

# INNOVATION, COLLABORATION AND INTERCULTURAL INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORT THE SETTLEMENT, INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF NEWCOMERS IN THE CITIES OF VANCOUVER AND SEATTLE

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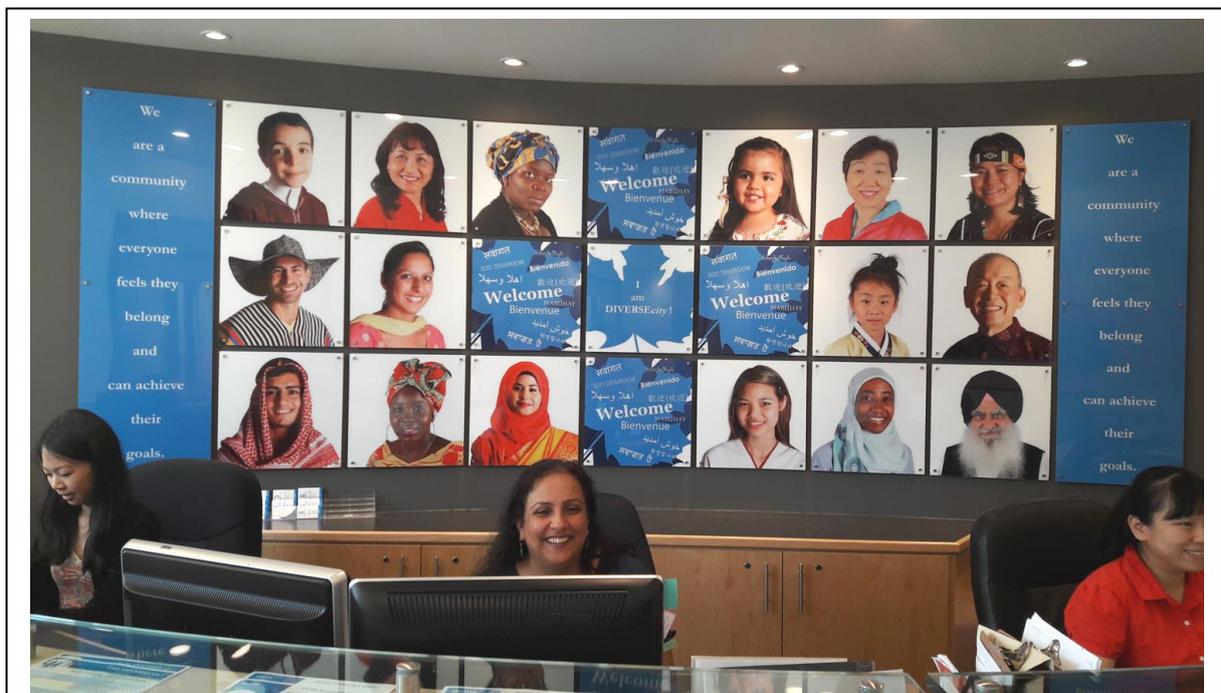


Photo taken by Mary Dawson of the reception space and staff at DIVERSECITY, a specialist settlement agency serving newly resettled refugees in the Cities of Vancouver and Surrey, British Columbia.

## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2.1 Aims of my Churchill Fellowship study trip</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>2.2 Role of Central and Local Government in Settlement and Integration</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>2.3 Visits in the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>3.0 KEY LEARNING</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>3.1 Focus Area One:</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>3.3 Focus Areas Two and Three</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>3.4 Focus Area Four:</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix: Travel Diary</b> .....	<b>40</b>



Example of typical artwork seen in neighbourhood houses and created by local community members.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I also wish to warmly acknowledge my former organisation, the Auckland Regional Migrant Services Trust (ARMS) for supporting me to apply for a WCMT grant, and for also contributing financially to the costs of my study trip.

My sincere thanks go to the Auckland Council for granting me sufficient time to undertake the study trip so soon after the commencement of my employment.

To all of the organisations that I visited and the managers and staff with whom I met, thank you for your generosity of time and sharing of your experience, knowledge and insights.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable background information available to me in the document: Auckland Plan 2050 Evidence Report: Belonging and Participation: Produced by the Auckland Plan, Strategy and Research Department, and approved by the Auckland Council June 2018.

Although I have not quoted at any point from this report (due to its copyright stipulations), it has provided me with recent and relevant evidence related to the concepts of belonging and participation, with regard to Auckland City and to Auckland Council's responsibilities.

Finally, my thanks to my very supportive partner who patiently supported me through the writing of this report and provided editing expertise.



Coming face to face with Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C.

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the details and learning acquired from a series of visits and meetings that I undertook during my Winston Churchill study trip to the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle in particular. It also includes, where appropriate, additional information gathered from organisational and council websites.

In Section Two, I have drawn together the various strands of my experience and interests that influenced the selection of the four focus areas of my trip. In summary, these were to learn about a range of settlement and integration agencies, the strategic alliances and collaborations existing across such agencies, and innovative intercultural settlement and integration initiatives and programmes, especially those addressing issues of social isolation and exclusion of more marginalised communities. Section Two also provides a brief explanation of terminology used in the report, the role of local government in settlement and integration, and the range of organisations, council departments, and personnel included during the study trip. Full details of these visits are contained in the Appendices.

Section Three provides an account of my learning, observations, highlights, and most relevant aspects of my experiences, under the four focus areas. There were many differences between the contexts of Vancouver, Seattle and Auckland cities, in terms of history, demographics, newcomer numbers, types and number of organisations supporting settlement and integration, issues experienced migrants and refugees, challenges faced by providers, and the level and sources of funding available. To some extent, these contrasts influenced the applicability of my observations and learning. However, from my visits and meetings I learned of several programmes, initiatives and strategies offered by community organisations or administered by the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle that I believe have potential relevance for Auckland's community sector and Auckland Council. I also discovered that some neighbourhood houses are intentionally including more intercultural programming, beyond their culturally or linguistically specific programmes, their increased community development activity, and strategic planning processes with community engagement strongly to the fore.

Section Four then draws these together into a list of relevant approaches, initiatives and actions (some already in progress), that I sincerely hope to action or at least bring to the attention of appropriate departments, organisations and personnel.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Aims of my Churchill Fellowship study trip

At the time of applying for a Winston Churchill Fellowship, I was still the CEO of the ARMS Trust and accordingly, I nominated three areas of focus for my Churchill Fellowship Study Trip.

1. To find out about the range of settlement and integration agencies, and the strategic alliances and collaborations existing across such agencies.
2. To learn about innovative and successful settlement and integration programmes and activities with strong intercultural elements, at both the neighbourhood and city-wide level.
3. To learn about innovative and collaborative multicultural economic and community development initiatives that address issues of social isolation and exclusion of more marginalised communities.

Two months prior to my planned August departure to Canada, I applied for and was successful in obtaining a managerial position at Auckland Council, in the newly established Community Empowerment Unit (CEU). Knowing that I would be starting in that role immediately after the study trip, I realised the relevance and importance of adding a fourth area of focus. As it turned out, this fourth became a crucial aspect of my visits and meetings in both Vancouver and Seattle.

4. To learn about how the local authorities of the City of Vancouver and the City of Seattle connect with and support local community groups, particularly to support the settlement and integration of former refugees and migrants.

In preparation for my study trip, I did an exhaustive search of relevant websites of agencies, councils, and programmes to identify those to visit and their key personnel with whom to meet.

Although I had managed to pre-schedule 22 visits and meetings, not all of those proved possible due to postponing my original travel schedule by a month, therefore arriving in the summer holiday season. A ferocious heat-wave in Portland and shut-down of government and community agencies prevented my visits happening there. However, 85% of my planned meetings did materialise.

What I initially hoped to bring back was insights and ideas that would be particularly pertinent to the ARMS Trust, now re-titled *Belong Aotearoa*. As it happened, my current role in the newly established Community Empowerment Unit of Auckland Council, and the lag between my study trip and the writing up of this report, meant that the study trip has in fact proven invaluable for gathering information, insights and ideas relevant to the Community Empowerment Unit and my council colleagues.

## **2.2 Role of Central and Local Government in Settlement and Integration**

### **1. Responsibilities for Settlement and Integration**

In most countries, the responsibility for managing migration flows and provision of initial settlement support for new immigrants sits with national governments.

In New Zealand as in Canada, migration is highly controlled, with central government being fully responsible for the selection of new migrants and largely responsible for their initial settlement. NZ government also focused on supporting migrants in their first three, now extended to five, years post-arrival period, with a significantly reduced focus on their longer-term integration.

However, in terms of settlement and integration, there is typically a wider spectrum of approaches on the part of central governments across the world. Some see not only the initial settlement stages but also later post-settlement or integration phases as part of their core business; at the other extreme, other national governments see ongoing settlement needs of migrants as the responsibility of local government, employers, educational institutions, and/or non-government agencies.

