

MAP Meeting Minutes

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

at MOSAIC – 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

- **Attendees:** Thanh Lam (MPNH), Mohsen Eslami (ISSofBC), Sireen El-Nashar (Zaytuna), Ami Konaté (IRB), Sara Lopez (VAST), Fran Cohn (VAST), Iris Solorzano (Options), Julia Wu (bc211), Loren Balisky (Kinbrace), Wilfred Thariki (Kinbrace), Ann Ball (New Hope), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Cagri Koçyiğit (Rainbow Refugee), Giuliana Lira (DIVERSEcity), Sanjay Jangra (DIVERSEcity), Fahad Altimyat (MSDPR), Bianca Lomeda (MSDPR), Pam Screpnik (MSDPR), Joni Rose (MUNI), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Nikita Laranjeira (MOSAIC), Lucia Hernandez (MOSAIC), Richard Soo (Eastern CC), Diana Barry (Vancity), Xin Chai (Impact North Shore), Arely Rodriguez (Little Mountain NH), Abraham Hagos (Umbrella Co-op), Imtiaz Popat (Fraser Health), Gaston Ntabaza (SOS-ISSofBC), Katya Quintanilla (SOS-ISSofBC), Duncan James (Covenant House), Kelly Rader (Inasmuch), Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch), Mohammed (PICS), Jean-Bruno (Le Relais Francophone), Glyn Townson (AIDS Vancouver), Dena Nicolai (First Christian Reformed Church), Valentina Stanciu (MAP Volunteer), Lisa Claxton & Jenny Moss (MAP).
Virtual: Fran Gallo (Volunteer – IHC Legal Clinic)
- **Regrets:** Lizeth Escobedo (YMCA),

MAP Co-chair Thanh Lam welcomed everyone and introduced MAP Executive: Sireen, Jenny and Lisa. She thanked **ISSofBC** for hosting and set up, and invited **Mohsen Eslami** to provide a welcome:

Mohsen acknowledged that the meeting was held on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and occupied territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations to whom we owe recognition and our gratitude.

He introduced himself as Manager of the SOS program at ISSofBC and welcomed everyone.

Thanh also thanked the **BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs** for funding MAP over the past 3 years and for participating in MAP's discussions actively. There was universal applause.

Joni Rose responded that she had thoroughly enjoyed getting involved with MAP and attending meetings. And possibly will do so in the future if procurement rules and time permits.

Thanh wished all those celebrating a Happy Nowruz and Ramadan Mubarak

Introductions: members introduced themselves and their agencies. There were 41 attendees from 28 agencies including 1 joining via teleconference.

We welcomed the following new attendees:

- Xin Chai – Impact North Shore
- Giuliana Lira and Sanjay Jangra – DIVERSEcity
and welcomed back again after a long absence:
- Dena Nicolai - First Christian Reformed Church – who generously organized the free parking.

Thanh outlined the Agenda, and the February 2023 MAP Minutes were **APPROVED** (motion proposed by Kelly Rader and seconded by Sireen El-Nashar)

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 14 months (to March 20) with BC addresses:

TABLE 1: Referrals to the IRB:

VABC Referrals (month)	Principal	Total including associates
2022		
Jan	105	160
Feb	108	156
Mar	157	236
Apr	137	217
May	168	309
Jun	195	311
Jul	205	352
Aug	225	366
Sep	274	420
Oct	310	509
Nov	223	366
Dec	216	355
2023		
Jan	294	447
Feb	318	483
Mar (partial, to Mar 20)	241	359
TOTAL	3176	5046

TABLE 2: Countries of Origin:

VABC Referrals (country)	Principal	Total including associates
IRN	901	1578
IND	472	632
MEX	349	606
COL	289	526
AFG	163	239
TUR	128	187
CHN	131	185
...	-	-
HKG	30	38
...	-	-
Other	713	1055
TOTAL	3176	5046

During the past 14+ calendar months (1 Jan 2022 to 20 Mar 2023), the top countries of reference for referrals received with a British Columbia address were as listed below. Included are stats on China (CHN) and Hong Kong (HKG) referrals. HKG is not included in the CHN stats. (These were provided as per a participant's request at the February MAP meeting.)

Ami clarified that the statistics reflect claimants passed along by IRCC or CBSA as deemed eligible to make a refugee claim. The claims may also include dependent family members also present in BC. There may be some discrepancies with earlier reports because of addresses and family files joined.

