

SYRIAN REFUGEE YOUTH CONSULTATION & COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FORUM

SUMMARY REPORT

October 2016



“We want to care about Canada like our own country”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISSofBC (Immigrant Services Society of BC) in partnership with The Fresh Voices Initiative of Vancouver Foundation hosted The Syrian Refugee Youth Consultation on September 17, 2016 at the ISSofBC Welcome Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. This first-of-its-kind full day consultation brought together Syrian young men and women, between the ages of 15 to 24, to gain insight into their settlement experiences, challenges and successes in their first eight (8) months in Canada. 1 out of every 3 GAR (Government Assisted Refugee) youth that arrived in Metro Vancouver & Fraser Valley since November 2015 was represented at this consultation. Participants travelled from all over Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley to be part of this discussion.

The activities for this full-day consultation were created and facilitated in Arabic collaboratively with Arabic-speaking youth workers from ISSofBC and The Fresh Voices Initiative. Group discussions and breakout activities facilitated different ways for youth to contribute and make their voice heard on each of the topics and questions asked. Participants were asked to share their hopes, aspirations, challenges and successes since arriving in Canada and to provide feedback on solutions and improvements to better support future groups of refugee youth. As part of the report back process, youth developed a social media campaign and spoke on camera for a short video to ensure that their voice is heard as part of the policy and program discussions directly impacting them and their future peers.

Recommendations were formed in collaboration with the youth participants. Of the many recommendations that came up during the discussions for policy and key decisions-makers to consider, the Syrian youth participants would like to focus on the following two (2) issues:

Housing: The housing crisis in the Lower Mainland has affected many of the participants' families since arriving in Canada. Participants shared concerns about the lack of housing options, high rental prices and lack of adequate space for larger families. There is a need for a housing strategy for new refugee families destined to cities in the Lower Mainland to address the many challenges refugee families face.

Education: Participants expressed confusion and lack of understanding of the education system in Canada. Many felt lost and unsure of what their next steps are in finishing high school, enrolling in post secondary courses, and how to connect all of this to finding employment. Youth expressed that there is a lack of information on how to gain accreditation for courses and diplomas completed prior to arriving in Canada. Participants spoke about the relevance of some of the schoolwork and how it often did not align with what other students were learning or at their academic level. Additionally, English Language Learning, other curriculum and the course credit system need to align better with current labour market needs and/or with students' interest to pursue higher education. This applies to the varying needs of youth who are a) 14 to 18 years old and b) 19 to 24 years old. There needs to be a pathway to employment strategy in place for this group of young adults that includes an education plan.

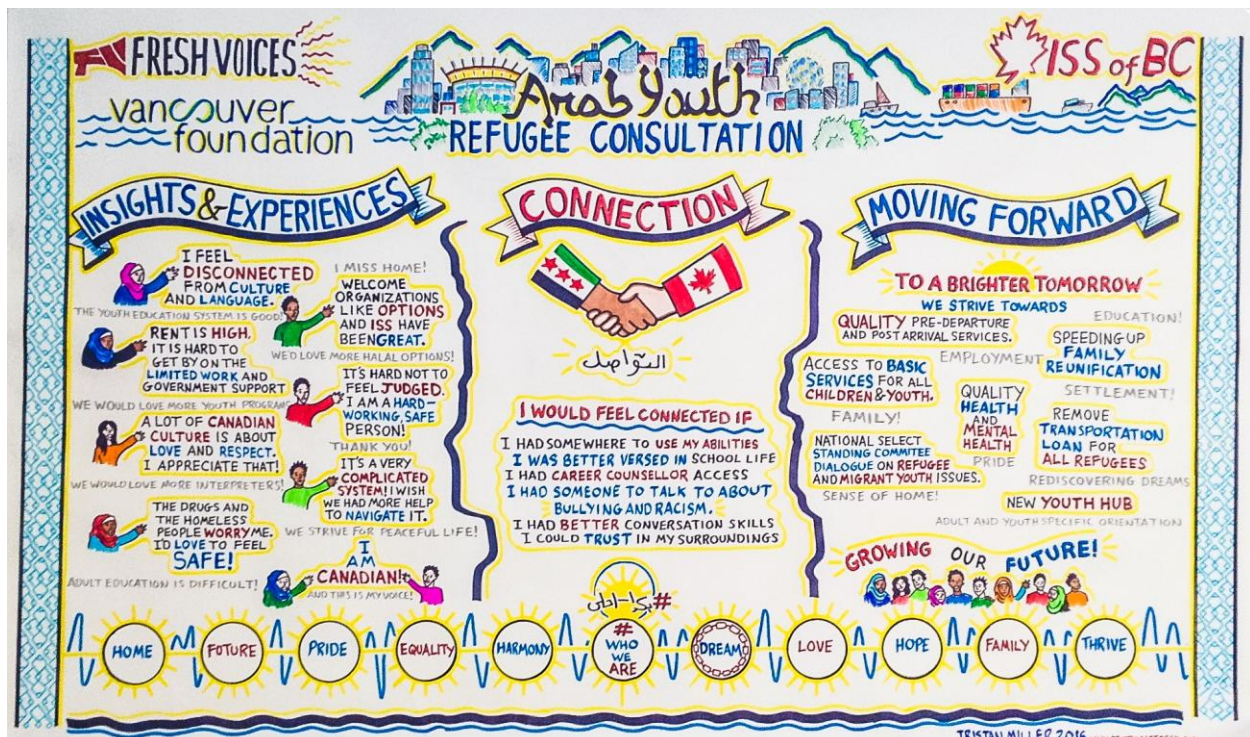
On October 6th, 2016 the youth participants at the Community Stakeholder Forum shared recommendations with representatives from private and public institutions involved in the settlement and integration of newcomer youth. Participants at the Community Stake Holders Forum further discussed the needs, potential solutions and best practices in addressing each of the recommendations presented.

