		
Jan	106	162
Feb	108	156
Mar	156	235
Apr	135	215
May	168	309
Jun	197	312
Jul	204	351
Aug	225	363
Sep	273	418
Oct	311	510
Nov	221	362
Dec	217	355
2023		
Jan	295	443
Feb (partial, to Feb 20)	248	355
TOTAL	2864	4546

TABLE 2: Countries of Origin:

VABC Referrals (country)	Principal	Total including associates
IRN	821	1422
IND	436	579
MEX	318	560
COL	260	477
AFG	133	189
CHN	122	177
TUR	84	132
Other	690	1010
TOTAL	2864	4546

Ami stated there has been a large increase in referrals from IRCC and CBSA compared to a year ago.
Note - No change in source countries

Updates from IRB: remote hearings are still the norm by default, but staff are returning to the office so it is expected that more in-person hearings will take place.
Everyone, especially those unrepresented claimants, have the option of a hybrid hearing if they are lacking the equipment or confidentiality to be able to connect from home.

Questions:

1) In the statistics on Country of Origin does China include HK?

Response: Yes – it is not separate

Ami could find information on statistics from Hong Kong specifically and provide to Richard Soo.

2) Who are 'Associates'?

Response: they are family members of Principal Claimants (to provide a total) and they can be inland claims (IRCC) or those referred from Port of Entry (CBSA) – all are recorded here.

Presentation: Muslim Food Bank and Community Services Society: Programs and Services

– an overview of the agency and services for refugee claimants

Presented by: **Saleem Spindari, Manager of ASPIRE Programs and**
Mainu Ahmed, Director of ASPIRE Community Services

Sireen introduced both speakers from their bios.

Please see the slides attached for the presentation

Additional Notes:

Saleem: introduced the Mission of MFB – which is from the Koran

Mainu:

- the model is based on volunteering (80% of workforce is voluntary)
- and it is not reliant on government. funding – and therefore can be nimbler/more responsive.
- MFB is not a settlement agency – it supports existing structures and agencies out there by connecting clients to resources and checking that clients do successfully connect.

Aspire Program: its flagship program is Community Caseworker Program – community members supporting others in the same community. It is based on the concept that people want to help others, but don't know how – so Aspire provides training (3 day) with basic skills for interacting and making an action plan with a client. The casework model is used in all other Aspire programs.

Counselling – the program has been updated thoroughly recently – NOTE: the mental health program is not volunteer run (staffed by Registered Counsellors)

Aspire does not provide counselling through interpretation – they have 8/10 languages covered by counselors: Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi/Dari, Urdu, Gujrati, Kiswahili, English.

Youth Program – creating leadership in local youth.

Employment program - workshops starting in March.

Housing

Special project to support some in DTES who need housing – Aspire finds housing, and might cover the deposit or some of the rent.

Refugee Claimants – Aspire advocates on behalf of refugee claimants crossing the border who are connecting with their office in Surrey. Large number of Afghans arriving that way – 15 in last few days
- Aspire provides access to services and a housing worker will look for a place where they can live together (instead of being split up in shelters)
- Aspire can also provide some financial support via Zakat funds.
MSDPR representative at the office helps with applying for SIN and financial assistance – this really helps with preventing delays.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

- Is counseling virtual or in person?

Response: it can be virtual or in person. There are Counseling rooms in the Surrey office.

- Are there pre-defined (counseling) needs that you focus on?

Response: It depends on the counselor – we will look at client's emerging needs and then assign the appropriate counselor with those skills, or find new counselors, if needed.

- Women from Afghanistan arriving at PICS and need special assistance –they need support in Pashto, can you help?

Yes they do, and we are always looking for new Pashto counselors.

- Gulalai (Burnaby NH) – MFB supported Syrian refugees tremendously with food support. Faith communities can do much to help those in dire need.

- During Ramadan do you conduct special fundraising to help children

Response: Yes, we depend on donations – e.g.: March 18 – 4-hour preparation for start of Ramadan and it is also a time for giving, so financial support can be increased during that time of Ramadan.

Sireen thanked Saleem and Mainu for an extremely insightful presentation.

MAP Strategic Planning Update - provided by Loren Balisky (Kinbrace) and Brad Kinnie (JHC)

- A. Loren recapped** - almost a year ago we tried to find a new co-chair and couldn't – this signified something was amiss with MAP's structure.