Clarification: these numbers do not include any children or other dependent family members still overseas.

• Co-chair Nominations Invited

Thanh announced that nominations were invited for the co-chair position since her duties will terminate in June and MAP encourages a few months' crossover with the new incumbent.

Thanh mentioned how much she had learned about collaboration and communication during the pandemic through MAP and now feels much more connected to the community.

Thanh outlined the revised co-chair job description and commitments as focusing on convening and encouraging collaboration, as well as supporting the agencies in the goals they wish to put into motion:

The co-chairs, working with the Community Engagement Director, are responsible for the following:

- a. identify guest speakers.
- b. set the agenda.
- c. chair MAP meetings
- d. at times represent MAP at events and in dialogue with external parties, including government.
- e. attend Advisory Council meetings and meet regularly with the Community Engagement Director

Key commitments of the co-chair:

To represent and prioritize the best interests of refugee claimants in BC and Canada

To uphold and model the values, mission, and vision of MAP.

To act in a neutral, impartial manner where there are many different interests.

To commit to the wellbeing of the entire refugee claimant serving sector, particularly the MAP community of Partner and Participant agencies

Participate in MAP Strategic Planning exercises.

Commit to approximately ten (10) hours work for MAP per month.

Jenny explained how to nominate:

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 should:

- 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.

Nominations should be sent by email to info@mapbc.org by Friday April 14 so that they can be shared with MAP membership in time for an election at the April Meeting.

All MAP Partner and Participant level members may vote – one vote per agency.

Presentation: MSDPR- "Financial Supports for Refugee Claimants"

Fahad Altimyat, Bianca Lomeda & Pam Screpnek – Community Integration Specialists

(SLIDES ARE NOT AVAILABLE - SEE LINKS BELOW)

Thanh introduced the speakers – Fahad and Bianca

Fahad explained that the Community Integration Specialists (CIS) are seconded to work with community partners, for example he works with ISSofBC/MOSAIC/Rainbow Refugee and SUCCESS. Their work focuses on connecting the most vulnerable clients to resources - many of whom are part of the Move Ahead program. MSDPR has:

- an office in the DTES to assist the most vulnerable refugee claimants
- Financial assistance
- Intensive case management for those in treatment facilities

For our purposes the Income Assistance is provided to:

- Those unable to work (including refugee claimants), or
- Applicants under an unenforceable deportation order or PRRA

Eligibility for refugee claimants is based mainly on:

- a) Unable to work (because there is no work permit (need ID (AOC form, IMM 1442B)
- b) Bank statement if they have an account – with 60 days info
- c) All sources of income, assets and property including outside BC

Guidance on the Application:

- Obtain a clear ID doc (IMM or AOC) before applying.
- Complete the application form with exactly the same names and dates of birth as on the IMM document (regardless of errors on the document)
- The IMM document must not have expired or extra documentation will be needed.
- Each family member needs their own IMM doc to reside in BC, but children can be accepted on the same application for IA if under 19. Over 19's must apply separately.
- Consent to Disclosure of information form is compulsory.

Process of Application

At the outset claimants cannot use My Self Serve online – they should set up an appointment at the MSDPR office or with their CIS rep over the phone where interpretation can be provided if the applicant states their language.

(My Self Serve requires a SIN. Once the claimant receives their work permit and SIN they can set up a My Self Serve account and post monthly reports there rather than having to visit the office).

Types of Assistance

Basic IA plus they may be eligible for:

- (PPMB) Persons with Persistent Multiple Barriers (medical or other barriers)
- Disabilities and non-employable
- Hardship Assistance (temporary)
- Clients Over 65 (higher benefit rate)

Employment Plans

Once the claimant receives their SIN, they must sign up for an employment plan.

However claimants can receive benefits for up to one year if they have not received their work permit.

Health Supplements

RC's will be able to sign up for MSP once they are found eligible and coverage may include prescription costs, medical supplies, dental and supplements.

QUESTION: A child of 16 was denied MSP because they didn't have a work permit while the rest of the family were signed up.

Response: problems with children's applications occur sometimes – need to contact MSDPR worker to look into it.

ISSUE: With arriving refugee claimant families the children need MSP to be allowed to register for school – IFH is insufficient.

Response: There is a way around it with the schools using refugee claimant ID.

