

NORTH SHORE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE NORTH VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

"Compile a WELCOME PACK – a notebook with all information newcomers would need **step by step** to reach a happy life in Canada"

- Participant, Parents Focus Group, North Vancouver

North Shore Neighbourhood House provides a range of services for the community, including activities which strengthen and celebrate multicultural connections and partnerships with other agencies to provide workshops, recreational programs, language training and parenting programs to immigrant families. The *Welcome Here* project team worked in collaboration with the North Shore Neighbourhood House to conduct two focus groups: one with immigrant parents (25 participants) and the other with practitioners working with immigrant families (23 participants). Although they developed their "Welcome Plans" separately, both groups expressed the same ideas for creating a welcoming community.

Welcome Signs That Immigrant Families Have Experienced In the North Vancouver

- "Canada does not tolerate racism. I like the fact that there are policies to protect the rights of the people"
- "Freedom about beliefs and respect for each other's beliefs"
- "Good services and programs for children, parents and families"
- "Living in a multi-cultural environment does not make me feel alone"
- "People listen, are polite and want to help you"
- "People smile all the time"
- "Seeing Persian signs in the community made me feel welcome"
- "Services in the community are very friendly"

Challenges Faced By Immigrant Families

- Difficulty with accreditation and securing professional employment
- Feelings of depression, isolation and lack of connectedness with people in the community
- Feelings of not knowing in which direction to go and how to plan for their lives in Canada
- Lack of information in their own language
- Language and communication barriers
- Unaffordable child care

Program And Training Needs Identified By Practitioners

- A simple resource that speaks about multiculturalism
- Access to a list of local community resources for referral purposes
- Access to translated material and interpreters
- Awareness and deeper understanding of the backgrounds of immigrant families
- Awareness of programs available to immigrant families in their own language
- Issues that practitioners can use as a guide when working with newcomer families
- Knowledge of relevant local, provincial and federal legislation to help immigrant families
- Training in counseling for immigrant families and dealing with post- traumatic stress
- Training in cross cultural communication
- Training to help immigrant families plan their lives in Canada to achieve stability
- Training to serve families facing racism and discrimination

Challenges Faced By Practitioners

- Communication and language barriers
- Inability to provide services on weekends
- Lack of availability of translated material
- Lack of coordination and collaboration with other community agencies
- Lack of funding and space in some locations
- Lack of systematic staff training on immigrant issues to establish consistency of service
- Overlap with programs offered by other community serving agencies

Group Results and Longer-Term Impacts

- 100% of the families indicated that they would like to have a Friday night social to get together with other people in the community.
- Immigrant families gained greater awareness of the services available in the North Shore. It is very likely that families will use the North Shore Neighbourhood House as a point of reference.
- Practitioners expressed their main program and training needs. If followed upon, this will provide a useful opportunity for continuity and to fill gaps within the community.
- The 'Welcome Plan' provides very tangible ideas some of which can be quickly put into operation.
- The focus groups were successfully conducted in North Vancouver. They helped to initiate a dialogue among immigrant families and among the practitioners working with immigrant families.
- The North Shore Neighbourhood House is currently working on a project entitled *Building Welcoming and Inclusive Neighbourhoods*. The information gathered from this focus group will enable them to work in close collaboration with other community organizations.
- The resource kits provided by **FRP Canada's Welcome Here** project increased participating practitioners' knowledge of **FRP Canada's** resources and services. Practitioners working with immigrant families will now be able use the website and resources available to help immigrant families.

North Shore “Welcome Plan”
Proposed by Immigrant Families and Practitioners

Access to Information

- Assemble a Welcome Pack – a notebook with all information newcomers would need **step by step** to reach a happy life in Canada such as getting a SIN number, driver’s license, health card, opening a bank account, banking rules, weather, using household items such as furnaces/ heaters, education systems, recreational activities, transportation systems, Canadian law affecting immigrants, social norms, slang, parenting and child care resources
- Conduct information sessions with North Shore residents to talk about needs and experiences of immigrants
- Create a map of the area indicating services available in the community such as clinics, hospitals, places of worship, schools, school boards, recreational activities, parenting programs, language programs

Access to Education/Training /Support Services

- Bring agencies together to create mechanisms for agency collaboration and to avoid overlap of services rather than working as individual organizations
- Establish friendships
- Organize activities/ workshops for newcomers: discussion groups to meet regularly to discuss and solve problems
- Provide affordable English classes that prepare immigrants for work at a higher English level
- Provide available and affordable child care
- Provide easier access to upgrade education
- Provide financial support to immigrants to learn English, for grocery subsidies, dental care etc
- Provide training for Canadian life skills
- Seek grants to fund community events such as block parties

Language Interpretation and Translation

- Initiate a cross-sectional and collaborative effort , which will include businesses and social services, to build inclusive communities
- Provide access to information in their own language
- Translate more resources on child care, subsidy and recreational activities for children into other languages

Mentorship/Volunteering/Host Programs

- Initiate a ‘personal welcome’ where individuals take on a personal responsibility to welcome immigrants
- Pair newcomer families with local families or other volunteers to help with language and culture and to welcome immigrants.
- Provide mentoring for caregivers (grandparents and parents)

Beyond Family Resource Programs

- Educate the Canadian public about immigrants/ immigrant issues through the newspapers, television, open forums, etc.
- Lobby for direct access to medical specialists instead of going through referral process