



# Moving Forward: ‘Unheard Voices’

Report on the Immigrant Seniors Forum

March 3, 2015

Prepared by ISSofBC

Afghan Seniors in Action



**SOUTH GRANVILLE SENIORS CENTRE** | 55+  
Connecting Adults 55+ to Your Community



**United Way**  
of the Lower Mainland



## DEDICATION/THANKS

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Naomi Staddon was a tireless community activist, facilitator, researcher, trainer and program developer who over the past 20 years worked with various immigrant and refugee communities (Cambodian, Iraqi-Kurds, Afghan, Somali and Bhutanese) in different multi-year capacity building initiatives ranging from children and youth, food security to seniors programming. With funding through the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) and ISS of BC, Naomi facilitated the planning of the Moving Forward: Unheard Voices forum, working with newcomer seniors' leaders from smaller immigrant communities right up until her death on November 7, 2014. All those who worked on "Moving Forward" see this forum as a testament to Naomi's legacy. As she helped to plan for this forum Naomi stated that our work should be guided by an old Afghan poem that roughly translates as *"Every person's action affects all others. We're here to work for all."*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1	Introduction - Background .....	4
2	Setting the Context .....	7
3	Personal Stories .....	9
4	Small Group Discussions .....	11
5	Recommendations from the Seniors' Perspective.....	12
6	Imagine if ... meeting some of the Seniors.....	13
7	Conclusion.....	18
8	Appendices.....	20
8.1	Agenda .....	20
8.2	Powerpoint Slides .....	21
8.3	Setting the Context Handouts.....	24
8.4	Discussion Questions .....	27
8.5	Summary of Discussions by Table .....	28
8.5.1	Table 1.....	28
8.5.2	Table 2.....	29
8.5.3	Table 3.....	30
8.5.4	Table 4.....	31
8.6	Evaluation .....	33
8.7	Evaluation Feedback .....	34
8.8	Speakers List.....	36
8.9	Summary of Attendees .....	38

# 1 INTRODUCTION - BACKGROUND

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Almost 18 months ago, with the financial support of the United Way of the Lower Mainland, over 150 Afghan seniors (part of the Afghan Seniors in Action program), arising out of a multi-year community capacity building project dating back to 2003, reached out to seniors from primarily Central and South America as part of the South Granville Seniors Centre with a vision to organize a forum. Not only were the issues faced by these seniors similar in nature but they also struggle as members of smaller ethno-cultural communities to have a voice in areas that directly impact their lives. It is also important to stress that many of these seniors are different from those in other communities because many have come to Canada as refugees displaced from war torn countries ... they have had to endure a lot of loss but remain resilient.

This Forum marked the end of a chapter -- an incredible journey that with any community development process had its share of speed bumps but also numerous successes and positive impacts along the way. As we often say, it is not the destination but the journey. For 18 months a planning committee with 24 seniors met twice a month briefing their respective program participants once a month. As well, an advisory committee consisting of senior allies -- Anne Kloppenborg, retired City of Vancouver Social Planner; Beverly Pitman from the United Way of the Lower Mainland; Clemencia Gomez and Sandra Medina from the South Granville Seniors Center; Jim Sands from SPARC; Shapiri Pashan, Aliya Facher and Latifa Jawansheer from the Afghan Seniors in Action program; Kathy Sherrell and Chris Friesen from ISSofBC -- met, on average, once per month to provide guidance and support. Lastly, Jennifer Ng, a recent SFU graduate joined in as a volunteer to help with various forum related logistical preparations.



Along the way there have been many successes and value added pieces. To better understand how these seniors have come together for this Forum it is important to share a few of the process pieces that occurred:

- Individual and group interviews inside and outside of the program committee were undertaken to research and better understand some of the current policies and programs that interface with their lives; From this process several recommendations emerged as outlined later on in this report;
- Seniors came together with youth from each group to hear from them on their challenges, concerns and issues in helping to formulate certain recommendations;
- Stories and photos from members of the participating communities were compiled to help put a face to the issues (these are included in section 6, as well as on the Forum thank you cards);
- A public speaking coach was brought in to help increase the confidence of the seniors to share their stories and articulate their issues and experiences;
- A short video project was also undertaken to capture seniors in their own voice and images; and,
- because many of the seniors do not speak English the process involved interpreters and translators to ensure as much as possible that the process was inclusive.

The Moving Forward: Unheard Voices forum was held on March 3, 2015 from 9am to noon to invited guests that included policy makers, academics, advocacy and community groups, federal, provincial and municipal representatives, health authorities, etc. After opening remarks by Chris Friesen, ISSofBC Director of Settlement Services, participants were welcomed by Shapiri Pashan from the Afghan Seniors in Action and Alicia Zapata from the South Granville Seniors Centre.