In New Zealand, over the last fifteen years, the former Department of Labour and now the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Enterprise (MBIE) have been responsible for developing and implementing the national strategies for new migrant settlement and for refugee resettlement and integration. They also co-led, with some local governments, the development of regional strategies that support settlement and integration for new migrants and refugees. In more recent years, the approach adopted by MBIE is to form regional partnership agreements with local councils.

Overall, it is currently recognised and accepted in New Zealand and Australia, as in Canada, that local governments are uniquely positioned to support the local integration of newcomers through the creation of inclusive policies and environments, partnering with responsive local organisations, promoting pathways for participation, and focusing on the importance of community connections to create a sense of belonging.

### **2. New Zealand's Strategy for Integration of New Migrants**

In New Zealand, successful integration under the National Settlement Strategy (pertaining to new migrants) means that those with migrant and non-migrant backgrounds can expect equivalent outcomes in a range of domains such as health, education, employment and housing. Outcome 4 of this strategy pertains to Inclusion: Migrants participate in and have a sense of belonging to their community and to New Zealand.

NZ Immigration defines success for this outcome as “the proportion of recent migrants:

- who belong to social networks and groups (including sports groups) is increasing
- with residence who vote in local authority elections and in general elections is increasing
- who feel a sense of belonging to New Zealand is increasing
- who have experienced discrimination in New Zealand is decreasing.”<sup>1</sup>

This strategy is intended to be implemented through the combined efforts of:

- government agencies that can contribute specialist expertise, such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health
- non-government organisations that can support migrant settlement outcomes, such as the Chambers of Commerce
- local communities and councils that want to create welcoming and inclusive environments for newcomers
- local government, regions and employers of recent migrants, to help them plan for, attract and retain migrant workers with the skills they need.

### **3. New Zealand’s Strategy for Re-settlement and Integration of Refugees<sup>2</sup>**

The overarching vision for the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy is:

Refugees are participating fully and integrated socially and economically as soon as possible so that they are living independently, undertaking the same responsibilities and exercising the same rights as other New Zealanders and have a strong sense of belonging to their own community and to New Zealand.

There are five integration outcomes:

1. Self-sufficiency: all working-age refugees are in paid work or supported by a family member in paid work.
2. Housing: refugees live in safe, secure, healthy and affordable homes without needing government housing help.
3. Education: refugees have English language skills that help them participate in education and daily life.
4. Health and wellbeing: refugees and their families enjoy healthy, safe and independent lives.
5. Participation: refugees actively participate in New Zealand life and have a strong sense of belonging here.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/how-we-support-migrants/how-we-measure-success>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/refugee-resettlement-strategy>



### **Building a welcoming culture**

Local governments are well positioned to build a sense of togetherness and inclusion within their communities that is difficult to achieve on a national level. By embracing newcomers and celebrating the benefits that diversity brings to their communities, local governments can create messages and environments that challenge negative stereotypes and promote social cohesion at a local level.

### **Belonging and social inclusion**

Creating a sense of belonging is a key integration outcome that many local authorities engaged in the work of newcomer integration aspire to. Whilst in the first few years of settlement the tasks of integration are often focused on the practical aspects of setting up life in a new country (eg. finding a house, learning the language, getting a job), in the longer term a sense of belonging to one's new home is a key determinant of successful settlement.

Whether the focus is on building welcoming communities or on belonging and social inclusion, the role of the host community and its local government includes supporting the inclusion and recognition of the experiences and attributes of newcomers and addressing factors that might lead to their exclusion. It also means that the host community creates frameworks and strategies that provide direction for how welcoming and supporting newcomers is best done, whether nationally or regionally.

## 2.3 Visits in the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle

### City of Vancouver (CoV)

There is an extensive array of organisations that provide settlement and integration support across the City of Vancouver (some of them overlapping into the adjacent cities of Greater Vancouver). For its population of 800,000, the City can be said to be extremely well served by a large number of agencies that are much greater in size, scope and stability than those serving Auckland City's newcomers.

Of these, I visited:

- Three specialist settlement agencies (out of four main ones):
  - Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (M.O.S.A.I.C.)
  - Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSBC)
  - DIVERSECITY
- Three Neighbourhood Houses (out of eight):
  - Kiwassa
  - South Vancouver
  - Mt Pleasant
- One multicultural services agency (out of around 14):
  - Multicultural Helping House Society, primarily for Filipinos
- Two umbrella or 'peak' organisations:
  - Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA)
  - Association of Neighbourhood Houses of B.C. (ANHBC)

In addition, I met with staff of two key departments of the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle.

### City of Seattle (CoS)

Seattle has its own city council and I was extremely fortunate to have a number of scheduled meetings and visits with council staff during my study week in Seattle. These included:

- Programme managers in City of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods (DoN)
- Three community engagement coordinators (DoN - North Seattle)
- Touring community spaces and projects with Jim Diers, former head of DoN

## Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

I was keen to spend time learning about this department, as its purpose is very similar to that of Auckland Council's Community Empowerment Unit (previously Community Development and Safety - CDAS) in Auckland Council. Prior to the development of Auckland Council's Empowered Communities Approach and establishment of the council's Community Empowerment Unit (2015-2016), there were information exchanges between key personnel at the City of Seattle and various key Auckland community leaders and Auckland council staff. I spent a full day with Jim Diers, the first director of the Department of Neighborhoods (DoN), who has paid many visits to Auckland over the past two decades, sharing his extensive knowledge and community engagement experience. Jim explained the origins and early years of the DoN and took me to see several neighbourhood projects and community centres. On subsequent days, I met with the current departmental leaders and district coordinators in this Department to find out about their current programmes and projects. All these meetings and visits were extremely informative, inspiring and useful to me, with several programmes proving relevant to my current council context.



High Point Centre, in West Seattle, remodelled in 2006, is a magnificent community facility. The Centre information is translated into 12 languages.

## **3.0 KEY LEARNING**

In this section, I address the relevance of my visits, their value, and my key learnings for each focus area. I have combined my observations for Focus Areas one and two as I found considerable overlap in the information gathered from my range of visits. I have therefore confined the learning in this section mainly to the City of Vancouver (CoV). My observations for Focus Area three are more sparse, as many of the groups and projects that I had hoped to learn about were not operating in the months of July and August. For Focus Area four, I have combined my observations on the various strategies, leadership and programming provided by each of the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle (CoS).

### **3.1 Focus Area One:**

Range of settlement and integration agencies, and the strategic alliances and collaborations existing across those agencies.

#### **i) Introduction**

Canada is often extolled as a prime example of how a highly-developed country, its provinces and cities, have been dedicated over many decades to welcoming newcomers and to responding to the mountain of issues that arise and relate to immigration, settlement and integration.

The scale of immigration, both of economic migrants and of quota refugees, into Canada, cascading down to Vancouver City, was my first major key eye-opener. To a large degree, this difference in scale between Vancouver and Auckland affected the extent to which I was able to benefit from my visits, in particular to the specialist settlement agencies. This was also exacerbated by the current context of almost all the agencies I visited. Only five months earlier, with very little lead-in time, Canada had begun taking in 45,000 refugees from Syria, this being the number for simply 2016, with around 25% of those coming into British Columbia. Moreover, the agencies were still working through a massive change from the previous provincially distributed funding arrangements to a federally managed funding model. The agencies were clearly reeling from the huge impact of these two developments. In Vancouver, the sheer number of refugees has meant the burgeoning of specialist agencies, while in other smaller centres of BC, smaller immigrant or settlement agencies which operate more as Neighbourhood Houses rather than as specialist reception and settlement services, have not been well-equipped to respond to the needs of refugees, particularly given that there are many different groups coming in with often very differing needs. However, in spite of this turmoil, workload increase, and often a climate of uncertainty in which contracts were still being

renegotiated, I experienced nothing but courtesy and generosity of time, from all the directors with whom I met.

Not only was the scale of immigration cascading into the City of Vancouver challenging for me to absorb, a further eye-opener was the extraordinarily extensive and well-established infrastructure of community organisations, both specialist settlement organisations and neighbourhood centres, across the City of Vancouver, a city of 800,000 compared with Auckland's then population of \$1.46 million. Many of the CoV's specialist organisations were set up around 40 years ago with significant provincial (and sometimes federal) funding, while others were established three to four decades ago as small organisations, through the efforts and generosity of earlier migrants. All of these specialist organisations had very spacious multi-storey buildings and up to as many as twenty delivery locations. Likewise, CoV's neighbourhood houses were extremely sizeable, due in large measure to the provision of substantial legacies by residents who had made sizeable fortunes in the rapid wealth accumulating era of the Port of Vancouver.

Also striking were the superb locations of these organisations, both specialist and neighbourhood. The City has an outstanding public transport system and network compared with Auckland's, and every one of the centres that I visited (including their satellite offices) was in close proximity to two or more main transport routes, often located on a major intersection, as were their satellite offices.

