

Immigrant Women's Health Project Research Findings Workshop Tues, June 4, 2013 (12pm-5pm)

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Break out discussion group summaries

NVRC = North Vancouver Recreation Commission

NSMS = North Shore Multicultural Society

NSNH = North Shore Neighbourhood House

NSWC = North Shore Women's Centre

NSWAC = North Shore Welcoming Action Committee

VCH = Vancouver Coastal Health

Topic 1: Involving Immigrants More

- Through NSMS share information on how to volunteer in NVRC and other supporting organizations (Library, NSNH, Ecology Centre)
- Provide opportunities through NSMS for groups to participate in NVRC programs just for new immigrants
- Workshops for new immigrants that introduce them to the community to help make new friends (for all immigrant groups)
- Welcoming volunteer to help a person through the door and show them what to do
- Pool of volunteers who speak different languages who can assist new immigrants participating in classes as an interpreter
- Provide incentives for the volunteers
- As part of the settlement package with the NSMS, they include a segment "wellbeing package" on mental and physical health, linking NVRC with new immigrants to assist in introducing exercise and stress relief.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to contribute their skills, experience, expertise, and language strengths to assist the community
- Provide a social opportunity for immigrants and a facilitator to discuss barriers & successes, and have the facilitator share the information to appropriate parties (2-4 times a year).
- Provide volunteer-based translation and multi-language pamphlets about services in the community and specific programs
- Friendly games competition (multi-sport) for families

Topic 2: Information & Communication

- Examples:
 - Rules or processes in different languages (eg registration; keep it streamlined)
 - Advertising – what’s going on
 - Free listings – Farsi newspaper, Korean newspaper (no free listings in Chinese newspapers)
 - Mandatory info sessions for newcomers (e.g. 1st Sunday of every month, friends, neighbours, NSMS, community ambassadors)
 - Welcoming Neighbours – NSNH model is successful
 - Volunteer training
 - Newcomers at the school
 - Structured Community Ambassador program
 - Find out where ESL classes are
 - Note: there is a website www.immigrantguide.ca created via North Shore Neighbourhood House that provides information about services, resources and programs to newcomers on the North Shore. We passed the management of the website on to the North Vancouver City Library who now organizes, manages and keeps it up to date. It has a specific section on it of all ESL programs and classes on the North Shore as well as other useful information for newcomers in English and Farsi.
- Lifestyle education and health – organized workshops
- Trusted, accurate information is important

Strategies for improved communication, information or participation:

1. Iranian Newspaper is a good information source for Persian population. Other newspapers?
2. Leisure Guide – main source of advertising for NVRC. How to simplify the info.
3. Language classes & language instructions
 - Schools – Newcomer children may be identified to bring info home to parents
 - Referrals from schools to social and recreation services
4. Cost – affordable programs and affordable childcare important to facilitate participation
5. Translated information in other community organizations
 - SIN # Office (Service Canada)
 - Banks
6. Volunteer opportunities
 - Work experience – opportunity to communicate
 - Increase confidence while studying to upgrade certification in field of work
 - Mentoring newcomers
7. Basic info: information needs to be simplified and streamlined
 - Low income – program listings
 - Short descriptions and benefits of the program
 - Special needs – what to do, where to go

8. Voicemail box to connect buddy with new immigrant
9. Video – multi language
 - Wendy suggested video being shown in waiting area of lobbies
10. Pictures – use photos to help increase understanding of info for diverse participants
11. Multiple barriers: newcomers face multiple barriers. A variety of strategies are needed from increasing awareness of opportunities to education. Service agencies may need to consider hiring practices to address multi-lingual needs of newcomers
12. Bring a friend for free opportunities. Many newcomers are introduced to services through friends or word of mouth
13. Parallel programs: schedule programs for children and adults at the same time but separately.

Topic 3: Reducing Multiple Barriers

- Educate staff (increase staff awareness: attendants, managers, programmers)
 - Build into the interview (hiring) process, and new employee orientation (training)
 - Front desk – Remember first impressions
 - Build a welcoming, whole-hearted atmosphere/ interactions
 - Be aware of attitude (snobbish)
 - Language: speak slowly, clearly
 - Volunteer translation
- Get feedback from immigrants
 - Need a feedback/complaint system (comment or suggestion box)
 - “Know your rights” - recent immigrants need to know that if they are unhappy or disappointed with services that they should provide feedback to the organizations/service providers and how this can be done
- Buddy System (or Intercultural Buddies)
 - Can address financial, belonging, motivation barriers at once
 - “Bring a friend for free” to increase social support
 - Volunteer to make it easier for new participants
 - Free sampler to try programs
- Language volunteers
- More language classes
- Address financial barrier
 - Create/Promote more low cost classes
- Parallel programs and/or childcare
- Physical health situations/disabilities
- List of barriers includes:
 - Communication, language
 - Financial
 - Childcare

- Transportation
- Sense of belonging
- Lack of support (family, friends, co-worker)
- Employment
- Motivation
- Physical health situation

