

Surrey & Delta

Community Dialogues Emergence, Adaptation and Resilience



On February 23rd, 2022, NewToBC brought together 37 community members representing newcomers, library representatives, and immigrant service providers from the communities of Surrey & Delta. 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

- “No experience” mindset of newcomers is holding them back; employers also need to be more aware of skill sets newcomers are coming with
- Need to address newcomers’ concepts of libraries; they represent a range of services and programs that may not be the case in newcomers’ home countries
- Difficult for libraries to respond to the increasing range of newcomers’ languages
- Difficult for service providers to attract and retain staff; this has been exacerbated during the pandemic
- Need to raise awareness of services available near clients’ homes

- Canadian experience is perceived as a major barrier; important to highlight confidence and language
- Post-employment community attachment should also be addressed
- Eligibility for some programs can work against a comprehensive approach to providing the services needed

INNOVATIONS ADOPTED / ENCOUNTERED

- Developed a résumé-building tool
- Surrey LIP has developed a tool for reporting and mapping racism within the community
- Multicultural worker training provided to those who can’t find employment; increases their skill set in working with newcomers
- WorkBC has new enhancements (e.g. wage subsidies, training)
- Career Pathways focuses on specialized areas of work (e.g. separate programs for health providers, educators, etc.)
- Free program at Douglas College for learning Digital skills
- Options offers Interpretation services
- WorkBC has life skills workshops
- The Library Champions Project has been very helpful in creating awareness about the programs, services, and other resources available in libraries and in the broader community

- The flexibility and accessibility of online programming. Hybrid programming is expected to continue
- Providing Chromebook was important for newcomers to be able to access online services; also libraries lending laptops has been very helpful

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS / REFLECTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Access to services

- Many agencies feel that refugee claimants and temporary foreign workers need more assistance
- Most immigrants are not able to avail themselves of the resources and services available as they are in survival mode and have started working
- The importance of connecting folks safely with settlement services before addressing mental health
- Libraries can offer basic information and basic steps to be taken, but we need to collaborate with service providers to assist newcomers find help with specific needs such as finding work or help with legal issues; these partnerships were lacking during COVID e.g. WorkBC used to come to the library to support newcomers; libraries are open to partnerships

Employment

- Survival is a big issue for newcomers. Professionals start working at whatever jobs they find and, in many cases, it is too late when they are ready to enter their own profession
- There is a need to avoid pushing clients to take any job without understanding their backgrounds
- There will be shortages in other professions if employment issues are not addressed

- The importance of more support around soft skills to achieve sustainable employment
- WorkBC perspective: Newcomers need knowledge, resources, and information about the labor market; they come with high expectations, which is fine, but need to know it is not immediate; those with language barriers are directed to LINC; for other needs, collaborations and mutual referrals are important e.g. housing, mental health, libraries

Other relevant issues affecting newcomers

- No doubt technology is very helpful, but it is one of the biggest barriers for those who are not computer savvy. Resources should be available in print as well
- Need to address the housing shortage along with employment issues and shortage of manpower
- Mental health is a dominant issue
- Anti-racism and multicultural workshops are very important

CONVERSATIONS MOVING FORWARD

How can service providers and newcomers be more aware of services available in the community?

What are other opportunities beyond traditional job placement to respond to the current employment-related challenges of newcomers?

What are the considerations and best practices to respond to the ongoing online context?

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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