## **ii) Why the City of Vancouver?**

I was also interested to explore, understand and compare the roles undertaken by leading settlement and integration agencies and alliances in a city that has demonstrated a very strong commitment to enabling positive outcomes for their newcomers, and for their migrant and former refugee communities. I hoped to learn about the strategic positioning of such organisations with regards to their local authorities, the service provider sector, and the migrant communities within their cities.

Another focus of my meetings in the CoV was the collaboration between its agencies, in terms of cooperative initiatives to enhance and streamline the administration, messaging, promotion, rationalisation, delivery of activities, input into policy, best practice development, and referral pathways involved in migrant and refugee settlement.

## **iii) Specialist Settlement Agencies in CoV**

From my discussions and reading, I gathered that the City of Vancouver has seen an enormous growth in specialist settlement agencies over the past two decades. For some, the majority of their clientele are now the more newly arrived refugees rather than economic migrants, while other

agencies are still serving the needs of all newcomers. Some specialist settlement agencies are also engaging in community development as well as delivering their large suites of core settlement programmes and services.

The funding structure of these specialist organisations was not a focus of my visits. However, understandably, at most meetings with the CEOs of the specialist agencies (as with the neighbourhood houses), I was regaled with sagas about the complexity of funding channels, the multiplicity of contracts, the hugely time-consuming requirement of accountability reporting, and the additional fund-raising efforts that are part and parcel of community organisations. Most agencies and some neighbourhood houses received federal funding requiring accountability and data-sharing back to Ottawa (for standard and specialist settlement programmes); some were also well funded by the province of British Columbia. All of the agencies I visited were funded by the City of Vancouver and usually had additional backing from banks, other commercial institutions and philanthropic trusts. Most organisations were receiving revenue of at least Can\$4 million per annum, while others were in the heady realms of Can\$25+ million per annum.

The specialist settlement agencies typically handled the early reception, orientation, English language, health and counselling assessment services, preparation for employment for those who had entered Canada as refugees, and some such as SUCCESS also delivered these services for new migrants (mainly Asian). However, as refugees and non-English speaking migrants move past the first year or two of their settlement journey, there are still many challenges and needs that can impede their adjustment, successful settlement and ultimate integration into Canadian society. Consequently, over the past five years, the neighbourhood houses have been increasingly funded to deliver a range of settlement and integration programmes.



ISSBC's Welcome Centre, opened just a month before my visit to Vancouver.



Entrance of DIVERSECITY, City of Surrey

#### iv) Neighbourhood Houses in CoV

These houses are an important and highly regarded feature of the City of Vancouver’s social infrastructure, perhaps more so than in any other city in British Columbia. Overall CoV’s Neighbourhood Houses are more akin to Auckland’s community hubs and community houses, while what are referred to as CoV’s community centres are more similar to our Council’s community centres. I could see from my visits that the size, spaciousness, staffing and programming of both the houses and the centres were on a scale far beyond what exists in Auckland, providing access to or delivery of a vast scope of social/community services and activities.

Their age and the size mean that property management is a major focus for most neighbourhood houses in Vancouver. However, my interviewees all emphasised that much of their time was committed to ensuring the stability of their personnel, with another large ratio of time being put in by management, community board members (governance) and staff into successful relationship building with all their local communities.



Exterior of Mt Pleasant Neighbourhood House



Kiwassa House in East Vancouver

Prior to a decade ago, the neighbourhood houses were very focused on delivering services and often relied on service partners hiring shared space and contributing to core costs. However, in the early 2000s, federal funding imperatives moved the neighbourhood houses towards more community development programmes and outcomes. For some houses, this necessitated a major change in their culture, and in the skills and experience of their personnel. Their governance is by local people, and management are focused strongly on relationship building within their local communities, understanding and responding to local needs through a myriad of onsite and offsite community-led programmes.

This focus is demonstrated by the process of strategic planning followed by most Neighbourhood Houses. This process is usually very extensive, taking 12 months, and is conducted every five years. For example, Mt Pleasant NH members conducted several iterations of a Circle Dialogue<sup>3</sup> process (co-design). This process puts everyone on an equal footing in a physical circle and employs a structured appreciative enquiry approach to gather stories of learning, personal impact, and possibilities. It is carried out with various circles of board, staff, and community members. As well, knowledge interviews are carried out by board members with key stakeholders. What emerges from all the circle sessions and interviews is collated into themes, which are used as the starting point for a wide-ranging SWOT and action planning. I was told that this had proved to be a hugely valuable approach, and relatively inexpensive as consultant(s) are only used for the final stages of analysis, in preparation for developing or revising the organisation's strategic directions. This comprehensive process builds the capacity of NH management, staff and community leaders.

At the same time, over the past decade and as a result of the increasing pattern of immigration and dispersal of newcomers across the CoV, there has been a marked shift towards Neighbourhood Houses also being funded for newcomer services, more particularly for new migrants and longer-term resettled refugees. This has resulted in a burgeoning of their services and programmes related to the first few years of the settlement journey. Neighbourhood houses are more accessible and often more able to be more responsive to the integration of newcomers past their first years of settlement, and to the community development needs of emerging communities. I was impressed by the full range of services being provided by the neighbourhood houses for newcomers and for more settled community members. It would appear that there are multiple opportunities and pathways for cradle-to-grave learning and participation by a cross-section of their extremely ethnically diverse communities.

Compared with New Zealand, phone interpreting services do not play a large role in supporting newcomers and those with English as a second language. There is therefore a high demand for face-to-face services/support. Many neighbourhood houses offer face-to-face services for their clients, as it is typically very easy for people to reach the neighbourhood houses to access these. It does however require a large pool of cross-cultural workers being available to assist and interpret. Due to funding constraints, turn-over of such staff is high and consequently there is a constant roll-over of staff recruitment and induction, and instability for many part-time cultural workers. Where the language groupings are consistent, standing down of staff is less of a problem.

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<sup>3</sup> The Circle Way <http://www.thecircleway.net/circle-way-at-work>

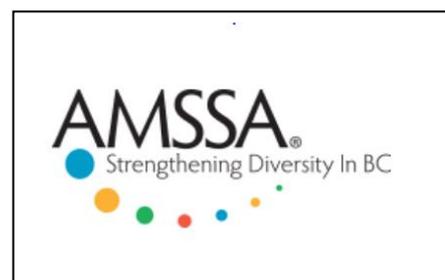
As already described, funding comes to neighbourhood houses from multiple sources. Typically, it comes from the province (mainly for employment-related activities), from federal funding (for general settlement and family support), and from the City of Vancouver and other sources (for general services for children, youth and seniors). Changes in funding policies and contracts can result in huge administrative challenges and demands on staff. This is where the support and input from an ‘umbrella’ organisation such ANHBC or AMSSA can be invaluable.

**v) Alliance or umbrella organisations visited in City of Vancouver**

**AMSSA (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies)**

I had a very interesting and worthwhile meeting with Katie Rosenberger, Executive Director of AMSSA.

This alliance (or ‘peak’ to use a Canadian term) organisation was set up in 1977, following a period of strong growth in settlement agencies and multicultural societies. In terms of its scope and role, it is this agency,



more so than ANHBC (see below), which presents more alignment with the regional role that had been envisaged in the past by the ARMS Trust (now Belong Aotearoa).

AMSSA essentially offers services ‘to support settlement, language and diversity service providers across Metro Vancouver’. This includes facilitating collaborative leadership, knowledge exchange and stakeholder engagement to support agencies that serve immigrants and build culturally inclusive communities. AMSSA provides member agencies with knowledge, resources and support in the settlement, language, and diversity sectors. The organisation calls itself the ‘voice of the settlement and diversity sectors in BC’, and its staff are highly active in visiting its member organisations and, increasingly, using video-conferencing to facilitate meetings across the city and the province.

AMSSA operates Settlement Net which is a password protected website and database that provides reliable and timely information and resources on immigration, resettlement, and migration for the settlement sector. Every Tuesday morning, AMSSA sends out a weekly update e-mail that includes the latest settlement related news, updates, initiatives, and resources.

Katie identified for me the main challenges to the services being offered by AMSSA (in 2016).

- i) A lack of financial advice due to the instability and balancing of grants and other revenue especially under the newly introduced federal funding regime, as the funders are located in Ottawa and therefore remote.
- ii) Increasing challenges are being experienced by settlement workers in schools endeavouring to integrate more traumatised children, with the increased numbers of Syrian refugees.
- iii) The need to support its member agencies to be able to understand and respond to evaluation requirements that are increasing with more time being needed to obtain feedback through various means.
- iv) AMSSA has recently been given responsibility for umbrella-ing and coordinating English language services, a role that was previously carried out by another agency (LISTEN).
- v) Advocating for and responding to the shortage of English language programmes with 7000+ on their waiting lists and having no support for this from the provincial government.

