



IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PLANNING

BURNABY LEADERS' CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

November 18, 2015

Prepared by
PEERs Employment and Education Resources

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT) is Burnaby's Local Immigration Partnership. Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are funded across the country by the federal government to support communities to develop strategies to enhance immigrant and refugee settlement and integration.

On November 18th, the BIPT convened 35+ leaders to obtain their input regarding barriers to inclusion, community assets and strategic priorities as they relate to immigrant and refugee settlement and integration.

Attendees spoke highly of the successes Burnaby has experienced as it has developed into one of the countries most culturally diverse communities; their thoughts fell into the following broad themes.

1. They acknowledged the participation and leadership of the School District and the Burnaby Board of Trade;
2. The depth and breadth of immigrant and refugee focused programs, services and work was noted as well as the agencies and consortia (the BIPT and the Burnaby Inter-Agency Council) that work to promote and coordinate these activities.
3. The existing cultural diversity was seen to facilitate settlement and integration; both community service providers and residents have experience in welcoming and inclusive practices and have a respect and understanding of the needs of new immigrants and refugees.

Attendees were asked to share their perspectives and opinions regarding the challenges and barriers faced by immigrants and refugees in settling and integrating into Burnaby. Six key themes surfaced in this round of discussion.

1. Much discussion was had regarding housing and affordability; the limited availability of low cost rental units and adequate childcare were cited as key problem areas.
2. A variety of barriers related to English Language Training and communication were raised including a perceived lack of English language classes, the need for a greater understanding of the importance of "communication" over "language fluency" and the need for more translated information in more languages.
3. Employment was identified as an ongoing challenge - specifically building awareness among job seekers of Canadian workplace culture, increasing awareness of supports available to employers, and difficulties related to foreign credential recognition.
4. Issues related to isolation were seen to be on the rise.
5. Service access and coordination was an area identified for improvement. Despite the wide range of available immigrant and refugee services, it was recognized that navigation of this plethora of services is difficult for newcomers and stakeholders alike, and that a better framework for representing and communicating the services is needed.
6. The lack of sufficient funding to support settlement and integration was raised with waitlists for federally funded English language classes being noted as a current and pressing example.

In the final discussion, attendees were asked to identify and state the most important priorities for the development of the BIPT's Strategic Plan. The following six priority areas were identified.

- 1. Access to Information**
Considerable discussion was had regarding improving access to information – not only for new immigrants and refugees, but for services providers and the community at large. Not only is improved access to better information important, but also a better understanding of how and where different cultures receive information is needed to enhance access and uptake.
- 2. Employment / Mentoring Opportunities**
Employment was recognized by many attendees as possibly the most critical dimension for newcomers in the settlement process; it was also recognized as being a very complex and multifaceted topic. Much of the leaders' conversations focused on increasing opportunities for newcomer jobseekers and employers to connect and to better understand the needs of both parties. It was suggested that different models for volunteering and gaining work experience need to be explored. While volunteering was recognized as an important element of gaining Canadian experience it was also noted that operating volunteer programming requires sufficient funding.
- 3. Service Coordination**
In order to adequately address the needs of immigrant and refugee integration, it is important that the service provider community effectively works together and is fully aware of the range of programs and services available within Burnaby.
- 4. Increase Affordable English Language Training**
The provision of adequate and affordable English language training programming for all immigrants and refugees to Burnaby is essential to effective settlement and community integration. Not only do the waitlists and current capacity issues need to be addressed, but it was also noted that more "intensive" classes are also required.
- 5. Housing**
Identifying the housing issues faced by newcomers and advocating for more affordable housing was put forth as a priority for the BIPT. While housing is an often cited barrier for newcomers, it was acknowledged that little is being done to address the issue from an immigrant integration perspective and that the BIPT has a role in educating and advocating for a greater understanding of how housing costs impact immigrant and refugee settlement.
- 6. Connection to Community**
A significant amount of discussion focused on isolation. Attendees recommended that addressing isolation and identifying means to create community connections for all residents be a priority for the BIPT.