INTRODUCTION

ISSofBC (Immigrant Services Society of BC) in partnership with The Fresh Voices Initiative of Vancouver Foundation hosted The Syrian Refugee Youth Consultation on September 17, 2016 at the ISSofBC Welcome Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. This full day consultation brought together Syrian youth to gain insight into their settlement experiences, challenges and successes in Canada. The second part of this project brought together representatives from private and public institutions in a Community Stakeholder Forum on October 6, 2016 to share recommendations directly from the youth. Participants at the Community Stakeholders Forum further discussed the needs, potential solutions and best practices in addressing each of the recommendations presented.

ISSofBC is the largest agency of its kind in Western Canada, with targeted programs for refugees, women, children and youth, plus support services in over 45 languages, with programs & services available in Metro Vancouver, Squamish & the Okanagan.

The Fresh Voices Initiative of Vancouver Foundation is active in public engagement, research, & partnership work that improves the experience of newcomer youth in B.C. We are a group of young immigrants and refugees who work with our partners to make sure we are heard on the issues that affect us.



This was the first time former refugee youth were brought together in their first year in Canada and asked about their thoughts, hopes, aspirations and feedback on the programs and services they've accessed since their arrival to Canada. 1 out of every 3 GAR (Government Assisted Refugee) youth that arrived in Metro Vancouver & Fraser Valley since November 2015 was represented at this consultation. Participants travelled from all over Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley to be part of this discussion, including Surrey, Delta, Langley, Vancouver and Burnaby.

This consultation is very timely since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's announcement in late 2015 that Canada commits to resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees. This commitment was met by the Canadian

government; from November 4th, 2015 to the beginning of August 2016, British Columbia welcomed 2,646 Syrian refugees, of whom 73% were GARS (Government Assisted Refugees), 15% were PSRs (Privately Sponsored Refugees), and 12% were BVORs (Blended Visa Office-Referred). British Columbia will welcome approximately 1,200 Syrian GARS in the last three months of 2016.

Additionally, Prime Minister Trudeau announced in the summer of 2016 his plans to form a non-partisan Youth Council. The Youth Council, with youth between the ages of 16 to 24, will help shape the future of Canadian policy. The consultation participants and facilitators are keen to contribute to the Youth Council, specifically on the topic of immigrant and refugee youth issues and needs.

OBJECTIVES & PROCESS

The activities for this full-day consultation were created collaboratively with Arabic-speaking youth workers from ISSoBC and The Fresh Voices Initiative. The same group of Arabic-speaking youth workers facilitated the meeting and activities in Arabic, with interpreters on-hand for non-Arabic speaking support staff. Group discussions and breakout activities facilitated different ways for youth to contribute and make their voice heard on each of the topics and questions asked. Participants were asked to share their hopes, aspirations, challenges and successes since arriving in Canada.



The meeting objectives were set by the consultation planning committee. They were as follows:

- Gathering youth insights on their experiences with current settlement programs and services for refugees.
- Providing a space in Arabic for youth who have recently come as refugees to connect with each other and strengthen their network of support.
- Share tools and a platform to provide feedback on programs, policies and practices in regards to refugee integration – What can we all learn so that all refugees are included in Canadian Society?

During the event, youth were given the opportunity to participate in a Social Media campaign by posing for photos with the campaign hashtag; a videographer was contracted to interview the participants to share their experiences and feedback in their own voice. All of these non-traditional mechanisms were used to facilitate the youth participants to find their voice and communicate directly with key decision-makers to raise issues that are important to them. These stand-alone outcomes (report, social media campaign and short video) were all different ways to support the youth participants to articulate the messages that they would like to communicate to the public even though they don't speak English (or very little English). Additionally, the video and social media campaign were different ways to disseminate the message not only to settlement service provider organizations, different levels of government and community stakeholders, but also to the general public who can now put a face and voice to this particular group of Syrian former refugee youth.

