



## MINUTES

Abbotsford Local Immigration Partnership  
Abbotsford Community Services - Boardroom  
Thursday April 4th, 2pm-4pm

Attending		Regrets	
Manpreet Grewal	Camilla Boisvert	Melissa Giles	Hillary Russell
Dave Loewen	Harold Rosen	Adlin Babantaj (IAT)	Sue Federspiel
Kanta Naik	Alison Gutrath	Stephen Piper	Nicola Mooney
Balbir Gill	Natalia Deros	Ghizlane Laghzaoui	
Seydou Keita (IAT)		Jennifer Mpungu	
Tammy Johnson		Harpreet Singh	
Max. R Aranguiz-Peterson (IAT)		Katerina Anastasiadis	

## PRESENTATION

[Job Connections for Immigrants:](#) Ranni Sangha-Tolman, Program Supervisor

ACS's Job Connections of Immigrants (JCI) in partnership with employment agency Maximus (Abby Works) is a program designed to aid newcomers who have accessed EI or parental leave in the past five years. The program includes 15 weeks of in-class job training through UFV's certificate programs and a four-week practicum placement with various retail employers. 50% of practicum students are hired by the business they were placed with, and the remaining clients are given two extra weeks to focus on job-hunting. Past clients of previous versions of this program were found to successfully continue work in their field of training.

ACS also has two other employment programs for newcomers: Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants and the Employment Mentors Program for Immigrants in Canada. The first is focused on newcomers with PR who are unemployed or underemployed within their field, providing them with training, career consultation, and networking opportunities. The EMP program provides one-on-one mentorship in newcomers' fields, along with professional development, networking, and soft skill training.

## MEETING OPENING AND INTRODUCTIONS

Stó:lō Land Acknowledgement

Roundtable

## APPROVALS

Agenda



Minutes Jan 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## **WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

### **Social Integration**

Social Integration met in February to discuss the goals and initiatives of the next year. Several projects emerged out of the brainstorming session- specifically, the need for fire safety information to be disseminated to newcomers. Action items were to coordinate with the Abbotsford fire chief to see what materials the fire department already has and to modify and translate them by LINC students and IAT members. Partnership with Literacy Matters, and in particular their Learn about Series was suggested as well.

The second fact sheet around newcomer demographics in Abbotsford is in progress.

### **Labour Market Integration**

This working group has met once- topics of discussion included new members of the working group, specifically businesses that have a large hiring potential. A second networking and panel discussion “Employment Mentorship Series” is planned with ACS Employment Mentoring Program in May with a focus on Human Resources

### **Research, Policy & Practice**

The RPP is conducting two research projects. UFV GDS student Darien Johnsen met with three settlement workers focusing on their stories of successful settlement. The second stage of the research is to conduct focus groups of LINC students and instructors over the summer, with the research expected to be published in the fall of 2019.

Former DEARs coordinator, Lia Bishop, is on contract as a consultant to conduct research and compile a report on secondary settlement in the Fraser Valley. Service providers have noticed a major trend of newcomers leaving their designated settlement city for cities in the Fraser Valley. This is not clearly documented, and thus the need is not recognized nor reflected by governmental funding decisions.

**GROUP DISCUSSION – What recent trends, barriers and/or observations have you made within your professional work in regards to newcomer needs in**



## **Abbotsford?**

### **Roundtable Discussion**

#### Refugee claimants

Abbotsford continues to see a number of refugee claimants fleeing traumatic situations. A change in demographics has been noticed with an increase of more families, leading to a greater impact in schools. The large number of refugees is often not represented by data, as some are undocumented or not yet accessing services in the region. BLAR and PAR refugees are often inadmissible for many government-sponsored services, although support can be found through places of worship or private sponsors. Sometimes there is a difficult adjustment to Canadian culture and customs alongside navigating daily life and living with trauma.

MAP BC is a large collective made up of 60 agencies- which shows the need for such centralized approach. The Fraser Valley branch was created for the local need.

There is an increased trend of Punjabi-speaking refugee claimants from the US, Norway and Italy fleeing xenophobia and racism.

Finding affordable housing is a big challenge for refugee claimants. Inasmuch works together with BC Housing, HARC, and the City of Abbotsford- a strong desire to collaborate makes Abbotsford unique.

#### Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW)

TFW's face unique challenges due to regulations around work visas. In particular, the children of TFW's have less access to services/schooling as they are only in Canada for two years. The school district tries to accommodate all children, but they aren't always eligible for the same services as other newcomer children.

