

Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission

Community Dialogues Emergence, Adaptation and Resilience



On March 18th, 2022, NewToBC brought together 32 community members representing newcomers, library representatives, and immigrant service providers from the communities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission. 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

- **Newcomer:** In moving LINC online, many teachers are helping individuals with technology and digital literacy; learner borrowed and received instruction on how to use the device, send emails, connect to wifi, and attend virtual classrooms.
- **Library:** Very hard to connect with new immigrants. People can access programs from home, but many experience tech barriers e.g. lack of devices, wifi.
- **Settlement:** Skilled immigrants having significant barriers due to lack of professional networks. They have left all of their connections behind and cultivating a

network is so important. Online networking events were organized but not the same as in-person.

INNOVATIONS ADOPTED / ENCOUNTERED

- Use of technology such as Zoom. COVID has accelerated the adoption of technology
- Able to provide more one-on-one support through virtual and hybrid services
- Online sessions such as Conversation Circles in libraries allowed people to join from other municipalities
- LINC classes are delivered in-person and online. For students who only have phones we use WhatsApp. Leveraged other platforms for delivery like Avenue and Teams
- Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program: <https://archway.ca/program/career-paths-skilled-immigrants/>

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / REFLECTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Information about Language Classes

- Info about LINC and registration page: <https://archway.ca/program/language-instruction-for-newcomers-to-canada-linc/>
- What programs are Temporary Foreign Workers eligible for?

- Access to English support: people who have work permit and Citizenship; one to one with volunteers <https://archway.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Updated-fillable-Application-form.pdf>
- Other language programs: <https://ircc.canada.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp>

Technology Solutions

- Potential to address digital literacy and access to it. e.g. loan out devices
- Older equipment could be donated from the community
- Google suite allows people who are doing learning programs to have free access to online tools (reduces cost barriers). Libraries could recommend newcomers set up gmail
- Staff develop skills to help clients navigate platforms like EventBrite to attend a StrongStart program
- www.cantalk.com translation and interpretation services; free service
- Creating Connections Across Sectors
- Need face to face events where community partners meet to promote and share services; include local faith organizations and those supporting people with disabilities
- **New Primary Care Network**
- 2000 families don't have a family doctor and can be supported through this site: <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/Service-Directory/Locations/Abbotsford/abbotsford-urgent-and-primary-care-centre#.YjT8perMJPY>

Innovating Programs

- Library Champions (LC): Leverage contacts to get LC in Chilliwack. Experienced staff members from Maple Ridge can help get that started

- Social Media is working for Library Champions
- Food security: **Bulk Buy** started up during the pandemic and other food-related initiatives including Zoom cooking classes
- Employment, library, settlement and food representation together provides an opportunity to reach different populations and address complexity
- To address barriers to access (digital literacy) and support at-risk populations (seniors, individuals with diverse abilities, those experiencing homelessness) leverage hybrid models
- Book club for newcomers e.g. adult learner collection of easy-to-read books

CONVERSATIONS MOVING FORWARD

How can Library Champions be leveraged to reach more newcomers, and what role can the program play in supporting information-sharing across organizations?

How can we work across sectors (employment, library, settlement, health, food security) to support outreach and innovation?

How can we better support front-line service providers who have borne a significant share of the increase in workload due to the pandemic and other current challenges?

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.

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