Topic 4: More Intercultural Opportunities

- 'Intercultural' includes both interactions with 'local' Canadians as well as other newcomers/immigrants from around the world
- Some people feel more comfortable in a group with other newcomers/immigrants as they can relate to each other in their sense of being 'afloat', not being rooted and established (yet), etc. (Whereas in classes with locals, one participant said she felt even more isolated and felt there was an invisible wall)
- So this way, immigrants still get to meet others outside of their ethno/linguistic/cultural group but still feel 'comfortable' at the same time. One participant said that she feels that her life is enriched by meeting people from around the world.
- These classes should be not only for NEWcomers; there are many immigrants who have been here for a while now but are not yet established, and would still appreciate programs geared toward settling down/adapting. So calling them 'international classes' and making it known that all immigrants are welcome (regardless of when they came to Canada) would be good
 - Many immigrants who have been here for a while have already gone through the 'honeymoon phase' of immigration – wherein everything is exciting, and you want to try everything – and have now reached an 'intermediate plateau' or even a decline in emotion. So keeping them involved is very important
- These classes should be activity-focused, rather than words/introduction-focused to really give a sense of what the participants can experience
- Some might be willing to pay for such classes especially since it seems like funds are a concern for NVRC
 - Free programs to begin with would be unsustainable (although financial aid programs for low income families should be kept)
- One participant also mentioned that men should be included in all of this too, especially since men tend to become less social as they age, so it's important for them to reap the social and emotional benefits of physical activity, and feel their value
- Buddy system for kids would be beneficial (her two sons use the rec centre for various activities but have not made any friends through them. This is hard because they have to 'jump in the middle' of programs wherein participating children have been doing the activity since they were little and have already established their friend circle, etc)
 - Following the Finnish example (Wendy knows more about this) wherein both buddies learn from each other would be good

Discussion outside of topic 4 but still useful:

- Volunteers
 - Having volunteers (for language barriers) is absolutely helpful – they don't even need to be experts on the rec centres; just to act as a liaison to guide them in the right direction would be helpful
 - This could prevent the 'zigzagging' that many newcomers go through (and some eventually stop trying because they get so fed up with it)
 - List specific dates and times of the volunteers' availability at each rec centre would be good
 - One staff person mentioned they could have phone voicemail boxes where patrons can call and leave messages in their language of choice
- Staff comments
 - There used to be volunteers but funding was an issue
 - But now that we hear that there are people like you and 6 others who are so willing and passionate to help, this is great! We have earned 7 new friends today
 - A class run by one NSNH instructor is a great example of programs that newcomers feel comfortable in – so it's important to learn from them and to improve them
 - Important to ask the question 'how could somebody have made a difference and helped you?' and 'how could we help foster this social piece?' to each newcomer – a learning moment for staff

Topic 5: Improving Partnerships

- **Considerations** when thinking about improving partnerships:
 - Better understanding is required by all community organizations of the needs of immigrants
 - By better understanding needs, organizations will be in a better position to determine what partnerships are required, what projects to partner on
 - Do potential partners have the same level of inclusion in mind?
 - Do organizations think of inclusion as welcoming (expecting immigrants to assimilate) vs. interculturalism (two-way learning and sharing between immigrants and organizations)?
 - Who in the partnership will take the lead on the project?
 - Immigrant inclusion is a role for all community organizations, but the multicultural society (NSMS) often ends up taking the lead. NSMS would like to do more, but staff and funding are limited.
 - Who in the partnership will fund the project?
 - Relates to the ongoing environment of limited funds.
- **Possible projects or initiatives that partners could work on** (possible action items that could be led by the North Shore Welcoming Action Committee (NSWAC), additional funding and staff required):

- Centralize information for newcomers (because currently information is not easily found by many newcomers)
 - Website hub (possibly on NSWAC website) on which topic-specific link can be collected as a 'one-stop shop' for newcomers to streamline information seeking for newcomers. e.g. links to different partner organization websites on health and wellbeing for newcomers could be collected on one 'health and wellbeing' webpage.
 - *See Topic 2: Information & Communication: there is an existing website hub on City of North Vancouver Library site, created by NSNH*
 - Monthly email newsletter and/or hardcopy brochure highlighting events, workshops and programs for newcomers offered by a range of community organizations.
 - Regular (monthly) North Shore orientation workshops organized centrally but hosted by a different community organization on a rotating basis. In this way, organizations take turns to welcome newcomers and newcomers can learn about the different services and organizations available to them.
 - Potentially draw on a volunteer pool to help with this
- Collaboratively deliver health, wellbeing, and recreation related programs by NVRC, NSMS & VCH
 - Over the past few years, NSMS and VCH have accessed grant funding to offer recreation and leisure programs to newcomers, including camping workshops, walking groups, facility orientations, introduction to group fitness/yoga classes. Vida has supported these opportunities when possible, but increasingly there is a fee involved.
 - More direct involvement by NVRC in these initiatives would enable these leisure-based programs to be offered more often (than once-per-year) and more widely across the community, and help stretch project funds.
- Community dialogues to improve intercultural communication and understanding between newcomers, long-time local residents, and First Nations peoples.
 - Opens the possibility to expand how the general public thinks about immigrants, i.e. recognition that all people living in Canada are immigrants or descended from immigrants, except First Nations Peoples.
 - Different communities in Metro Vancouver have used dialogue circles to engage the wider community to discuss important issues.
 - E.g. City of Richmond held dialogue circles in Mandarin, Cantonese, and in English with immigrants and the general public to gather input for the development of their Social Planning Strategy.
 - E.g. City of Vancouver and Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society held dialogue circles with Aboriginal elders and new immigrants to facilitate learning and discussion across cultures and histories.
 - *Note: Donna has a few resources on community dialogue*

- Possible partner organizations/contributions/limitations
 - NSMS has taken the lead on many immigrant health/wellbeing initiatives; want to do more but limited in staff and funding
 - Recreation Commission and Neighbourhood House could support recreation-based initiatives through help with facility space and instructors
 - Women's Centre has useful resources, but there is limited language support which can make it difficult to refer newcomers