I was interested to hear that an emerging problem for AMSSA is the significant proportion of requests received from AMSSA's member organisations, often outside of the large cities, about how to manage and respond to racial discrimination issues. Katie spoke about the lack of funding for anti-racism initiatives or even multicultural festivals. For example, the AMSSA Safe Harbour programme is primarily funded by the Ministry of International Trade and now may need to move towards event funding to survive.

AMSSA also has a charitable arm, the Community Education Society of BC (ACES), with its purpose being to promote public education on diversity, anti-discrimination, settlement and immigration issues. This, too, has some resonance for me in terms of issues that may well need a more concerted and collaborative response in the city of Auckland.

### **ANHBC (Association of Neighbourhood Houses of B.C.)**

The ANHBC plays a supporting 'back-bone' role across most of the neighbourhood houses of Vancouver City and other parts of British Columbia, and it was referenced by the managers of the three houses that I visited. During my visit to ANHBC I met the two co-directors of the Association, and spoke mainly with one of them, Deb Bryant.

I gathered that, for those neighbourhood houses with less capacity and more recently established, the Association provides assistance with financial oversight, expectations of governance, seeking out opinions and information to inform submissions, and providing support with communications

where needed. While I gained a clear understanding of the purpose, philosophies and value of the three neighbourhood houses I visited, it was less easy to glean from my meeting with the two directors of ANHBC (or even from the organisation's website) exactly how this organisation operated, or the range of functions that it carries out for its member houses.

### **Key Learning relevant to Focus Area One**

Overall, through the range of visits that I made to agencies and houses, I was able to gain a solid overview of the City's infrastructure related to its settlement and integration support agencies. At each centre, I was impressed to hear reference made (usually positively) to the City of Vancouver's social planners, the Vancouver City Local Immigration Partnership, the collaborations that exist between agencies and /or houses, and the leadership provided by the City in supporting newcomers.

For some of my visits, I was able to focus on another of my interests: inter-agency collaboration, partnerships and alliances. Regarding the settlement specialist agencies which were responsible for the early stages of settlement support, I found that their collaborations were understandably not so much with other specialist agencies, but with providers of English language courses, housing bodies, the state employment agency, childcare providers, and health agencies. These specialist agencies were also chiefly focused on rationalising service delivery across their satellite offices, as refugees moved into different housing arrangements and areas. The atmosphere in some of these agencies was more formalised; people arrived and went off to classes, slotted into various categories, for example: learners; applicants for housing; having basic or high complex needs; job seekers, and then referred accordingly to the appropriate programme. Offices bore the names of various organisations/team leaders, and the lobbies and corridors abounded with posters, screens, and notice-boards with information and lots of doors opening into classrooms. Some hosted an early childcare centre and some had garden plots for producing food and teaching gardening skills.

In the neighbourhood houses I visited, there was a noticeably different ambience, marked by more expressions of welcome, greetings, and informal chat, as well as local artwork, colourful signage and racks full of brochures directing and informing people about a staggering number of courses, activities, events, training options etc. Spaces varied from large halls, play areas, computer rooms, large communal kitchens, lounge areas, classrooms, to youth hub spaces and large community gardens. These typically, very large, often 3-storeyed houses have high usage (except in the height of the summer holiday period); either by venue hirers (eg. community groups, sports groups, mother language groups), by programme providers (eg. English language, employment support, settlement support) or by programmes run by the neighbourhood houses themselves.

Compared with the specialist settlement agencies, the neighbourhood houses have developed a different canvas of collaboration. This happens between the providers using the premises, for example, around the shared use of space and the path-waying of people to their programmes. I heard about the partnerships created by the houses with their local community organizations and institutions to create mutually beneficial events, run programmes and share resources. Some neighbourhood houses worked particularly hard on their relationships with neighbouring schools, facilities and agencies to leverage an extensive range of spaces, physical resources, volunteers, and joint funding. The houses play a pivotal and distinctive role in the community they serve, with a more grassroots (community development) approach that recognises and promotes the strengths and skills of participants, with staff and local volunteers working together to address the needs and goals of the local community. The value statements of neighbourhood houses typically speak to community empowerment, safety, collaboration, respect and inclusiveness of all people.

For all of these establishments, whether specialist settlement agencies, multicultural societies, neighbourhood houses, or alliances, the funding levels are far in excess of any currently received by Auckland-based agencies and centres. While federal and provincial funding tends to be more targeted towards settlement-related programmes, overall this high level of funding together with the assets available to CoV's organisations results in an extensive raft of programmes, activities, support services, trainings, holiday experiences and events, catering for a wide diversity of community members (seniors, youth, children, people with low English, people with disabilities, LGBTQ). Although many are run for specific cultural or linguistic groups, others clearly had an intentional intercultural focus.

British Columbia is seen as a highly inclusive and migrant-friendly province. However, a note of caution was voiced by some of those whom I interviewed that, in reality, the key lens is still managing diversity, rather than promoting inclusion. Some of my contacts spoke about racial tensions in communities and the challenges for many new migrants and refugees in terms of social inclusion, with these issues at risk of increasing given the Liberal government's projected ongoing high intakes of migrants and refugees.

While 'blending in' can be far easier in large urban centres which have ethnic enclaves, than in smaller rural centres, there is no 'push-back' from the BC government to the ongoing emergence of ethnic enclaves. The City of Richmond, for example, is now the major location for Chinese migrants and the City of Surrey likewise for south-Asians. Housing availability and affordability have had a significant influence on this development. For the City of Vancouver, the lack of

affordable housing has become a massive issue, hence the trend of refugees and migrants moving out into other parts of Metropolitan Vancouver.

### **3.3 Focus Areas Two and Three**

Innovative and successful settlement and integration programmes and activities with strong intercultural elements, at both the neighbourhood and city-wide level.

Innovative and collaborative multicultural economic and community development initiatives that address issues of social isolation and exclusion of more marginalised communities.

#### **i) Introduction**

Auckland has grown rapidly to become a city of 1.5 million people hailing from over 180 different cultural backgrounds and speaking over 210 first languages. There is a very high proportion of Aucklanders who were born overseas or to parents who are newcomers. Moving countries, adjusting to a new culture, leaving behind the familiar, family and friends results in many newcomers, particularly women and seniors, searching for a sense of belonging, connection and safety; in other words, a sense of home.

Many of Auckland's newer residents also struggle to converse in English. Some, particularly who have come as refugees, may have had minimal education, training or employment experience, and lived many years in refugee camps. Women especially can find themselves house-bound with young children, without the level of companionship they previously had in their home country or even transition country. They often lack access to transport or knowledge about how to move around and find it difficult to connect with others outside of their family and ethnic or language community. They may experience restrictions about speaking with others outside of the family or going to community places, and are therefore marginalised, excluded and often hard-to-reach.

In Auckland, there are many groups that bring together members of specific communities, and provide opportunities for companionship, activities, exercise, service, and education. Some of these organisations have spread beyond their original base eg. Mt Roskill, Onehunga, and have been able to run their programmes in other parts of Auckland. Their leaders engage with other ethnic organisations, service providers, local politicians etc, and know the importance of sharing information, accessing services for their members, and advocating for their issues. Such bridging across culturally diverse communities certainly occurs, through the engagement forums run by council (eg. for local board planning), by central government (eg. NZ Police, MBIE), by community organisations (such as Multicultural NZ, English Language Partners), sometimes by community hubs, and by faith institutions with multicultural congregations.

Making connections with people beyond one's own cultural or linguistic group and being able to participate in all aspects of community life is essential in building a sense of community and belonging. This is usually best done at a neighbourhood level. An example of this at a grass-roots level is the WISE Collective<sup>4</sup>. The weekly WISE hubs bring together local women from many different cultural backgrounds, many of whom are still feeling very isolated, to share and use their skills and talents, learn about one another's culture, follow their interests and access new skills, knowledge and experiences.

Cultural festivals and religious celebrations have become a welcome feature of our highly multicultural city. Such celebrations are exciting and attract large crowds; we have a wide array of large and small ethnic communities many of them well-established; and Council has an events department (as well as a council-controlled organisation: Auckland Tourism, Events, and Economic Development) that sponsor and support such events. What is more aspirational is for Auckland to move beyond espousing itself as a super-diverse or multicultural city to becoming an intercultural city<sup>5</sup>, thereby strengthening social inclusion and cohesion across communities as its population grows ever larger and more diverse.

While there are some positive signs that this is the direction that Auckland Council is aspiring to follow, arguably there is much yet to be done across Auckland to champion inter-culturalism and to foster social cohesion. There needs to be a far wider range of opportunities, programmes and activities and not just events, aimed at people from a wide diversity of backgrounds to enable them to come together at a neighbourhood level and become less socially isolated. Participation in social and community activities, and in civic life enables people to recognise what they have in common with others. At the same time, valuing of cultural and other differences, contributes to the building of relationships and bridging between cultures, and reinforces a sense of belonging for new Aucklanders.

