

Langley

Community Dialogues Emergence, Adaptation and Resilience



On March 17th, 2022, NewToBC brought together 43 community members representing newcomers, library representatives, and immigrant service providers from the communities of Langley. 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

- “As a newcomer mom with 3 kids under 4yrs old, even before COVID, I felt isolated. Strong Start and Libraries were a light in the middle of the dark.”
- One main barrier is language, and the sense of not belonging. Need to force ourselves out comfort zone
- Informing newcomers about the library and its offerings
- Growth in Langley has been fast and it’s challenging to support various languages
- Challenging to provide training and ongoing support for staff e.g. trauma-informed

- As an IRCC service provider, we collect PR numbers; some reluctance from clients
- SWIS offers more youth-focused services. Finding the right staff for this is important

INNOVATIONS ADOPTED / ENCOUNTERED

- “Library Champions changed my life. I learned about services and how to connect and give information about library services for families and other resources effectively.”
- Parent Advisory Councils help parents connect, get comfortable with the system and teachers’ role in their children’s lives, and how others dealt with challenges
- Innovation comes from challenges - such as COVID. We want to maintain the core of what we’re doing in a different way e.g. delivery of books/resources to people’s doors
- Library can be a hub and a chance to be around people e.g. Preschool Storytime
- “In-person programming is critical for many newcomers, especially refugees, so we’ve continued one-on-one support.”
- Services provided in first language allow new immigrants to build rapport and trust with people who share their language and culture
- Location is important; ex. lots of providers are based in Langley City, so it’s critical for SWIS to be in Willoughby

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / REFLECTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Pivoting Programming and Responding to Complexity

- “We had to pivot quickly and deliver employment programs via zoom. We learned a lot in 2 weeks, but it has been very successful.”
- Addressed the technology barrier by providing “Chrome books”
- Interconnection between digital literacy, transportation, education, etc.
- Now is the opportunity to do more hybrid programming so people can attend based on needs/preferences
- The power the library has in getting the word out and re-defining what library means - we are more than books. Rebrand ‘The Library Integration Centre’ or ‘Library Hub’ or ‘Library & Resource Hub’
- We should be reaching out to newcomers: “This is what your library card can do. We welcome you.”

Supporting families

- Needs differ between generations
- PAC tried very hard to reach out to parents who were new to the school/community and to have communications translated
- Focus on family/youth in providing services
- Newcomer fairs for all the services and newcomers to attend to learn and engage
- Adopting Library Champions model for different demographic groups

Connecting in-person

- Challenges of so much moving online: it doesn’t work for all groups e.g. families that are illiterate or don’t have devices can’t access online programs; also nothing replaces the importance of in-person relationships
- We learned from moving online: we are connecting more and slowing down to listen.

Strengths and Challenges of Partnerships & Staff

- Partnerships such as Strong Start and Fairs are key - meeting people where they are
- Challenge of keeping up with the pace of technology and offering a supportive space
- Provide feedback to our organizations about new trends and what supports are needed
- Need to improve relationships with other orgs to redirect them if we can’t support them. Langley LIP is a good place for inter-organizational conversations

CONVERSATIONS MOVING FORWARD

What do we need to build capacity to respond to the changing context of service delivery (ie. diversity of languages, hybrid services)?

How can we leverage the partnerships already in place to build a network of resources?
What would that network look like?

How can the Library Champion model - newcomers sharing information and resources with other newcomers - be adapted to other demographics (e.g. seniors, youth)?

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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