The meeting agenda and evaluation results can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

PARTICIPANTS

The consultation was targeted at a specific group of Syrian youth. Fifty – seven (57) refugee youth that fit the following criteria attended the consultation to share their experiences of settling in Canada:

- Syrian refugees, both GARs (Government Assisted Refugees) and PSRs (Privately Sponsored Refugees)
- Male and female young adults between the ages 15-24 years old
- Arrived in Metro Vancouver & Fraser Valley between November 2015 and February 2016

Note: Arabic speaking youth that did not fit the above criteria were not turned away. All youth that attended were welcomed.

Participants were provided with an honorarium of \$55 for their time and the transportation cost to the event; additionally, meals and refreshments were provided for this full day consultation.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSIONS

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Participants were given the opportunity to put together a social media photo campaign. The objectives of this campaign were as follows:



- For youth participants to self-identify and advocate to the general public what they would like everyone to know about young immigrants that have come to Canada as refugees, using their social media post and photo.
- Use social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to disseminate the message of the campaign using the photos taken at the event and promote the recommendations in the final report from today's event by posting a link to the report in their social media post.

Out of three hashtags, the youth participants voted and picked one Arabic & one English hashtag for the campaign; participants were then given the option to write down one sentence on who they are and what they would like people to know about them, other than being a refugee. The participants will then be e-mailed their photos and will post to any social media platform of their choice, include their photo, personal sentence, and a link to the recommendations report to bring awareness to what is needed and what the youth would like the public to know about refugee youth. The final hashtags chosen were: #WhoWeAre and #TomorrowIsBetter (Arabic version). All of the items mentioned above can be found on the consultation website at issbc.org/WhoWeAre.

COMMUNITY MAPPING – A COLLECTIVE JOURNEY

This activity was designed to gather information for a collective journey of how the youth participants came to Canada, how they arrived in Canada, what has helped the youth feel welcomed and what needs

to improve as they build a new life in this new country. Participants were divided into 2 smaller groups based on their age and asked to share their thoughts and experiences on the flipcharts provided. Facilitators asked participants the following general questions during this exercise:

- Describe your journey coming to Canada?
- Describe what services helped you, such as school, community centres and settlement service providers.
- How helpful has school been? Why is that the case?
- Have you accessed services in Canada? Which ones? How did you feel accessing these services?

The results of this exercise and discussions were as follows:

Notes: the responses have been kept in the participants' own words as much as possible.

Successes:

“Canadians did not make us feel like we were refugees; it was a very welcoming experience with lots of support and well wishes.” – Consultation Participant

- We feel that we are all equal here regardless of religion and ethnicity; we are respected regardless of our backgrounds.
- Settlement organizations were very helpful and went above and beyond.
- Things that would normally take long, didn't.
- The importance of the moral support that was offered.
- There was lots of assistance to help youth upon immediate arrival, as well as follow-up.
- No discrimination in Canada.
- There is peace and security in Canada.
- We feel respected and supported here in Canada.
- Equality between different segments of society.
- Warm welcome from Canadian people.
- Support from different organizations to resettle Syrian refugees.
- Refugees got great help from different organizations.
- Facilities and services provided by the Canadian government and people.
- Good educational system.
- The traffic laws are good; they keep us safe.
- Providing interpreters when needed.
- Free medical system.



Challenges:

Housing

- A main problem for newcomer families is the housing market; there are not many affordable homes available that are big enough for larger families. If we do happen to find somewhere to rent that meets occupancy regulations, it is usually too expensive to afford, leaving us stuck.
- Finding a home that is suitable for a large family is nearly impossible.

Education

- For those of us who are over the age of 18, there was a lot of trouble finding support groups and finding our place in the education system.
- School was very ambiguous and convoluted process with no strict guidelines on when we would be able to start (all ages).
- People who already have an education have to restart from scratch, even those of us under 18.
- Education system is weak; more focused on entertainment rather than rigorous assignments.
- It is really hard to make friends at school.
- Overall, it is hard to understand the big picture re: what we need to take in order to get into university, and how to choose what we're supposed to study.
- Difficulties in getting accreditation for diplomas and qualifications

Employment

- The Canadian government provides obstacles to their own economy by discouraging our entrance into the labour market because they minimize our monthly RAP (Resettlement Assistance Program) salaries.

Dental & Primary Healthcare

- The wait times for medical practitioners across the board are very long.
- Dentists are extremely expensive and IFH (Interim Federal Health Program) has the most limited coverage for it, which is not helpful.
- Medical system and difficulties in seeing a specialist.