## **ii) Key Learning relevant to Focus Areas Two and Three**

Unfortunately, given the time of year that I was visiting Canada and the U.S.A., it proved too difficult for me to find out about or visit many innovative and collaborative multicultural, economic and community development initiatives. From the visits that I made, however, I was very impressed with the availability of spaces which enabled a huge range of activities to be incorporated into the weekly programmes of neighbourhood houses, at all hours of the day. For

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<sup>4</sup> <https://settlement.org.nz/community-partnership-projects/the-wise-collective-project/>

example, kitchens had high usage throughout the week operating as ‘Multicultural Community Kitchens’, including the production of catering for the house staff and clients.

What was very evident, possibly influenced by their location, was that some neighbourhood houses have become very much focused on following an intentional intercultural approach - embracing diversity, connecting people, building bridges between cultures, and working together to promote greater social cohesion in their neighbourhood. This was the case for both South Vancouver NH and Collingwood NH, which were situated in culturally highly diverse areas. Other houses had many more language or culturally specific activities, no doubt consisting of multicultural participants, but were less focused on specific intercultural programmes and activities.

The value of inter-culturalism is captured well by Collingwood NH on its website: “Inter-culturalism is the view that we all benefit when we actively encourage connections between people from different cultures. It allows us to share our uniqueness, open up new ways of seeing and doing things and enables us to co-create something new.” Their tag-line is: ‘a place to belong, a place to grow’.

As well as language or culturally specific programmes, these two neighbourhood houses also offer:

- community leadership trainings
- multicultural peer mentoring programmes
- intercultural dinners for locals
- community action network
- bingo and bag lunch
- intercultural craft circles
- intercultural wellness groups
- intercultural ‘Nobody’s Perfect’ parenting groups.

During my visits and from my readings, I have learned about the impressive range and number of innovative, successful projects and programmes, both house-led and community-led. that enable and build bonding, well-being and social capital. For the purpose of focus area three, I was particularly drawn to projects and initiatives that had strong intercultural and intergenerational elements. In addition to other good examples of these elements observable in the programming of the Collingwood Community House, I have chosen to highlight three of their initiatives in particular, as potentially having relevance to the context of Auckland, both for the Council and for the community sector.

- The Front Step Project<sup>6</sup> at - engaging youth and older adults from different cultural backgrounds to think about community needs differently.
- Upcycling Parklet<sup>7</sup> also at Mt Pleasant Neighbourhood House – using recycled materials and a co-designing process with locals to create a small space involving such things as:
  - Planting indigenous plants to help the space thrive year-round
  - Purchasing games like giant checkers for people of all ages to play together
  - Having a blackboard and keeping a steady supply of chalk and brushes available
  - Crafting custom armrests to help seniors sit and stand comfortably
  - Hosting events that promote social inclusion in our neighbourhood
- INTERactive<sup>8</sup> – activities and resources to increase and deepen relationships between people who are different from each other and increase the physical activity of Renfrew-Collingwood residents and workers. Neighbourhood organizations, residents and UBC students and faculty work together to increase intercultural relations and physical activities, to reach out to people that are not participating, but might like to, to address barriers and broaden opportunities to be accessible. This programme has some exceptional resources.

I was also impressed by the Finding Home™ Initiative<sup>9</sup>, a model developed over many years by Jessie Sutherland, a highly experienced independent community development worker, with whom I met at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House which was situated close to where I was staying in East Vancouver. The key focus of this initiative is to support individuals and neighbourhoods to foster a sense of belonging, build inclusive communities and increase effectiveness in responding to personal, local and global challenges. Coming from a strengths-based community development approach, it fosters citizen leadership and generates innovative self-organizing projects. Jessie spoke passionately about how all the projects are led by community members and address their community's priority issues such as elder abuse, housing needs and isolation. The outcomes are usually lasting because the approach creates the conditions for diverse people and communities to do their best work together. The Finding Home™ metaphor provides an opening through dialogue and collaboration for bringing diverse cultures, individuals and sectors together to examine home

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<sup>6</sup> <http://mpnh.org/about-us/community-development/the-front-step-project/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://mpnh.org/about-us/community-development/prince-albert-parklet/>

<sup>8</sup> INTERactive resources at <http://www.cnh.bc.ca/community/about-interactive/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.findinghome.ca/about-finding-home.html>

and the value of cultivating a sense of belonging, connection and community. Each Finding Home dialogue series is customized for each group/sector to enable participants to:

- Identify what elements create a sense of belonging and home
- Make friends and build social networks
- Learn about relevant community resources
- Generate new ideas, insights and strategies
- Generate solutions for everyday challenges



### **3.4 Focus Area Four:**

How local authorities of the City of Vancouver and the City of Seattle connect with and support local community groups, particularly to support the settlement and integration of former refugees and migrants.

#### **City of Vancouver's support for settlement and integration**

Already illustrated earlier in this report is how the City of Vancouver supports the settlement and integration of refugees and migrants, through its funding and resources, particularly to local agencies.

In this section, I will focus mainly on what I learned from Baldwin Wong, Senior Social Planner for the City, and the work that he has been spearheading, working with local community organisations, as well as with government agencies, to create a City strategy that is all about helping newcomers become locals.

In brief, on July 2014, the City of Vancouver and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) entered into an agreement for Vancouver to undertake a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative<sup>10</sup>. The Vancouver Immigration Partnership (CVIP), adapted from the LIP model, lays the foundation for a process that resulted in the creation of the New Start Strategy. With the assistance, input and support of 100+ local organizations and community leaders, CVIP's goal is to improve the newcomer experience.

The intention was that the CVIP would build on the success of the Welcoming Communities Initiative, a City of Vancouver project that has involved 27 of the city's most respected community service agencies, and nearly 120 people from 72 organizations and groups in total, in a 16 month process. These collaborations have created innovative and effective strategies to increase

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<sup>10</sup> Local Immigration Partnerships, funded by IRCC, are designed to strengthen local capacity to attract and integrate newcomers. First introduced in Ontario in 2008, these community-based partnerships have produced innovative plans that have optimized local approaches to newcomer settlement and integration.

understanding, expand awareness and improve communication in supporting the unique needs and perspectives of Vancouver's immigrant population. Building on this work, CVIP is focused on four strategic areas, as identified from background documents:<sup>11</sup>

**1. Enhancing Newcomers' Access to Services and Programs**

CVIP will examine and address issues that will improve service coordination across immigrant service organizations and mainstream service sectors

**2. Strengthening Intercultural and Civic Engagement**

CVIP will propose civic engagement activities that bring together newcomers and longtime residents with the purpose of strengthening social relations and community cohesion.

**3. Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces**

CVIP will continue to seek ways of partnering with businesses and employers to foster welcoming and inclusive workplaces for all.

**4. Engaging Governments and Public Institutions to Address Newcomers Needs**

The public sector and governments play key roles in supporting newcomers' integration. This focus area for CVIP examines how governments and public institutions can respond to newcomers needs in areas such as housing, health, access to local and municipal services.

There is a CVIP Project Secretariat is made up of three staff members: Project Lead, Project Coordinator, and Research/Outreach Coordinator. Consultants assist with research, workshops, programme evaluation and related activities.<sup>12</sup>

A Research Advisory Committee was set up to support CVIP's research activities and additional advisory committees formed to leverage funding and obtain newcomers' perspectives. The Mayor's Working Group on Immigration is the overall governance group for the initiative, tasked with guiding the overall direction of the CVIP.

The CVIP is comprised of four strategy groups, representing various community sectors, to oversee each of its focus areas. Each strategy group took responsibility for analysing existing activities, identifying gaps and needs, and proposing priority actions regarding future approaches.

These priority actions were to form the basis of the New Start Strategy. An early result from the New Start initiative was the production of 'A Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver' – an impressive document that is available in hard copy and online for newcomers and service providers to access.