MAP has never had an **Advisory Council** and there was too much weight placed on the co-chairs and Coordinator regarding decision making.

Consequently, there was an appeal for volunteers and a group of **6 agency representatives** came together as a time-bound group – (identified Brad (JHC), Sherman (MOSAIC), Jennifer (ISSofBC), Iris (Options) Gulalai (Burnaby NH) and Loren).

On **Jan 13 – we held a Strategic Planning Day** facilitated by Angie McLeod of HIP Strategic Consulting – this was an important day of talking, listening and imagining going forward.

Brad added – we are hiring a **New Community Engagement Director**

Since Jenny is retiring March 31 we are looking for a new leader who will be responsible for 5 areas of work In the contract:

- A. Convening Sector Partners: meetings and working groups
- B. Information Sharing and Advocacy
- C. Public Education
- D. MAP Project Support
- E. MAP Administration

(see posting and Job Description attached to these Minutes)

JHC has taken on host funding and so they are making sure the contract is well drawn up to support the person and do the work.

Loren– MAP Structure is an ongoing discussion (covers decision making/reporting/communication) the Advisory Council is trying to realign the structure in accordance with the Strategic Planning goals and includes these recommendations:

- Recommend the Advisory Council stays in place
- Working Groups – the AC will look at how they work – if needed they will come to members for a decision on recommendations.
- Looking at sector-wide projects and how they serve MAP and its members.
- MAP's voice – what is this voice? – clarify this in terms of role and content
- Membership fees – has to be discussed and there will be a recommendation.

- **BC CHARMS report** (please see slides attached)

Updates:

1) Originally the **housing form** didn't differentiate between housing types – so it is now broken down into Short term and Long term housing

And each category could be transitional housing or with a private landlord

- Training will start moving forward on this change.

2) **Number of units increased** – now have 24 units

3-5 people allowable per unit

Have so far placed 11 families (39 individuals)

3) **Private Landlords**

Starting to include them in CHARMS

- Modeled after United Way model for Ukrainians, and COSTI model in Ontario

- Inputting the accommodation will be via webforms for external users (like lawyers, teachers, churches), and now private landlords

(Private landlord accommodation cannot be included like MAP housing agency accommodation because of confidentiality reasons)

- The webforms then go to ADMIN to check and the information is then transferred to the regular dbase forms.

- The Referral mechanism is also a little different

4) **Sustainability Fund**

Contract with the BC Government ends March 31

MOSAIC has applied to 6/7 more grants as of 5/6 months ago but has only secured one of the BC CHARMS positions through a Vancity fund.

So, MOSAIC went back to Bonterra (formerly Apricot) to ask if there could be a price reduction.

Costs reduced by 50% and Marzieh and Nikita will be hired by Bonterra for this work.

They also gained a clearer idea of how many licenses they need – and have reduced the numbers.

Housing Working Group Report – Doug Peat (Co-chair)

The HWG has been looking at the roots of MAP HWG advocacy – back to the 2019 Report to the provincial government '[Towards a Housing Solution for Refugee Claimants](#)' and has been re-imagining one of the strong recommendations: that BC needs a Refugee Claimant Reception Centre (sometimes known as

'refugee shelter' in other jurisdictions).

The issue is we don't know what to do when refugee claimants arrive – we don't want to send them to shelters, but we often have no alternative. As a sector we are successful in many areas – but we have not been successful in providing an arrival facility for claimants

In October we decided to do research nationally to see what others have done to provide arrival housing. And to use this research combined with our own to engage in conversations at the highest level to put in place a solution.

Included: we put together pertinent questions, listed the locations of refugee shelters in different provinces and met and discussed with the HWG.

However, because of MAP's Strategic Planning and **structural** changes the HWG co-chairs have decided to put a pause on the project - when MAP is ready and HWG is ready they will reconvene.

Recommend to Advisory Council:

- Adopt recommendations from the Report as goals for MAP
- Invite more voices of those with lived experience to add authenticity

In the meantime:

- We will continue to voice the needs at AMSSA and BCNPHA roundtables to avoid losing our seat.
- We will continue to use the 'one voice' at these tables.

INFORMATION WORKING GROUP REPORT – Lisa Claxton Volunteer Member

'Building Connections: an Interactive Resource Fair for Refugee Claimants' (see poster attached)

MAP is hosting the event Saturday April 1st at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House from 4pm – 6:30pm

We envision an activity that provides newly arrived refugee claimants in the Vancouver area access to important information to help them get started, and a chance to relax over a coffee/tea and snacks to meet others and find support.