Temporary Child Benefit top up – this is available until child reaches 18 months of BC residency – and can be extended until Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is provided.

Crisis Supplements

These can be provided to prevent danger to health or the removal of a child.

There are crisis supplements for food, clothing, shelter and essential utilities.

Timeframes:

Food supplement – awarded within 24 hours

Clothing supplement – in 2 days

Shelter supplement – when rent is due.

These payments are made by direct deposit or cheque.

These requests are not investigated or checked up on.

Rates provided: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/bc-employment-and-assistance-rate-tables>

QUESTIONS TO PRESENTERS

- Does the PPMB allowance include trauma?

Response: Yes, but this must be verified by a doctor

- Those who are on an 'Exclusion Order' are not eligible for IA (can't work but are not slated for deportation yet) – what can they access to survive?

Response: Only chance is to use a PRRA - if this is not available then they must provide more documentation from CBSA/IRCC for the Ministry to consider.

- Can MSDPR provide interpretation over the phone?

Response: YES

But limited in person interpretation and not available to the CIS staff

Sometimes they tell clients to call the 1-866 -866-0800 number to get interpretation for their interviews.

- Can MSDPR call a settlement worker?

Response: YES, if there is consent.

- Furniture start up benefit. How much is it?

Response: Amount is not specific but based on need and limited to bedroom furniture and kitchen supplies.

BEDS are supplied through RAGS who can also deliver via a 3rd party.

KITCHEN SUPPLIES – A cheque is sent to the client.

Setting this up takes about one week.

- Furniture can be sourced at 'Families in Need Society', but they charge a moving fee.

Response: The Ministry can reimburse this fee.

- Transition house has difficulty with furniture requirement test when MSDPR refuses claimants because they are seen as having furniture already – although this is property of the transition house – not claimants.

Response: these requests should not be denied but it does take time – ask to speak to the supervisor to explain the situation.

- What about the delays when claimants are waiting for their AOC document?

Those clients have no support for months.

It's also hard on the agencies to find support with few resources.

Food banks are asking for the same ID document

Could assistance be provided right from the start?

Response: It is most unfortunate, but the Ministry cannot respond in these situations.

- Comment – MSDPR could do more to create more education for refugee claimants on the benefits and how to access them.
- Comment – the food supplement is not enough for culturally appropriate foods.

Useful Links: (cut and paste)

- **Apply for IA :**
<https://myselfserve.gov.bc.ca/>
- **MSDPR site:** <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/social-development-poverty-reduction>

Contact the Ministry:



Online, 24 hours a day

- » Through My Self Serve (myselfserve.gov.bc.ca) you can:
 - Apply for assistance
 - Receive and reply to messages from the ministry
 - Make and track service requests
 - Submit your monthly report
 - Find information about your next payment date
 - Get information on services and supports through the ministry's website at: gov.bc.ca/sdpr

All offices have computers and free Wi-Fi available to access My Self Serve during office hours



In Person

- » Offices are open Monday – Friday (except statutory holidays) between **9 a.m. and 4 p.m., closed 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. local time**
- » Cheques are produced in all ministry offices at least three times per day at **11 a.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.**
- » Clients attending a ministry office are acknowledged and informed of service request processing times
- » All ministry offices are accessible



Phone

- » Information about ministry programs and services is available 24 hours a day, toll free at: **1 866 866-0800**
- » Phone lines are open Monday – Friday (except statutory holidays) between **9 a.m. and 4 p.m. local time**
- » Clients calling the ministry are informed of service request processing times



Mail

The ministry is committed to providing responses to ministerial correspondence within **14 business days**.

Thanh thanked Fahad and Bianca profusely for the presentation – they are happy to be contacted with any further questions.

BREAK

MAP Advisory Council Report - provided by Loren Balisky on behalf of the AC.

