



navigating refugee reform

Workshop Report

May 22, 2013

Submitted by:

Kinbrace Community Society

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Navigating Refugee Reform (NRR) Workshop was held six times (January - May 2013) in Metro Vancouver, British Columbia, training 226 service providers about Canada's new refugee protection system. Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act (PCISA) came into force on 15 December 2012, resulting in the new system. The NRR Workshop required significant partnership of government, non-government, inter-government, and for-profit organizations working together to promote a continuum of educational perspective for participants on the impact of the new, fast-paced, and complex system. Participants completed the training with tools and strategy to support refugee claimants.

WORKSHOP GOAL

To ensure that all refugee claimants in BC are oriented and supported by knowledgeable and equipped service providers.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

Our objectives for each participant were to:

- *learn* about Canada's new refugee determination system
- *network* with others who support refugee claimants
- *receive* useful resources
- *gain* answers to service provider questions.

It was a fantastic learning day. I received so much information. Presentations were all great.

Thank you so much.

Workshop Participant

PROTECTING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

The Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act (PCISA), which received Royal Assent on 28 June 2012, made a number of changes to Canada's refugee claim system, including a drastic reduction in the timelines for refugee claimants to bring their claims before the Immigration and Refugee Board. On 15 December 2012, when the law came into force, community workers assisting refugee claimants entered a whole new landscape, requiring a complete relearning of process and referral pathways.

HISTORY OF THE NRR WORKSHOP CONCEPT

In anticipation of changes to the refugee claim system, Kinbrace, through the guidance of the READY Committee, applied to the Law Foundation of British Columbia in January 2011 for a grant to revise its *Refugee Hearing Preparation: A Guide for Refugee Claimants*, with the goal to conform content to the legislative changes and have it translated into five languages. In addition, a small amount was requested to fund a workshop to train service providers in the Lower Mainland.

It became quickly apparent through discussions at stakeholder's meetings and elsewhere that there was widespread need for training around the new law. It was agreed that five identical daylong workshops would be provided in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley of British Columbia, the first to take place in late January of 2013. Demand required that a sixth workshop be added for early May 2013.

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, which collaborates with Kinbrace in providing the READY Tour, was approached with the idea of participating in the Navigating Refugee Reform Workshops very early. The IRB readily supported the idea. Legal Services Society was also a very early and committed partner, as were several Vancouver refugee lawyers. As the concept developed over meetings with the IRB, LSS and local refugee lawyers, it became apparent that the participation of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, as the agency that drafted the legislation would add great value to the workshop. CIC participation was confirmed and at least one CIC officer attended each workshop. There was also consensus that two to three community agency representatives be invited to participate in each workshop to share information about the services they provide to refugee claimants and the challenges they face in the new system. After completion of the first session it became obvious that the missing link to a complete workshop was the presence of Canada Border Services Agency, who readily agreed to participate in the remaining workshops.



227 participants attended the Navigating Refugee Reform Workshop from January-May 2013.

PRESENTATIONS

Kinbrace suggested topics to the participating agencies and lawyers, which independently produced presentations covering among other things:

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB): an overview of PCISA relating to the processes and procedures. Information includes: time lines, Designated Country of Origin, port of entry vs. inland claims, the Basis of Claim form, and much more.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC): initiating a claim, completing the IMM0008 and other required forms, the eligibility interview, IRB scheduling, the work permit application process, Interim Federal Health coverage, navigating the new CIC web site, and more.

Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA): the role CBSA plays in the new refugee claim process, including eligibility interviews and detention among other topics.

Legal Services Society of BC (LSS): the LSS strategy for working within the increased time constraints and, in particular, how to ensure refugee claimants arrive to the LSS office at the earliest date possible. Other information includes new intake procedures, referral mechanisms, and legal resources available throughout the Lower Mainland.

Refugee Lawyer: advice on how service providers can best assist unrepresented refugee claimants and analysis of some of the legal issues involved in a refugee claim, among other topics.

While Kinbrace staff did not make presentations, four Kinbrace staff members were responsible for the on-line registration, facilitation, communication, technical support, organization and logistical support for the six workshops.