These strategic priorities not only represent the input and perspectives of the broad cross-section of Burnaby leaders who participated in the consultation, but are consistent and align with the findings and many of the key issues brought forward in other elements of the BIPT's community research and consultation. In the development of its strategic plan, these priorities will be considered in context of the research and other consultations conducted and used to shape the strategic directions and action plan for the years to come. A draft of the plan will be finalized and distributed to the participating leaders for their input in January 2016, and the final Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan for Burnaby will be distributed in March 2016.



BACKGROUND

What is the BIPT and a LIP?

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, Burnaby is home to 111,170 immigrants and refugees, representing 50.5% of its population. From 2001 to 2011, the immigrant population in Burnaby grew by 22.6%; approximately 9,140 immigrants – an average of 1,800+ per year, chose Burnaby as their new home. Burnaby and Toronto have become the most culturally diverse cities in Canada.

To address the needs of an ever-increasing immigrant population and burgeoning cultural diversity, Burnaby Family Life (BFL) was awarded funding from the United Way in 2007 to convene the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT). The Table immediately attracted and has continued to engage senior level representation from a broad range of institutions and community serving agencies.

Since 2007 the BIPT has worked collaboratively to support the successful delivery of numerous research, knowledge exchange, community awareness, capacity building events and training projects and programs. The BIPT recognizes that although much has been achieved in raising awareness of immigrant needs and barriers, there is still much more to accomplish to enhance the capacity of service providers, align key stakeholders in a common vision, and maintain and increase community mobilization efforts in order to ensure the successful settlement and true inclusion of newcomers.

In April 2014, BFL was awarded funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now called Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada - IRCC) to support the continuation of the BIPT community partnership table and allow it to build from its previous work. IRCC refers to these partnership tables as "Local Immigration Partnerships" (LIPs). LIPs build on local services in order to optimize engagement, planning and coordination in the area of newcomer settlement and integration. LIPs do not deliver services directly to immigrants and refugees. Instead, they foster local engagement of organizations that offer services to newcomers, support community-level research and planning and improve coordination of services that help immigrants settle and integrate.

With this federal funding, the BIPT has conducted research and consulted with community service providers, immigrants and refugees, employers and community leaders. This research and consultation has provided a deeper understanding of immigrant and refugee needs and the barriers to inclusion they face and will be used to develop a Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan for Burnaby (to be submitted March 2016).

The intent of the Strategic Plan is enhance the ability of Burnaby immigrants and refugees to participate economically, socially, and civically. To do so, the Plan will not only focus on how we are supporting and integrating newcomers but also at what are we doing to prepare the receiving community / longer term residents to welcome and include these newest residents.

CONSULTATION PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The BIPT has engaged the full and active participation of many senior level managers and community leaders but there are many others who are not able to sit at the Table. The key purpose of the November 18th Leaders' Consultation was to obtain the input of the full range of Burnaby's leadership to inform the development of Burnaby's Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan. The consultation was held at the Burnaby Neighbourhood House and its staff and volunteers handled event set up and take down as well as the preparation and service of dinner.

The consultation had three main objectives:

1. To share the findings from the BIPT research and community consultations conducted to date;
2. To obtain the perspectives, opinions and insights of the attending community leaders; and
3. To engage and inspire greater involvement in the work of the BIPT and the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Participants

The BIPT Project Team developed a list of invitees which was vetted by the membership of the BIPT. In total 85 community leaders were invited. More than 35 individuals representing 30+ organizations attended the consultation.

Representatives included:

- Elected Officials
- Municipal Staff from the Social Planning, Long-range Planning and Parks and Recreation Departments
- School District: Assistant Superintendent, Trustees, the SWIS Coordinator, the LINC Manager
- Immigrant and Community Agency Directors
- Chief Librarian, Deputy Chief Librarian and Library Board Chair
- BC Muslim Association Leaders
- Director of Systems Planning and Consultation, Translink
- Temple Master, Chinese Taoism Association
- President and CEO of the Burnaby Board of Trade
- Douglas College Management

The complete list of attendees has been included as **Appendix 1**.