Mental Health

- There is a lot of pressure and distress because of trying to balance work, school, learning a new language, and trying to reconcile this with the emotional distress of our experiences.

Cultural Awareness

- Canada does not take into consideration the relevance of religion in the ways we live our lives (for example there aren't many Halal restaurants and grocery stores).
- Lack of cultural awareness and understanding. Others don't understand our culture and our ways of life.
- Some don't understand our culture and therefore make assumptions that we're dangerous and scary.
- Not enough culturally appropriate and fun activities for youth, especially girls.

Transportation

- Bus passes are too expensive, difficult to afford them.

ACCESSING SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Youth participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback about organizations that participants have interacted with. ISSofBC staff was asked to leave the room while the Fresh Voices Initiative staff facilitated the discussion. The participants were asked the following question:

- What is something you have a hard time saying to the people supporting you through your settlement process?
- Can you provide any feedback for settlement service provider organizations?

The following points were shared during the report back to the ISSofBC staff:

- Some workers and agencies were very good to us and very welcoming.
- Inadequate health care services and not caring enough about the patients (i.e. Bridge Clinic)
- Multiple referrals between settlement organizations and settlement workers; we keep getting referred from one person to another, but we don't get the help we need.
- More support with banking and how the financial system in Canada works (for example the importance of building credit).
- Difficult to find housing and the houses that are found are in bad condition and rent is very high.
- We are only allowed to stay at the Welcome House for 15 days, and then we have to pay. This is a very short time.
- We understand that there is a huge pressure on settlement workers due to the large number of refugees that came in a short time. Some of the settlement workers need more training.
- Once refugees leave the Welcome House, they are left alone with no support. They have no interpreters, don't know their way around and don't know where to go for support.
- There is a clear shortage of interpreters.



PROGRAM, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

During this presentation, the youth participants were given information on what programs, policies and different practices are in the context of today's consultation and how the recommendations produced at the consultation fit into each of these areas. The Fresh Voices Initiative report recommendations were used as an example of how youth can use their voice in policy conversations and why this is important in impacting policy. Additionally, different levels of government in Canada were reviewed and how they also impact settlement and youth services and programs. The participants were then given the opportunity to ask questions about the system and think about how to make these systems better.

YOUTH-CENTRIC POLICY AND PROGRAMS

In this activity, the participants were asked to brainstorm key themes that programs and services fit into. Then participants were broken into smaller groups to discuss programs and services that youth have been accessing that fit into these theme areas and answer some of the following questions:

- What has been the experience for youth who have accessed settlement & youth programs and services?
- What are the strengths and how has it been helpful?
- What can be done better in these different programs, spaces and services? Provide ideas for solutions.

- What do you think of the Fresh Voices recommendations? Are these helpful? Can you think of other ideas?

The following is a summary highlighting key ideas & overall feedback from the participants specific to each theme:

Notes: the responses have been kept in the participants' own words as much as possible

Housing

- Culturally Arab families live in one house, even when “children” are over the age of 18. Solution: Increased knowledge on Arab culture.
- BC Housing available for all refugees (Syrians and non-Syrians), preferably in areas with services.
- Rent is very expensive. Solution: lower rent for low-income families. Acceleration in finding housing for low-income families or securing housing before the arrival of refugees.

Mental Health

“Learning how to cope with negative thoughts and sadness after losing our country, losing loved ones and losing stability is difficult.” – Consultation Participant

- Recreational trips for older parents because they can't go on their own. They stay at home and are depressed which affects the youth living with them.
- Cultural activities for youth over 18, not only for children, to fill spare time and create an environment for peer-to-peer support. Not enough activities for youth between 18 and 24 years old.
- Treating mental illness and anger issues, especially after living through war.
- Creating groups of youth from the same culture and with the same experience to meet and share their stories (especially for young girls since they mostly stay home if they are not at school).
- More trauma informed and trustworthy counsellors to organize activities for youth groups.
- Creating a network of volunteers or a social media network to deliver information about the diverse activities for youth in all areas; this would help to facilitate community connections and decrease isolation, which leads to depression and other mental health issues.



Employment and Income

- Income is too low for youth.
- Providing work for youth.
- Settlement workers to guide youth on how to find a job depending on their interests in jobs.
- Providing employment readiness training for youth to join the job market.

Immigration and Resettlement

- Family reunification as soon as possible; acceleration in immigration procedures.

- Less paperwork and organizing documents in a way that makes it easier to use and understand them.
- Difficulty in finding the right authorities that would help with family reunification.