*I have gathered information that will be useful for current
and future clients.*

Workshop Participant



Participants received a binder of presentations and resources, as well as a pen.

MATERIALS

The majority of NRR presenters used PowerPoint presentations, which were copied into the NRR binder and provided to each participant. In addition, the binders contained: biographies of fictional characters that were developed to assist in illustrating refugee claimant scenarios, a list of acronyms, biographies of the presenters, flow charts of the refugee claim process from LSS and the Red Cross, a document entitled “Refugee Law in 6 Basic Steps” written by Vancouver refugee lawyer Lesley Stalker, all of the government forms required of refugee claimants as well as the CIC guide, the Kinbrace produced “Refugee Hearing Preparation: A Guide for Refugee Claimants”, information about the University of Ottawa Refugee Assistance Program, a list of members of the BC refugee bar, a listing of free legal advice and representation for claimants in the Lower Mainland, a compilation of agencies in BC that assist refugee claimants, the current list of Designated Countries of Origin, a list of links, contacts and resources for services providers, a one pager on eligibility for the Refugee Appeals Division, settlement resources, and a NRR crossword puzzle.

A series of artistic renderings of refugee claimants of various nationalities was displayed in the front of the room at each workshop. These original drawings corresponded to the claimant biographies found in the binder and used by several of the presenters to illustrate points during their presentations.



Kinbrace staff (l-r) Andrew Kuipers, Loren Balisky, and Fran Gallo celebrate completion of the 15 March 2013 Workshop at MOSAIC (Vancouver) with Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada's Colleen Zuk (Coordinating Member, Refugee Protection Division, Western Region) and Ross Pattee (Deputy Chair, Refugee Protection Division).

PARTNERS AND PRESENTERS

Kinbrace's partners and presenters are numerous. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada was our initial partner, and without their support the project would not have gotten off the ground. The IRB provided four speakers over the course of the workshops, three lawyers and their communications officer, who shared and alternated in presenting. Present and available for consultation during one of the workshops was the Deputy Chairperson of the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) of the IRB. In addition, the Acting Coordinating Member of the RPD for the Western Region attended three of the six workshops.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada provided two staff members, the Western Region Supervisor, Temporary Residence and Refugee Unit and a Citizenship and Immigration Officer, who alternated making presentations to the workshop participants. Three officers from Canada Border Services Agency alternated as presenters at the various workshops: the Manager of Detention Operations, a Supervisor and an Officer at the Vancouver Triage Unit.

Two lawyers from Legal Service Society shared the job of presenting the LSS perspective with the workshop participants. In addition, four members of the local refugee bar alternated making presentations at the six workshops.

Thirteen service providers representing ten agencies participated in the workshop. These agency representatives shared information about the services that their organizations provide to refugee claimants as well as the challenges their agencies face in dealing with the new refugee system. The Canadian Red Cross First Contact Program presented at all of the workshops with the exception of one.

Catering for the workshops was very competently provided by JustCatering, which did a superb job in providing breakfast snacks, lunch and afternoon snack to the participants.

All of the venues were provided free of charge to the organizers. Contribution of venue space was provided by Abbotsford Community Services, MOSAIC, Vancouver School Board, Surrey School Board, the Canadian Red Cross and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

Funding for the workshops was provided by: Archdiocese of Vancouver, Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, Law Foundation of British Columbia, Mennonite Central Committee, Vancouver Unitarians, and West Point Grey Baptist Church.

REACH

Due to the dimensions of our venues and a desire to keep each workshop to a size permitting interchange between presenters and participants, registrations for each workshop were limited to 40 participants. The total number of participants in the six workshops were 227, including the service provider presenters but not including the government/lawyer presenters. The total number of individuals who presented at the various workshops is 28, nine of which came from federal government agencies.

Participants came primarily from the Lower Mainland (Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Delta, Langley, North Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster, Maple Ridge) and the Fraser Valley (Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Mission). Two participants attended from Victoria and one from Toronto.

I have a better understanding of the process and can better guide refugee claimants.