- **Recap - who is the Advisory Council?**
 - [Jennifer York](#)
 - [Iris Solorzano](#)
 - [Brad Kinnie](#)
 - [Sherman Chan](#)
 - [Loren Balisky](#)
- **Recap of AC history and purpose**
 - In May 2022 the MAP membership approved the motion to form an Advisory Council that meets once a month to broaden decision making, support the co-chairs, and advise and direct MAP.
 - This was proposed as an interim response to the pressing needs and pressures of a year ago when we lacked nominations for the co-chair role.
 - MAP member agencies were invited to put names forward to serve on a temporary Advisory Council, and the above people were affirmed (Gulalai had to step down last month)
- **Work that the volunteer AC has accomplished to date:**

- Hosted the Strategic visioning and planning day in January 2023
- Started discussing:
 - the structure of MAP - still in process
 - the mission/vision/values
 - Policies and procedures that need to be written down.
- The timeline to complete this is still TBD and our hope is that once the Community Engagement Director is contracted, we can work on all these items.
- All structure, mandate, policies and procedures will come to the MAP membership for discussion and approval.
- The goal is to keep MAP healthy organizationally, with a clear and progressive mandate.
- **Interview Process for Community Engagement Director** - this has been the focus for the AC in the past month, and an announcement will be made in the near future.
 - Journey Home Community agreed to be the lead agency to receive funds and steward the contracting of MAP Community Engagement Director
- **There was a question that came from the MAP community last week about the Advisory Council and whether there will be a vote to formalize it.**
 - The AC is recommending:
 - Keep the current temporary Advisory Council in place until -
 - the hiring process for the Community Engagement Director is complete.
 - the transition from Jenny to the new Community Engagement Director is complete.
 - The updated shared mandate (mission/vision/values) are approved by the membership.
 - An updated MAP structure is approved by the membership.
 - New policies and procedures are approved by the membership.
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- Finally, a note that, as Jenny transitions out of her Executive Coordinator role and the new Community Engagement Director takes over, please be patient with possible disruptions, silences, slow responses, changes.

A motion was proposed to approve the AC's recommendation to continue as is until the Fall (when the above will have been accomplished)

AGREED.

Question: what are the results of the Strategic Plan?

Response: they are not formalized yet – still in process.

NOTE: There is a need to add persons with lived experience to the AC – and if any such person would like to join they would be encouraged to apply. However, the AC is not recruiting per se at the moment.

● **BC CHARMS report**

Searching via BC CHARMS: 256 individuals / 101 families

Placed “ “ “ : 179 individuals / 55 families

Waiting Room: external referrals placed here are picking up.

Please contact clients in a timely way

Referrals are going well: 24 units (only 13 in October)

Client intake form can now distinguish between

- temporary and permanent housing.
- short and long term opportunities

It identifies stages along the way of the housing continuum and where the client is at. This helps prevent the client falling off the spectrum completely.

Private landlord onboarding has been finalized.

- All forms and online links established
- Privacy and security mechanisms have been finalized.

The form includes lots of detail about the rental space concerned.

It's not live quite yet – we will discuss it with the BC CHARMS Advisory Committee next week to see if it is viable, and if so it will go live.

Ready to present at Landlord BC Conference in May.

Thanh added: the BC CHARMS Advisory Cttee will meet Wednesday March 29 and decide whether to continue the subscription with Bonterra since the renewal date is June '23 and notice is required.

INFORMATION WORKING GROUP REPORT – Jenny Moss

'Building Connections: an Interactive Resource Fair for Refugee Claimants' –

Saturday April 1, 4pm at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House.

The event is well underway with 15 agencies signed up to share information and an active promotion campaign to attract refugee claimants as well as recruit interpreter volunteers.

Thanks to Mount Pleasant NH and Thanh for hosting, and the IWG for its preparations: Lisa, Angela, Seyar, Fran, Melissa and Jenny.

World Refugee Day upcoming!

WRD is on June 20 and is traditionally a very big event for MAP.

Sireen has offered to lead the organizing – but she is looking for other volunteers and ideas for activities.

Please contact her at sireen.elnashar@zaytuna.ca with your ideas.

• AGENCY UPDATES AND ISSUES

Kelly – (Inasmuch)– would like to see a Settlement Worker Workshop

- how to deal with issues as they arise
- top 5 issues

They are happy to host.

Joni suggested Inasmuch could look into training hosted by AMSSA – though this does not focus on refugee claimants.

Imtiaz (Fraser Health Sehat Program) – there is a spike in COVID cases – please take precautions.

- supporting the rights of queer Muslim community in Uganda that is persecuted – please support if you can.

Thanh announced a retirement party for Jenny – April 27 from 5pm – 8pm at Mount Pleasant NH. Mohsen asked if the MAOP meeting could be moved to the afternoon to accommodate both MAP Executive will consider and let everyone know in time.

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

Next meeting Thursday April 27 at MOSAIC