



## Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows

# Community Dialogues Emergence, Adaptation and Resilience

On March 25th, 2022, NewToBC brought together 35 community members representing newcomers, library representatives, and immigrant service providers from the communities of Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows. These attendees gathered to network and provide input to current immigrant settlement and integration barriers and issues that newcomers are currently facing, and learn about the innovations on service delivery in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. The following is a summary of the observations, ideas, and perspectives shared by participants.

### CHALLENGES THAT NEWCOMERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE CURRENTLY FACING

- The biggest challenges facing newcomers are language, employment and mental health/isolation
- Newcomers have lost their family support "I'm still not able to see my husband". Anxiety and mental health are big challenges. Family Ed programs are so important for newcomers, but many newcomers don't know about them
- Newcomers aren't necessarily coming to the libraries; libraries need to find better ways to reach out; different countries of origin and have different experiences of libraries, so not top of mind when looking for help, community connections, children's programs etc
- Not all library staff have the same level of knowledge about other community orgs and what programs are out there



- One challenge has been to reach out to newcomers - we don't hear their voices except through the NAC group (Newcomer Advisory Committee)
- Some partnerships have been amazing - but there could be a wider range of stakeholders committed to collaborating in providing services for newcomers

### INNOVATIONS ADOPTED / ENCOUNTERED

#### Building Community

- "Looking for a job in my field, I received great services. Also volunteering and being able to contribute helped a lot with my integration."
- Services where people can have a social connection - coffee, a Zumba class together - to feel that sense of community belonging
- Library pivoted to reach newcomers, families etc. People are participating in live Zoom programs and enjoying them
- Library is fine-free - more welcoming, reduces barriers
- City support of the growth in newcomers is vital e.g. policy level, anti-racism initiatives, facilitating dialogues with businesses and employers, providing data
- Some refugees are looking for smaller communities - so we want to welcome them

#### Diversity & Inclusion

- Library did more diversity training, including cultural sensitivity, e.g. "when people take Grab and Go kits, they are seeing themselves represented". Staff have taken action in bringing their own culture into the conversation



- COVID was an opportunity to examine what we've been doing. We will continue a hybrid model to reduce barriers e.g for those transiting long distances
- Opportunity to work with indigenous groups on Day of Reconciliation that was well received, and learnings were shared with newcomers

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / REFLECTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

### Addressing barriers to getting information out to newcomers

- Using technology e.g. videos in multiple languages on social media
- Build an Asset map for newcomers and service providers
- Newcomer welcome packages at the library including multi-lingual information
- "How can we help you" posted in different languages at the help desk
- Standing outside of Walmart etc. with library flyers and brochures
- Include libraries in pre-arrival webinars and info that newcomers receive when they first arrive (CANN - Community Airport Newcomers Network)
- Libraries can be more of a "face" at WorkBC and other places of partnership

### Immigrant Voices & Contributions

- Recognize and value the different newcomer experiences and hear these perspectives e.g. newcomers sitting at tables and on committees, informing cultural sensitivity training and informing policy-making
- Library Champions are reaching out to newcomers. It benefits organizations and LCs in their sense of contributions - chance to stop being newcomers and become hosts

- "Before coming to Canada, people had big labels (jobs titles, etc). Now their label is 'immigrant'. These are people, not labels. When we see them struggling with language, that is courage and bravery."

### Other ideas around service delivery and advocacy

- Post covid will continue with hybrid. Need to be aware that online adds another layer of barriers for newcomers and staff
- Open spaces in libraries for conversations and guest speakers from different orgs
- Multicultural Hubs were created before COVID and are being maintained
- Advocate for universal qualifications ie. educational requirements so people coming in from other countries can work in their profession

## CONVERSATIONS MOVING FORWARD

What tools and approaches can be leveraged to reach a greater number of newcomers with information about programs and services?

How can libraries & settlement providers ensure that newcomer voices, needs and experiences are incorporated into program and service development?

Recognizing that we as a community are all impacted by isolation, racism and other complex social issues, what can we do in our various roles to bring empathy and more connection into our interactions and endeavours?

## About NewToBC

NewToBC is a library settlement initiative that connects immigrants and refugees with essential settlement information, public libraries, other service provider organizations, and, ultimately, BC communities. NewToBC plays a unique role in the settlement sector by offering services that are responsive to the evolving needs of newcomers, that complement and raise awareness about resources and services offered by public libraries and other service provider organizations, and that support BC communities as they welcome growing newcomer populations.

**For more info** on the NewToBC, check out our website at <https://newtobc.ca/> or contact **Ben Hart**, NewToBC Project Coordinator.

**T: 778.988.5438**

**E: [ben.hart@newtobc.ca](mailto:ben.hart@newtobc.ca)**