Approach and Guiding Questions

Attendees were welcomed by the BIPT Contract Manager and Co-Chair, Michel Pouliot, Executive Director of Burnaby Family Life. Mayor Corrigan provided the opening address which included significant context for the forum. Trevor Van Eerden, one of the BIPT project consultants, presented key themes and findings from the research and community consultations conducted.

The consultation was led and facilitated by the BIPT Project Coordinator, Jody Johnson, and BIPT members facilitated the small group discussions. The following questions were used to guide the discussions.

1. What's working well? What are some examples of services, events, supports or activities that are working well to support immigrant and refugee integration in Burnaby?
2. What are some of the current barriers and challenges to integration and the development of belonging and full inclusion?
3. What should be the priorities for the BIPT's Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan?

The key themes, ideas and perspectives shared were captured by note-takers at each table and have been summarized and provided below.

The agenda for the consultation has been attached as **Appendix 2**.

PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

In small groups of six to eight, attendees provided their opinions and perspectives regarding Burnaby's strengths and areas for improvement and identified priorities for consideration by the BIPT in development of its Strategic Plan.

Notes taken at each table have been compiled and organized into the themes and priorities and presented below.

What's working well?

Attendees were asked to share what they thought was working well in Burnaby (in terms of supporting immigrant and newcomer inclusion) and could be built upon, expanded or better promoted. Four broad themes emerged.

1. The School District – its Programs and Leadership

Repeatedly the Burnaby School District was noted as having played a key role in welcoming and including new immigrants and refugees to Burnaby as a key contact point for immigrants and refugees, and, for many, a critical step in the settlement process; school district administration and staff were acknowledged for the pivotal role they play in Burnaby's settlement framework. Numerous aspects of the school system as well as programs targeted towards new immigrants and their families were cited such as the Welcome Centre, the Settlement Workers in Schools Program, and the work of the Community Schools. In addition, it was recognized that the school district was not only an important stakeholder in the delivery of its own programs, but a frequent and pivotal partner in the delivery of settlement services and supports in Burnaby.

2. Array of Community Services

The depth and breadth of services available in Burnaby to support immigrant and refugee integration was seen by many as exceptional. Not only were immigrant and community serving agencies and the plethora of programs and services they offered discussed but so too was the work of Burnaby agency networks and consortia such as the BIPT and the Burnaby Inter-Agency Council. Many felt that Burnaby agencies have a solid understanding of each other, are well connected and work together to support newcomers individuals and families. The City's support of community service providers and these community planning tables was also acknowledged.

The Library Champions project was raised as a specific program model for expansion and for other institutions to consider adopting.



3. Involvement of the Board of Trade

Employment is a critical dimension of successful immigrant and community integration, and the involvement of the business and employer community is seen as highly advantageous. At the forefront of this involvement, the Burnaby Board of Trade has long been involved with immigrant and refugee integration and its work in this realm was recognized by a number of attendees. Not only is the Burnaby Board of Trade an active member of the BIPT, but it has taken on key roles in immigrant employment programs and services, promoted Burnaby's immigrant talent pool and value of a diverse workforce to its membership, and raised the importance of immigrant integration as an economic issue for Burnaby through its Social Development Committee.

4. Existing Cultural Diversity

Several consultation participants identified and discussed how the cultural diversity of Burnaby makes it easier for newcomers to integrate. Both community service providers and residents have "practice" welcoming and being inclusive and have a respect and understanding of the needs of new immigrants and refugees.

Burnaby is home to many different faith groups and places of worship and the opportunity to practice one's faith was seen as critical in developing a sense of belonging. In discussing faith, it was acknowledged that Burnaby not only supports individual faith groups, but has made focused efforts to bridge the faith communities and include the broader community in its interfaith initiatives.