Although some TFW's see their visa as a possible pathway to PR, migrant farm workers on a shorter seasonal basis have even less opportunities/access to services. Many are unaware of their legal rights and possible services accessible to them and face punitive measures including being sent back if they speak out about concerns. A trend has been noticed where TFWs/seasonal migrant workers are accessing the Abbotsford Food Bank secretly without the notice of their employers. Many farm employers are protective of the information available to their workers due to a fear of lack of control. ACS has programs specifically geared to the needs of TFWs/migrant workers.

**Action Item: Project Management to talk to Claudia from Legal Advocacy to find out more.**

#### International Students



International students at UFV struggle on several levels and are not applicable for most service programs due to their lack of citizenship/work visa status. Allowed to only work a limited amount of time, a noticeable percentage has difficulty in finding affordable housing, sufficient meals, or housing, while also juggling the course load of full-time schooling and working full-time (often under the table).

### Abbotsford Interfaith Movement

AIM is continuing their series of interagency forums, with one planned on the topic of women in religion. The City of Abbotsford is also planning a forum on the distinct neighbourhoods of the region. Discussion panels can lead to strategic action.

### Access to Services information

It can be difficult for Newcomers to know where to access information about the services available to them. A helpful tool would be to create a flow chart of services for specific classifications of newcomers (e.g. GARs, BLARs, PARs, PRs, TFWs, etc.). A possible map of services could be centralized on the ALIP website, and updated by project management.

“Welcome to Abbotsford” folders with lists of services and information for newcomers were written and translated in several languages in past years. Something similar could be created on the ALIP website, although there might be some difficulty in the upkeep of web maintenance or printing new/changing information.

**Action Item: Project Management to look at creating a map of services for the ALIP website. Possible project for next round of LIP funding.**

### Second Phase Settlement

There is less focus by service providers on secondary settlement (post five years of initial settlement). Newcomers still have need for specific services years after the initial stage of settlement, which is often overlooked by service providers.

Some issues that are noticed are tensions between immigrant parents and their children. The youth often have a better understanding of English than their parents, and will serve as a translator which gives them a status and power within the family where they more easily can undermine their parents. Tension is also created between the parents who wish to uphold the traditions and culture of their first country, and that of their children, who often identify more with the mainstream Canadian culture. Both parties can feel cultural misunderstandings. A similar tension can be observed between newcomer youth and the children of first generation immigrants born or raised mostly in Canada, where there is a cultural clash and search for belonging within the same ethno-cultural group.

School districts can be proactive around these issues by holding workshops for parents.



## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **New Members**

In the past month, three interested potential ALIP members have reached out or have been referred by current ALIP members. The criterion around new ALIP membership is determined by the current council. Referrals from current ALIP members and interested parties will contact project management who may ask to meet and go over mutual expectations and roles. Project management will then invite suitable candidates to join the council.

**Action Item:** Project management will follow up with interested new members.

### **Call for Proposal for LIPs**

Call for Proposals for the Local Immigration Partnership was released in early April- with potential funding beginning April 2020-March 2025. Project Management is working on the proposal due on April 30<sup>th</sup>.

ALIP council agrees that Abbotsford has need of a LIP council, and to continue meeting the needs of the local newcomer population. The new CFP is responsive to gaps in services for marginalized people, specifically the LGBTQ2+ community, newcomer women of colour, seniors, youth, and those differently abled. This ties into many of the needs and desired projects in discussion with current ALIP members and organizations, specifically around indirect services such as evaluation, coordination, and research.

Future ALIP projects that are now included in LIP funding could include more capacity building with businesses and organizations in the community, stronger partnerships with UFV in regards to research on the process and outcome of settlement later on, and possible diversity training for the public or organizations.

Some capacity building possibilities are to connect with homelessness, housing, and wellness initiatives through City Social Planning- vulnerable populations include newcomers. For example, the City is launching a pilot service provider app, "Help Seeker".

Suggestion for ALIP to conduct an annual self-assessment around the outcomes of the goals from the previous year in order to provide accountability on strategic action plans.

**Action Item:** Project Management to follow up with ALIP members/organizations with a template Letter of Support for the LIP CFP.

**Action Item:** Project Management to contact local organizations and businesses for potential partnerships with regarding their strategies with newcomers, and to incorporate into the current CFP.



Action Item: Project Management to look at project outline for template for self-assessment, and, if lacking, to create one.

**ROUND TABLE UPDATES/ UPCOMING EVENTS**

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**