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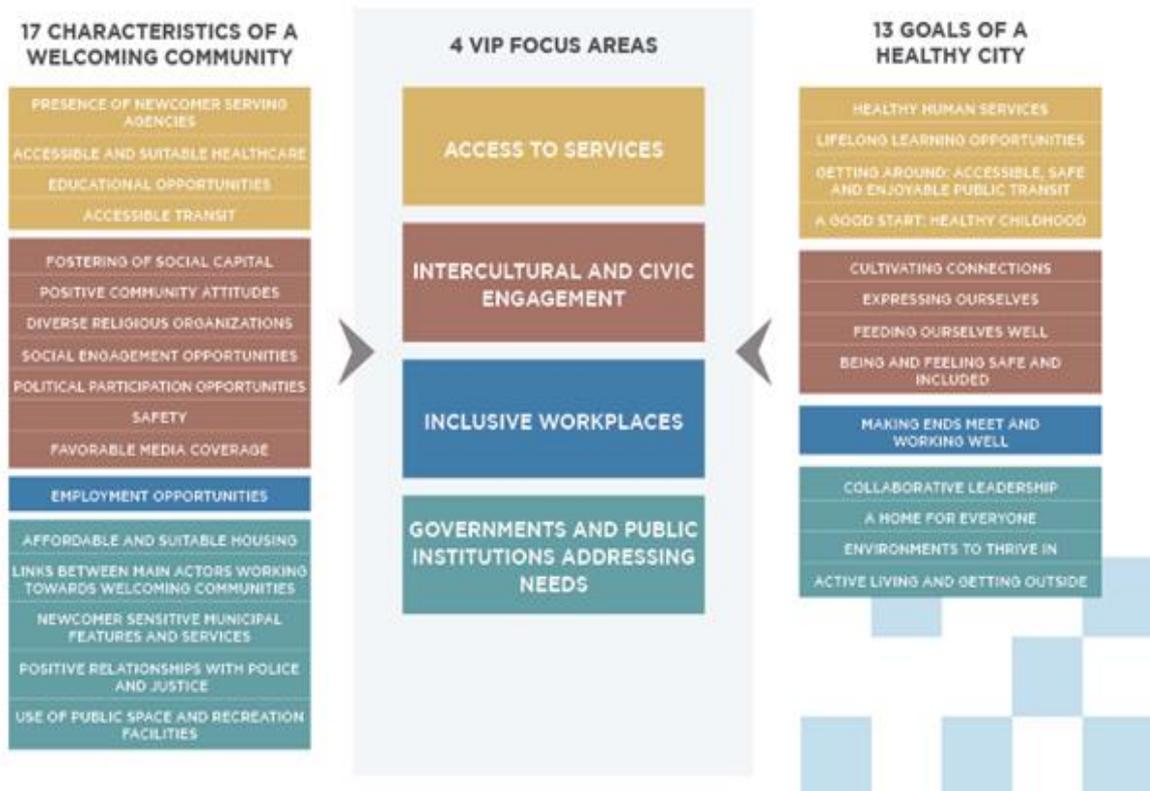
<sup>11</sup> **Local Immigration Partnership Handbook:** <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2013/08/Local-Immigration-Partnerships-Handbook-2013.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Source: Local Immigration Partnerships Outcomes 2008-2013, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, April 2014.



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Vancouver Immigration Partnership (VIP) conceptual framework is shaped by two key sources: the "Characteristics of a Welcoming Community" research paper commissioned by CIC, and the City of Vancouver Healthy City Strategy. This framework aligns VIP's four areas of focus with the 17 characteristics of a Welcoming Community and the 13 goals of the Healthy City Strategy.



### City of Seattle's Support for Neighbourhoods, Diversity and Newcomers

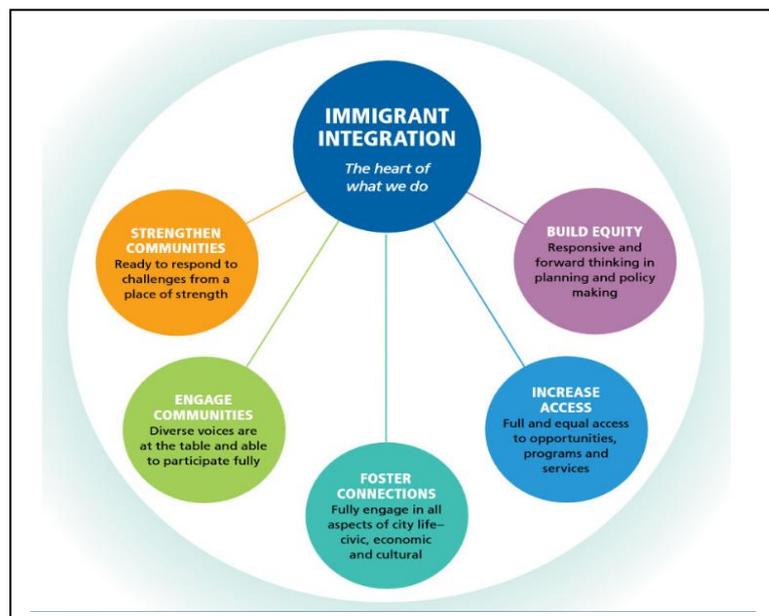
The City's website is a visitor's and a newcomer's delight! Certainly, CoV's website is generous with its descriptions and resources and links for new migrants and refugees. By comparison, however, the CoS's website is also wonderfully easy-to-navigate while a search on Google for

“Newcomers to Seattle” throws up an online library of well-constructed information. As it should, given that Seattle is awash with tech-giants!

# Seattle Newcomer's Guide

Moving Resources	+	<b>Customer Service Bureau Multilanguage Brochures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ English</li> <li>▪ Amharic   አገዛዥ ግብይት? ይጠይቁ!</li> <li>▪ Arabic   هل تحتاج إلى مساعدة؟ اسألنا</li> <li>▪ Chinese   需要幫助？來找我們！</li> <li>▪ Japanese   サポートをお求めの方へ</li> <li>▪ Khmer   ត្រូវការជំនួយ? សូមស្នើសុំជំនួយ!</li> <li>▪ Korean   도움이 필요하세요? 저희에게 문의해 주세요!</li> <li>▪ Lao   ທ່ານຕ້ອງການຄວາມຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອບໍ່? ຖາມພວກເຮົາໄວ້ດີ!</li> <li>▪ Oromo   Gargaarsa ni barbaadduu? Nu gaafadha!</li> <li>▪ Russian   Вам требуется помощь? Обратитесь к нам!</li> <li>▪ Somali   Ma u Baahan Tahay Kaalmo? Na Weydii!</li> <li>▪ Spanish   ¿Necesita ayuda? ¡Solicítela con nosotros!</li> <li>▪ Tagalog   Kailangan ng Tulong? Magtanong sa Amin!</li> <li>▪ Thai   ต้องการความช่วยเหลือหรือไม่? สอบถามเราได้!</li> <li>▪ Tigrinya   ኣገዛዥ ግብይት? ይጠይቁ!</li> <li>▪ Vietnamese   Quý Vj Cần Giúp Đỡ? Hãy HỎi Chúng Tôi!</li> </ul>
Utilities	+	
Public Transportation	+	
Education	+	
Employment	+	
Animals and Pets	+	
Seattle City Government	+	
Community Information and Resources	+	
Become a Washington Resident	+	
Get a Washington State Driver License	+	
Register to Vote in Washington	+	
Emergency Response	+	

The City of Seattle is a member of the mainly US “Welcoming Cities” initiative and has an Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) that leads the City’s Immigrant Integration strategy, with its five elements as shown on the next page.



Five elements of City of Seattle’s Immigration Integration Strategy.

## **Ethnic Media Programme**

I was impressed to hear about this programme provided by the OIRA. Through my work in settlement and engaging with ethnic media, I am aware that new migrants and former refugees rarely access English-language mainstream news sources. They often prefer to read/watch/listen to news in their own language, including stories from their local community and current events from their home country.

In Seattle, most ethnic media outlets are small operations, and many are family businesses. Most periodicals are weeklies and most television and radio programming are produced in small studios. Many organisations lack the capacity to attend City press conferences and media events. The City seeks to make it easier for these news organizations to access City information. For instance, the City prioritises releasing translated press announcements relevant to immigrant and refugee communities. The OIRA also organises regularly scheduled ethnic media roundtable discussions, frequently with the Mayor. Ethnic media reporters and journalists are invited to these events where they can ask the Mayor any question about the City of Seattle and its communities. It would be interesting to know to what extent this type of access exists in Auckland City, for our ethnic media, and therefore for our migrant and former refugee populations

## **Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

Taken from its website: “The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods provides resources and opportunities for



community members to build strong communities and improve their quality of life. Through our programmes and services, we meet people where they are and help neighbors develop a stronger sense of place, build closer ties, and engage with their community and city government.”

I was keen to spend time learning about this department, as its purpose is very similar to that of Auckland Council’s Community Empowerment Unit (previously Community Development and Safety - CDAS) in Auckland Council. Prior to the development of Auckland Council’s Empowered Communities approach and establishment of the council’s Community Empowerment Unit (2015-2016), there were information exchanges between key personnel at the City of Seattle and various key community leaders and Auckland council staff. I spent a full day with Jim Diers, the first director of the Department of Neighborhoods (DoN), who has paid many visits to Auckland over the past two decades, sharing his extensive knowledge and community engagement

experience. Jim explained the origins and early years of the DoN, and took me to see several neighbourhood projects, community centres, and community gardens (P-Patches).



P-Patch gardens were to be found everywhere in Seattle.

On subsequent days, I met with the current departmental leaders and district coordinators in this Department to find out about their current programmes and projects.