Health

- Not enough interpreters in hospitals.
- Waiting too long to get medication and the right medication is not always available.
- Not enough specialists.
- Procedures are too slow.
- Not enough dental coverage.
- Distance between home and medical centre is usually far.
- Paying fees for not showing up at an appointment.

Education

“Provide extra support to students who don’t speak English and be patient with students when they do not understand instructions.” – Consultation Participant

- Experienced settlement workers to help refugees adapt to the secondary education system.
- Provide education grants for refugee students.
- Provide psychological support to refugee students.
- Waiting list is very long for English classes.
- Providing volunteers that can guide students entering the school system and help with studying.
- Facilitating the accreditation of university diplomas from Syria.
- Learning English in a fun way; recreational and cultural trips for youth to learn about Canada and learn English.
- Sports activities for boys and girls; especially for girls because of their cultural restrictions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a starting point youth participants were provided with copies of the Fresh Voices Initiative 2013 Report recommendations and were asked to review the document and indicate which recommendations they would like to keep and move forward with and what new recommendations should be added to the list. This was all based on their experiences in Canada and what they would like to see for future refugee youth that are coming to Canada, both Syrian and non-Syrians. Most youth felt a profound sense of gratitude towards Canada, and to everyone who has come forward to support Syrians. Canada has truly become an example to the world. Participants realized that while their experience in Canada so far has been unique and positive which they really appreciated, they also noted that they face certain issues not unlike other newcomer youth. Areas that need attention would not only help ease the settlement and integration of future Syrian youth, but also other immigrant and refugee youth newcomer populations to Canada.

When reviewing the following recommendations, there may be programs or organizations already trying to address some of these issues; in some cases these ideas are a reminder to policy-makers. Of the many recommendations that were discussed, the Syrian youth participants would like to focus on two (2) main issues – the current housing crisis and the education system.

HOUSING

The housing crisis in the Lower Mainland has affected many of the participants' families since arriving in Canada. Participants shared concerns about the lack of housing options, high rental prices and lack of adequate space for larger families. There is a need for a housing strategy for new refugee families destined to cities in the Lower Mainland to address the many challenges refugee families face.

EDUCATION

Participants expressed confusion and lack of understanding of the education system in Canada. Many felt lost and unsure of what their next steps are in finishing high school, enrolling in post secondary courses, and how to connect all of this to finding employment. The frustration with the lack of information on how to gain accreditation for courses and diplomas completed prior to arriving in Canada was heard throughout the day in discussions. Participants spoke about the relevance of some of the schoolwork and how it often did not align with what other students were learning or at their academic level. Additionally, English Language Learning, other curriculum and the course credit system need to align better with current labour market needs and/or with students' interest to pursue higher education. This applies to the varying needs of youth who are a) 14 to 18 years old and b) 19 to 24 years old. There needs to be a pathway to employment strategy in place for this group of young adults that includes an education plan.

In addition to the above top two (2) priorities, below are additional recommendations based on the participants' feedback.

EMPLOYMENT

Provide refugee youth with much-needed employment programs to address the barriers they face in entering the labour market. This includes job search and skills development programs, mentorship and one-on-one support, placement opportunities and Canadian culture orientations. Many youth expressed that they are in need of financial support as the income they receive in their first year is very limited especially due to the high cost of living in the Lower Mainland. The lack of income security has a severe negative impact on the youth and their families, which makes finding a job a main priority.

ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

Participants expressed a need for more readily available information and staff who can guide refugees through the existing programs and services. Participants spoke of having to go to multiple staff before finding someone who could support them through a service. Some youth expressed that they still have no one to connect with in regards to housing, employment, health, and other settlement issues.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

For children and youth to thrive, parents need to thrive. Participants expressed concerns about the mental health of their parents as they often come to Canada hoping to be the main support for the family. Once arriving, young people navigate the system better and parents feel depressed and isolated.

It is important to provide opportunities for community connections to build relationships with other adults and young people and engage in healthy, active living.

PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

Provide more opportunities for Syrians to come together and support each other. Participants voiced concerns on the issue of isolation due to language or cultural barriers. It is also evident that as a community coming from a war torn country, healing and dialogue needs to be part of the process to feel welcome in a new community.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The war in Syria continues. Many youth have left family members behind and the journey to Canada was not easy. This affects their process of integration, increases stress level and impacts their mental health negatively. Family unification was identified as a significant issue by the youth at the session. Participants spoke of how being separated from their parents for a long time affected the relationship within their families and communities. There are currently few opportunities to communicate the hardships that accompany family separations to federal immigration officials.

TRANSPORTATION LOANS

The Canadian government waived transportation loans for the first group of Syrian refugees resettled to Canada. It is important that this is an offer not only to Syrians but also to all refugees in Canada. Having a loan upon arrival that is interest bearing makes it very difficult to succeed and integrate. Participants are calling on the federal government to remove the transportation loans for all refugees.