The event will feature information tables with the following resources: legal, housing, settlement support, food security, employment, health and mental health, library resources, police. Many MAP agencies are being invited to participate and provide information on their services, but others are welcome to join if we have space.

We are focusing on Spanish and Farsi/Dari speaking communities and we urge all agencies to encourage their claimant clients to attend. There will be interpreters circulating to help out.

Please contact Lisa at lisa.claxton64@gmail.com if you would like to help out or have a table for your agency. Posters are available in 3 languages for promotion to clients (attached)

AGENCY UPDATES:

Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health)

Update: COVID cases peaked in January and now decreasing

Flu is peaking but will continue to end of March

There is resistance amongst newcomers to vaccinations – caseworkers should help with

providing information to their clients about vaccinations please
Deaths by intoxication – seen a number of deaths in Afghan community – alarming.

Richard (Eastern European Orthodox Church)

Please be careful of language used concerning Ukrainians – please call them war-disrupted refugees. Most wish to return to their countries.

Iris Solorzano (Options)

Do send your RC clients for series of 6 pre-employment workshops – Options has lots of languages available - see MAP bulletin.

REQUEST: Options needs a list from MAP members about who is providing housing – *for example:* the Options listing on their website is not appropriate for families or women coming out of abusive situations.

Response: **Marzieh** – all transitional housing mentioned by MAP member agencies exists on BC CHARMS. and for each vacancy there is a contact person

Iris added – Options needs to get more information so they can help the large number of people asking.

Brad Kinnie (JHC)

Readying the launch of a new community house in Burnaby – prioritizing Meanwhile Spaces at the moment – have just signed a contract for 5 new houses for a year!

Miriam Jurigova (MOSAIC)

MOSAIC's Legal Advocacy Program has a new more convenient email: LAP@mosaicbc.org
(Our other email legaladvocacy@mosaicbc.org is still in use, the two emails are now combined.)

For more information about our program please consult our webpage: <https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/legal-help-for-immigrants-and-refugees/> (you will have to scroll down for the program support information)

We are careful not to duplicate the services at IRLC, so we focus mainly on family reunification

Lizeth Escobedo (YMCA)

- Wonders why there are no reps from YWCA at MAP? It might be possible to engage YWCA into providing some housing support if we invited them to MAP?

(Jenny M to follow up)

- Please take care when using the United Way private landlord system as there have been some problems with inappropriate hosts for Ukrainians.

Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace)

Achieving Financial Mobility – changing the narrative to encourage employers to hire refugee claimants.

Updates: – hired facilitators to assist Refugee Claimants

- need more employers – for profit/business - to be mentors

- won a grant from [Culture and Animals Foundation](#) – it's an artistic project involving refugee claimants and climate change.

For this Kinbrace needs 10 RC's to walk the journey of art and the history of Canada

Kelly Rader (inasmuch)

Issue: Kelly referred to earlier MAP meetings when we discussed settlement workers' role, if any, in assisting with forms, or how to find a reasonable and able representative.

Response: Jenny (MAP) – Please see previous Minutes from our Feb 24, 2022 meeting with CCR regarding this issue and subsequent Quality of Service Project. Encouraged Kelly to contact CCR for more information if still necessary.

Iris – Options is empowering claimants to do it themselves (by providing laptops and language assistance) or insisting their lawyers help.

Thanh – remembered that Mahi (ISSofBC) referred to this: – section 91

Marzieh (MOSAIC)

Food Safe training tomorrow full, but will repeat in other languages in other areas
First Aid training March 29 in English for refugee claimants

Loren (Kinbrace)

- My Refugee Claim – packages are available
- Kinbrace has a new Scholarship fund – mentioned in Feb 8 MAP bulletin and searchable on MOSAIC website - deadline to apply April 30.
- Becoming neighbours workshops – first one on 25 March – Kinbrace ran a pilot with MFB which worked well to establish 5 core values that really work

Vancity (in absentia)

The process to support Refugee Claimants who only have a **copy** of their ID and an Acknowledgement of Claim form is fully in place. Diana will connect with MAP agencies to go over the process soon.

Members completed the Feedback forms and the meeting adjourned at 12:00PM

Next meeting Thursday March 23 at ISSofBC