Chris Friesen set the context for the day's discussions by providing an overview of the numbers of immigrant and refugee seniors (age 65+ at arrival) settling in Metro Vancouver, as well as the ways in which newcomer seniors are affected by current legislation and policies at the Federal and Provincial levels (see Section 2). Gulpakiy Amani from the Afghan Seniors in Action and Miriam Villaba from the South Granville Seniors Centre illustrated some of the challenges faced by immigrant and refugee seniors by sharing personal stories (see Section 3).

Participants were divided into small groups and asked to discuss and reflect upon the information presented. Small group discussion were guided by certain questions (see Section 4).

Following a report back from each table, Latifa Jawansheer from the Afghan Seniors in Action outlined recommendations brought forward from the Afghan and Spanish seniors (see Section 5).



The Forum concluded with thanks from Jamila Naqib from the Afghan Seniors in Action and Ana Maria Jimenez from the South Granville Seniors Centre. All participants were provided with a Thank You card for attending which contained the photo and story of one of the seniors (see Section 6), and asked to complete an evaluation (see Section 7).

See Appendices (Section 8) for:

- Agenda
- PowerPoint Slides
- Setting the Context handout
- Discussion Questions
- Summary of Notes from Each table
- Evaluation Form
- Speakers List
- List of Attendees (with organizational affiliations)



## 2 SETTING THE CONTEXT

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Immigrant seniors (65+ years upon arrival) represent a growing age cohort in Metro Vancouver. Between 2010 and 2013, for example, there has been a three-fold increase in seniors arrivals from Asia and Pacific, as well the Middle East and Africa (from 4,936 in 2010 to 14,012 in 2013).

Although representing smaller arrival numbers than overall immigrants, seniors (age 65+ at arrival) represent approximately 2% of Government Assisted Refugees resettled in BC each year. Over the same time period, there has been a two-fold increase in the arrivals of refugees age 65+, as well as those ages 55-64 (from 33 in 2010 to 63 in 2014). Notably, there has been increasing arrivals from 'new and few' communities, including Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Liberia and Syria, as well as seniors from the Middle East region and Muslim faith. The top 3 destinations (65+ seniors) during the 2010-2013 period were the Tri-Cities, Burnaby, and Surrey.



Many immigrant and refugee seniors fall through the cracks of contradictory government policies and insufficient programs in Canada and, as a result, live their last years in poor health and poverty.

As a result of impacts of public policy and migration experience, immigrant and refugee seniors face higher degrees of income insecurity than Canadian-born seniors. For example, refugee seniors who arrive with no resources are nevertheless required to repay interest-bearing loans for their



transportation to Canada. They also tend to arrive in Canada with more complex needs and characteristics that impact their ability to learn English or earn income. Newcomer families who have the means can apply to reunite with their parents/grandparents, however, sponsors are now financially responsible for 20 years. The increased sponsorship time frame, this

can create unhealthy dependencies and conditions for senior abuse.

Immigrant and refugee seniors face a number of factors which are unique to newcomers, including:

- Previous work experience and education are often not recognized, something which negatively impacts those ages 55-64 seeking employment;
- Lack of familiarity with Canada and Canadian society, as well as workplace norms/expectations;
- Cultural and family norms/expectations around providing childcare to grandchildren make it more difficult to participate in settlement and language programming, as childminding is only available for direct dependents; and
- Weaker social networks & supports, particularly for those from 'new and few' communities'.



Lastly, access to income security for newcomer seniors including eligibility and amount depends on various factors including:

- If you arrive at age 65+ and did not work in Canada you will not be eligible for OAS for 10-20 years;
- Immigration category (e.g. family sponsored);
- Residency requirements determine CPP, OAS or GIS eligibility; and,
- BC basic income support allowance (single 65 year old) is \$906/month – less than \$11,000 annually.





### 3 PERSONAL STORIES

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Two newcomer seniors from each group shared their personal stories of how certain policies have impacted their lives in Canada. The following are their stories as presented in the forum:

#### **Gulpaki:**

*Today I am here to share the sad and heartbreaking immigrant who's providing support to family of 5 with little income as called Seniors Old Age security or 'OAS'.*

*First of all, I would like to thank the government of Canada for opening the peace and solidarity door for everyone, and welcoming everybody as human regardless of race, gender, social states, religion, and etc.*

*Whenever you have pain in your body, you are the only one who suffer the horrible feeling. The following story is indicating the challenge and the hardship of your time as senior.*

*I live in a family of 5, my son, my daughter in law and 2 young children age 6 and 8.*

*I came to Canada via family sponsored ship several years ago. My son and my daughter in law must have enough knowledge of English as well working experience in order to find a good job.*