PRE-DEPARTURE AND POST-ARRIVAL PROGRAMS

Participants felt they had a lack of information upon arriving in Canada. While many felt grateful for the opportunity, it would have also been better to have adequate information. For many immigrant and refugee youth, a large part of their lives are interrupted and or take place in exile during migration, displacement and the resettlement process. Additionally, migration is often a decision made by adults and/or parents. While the number of refugee youth between 14 to 18 years old resettling in Canada is increasing, Canada only has pre-departure orientation programs for adults, and limited post-arrival orientation resources tailored to the unique needs of children and youth.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FORUM



At the Community Stakeholder Forum on October 6th, 2016, youth representatives spoke on behalf of the larger group and shared their recommendations. Representatives from government, settlement service provider organizations, school districts and other community stakeholders involved in the settlement and integration of newcomer youth were in attendance to learn, share and discuss. Everyone in attendance was extremely engaged in the discussions with the youth and the breakout activities.

The meeting agenda can be found in Appendix C.

This event started with a press conference for media to come and meet the youth representatives and ask questions. Then 50 attendees from a cross-section of private and public institutions listened to event organizers from ISSofBC and Vancouver Foundation describe the goals and objectives of both the consultation and the forum. Most importantly, youth were given the opportunity to speak on their own behalf in their own voices to policy-makers and service providers. Five (5) youth representatives spoke about the recommendation that most affected them and their families. Attendees were able to interact with and ask the youth more specific questions about each of the recommendations and what it meant to them.



"Thank you to Canada for opening your doors when others closed them"
– Fadia Jouny, Syrian refugee youth representative

After the panel discussions, the attendees were asked to form small groups and discuss current needs and innovative programs/services and best practices in supporting refugee youth between the ages of 15-24 years old. The following are the results of the discussions:

Question 1: Based on what you've heard today from youth what suggestions do you have to address current needs?

Pre-arrival programs

- Pre-settlement service orientation on Canadian laws and rules & general orientations for GARs.

Education

- Orientation on the difference between adult education and secondary school.
- Additional funding needed for Adult Education and resources from the Provincial and Federal government.
- ELL - elective courses do not count for credits; this must be communicated to youth
- University grants and financial support
- There is a need for literacy programs for young adults (18-24 years old)
- Challenges for young adults to transition to and be assessed for Adult school
- Lack of support for young immigrant and refugee adults (18-24 years old) as they are not recognized by IRCC or Ministry of Education as a group that needs specialized programs/services.
- Support students with transportations costs (ie. Subsidy for bus pass)
- Increase number of after school clubs:
 - With existing residents to connect / share / explain culture
 - Homework / hangout / to just "be"
- Social Mentoring and matching program for young adults (18-24 years old)
- Increase volunteer opportunities in both school and community

Employment

- Job training and placement programs for youth (14-17 years old) and young adults (18-24 years old)
- There is currently a “dis-incentive” to work in the first year, while on Government Assistance under the Resettlement Assistance Program; orientation for young people to understand pathway to employment and importance of learning English to secure “survival job”.

Cultural Awareness/Sensitivity

- Cultural sensitivity & Anti-Racism training for teachers and staff – suggestion made that this should be mandatory.

Community Connections

- Difficult to reach marginalized populations and newcomers not attending events; important to build personal relationships with young people to keep them engaged.
- There is a need for more funding for outreach workers; right now settlement workers are expected to do everything.

Healthcare (including dental, primary and mental health)

- Funding shortage for healthcare workers that support refugees.
- Would be very helpful to minimize IFH paperwork to eliminate barrier to service.
- Limited dental coverage; dentists have approached agencies to help but not sure about follow-up and where to direct interested dentists.
- Long wait list for all families for the [BC Healthy Kids Program](#); would be helpful to minimize waitlist so clients can access program quicker.
- Programs to raise awareness about smoking and help youth and young adults stop smoking.
- Need for specific programs/services to address mental health issues and concerns for young adults (18-24 years old).

Family Reunification

- Speeding up family reunification process; clarity needed on whose role it is to help refugees within the 1-year window (ie. Role of IRCC or Settlement Service Provider?)
 - What are the expectations from settlement workers and are these expectations realistic?

Question 2: What are you doing now to engage Syrian youth that might be considered a promising practice, for example a program, a special project, successful outreach strategy?