Much of the information and resources available to the community is via apps and social media. In terms of face-to-face programmes, there were two carried out by this Department that have potential relevance to Auckland Council/Community Empowerment Unit:

### i) Community Liaison Programme

This was created to help the City do a better job of engaging with and serving historically under-represented communities. The Community Liaisons are strongly connected community leaders from a variety of immigrant and refugee communities, communities of colour, and communities of seniors, youth, and people with disabilities. They bring deep expertise on their communities' needs and concerns, trusting relationships with community members, and an ability to build bridges between City government and community interests. Their work is wide-ranging and includes such tasks as:

- Advising on relevant outreach and engagement strategies, materials and plans
- Participating in and convening focus groups, workshops and events (often in parallel to larger City-hosted meetings)
- Conducting door-to-door outreach and survey collection
- Online and social media engagement
- Providing feedback and expertise on concerns and barriers
- Working with ethnic media
- Participating in committees and advisory bodies
- Translating and proofreading documents
- Interpreting at events



Community Liaisons: taken from City of Seattle website.

**ii) People’s Academy for Community Engagement (PACE)**

This programme is designed for 25-30 emerging leaders each year who want to acquire additional skills to be more effective in civic leadership, and in community building and engagement efforts. The civic leadership programme upskills participants to work across a range of City work and/or to become community liaisons. While their tasks are often providing translation or interpreting, they also involve representing the City and at the same time enabling the voices and representation of community members from ethnically diverse and non-English speaking backgrounds to come to the fore.

Participants in the civic leadership programme have the opportunity to:

- Refine their organizing and communication skills;
- Increase the effectiveness of community groups they work with;
- Identify resources and avenues to empower communities and neighborhoods;
- Cultivate a deeper appreciation of cultural competency and inclusive civic engagement;
- Learn from key community and civic leaders and build new relationships.

There is considerable importance attached to this training programme and to community liaisons in terms of their contribution to the vision of the Department of Neighborhoods: Its vision is "a city government of all people, by all people, and for all people."

A key take-out for myself was that the staff from the Department of Neighborhoods oversee the Community Liaisons and run the People's Academy, in partnership with other City staff.

I was provided with plenty of details about three other programmes administered by the Department of Neighborhoods:

- Seattle Youth Commission – not dissimilar to Auckland City's Youth Advisory Panel
- P-Patch Community Gardens – a city-wide programme offering a baseline of support, oversight, resources to communities running a wide range of community gardens
- Neighbourhood Matching Fund (now commonly in place in other cities of Canada and the US) providing a range of grants from very small grants (that typically fund activities with a focus on community safety such as Blockwatch and Neighborhood Night-Outs, or neighborhood tidy-ups) to major grants up to Can\$400k.

#### **Key Learning relevant to Focus Area Four**

I was extremely glad that I decided to add this fourth area to focus on for my study trip, as my meetings with council staff (former and current) in both the City of Vancouver and the City of Vancouver were very worthwhile, for different reasons.

As mentioned before, the scale of each city's immigration and agency infrastructure was and still is vastly different between the cities of Vancouver and Auckland. Vancouver City appeared to have no real shortage of agencies, local satellite offices, transport routes, and programmes for meeting the wide diversity of clients and their settlement and language needs. Even in the face of increasing numbers of refugees, CoV's agencies appeared to have the funding and space to expand and respond to the demand on their services. Nor is the city growing to any degree in terms of population or geographical spread. These facets are in contrast to the realities of Auckland.

The City of Vancouver has a history of being continually dedicated to partnering with and supportive of local community groups, with a very strong emphasis on supporting the settlement and integration of former refugees and migrants. As mentioned earlier, the settlement sector is highly resourced; agencies are very well informed about one another; they are used to working together collaboratively in a variety of ways; and there are many city strategies and initiatives that promote ongoing learning and collaboration to address the needs of Vancouver City's newer residents. It was interesting to reflect on the development and implementation of the Auckland

Regional Settlement Strategy, all done on very minimal resources and coordinated largely by government officials based in Wellington.

What was highly impressive was how the City of Vancouver works in partnership with settlement and integration-related organisations. I heard many very positive comments about the CoV New Start Strategy, and the effective leadership and dedication of the staff in the Social Planning department in the city's council. The agency leaders with whom I spoke were extremely well informed about relevant federal and city policies, funding strands, and the city's strategies and outcomes sought from those. They also saw the staff of CoV as valued and informed partners. This strong collaborative framework has benefits both ways; the local government has better access to 'hard to reach groups' and community organisations benefit from access to local government resources i.e. space. All this benefits the newcomers in terms of supporting their participation and inclusion.

Compared to Auckland's providers, those in Vancouver were coping with very different issues: complexities of funding, contracts, staffing retention, housing shortages and English classes entailed in meeting the service demands for high numbers of migrants and refugees.

According to my own reading and experience derived from research, surveys, endless workshops and forums related to the settlement and resettlement sectors in Auckland, the challenges faced by sector agencies, individuals and communities are typically:

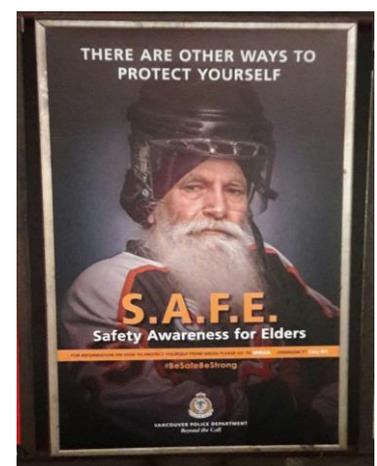
- lack of ongoing collaboration between agencies;
- absence of a cohesive regional strategy – particularly in the smaller resettlement sector which arguably has more potential for strategic coordination;
- issues with community and provider capacity, resourcing and capabilities;
- a lack of clear considered alignment between the responsibilities of local government, central government, service providers and communities;
- difficulty in being able to find suitable accessible premises from which to run programmes;
- need for information in different languages;
- inadequate public transport in some areas of Auckland.

Reading about the Canadian Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and hearing about the CoV LIP, it appears that local governments in Canada are being well funded and expected to provide a strategic coordination role and backbone support to their multiple stakeholders. Arguably, local councils have greater capacity than community organisations and are in a better position to

undertake regional coordination, as they are not competing for funding and can take a more neutral role. From looking in-depth at the New Start strategy of the CoV, it was clear that the social planners were able to get the right institutions and people, as well as the community players, around the table to address issues such as education, health and policing. Through these Local Immigration Partnerships, the responsibility for achieving the outcomes of a LIP action plan is shared across a very wide range of community partners including schools, settlement agencies, neighbourhood houses, multicultural societies, other providers and community groups, as well as foundations such as the Samara Canada Foundation<sup>13</sup>, a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada’s democracy through a range of civic engagement programmes, such as democracy talks, training to develop advocacy projects, civic literacy sessions, engagement with issues, action research, and overcoming fear of speaking out in the Canadian context.

### Welcoming and Inclusive Cities

In both the cities of Vancouver and Seattle, it was clear that the local governments were invested in celebrating diversity, building a culture of ‘welcoming newcomers’, discouraging racism, and ensuring community safety. This concept was apparent in the local newspapers, on street billboards, in bus shelters, on public transport, and of course in community centres, libraries and other council facilities. The spirit of welcoming communities was noticeable in both cities with posters and messaging that was inclusive of the experiences and attributes of newcomers. In the neighbourhoods in which I was staying, I saw evidence of many community festivals celebrating the community’s cultural diversity, of public art and plaques commemorating historical events pertaining to different groups of settlers, museums and messaging related to migrant stories, and posters which stated clearly the civic responsibilities of users of transport and facilities.



<sup>13</sup> <https://www.samaracanada.com/about-us>



Examples such as those above highlighted to me how local government agencies can play an important role in supporting people to feel safe, respected and respectful, and to develop a sense of belonging and inclusion. These are all signs of pro-active leadership, of role modelling by institutions, of encouraging intercultural awareness and interaction, of addressing discrimination, and of celebrating diversity.

Across all of the agencies and organizations I visited, there were numerous innovative programmes, products and activities aimed at assisting new residents to identify their needs, to learn skills, and be informed about resources made available within their communities. Frequently funded by the local council, these were regular and ongoing, and included:

- interactive tours providing newcomers with an introduction to community facilities and local government services
- newcomer information booklets, maps and apps
- conversational classes incorporating information about local services, civic education, volunteering and other participation opportunities
- library-based programmes/information hubs

I was highly impressed by the amount of space and staff time that was allocated in libraries to holding workshops, running programmes, providing resources and information to assist newcomers with their integration. In the cities of Vancouver and Seattle, there were dedicated staff roles and programmes with a strong new migrant, cultural diversity or ethnic engagement focus. Examples

of these were the Community Liaisons in Seattle, the Ethnic Media Programme, the Office of Migrant and Refugee Affairs, and the People's Academy of Community Engagement, all playing a conduit function in connecting public organisations to diverse and hard-to-reach communities. Together with the highly coordinated P-Patch Community Gardens Programme, these were my key take-outs for sharing with colleagues from my time in Seattle.