Although not specific to the Consultation breakout discussions, the event evaluation also provided a couple of indicators of what was working well in communication and sharing information on immigrant and refugee integration in Burnaby. When attendees were asked to state how they would like to receive information about the BIPT and its work; almost 90% stated that email was the most effective, second to this was via the BIPT website – www.bipt.ca – and third, by presentations to Boards, Council or staff teams. Similarly, when asked what would be the most effective approach to further involve community leaders and other key stakeholders in the work of the BIPT, 96% stated an interest in participating in workshops similar to this consultation. The second approach selected by 42% was by participation in surveys.

Barriers and Challenges

Attendees were asked to share their perspectives and opinions regarding the challenges and barriers faced by immigrants and refugees as they settle and build a sense of connection and belonging to Burnaby. Six key themes surfaced in this round of discussion.

1. Housing and Affordability

Although by no means solely an immigrant issue, the high cost of housing and Burnaby's (in fact, the entire Metro Vancouver region) high cost of living was raised as having a significant impact on the settlement and integration of new immigrants. In addition to the overarching high cost of housing, the lack of afford-

able rental units was cited as a significant inhibitor to settling in Burnaby for immigrants and refugees. Participants also noted that the costs and or limited availability of adequate childcare services; a significant issue for many newcomers as they often have no family or friends to assist with childcare and so must seek fee for service.

2. English Language Training and Communication

Language and communication was cited by many as key barriers to integration. Some attendees perceived a lack of English Language training opportunities.

Others suggested that newcomers need to be supported to understand that language skills are less important than communication skills; speaking perfectly is not essential but being able to get your message across is. Participating Service Providers noted that several levels of the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program in Burnaby were oversubscribed and managing substantial waitlists. As above, lack of funded childcare spaces was also recognized as a key factor in inhibiting access to language instruction.

Other participants identified that the community needed more print information translated and available in more languages to assist newcomers to better understand Burnaby and all of its amenities, programs and services.

3. Employment

Employment was acknowledged as a significant challenge by many attendees. Three key barriers to immigrant workforce attachment were raised:

- a. Newcomers lack knowledge regarding how businesses work in Canada;
- b. Limited access and / or awareness of supports available to small and medium sized business interested in hiring newcomers; and
- c. Lack of recognition of foreign credentials and / or lack of support to recognize foreign credentials.

During the roundtable discussions it was noted that not only does lack of employment have economic impacts on individuals, families and community, but that prolonged lack of employment is demoralizing and may result in psychosocial problems.

4. Isolation

A number of issues related to isolation were raised at the consultation. It was stated that as we become more urbanized, we have more opportunity to avoid contact. This isolation is compounded by the incredible growth and demographic shift Burnaby has experienced over that last few decades; longer term residents have seen a lot of change, but have had limited opportunities to “process” this change. Many felt that there has been a lack of open dialogue which has not only caused separation or isolation but has allowed cultural misunderstandings or stereotyping to persist. Moreover, participating leaders pointed out that despite Burnaby’s multiple and numerous efforts to champion diversity, the community lacks a central or coordinated approach to welcoming new immigrants and ensuring they understand that the full breadth of what Burnaby has to offer.

Volunteerism was also raised as an opportunity to reduce isolation and it was noted by several attendees that newcomers are extremely willing to volunteer to not only gain experience but to build a sense of belonging to their new community.

It was also noted, that as a leading BC community in the settlement of refugees, Burnaby faces a greater number of newcomers arriving with vulnerabilities, trauma or requirements for personal and or family counselling. In some cases these vulnerabilities can be compounded by newcomers’ lack of awareness of existing counselling services, or a stigma in accessing these services as part of their settlement process.



5. Service Access and Coordination

As described in the section above, there is a wide range of programs and services available to new immigrants and refugees in Burnaby. Although many participants felt service providers are well connected and their services accessible and coordinated, others stated a need for additional means to increase access and enhance coordination. Despite the wide range of available immigrant and refugee services, it was recognized that navigation of this plethora of services is difficult for newcomers and stakeholders alike, and that a better framework for representing and communicating the services is needed. In considering a mechanism for representing the availability of immigrant services, it was recognized that to be truly effective immigrant and refugee services need to be communicated and promoted in a way that is not only understood by newcomers and program participants, but by the broader public, so they can assist in providing guidance, referrals and direction.