- Organizations have community volunteers doing orientation workshops on Canadian Law
- Canadian Law Resources are available in Arabic from [Vancouver School Board \(VSB\)](#)
- RCMP ambassadors doing workshops for newcomers (ie. [Surrey RCMP](#))
- [MY Circle](#) youth program offered in multiple cities in the Lower Mainland.
- Connecting resources to one site – [Refugee Readiness Hub](#)
- [RAYCAM Co-operative Community Centre](#) has free dental days with UBC students.
- For disabled youth over 18 years old, a lot of support is given through [WorkBC](#)
- [DIVERSEcity](#) family and relationship counselling services; IRCC funded – has a men’s group to have discussions about family and relationships

- [Little Mountain Neighborhood House \(LMNH\)](#) has conversation circles and life skills classes that help clients meet others in their local community.
- Important for families to connect with [SWIS workers \(Settlement Workers in Schools\)](#); SWIS has literacy classes for all youth in manageable numbers
- [Engaged Immigrant Youth Program \(EIYP\)](#) focuses on youth in Grades 10-12
 - Provides open lunch space for Syrian Refugee youth and creating a space for youth to come and learn from each other.
- [VCH Blush program](#) provides sexual health education to youth in the Lower Mainland and can be tailored to newcomers.
- Local [Neighbourhood House](#) programs enable youth to interact with Canadian and non-Canadian friends in their social groups and programs
- School program called Syrian Club supports youth and answers questions about school / community

CONCLUSION

It was made evidently clear during the one-day consultation that former Syrian refugee youth want to be engaged and are eager to contribute to policy and programs that directly impact them. Through this consultation, organizers have attempted to help them find their voice in Canada and ensure that service providers, government and public institutions have a better understanding of their unique challenges and needs. This was achieved through the Community Stakeholder Forum, which allowed youth to speak directly to policy-makers and service providers. We are hopeful that this model for a youth engagement strategy will inspire similar conversations and events to take place. This will ensure and enhance the ability of refugee and immigrant youth to fully participate in policy and program discussions and help to fine-tune settlement related programming that address their recommendations included in this report. There is no better way to end this report than by a quote from one of the youth participants, which reflected the spirit of the day:

“We want to care about Canada like our own country”

– Consultation Participant

APPENDIX A – AGENDA: SYRIAN REFUGEE YOUTH CONSULTATION

The final agenda for the Syrian Refugee Youth Consultation was developed by the planning committee, which consisted of staff from ISSofBC and The Fresh Voices Initiative.

SYRIAN REFUGEE YOUTH CONSULTATION	
 	Date: September 17, 2016 Time: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Location: ISSofBC Welcome Centre 2610 Victoria Drive, Vancouver, BC
	
OBJECTIVES FOR THE DAY:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gathering youth insights on their experiences with current settlement programs and services for refugees. ✓ Providing a space in Arabic for youth who have recently come as refugees to connect with each other and strengthen their network of support. ✓ Share tools & a platform to provide feedback on programs, policy & practices in regards to refugee integration – What can we all learn so that all refugees are included in Canadian Society? 	
Time	Item & Description
9:00 – 9:30 a.m.	Registration - Light refreshments served
9:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Welcome & Introductions - First Nations Welcome - Vancouver Foundation & ISSofBC Welcome
10:00 – 10:20 a.m.	Guidelines & Social Media Campaign
10:20 – 10:30 a.m.	Icebreaker & Name Activity
10:30 – 10:40 a.m.	Break - Light refreshments served
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	Breakout Activity: Community Mapping – A Collective Journey
11:45 – 12:30 p.m.	Group Discussion: How has your experience been so far?
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	Lunch Break: Lunch will be provided to all participants
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.	Group Discussion: Program, policy and practice
2:15 – 3:00 p.m.	Breakout Activity: Youth-centric programs and services
3:00 – 3:30 p.m.	Break - Light refreshments served
3:30 – 4:00 p.m.	Reflect Back and Q&A Session: Group Discussion & Breakout Activity
4:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Panel Discussion: Review Fresh Voices Report & Future Recommendations
4:30 – 5:00 p.m.	Panel Presentation: Next Steps & Wrap-Up

APPENDIX B – EVALUATION RESULTS: SYRIAN REFUGEE YOUTH CONSULTATION

All participants at the Syrian Refugee Youth Consultation, held on September 17, 2016, were asked to fill out an anonymous event evaluation form (in their choice of either English or Arabic). Out of 57 participants, 23 filled out the evaluation form. The results of the event evaluations are as follows:

#1 - On the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), did you think the following activities / discussion topics were helpful for you to express your feelings & opinions about your experience in Canada? Please check one for each activity below:

Activities / Discussion Topic	1	2	3	4	5
Community Mapping – A Collective Journey	1	2	4	4	8
How has your experience been so far?	2	1	1	4	12
Program, policy and practice		1	2	5	9
Youth-centric programs and services		2	1	2	13

#2 – Facilitators and support staff were supportive of my participation and made me feel welcome in the space? YES | NO (circle one)

Any other comments:

YES - 18

#3 – The photographer & videographer were respectful and made me feel comfortable to share my picture and story? YES | NO (circle one)

Any other comments:

YES - 18

#4 – Was the venue was accessible? YES | NO (circle one)Any other comments:

YES – 17

NO – 1

#5 – Did you like the food? YES | NO (circle one)

Any other comments:

YES – 18

- Very good, thank you!