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

For a host of reasons, covered in earlier sections, Canada as a country is far ahead of New Zealand in terms of responding to the world's refugee crisis, welcoming its migrants and responding to the needs of all its newcomers. The province of British Columbia and its cities, particularly the City of Vancouver, are to the fore in managing their newcomer numbers and addressing consequential challenges. My over-riding realisation from my study trip, as I have already observed, was the difference in scale between the City of Vancouver and Auckland City, in terms of migrant and refugee numbers, the number and array of relevant agencies, and the levels of funding available for settlement and integration programmes. To some extent, these contrasts have directly influenced the applicability of my observations and learning. Nonetheless, it was extremely interesting to discover the complexities of the way in which settlement and integration services are funded, what they provide, the challenges, how the agencies, and the role and contributions of the city councils. In particular, I appreciated the opportunity afforded by my visits to understand how the different organisations have adjusted to the increasing newcomer flows, the multitude of their settlement needs, and the needs of their local communities.

In the earlier sections of this report, I have identified particular community organisations, programmes that I consider to be innovative and/or having greatest relevance according to my areas of focus. I noted, too, the major shift made by some neighbourhood houses from a previously strong service focus towards more grass-roots and community-led development activity, arising out of greater engagement and planning with their local communities. Two neighbourhood houses (Collingwood and South Vancouver) ran programmes that were about 'bridging' and intercultural community building, aligning with my third focus areas in particular.

In addition, I have highlighted particular initiatives operated by the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle that, in my opinion, are worth bringing to the attention to the Community Empowerment Unit of the Auckland Council. These are:

- Community Liaison programme (City of Seattle)
- People's Academy for Community Engagement programme (City of Seattle)
- Neighbourhood Matching Fund (City of Seattle)
- Various intercultural initiatives offered by Neighbourhood Houses (City of Vancouver)
- Finding Home Initiative (City of Vancouver)
- City of Vancouver's New Start strategy and Newcomers' Guide
- Newcomer information provided online by the Cities of Vancouver and Seattle

Since my study trip, I have also broadly identified ten approaches/initiatives that seem to be most relevant and to have potential for Auckland Council's leadership and capacity to strengthen responsiveness to new migrants and refugees, to foster intercultural learning, to foster a sense of belonging, and to build social cohesion. These ten approaches are:

1. Recognising and defining more clearly the role of Auckland Council in relation to the needs of newcomers and broader social cohesion/development objectives.
2. Applying the application of a 'newcomer lens' to Council's service delivery, access to its facilities, and policy development, to ensure the reduction of any barriers and enable accessibility for settlement providers and new migrants to council facilities.
3. Providing accessible information specifically for newcomers on Auckland Council's website.
4. Building capacity and processes for knowledge-sharing, and strengthening collaboration and coordination across local government, service providers and communities.
5. Developing partnerships with local and regional organisations to more intentionally enhance the participation and inclusion of newcomers in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Auckland.
6. Building community development and intercultural connectedness through community-led neighbourhood approaches, making best use of council and other facilities to do so.
7. Developing and providing pathways to leadership within culturally and faith-diverse communities.
8. Supporting initiatives whose outcomes relate to fostering a culture of inter-culturalism.
9. Being alert and responding to the risks of anti-immigration and anti-racism that can reduce social cohesion.
10. Building strong working relationships and communication channels with Auckland's ethnic media.

Following the conclusion of my study trip in September 2016, I took up my managerial role in Auckland Council. This provided me with a much greater understanding of the role and responsibilities of Auckland Council in supporting its communities, the priorities and key objectives of the Auckland Plan, the role and challenges of the Community Empowerment Unit where I am employed, and the political decision-making processes involved in enabling and empowering community outcomes. This has provided me with a valuable context for now understanding which aspects of my study trip learning are the most relevant and potentially useful to others, how best I could employ such learning, and via which channels. There have been opportunities that I have already been able to grasp and act upon.

## Actual and proposed application of learning and ideas

The following table sets out how, where and with whom I have either been able already to share or action my learning and ideas or expect to do so in the future.

<b>Focus area</b>	<b>Particular idea, initiative, concept</b>		<b>Progress</b>
A: Instigation and/or sharing of relevant innovative programmes that enhance intercultural experiences, and localised support for marginalised community members	1	Submitting an application, on behalf of a group of community organisations, for funding from the Innovation Fund of the Community Empowerment Unit, for a programme of Intercultural Civic Dinners.	Application was successful; project getting underway.
	2	Initiating another successful application to the Innovation Fund for coordination of a social cohesion project across diverse communities for a new housing development area.	Application was successful; project getting underway.
	3	Sharing these programme ideas with service providers, strategic brokers, other members of the Community Empowerment Unit.	In progress and ongoing
<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Particular idea, initiative, opportunities</b>		<b>Progress</b>
B: Collaboration across government agencies and council departments.	4	Contributing to and supporting the finalising of a Regional Partnership Agreement (RPA) between Auckland Council and MBIE.	RPA in place and about to be reviewed.
	5	Socialising of MBIE's Welcoming Communities Framework included in the RPA and introducing this to staff of the Community	Ongoing
	6	Instigating a survey of Council's facilities in terms of the usage by and accessibility for the city's newcomer service providers.	In progress
C: Strengthening Council support to newcomer communities and providers	7	Taking on the regional portfolio for the Community Empowerment Unit for the focus area of Diversity and Inclusion: New migrants and former refugees.	Ongoing
	8	Becoming the council representative on the Auckland Refugee Service Providers Steering Group.	Ongoing
	9	Advocating for Council to support/sponsor a Communities Refugee Day celebration with the Mayor in attendance.	Commenced

	10	Developing and delivering a workshop to build awareness about Auckland’s migrant and former refugee communities.	Completed
	11	Explore opportunities to share my learning and to promote the approaches and initiatives (identified above as the most relevant and to have potential for Auckland Council’s leadership) to council colleagues.	Pending
D: Sharing general learning with other staff and organisations	12	Presenting key learning and ideas at our Department’s Showcase sessions.	Pending
	13	Sharing key learning and ideas with the ARMS Trust/Belong Aotearoa and other service providers in Auckland, through a range of opportunities and channels.	Partially and pending
	14	Providing feedback and input on surveys, issues and strategy development.	Ongoing
	16	Sharing learning about volunteer programmes with Volunteering Auckland, as one of its board members.	Pending



Mary Dawson with Neelam Sahota, CEO of DIVERSECITY, a large specialist resettlement agency in the City of Surrey, Greater Vancouver

## Appendix: Travel Diary

<b>City of Vancouver</b> - arrived 26 July 2016: 10 scheduled visits, as well as informal drop-ins to other Neighbourhood Houses, libraries, and multi-cultural centres.		
<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>FOCUS AREA</b>	<b>PERSON</b>
Finding Home Programme	3	Jessie Sutherland, Founder
M.O.S.A.I.C.	1,2,4	Eyob Naizghi, Executive Director
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House	1,2, 3,4	Melissa Cailleaux Director of Family and Settlement Programs, and others
Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC	1,4	Deb Bryant, CEO
South Vancouver Neighbourhood House	1,2,3,4	Zahra Esmail Executive Director
ISSBC Welcome House	1	Kathy Sherrell, Associate Director - Settlement Services, and others
DiverseCity Community Resources Society	1,2	Neelam Sahota, CPA, CGA Chief Executive Officer
Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House	1,2	Jocelyne Hamel Executive Director, and others
AMSSA (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies)	1,2	Lynn Moran, Executive Director
City of Vancouver, Social Planners	1,4	Baldwin Wong (Senior City Planner)
<b>City of Seattle</b> - arrived 12 August 2016: 7 scheduled meetings and visits, as well as informal drop-ins to libraries, and community centres.		
City of Seattle, Strategic Community Engagement	4	Sahar Fathi, Division Director – Leadership Development
	4	Samantha Stork, Community Engagement Advisor
	4	Jenny Frankl, Coordinator Seattle Youth Commission
City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods	4	Kathy Nyland, Director, P-Patch Community Gardening
	4	Neighbourhood Matching Fund Karen Salander, Coordinator
	4	Thomas Whittemore, Community Engagement Coordinator, Outreach and Engagement Unit
Other	1,2,3	Jim Diers, former Director, Dept of Neighbourhoods
<b>City of Portland:</b> Two scheduled visits – one to Portland Council to meet with Paul Leistner, Director of the Bureau of Community and Civic Life, and the other to the White Centre – were unable to go ahead, due to an exceptional heatwave resulting in staff being advised to stay home.		

Full details regarding my visits and meetings are in an additional appendix. Please contact the report writer if you are interested: [marydee@xtra.co.nz](mailto:marydee@xtra.co.nz)