6. Funding

Several participants raised the lack of funding to sufficiently address newcomer settlement and integration initiatives in Burnaby. The most specific example cited was the number of people waitlisted for Burnaby based LINC classes; it was estimated that there are 125 individuals waiting to get into this government funded English language program. Due to recent shifts in federal and provincial responsibility for settlement programming and the subsequent allocations of funding for settlement services, it was recognized that not only are there issues for programming demand versus funded capacity, but that also key provincial funding mechanisms have been reduced or eliminated, and that in the coming months further reductions are likely as the Skills Connect program will be brought to a close.

Priorities for the Strategic Plan

In the final discussion, attendees were asked to put forth what they think the priorities for the BIPT's Strategic Plan should be. The following six priority areas were identified

1. Access to Information

Considerable discussion was had regarding improving access to information – not only for new immigrants and refugees, but for services providers and the community at large. Not only is improved access to better information important, but also a better understanding of how and where different cultures receive information is needed to enhance access and uptake. Several suggestions for enhancing access to information emerged:

- a. Develop a booklet to be given to new arrivals listing all relevant programs and services; content should be provided in plain English and translated into multiple languages
- b. Build a centralized source of information about English language classes and other settlement services
- c. Identify / create ways to assist newcomers navigate the continuum of services
- d. Develop a “welcoming image” to be posted / used by all Burnaby agency websites
- e. Adopt approaches like the Library Champions project to reach out into various ethno-cultural communities to share information.

2. Employment / Mentoring Opportunities

Employment was recognized by many attendees as probably the most critical dimension for newcomers in the settlement process; it was also recognized as being a very complex and multifaceted topic. Much of the leaders' conversations focused on increasing opportunities for newcomer jobseekers and employers to connect and to better understand the needs of both parties. It was suggested that different models for volunteering and gaining work experience need to be explored. While volunteering was recognized as an important element of gaining Canadian experience it was also noted that operating volunteer programming requires sufficient funding.

3. Service Coordination

In order to adequately address the needs of immigrant and refugee integration it is important that the service provider community effectively works together and is fully aware of the range of programs and services available within Burnaby. From the leaders' discussion three broad recommendations came forward:

1. Provide opportunities for the service provider community to network and share information;
2. Make a concerted effort to inform and educate service providers on the range of services available in Burnaby; and
3. Create a virtual space where the settlement continuum, and settlement terms and services are clearly presented.

4. Increase Affordable English Language Training

The provision of adequate and affordable English language training programming for all immigrants and refugees to Burnaby is essential to effective settlement and community integration. Not only do the waitlists and current capacity issues need to be addressed, but it was also noted that more "intensive" classes are also required. Beyond free federally and locally funded language programs, English language programs / offerings need to be affordable and accessible to new immigrants. While the cost of the classes themselves can be a barrier, a key determinant of affordability and access is the provision of childcare so that newcomers can participate in language programs.

5. Housing

Identifying the housing issues faced by newcomers and advocating for more affordable housing was put forth as a priority for the BIPT to address in its Strategic Plan. As described in the sections above, while housing is an often cited barrier for newcomers, it was acknowledged that little is being done to address the issue from an immigrant integration perspective and that the BIPT, while perhaps limited in its ability to address the issue in all its dimensions, has a role in educating and advocating for a greater understanding of how housing costs impact immigrant and refugee settlement.

6. Connection to Community

As described in the Barriers section above, a significant amount of discussion focused on isolation. Attendees recommended that addressing isolation and identifying means to create community connections for all residents be a priority for the BIPT.



BIPT

BURNABY
INTERCULTURAL
PLANNING TABLE

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE
SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PLANNING
Burnaby Leaders' Consultation
Summary Report

NEXT STEPS

The input provided at this consultation, along with all of the research and community consultation conducted, is being reviewed and considered by the membership of the BIPT in the development of the Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan for Burnaby.