Workshop Participant

DATES AND GEOGRAPHY OF WORKSHOPS

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| • Burnaby (Canadian Red Cross) | January 31, 2013 |
| • Surrey (Surrey School District) | February 14, 2013 |
| • Abbotsford (Abbotsford Community Services) | February 20, 2013 |
| • Vancouver (MOSAIC) | March 15, 2013 |
| • Vancouver (Vancouver School Board, DRPC) | April 17, 2013 |
| • Vancouver (Library Square Tower) | May 7, 2013 |

COSTS

There was no cost for participants in the Navigating Refugee Reform Workshop. Kinbrace decided early on to engage funding partners in a bid to allow equal access for participants. Each participant was provided a binder of materials, a pen, lunch, light morning and afternoon snacks, coffee, tea, and juices. Kinbrace was not required to pay for any of the venues. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada covered the cost of the sixth venue.

- Total cost of the six workshops: \$9600
- Cost per workshop (average 38 participants): \$1600
- Cost per participant: \$42



Some participants may have had a religious experience in the Workshop, but these are following direction of facilitator Emily Parsons Dickau to get their blood moving in the 07 May 2013 Workshop at 300 West Georgia Street, Vancouver.

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. High participant demand – There was more interest in the workshop than we had space for. Even with adding a sixth workshop, we ended the event with a small waiting list.
2. Unfailing presenter participation – We were inspired and impressed by the unfailing commitment of each our presenting partners, who not only had one hundred percent participation rate over three months and six workshops, they worked to improve their presentations over time.
3. Diverse support base – Our presenters represented a diverse and healthy perspective on the new refugee protection system: government, legal, service sector. As well, there was remarkable funding support from the faith communities.
4. Strengthened relationships and communication between agencies – Government agencies expressed increased communication between themselves and between non-government agencies during the Workshop season, illuminating for each other the challenges and successes they were experiencing in the new refugee protection system. As well, there was a voiced experience of perspective-widening from both government and non-government agencies as each heard and had clarified the roles, functions, and paradigms of each presenter.

WHAT WE MIGHT CHANGE NEXT TIME

1. Charge a small fee for participants – We experienced a five percent dropout rate of registered participants, and wonder if charging a registration fee of \$10-\$20 would have encouraged registrants to attend?
2. Go digital – We spent about \$18 on materials and printing per binder for participants. It gave them an excellent resource to work with during the workshop and to take back to their work places. Could we have done it digitally?

Very diverse. Lawyers, NGOs, government, settlement, consultants... fantastic! Thank you.

Workshop Participant

THANKS AND APPRECIATION

A wrap-up and celebration event was held on 22 May at Kinbrace in a spirit of gratitude for the faithful, diligent, professional, and generous support of all the stakeholders in helping make the Navigating Refugee Reform Workshop a success.

Kinbrace extends an enormous debt of gratitude to the following partners who helped make the NRR Workshop an excellent training opportunity:

Government Agencies –

- **Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada**
- **Citizenship and Immigration Canada**
- **Canada Border Services Agency**

Agencies and Community Organizations –

- **Legal Services Society of British Columbia**
- **The Canadian Red Cross**
- **Journey Home Community Services Society**
- **Surrey School Board**
- **Options Community Services Society**
- **Abbotsford Community Services**
- **Mennonite Central Committee**
- **Settlement Orientation Services**
- **Vancouver School Board**
- **Immigrant Services Society**
- **MOSAIC**
- **Rainbow Refugee**
- **Inland Refugee Society**

Vancouver Refugee Lawyers –

- **Lesley Stalker**
- **Peter Edelman**
- **Laura Best**
- **Adrian Huzel**

Funders –

- **Law Foundation of British Columbia**
- **Canadian Baptists of Western Canada**
- **Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver**
- **Mennonite Central Committee**
- **Vancouver Unitarians**
- **West Point Grey Baptist Church**

KINBRACE STAFF TEAM

- **Andrew Kuipers (Project Manager)**
- **Fran Gallo (Project Coordinator)**
- **Emily Parsons Dickau (Facilitator)**
- **Loren Balisky (Executive Director)**
- **Adriana Zepeda (Kinbrace Coordinator)**
- **Jennifer Crolow (Administrator)**