#6 – What was your favourite part of the day? (Write your comments below)

- When we talked about our problems and tried to find solutions.
- When we said our opinions freely.
- It was all interesting and great.
- They listened to the problems we face.

- Drawing and writing on papers.
- When we talked about our opinions and ideas about the organizations performance – we wrote them on paper / expressing and talking about our own experiences.
- Everything.
- Everyone respected the opinions of others and the information was beneficial.
- The seminar and photography.
- Recommendations for policies
- Discussing challenges in different areas, like housing.
- When we expressed our opinions.
- Talking about the challenges we face.
- Expressing what we have inside us and our needs.
- Everything was interesting. I loved working in groups; it was fun.

#7 – What was your least favourite part of the day? (Write your comments below)




- Nothing, everything was great.
- Everything was good, comfortable, enjoyable.
- Too much talking, not enough fun.
- Everything was good and comfortable.
- Everything was amazing.
- Far from my house.
- I like everything.

#8 – Anything else that you would like to say? (Write your comments below)

- Thank you to ISSofBC. It was a great seminar and I hope I can participate in future events.
- Thank you to all of the volunteers and organizers, very supportive of youth.
- Shorter, it was too long.
- Thank you for the beautiful day you offered us and I hope you will do it again in a fun way.
- I would like to thank ISSofBC for organizing this activity to help the voice of youth get heard by the Government of Canada for concrete solutions and thanks to Fresh Voices.
- Thank you.
- I hope I get successful in your program and help other refugees. It was a great day.
- Ask for more feedback on programs provided by settlement services.
- I hope I could attend other seminars.
- This seminar was educational. I thank everyone who participated and I thank ISSofBC

APPENDIX C – AGENDA: COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The final agenda for the Community Stakeholder Forum was developed by the planning committee, which consisted of staff from ISSofBC and The Fresh Voices Initiative.

SYRIAN YOUTH REFUGEE CONSULTATION: Community Stakeholder Forum	
 	Date: October 6, 2016 Time: 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm Location: ISSofBC Welcome Centre 2610 Victoria Drive, Vancouver, BC
	
OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Getting insights on current settlement programs – How has the experience to date been so far for Syrian refugee youth?</i> ✓ <i>To create a space for youth refugees to provide feedback on programming, policy and practice in regards to refugee integration – What can we learn so that all refugees are included?</i> ✓ <i>Share and discuss with community stakeholders on the successes and challenges to date</i> ✓ <i>Discuss innovative and best practices with government and community stakeholders</i> 	
Moderator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jorge E. Salazar, Fresh Voices Initiative of Vancouver Foundation 	
Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kevin McCort, Vancouver Foundation ○ Chris Friesen, ISSofBC ○ Nada El-Masry, Fresh Voices Initiative of Vancouver Foundation ○ Fadia Jouni, Fresh Voices Initiative of Vancouver Foundation ○ Mariam Mohammad Alrashed Aba Zid, Surrey – Syrian Youth (22) ○ Nadim Alrefai, Vancouver – Syrian Youth (14) ○ Noor Alshhadeh, Delta – Syrian Youth (17) ○ Mohammed Sleman, Vancouver – Syrian Youth (16) 	
Time	Item & Description
3:30 – 4:00 p.m.	Press Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media are invited to attend to interview youth participants and project facilitators
4:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Registration & Networking
4:30 – 4:45 p.m.	Welcome & Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Welcome – <i>Jorge Salazar</i> • Vancouver Foundation & ISSofBC Welcome – <i>Chris Friesen & Kevin McCort</i> • Objectives and Overview of Youth Consultations & Community Stakeholder Discussions – <i>Chris Friesen & Jorge Salazar</i> • Short Video of Youth Consultation – <i>Jorge Salazar</i>

4:45 – 5:10 p.m.	<p>Panel Discussions: Summary of Syrian Refugee Youth Consultations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh Voices Initiative – <i>Nada El-Masry & Fadia Jouni</i> • Youth Participants Share Recommendations • Panel Q&A Session
5:10 – 6:15 p.m.	<p>Group Discussions: Panel & Community Stakeholders Dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions for Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on what you've heard today from youth what suggestions do you have to address current needs? ○ What are you doing now to engage Syrian youth that might be considered a promising practice, for example a program, a special project, successful outreach strategy? • Report Back on Best Practices
6:15 – 6:30 p.m.	<p>Closing Remarks and Wrap Up</p>