A draft of the Strategic Plan will be complete by the end of January. This draft will be presented to attendees of this forum for their review and input. Input will be considered by the BIPT membership and incorporated as appropriate.

The final plan will be distributed to community leaders and other stakeholders and submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada at the end of March 2016.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1 – List of Consultation Attendees

Amber Keane	Raj Chouans Assistant
Andy Leclaire	Staff Sergeant, Burnaby RCMP
Anna Foschi	Volunteer Coordinator, V.L.M.Multicultural Family Support Services Society
Antonia Beck	ED, BNH
Baljinder K. Narang	School Trustee, Burnaby School District
Chris Friesen	Settlement Director, ISSofBC and Co-Chair BIPT
Cindy Chang	Manager, Recreation Services, City of Burnaby
Daniel Yu	Community Lead, Chinese Taoism Kuan Kung Association
David Ali	Burnaby Public Library Board Member
Deb Thomas	Deputy Chief Librarian and Metrotown Branch Manager
Derek Corrigan	Mayor
Dorothy Moreno	Executive Assistant, BIPT
Edel Toner-Rogala	Chief Librarian
Farida Bano Ali	Chairperson, Women's Council of BC Muslim Association
Harman Pandher	School Trustee (Vice Chair), Burnaby School District
Hazra Ismail	BC Muslim Association
Heather Hart	Assistant Superintendent, Burnaby School District
Jalpa Ruparelia	Manager, Employee Relations, HR, Translink
James Gruneau	Executive Director, Journey Home Community
Joan Andersen	MOSAIC
Jody Johnson	Project Coordinator, BIPT
Katrina Chen	School Trustee, Burnaby School District
Kim Darcey	GT Hiring Solutions, Manager
Lee-Ann Garnett	Assistant Director-Long Range Planning, City of Burnaby
Ling Chu	SUCCESS
Lois Taylor	Douglas College
Louise Thorburn	Manager, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)
Margaret Wittgens	Director of System Planning and Consultation, Translink
Margie Manifold	Senior Social Planner
Michel Pouliot	E.D. BFL and Co-Chair BIPT
Millie Chen	Temple Master, Chinese Taoism Kuan Kung Association
Natalya Khan	Burnaby School District SWIS Coordinator Cultural Transition Services
Paul Holden	President and CEO, Burnaby Board of Trade
Peggy Woodruff	BBOT, Social Planning Committee
Raj Chouhan	MLA, Burnaby-Edmonds
Rebekah Mahaffey	Planning Department, City of Burnaby
Ronnie Bahia	Nursing Supervisor, Burnaby Public Health
Shaheen Nanji	Simon Fraser University
Sheila Pierce	Chairperson, Burnaby Public Library Board Chair
Sherman Chan	Director of Settlement, MOSAIC
Trevor Van Eerden	Project Coordinator, BIPT
William Tsai	CEO, Maple Overseas Cultural Foundation

Appendix 2 – Consultation Agenda

Burnaby Leaders' Consultation

WHEN: Wednesday, November 18th, 2015
Doors Open and Registration – 5:00 pm

WHERE: Burnaby Neighbourhood House
4460 Beresford Street, Burnaby



Agenda

Dinner	5:30 – 6:00
Welcome and Purpose of Event <i>Michel Pouliot</i> Executive Director Burnaby Family Life and BIPT Co-Chair	6:00 – 6:05
Opening Remarks <i>Mayor Corrigan</i>	6:05 – 6:15
Presentation of Key Research Findings <i>Trevor Van Eerden</i> Project Consultant	6:15 – 6:30
Consultation and Priority Setting <i>Jody Johnson</i> Facilitator / All Attendees	
a) What's working?	6:30 – 6:50
b) What are the challenges?	6:50 – 7:10
c) What should be priorities for the BIPT's Settlement Strategic Plan?	7:10 – 7:30
Evaluation, Thank you and Next Steps	7:30