*My daughter in law was working in a fast food restaurant, but lost her job based on language barrier. My son is working as a cleaner who just getting paid \$10.50 per hour. Whenever the supervisor want to have someone else take the shift my son will be the only one not working the shift, because he is a short tempered. Most of the time my son is at home and searching for job on the internet. My 3 grandchildren who are going to school coming home sad and upset for being teased by other kids for not wearing brand name clothes, shoes or not taking good lunch to school.*

*The last week of each months I am the target for paying off the bills and half of the rent. Many time I denied my priorities which is my health. I have a prescription waiting yet to buy. My income is the only solid income and the only income that can support my family.*

## **Miriam:**

*My name is Miriam Villalba, I am 66 years old and I was born in Uruguay. I have a bachelor degree as a Teacher and 25 years of experience in this profession in Uruguay and Venezuela. I came to Montréal in 1992 with my family (husband and daughter), and at that time my aspiration was to obtain my credentials as a teacher in Québec. I had to learn French and obtain my High School degree, and also I performed as an active volunteer.*

*In 1994 we decided to come to Vancouver. I studied English and volunteered in different organizations; I worked as a Spanish teacher volunteer two hours in Mondays for six months. Soon after my husband was diagnosed with ALS and he passed away in 2001. My dreams were put off the side and I had to take economical responsibilities of my family.*

*Due to my financial situation, I made the decision to work in the cleaning business. I took a Hospitality training for 6 months and I started working as soon as I finished it. I did it for 18 years. My daughter and I were denied survivor benefits after my husband died which greatly impacted our income. At the same time that I lost my husband, I had to wait until my income was low enough that I could apply for my own benefits – GIS and bus pass.*

*This process took one year and greatly impacted my life. My income is just enough that I still must pay for my MSP premiums and prescriptions. When I applied for my CPP and OAS pensions surprisingly I obtained the monthly payment of \$558. Then, with the support of the South Granville Seniors Centre I applied for the Guarantee Income Supplement and finally I got \$886.97. Fortunately I live in a CO-OP and I could get a rent reduction.*

*I chose to work and earn a living although I earned a low wage rather than live on provincial income support, but it seems that I am worse off than some of my peers who didn't or couldn't work at all. When they turned 65 they were able to access OAS and other benefits that I can't. In fact, a single senior on provincial income support may earn \$20 per month more than me.*

*Based on these facts I couldn't save money and make a retirement planning, as once a Service Canada worker demanded me. So, right now I am a low income senior.*

*I have these questions:*

- *How can an older immigrant plan for retirement?*
- *If I did contribute for 18 years to the Canadian Society, how I finish with a lower income?*



## 4 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

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After setting the context and hearing two personal stories from seniors, participants were broken into four groups. Each table included a representative from both the Afghan Seniors in Action and the South Granville Seniors groups, as well as interpreters where necessary, in order to ensure the Senior's full participation in the event. Discussions were facilitated by members of the Advisory Committee, and a note taker ensured the discussions were recorded. Each table was asked to discuss the following questions.

*What suggestions do you have for actions which would address any of the issues raised today?*

Example:

- What possible program or service ideas do you have to better outreach to seniors from smaller ethno-cultural communities?
- Are there suggested strategies to increase engagement with policy makers on specific income security and employment areas?
- How can we increase newcomer seniors' access to information and services?

See Section 8.6 for a summary of the notes from each table.



## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SENIORS' PERSPECTIVE

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As already noted, through this facilitated 18 month process leading to the forum seniors undertook their own consultation to define some recommendations that would begin to address their self-identified issues. Latifa Jawansheer from the Afghan Seniors in Action presented the following recommendations on behalf of the seniors.

- With growing proportionate increase in immigrant seniors and children poverty rates – income assistance rates and/or supplements should be increased to LICO;
- As low income seniors we are concerned about our grandchildren in the school system - we recommend the provision of additional resources for schools serving children from less well-off groups;
- The Revenue Support Grant formula and other funding mechanisms should be more strongly weighted to reflect need and socioeconomic disadvantage;
- Investment in skills training programs that target 55+, have work experience component, wage subsidy and specific language training;
- Specialized funding for culturally and age responsive mental health and trauma treatment programs-supports as well as programs that reduce social isolation are needed;
- Although we are grateful to the Government of Canada for allowing us to rebuild our lives in this country, the transportation loan program for refugees should be eliminated;
- The creation of more affordable social housing;
- Development of high quality public transport system which is integrated with other forms of transport and is affordable to the user;
- Integrated policy for the provision of affordable, high quality day care and pre-school education with extra resources for disadvantaged communities;
- English language programs that are more tailored to ethnic seniors -- that include flexible hours, locations, in-class first language supports and more child care for our grandchildren;
- That the needs of minority ethnic groups be specifically considered and involved in the development and implementation of policies that impact us; and
- That providing equitable access to effective care in relation to need should be a governing principle of all policies in the life of immigrant seniors.



## 6 IMAGINE IF ... MEETING SOME OF THE SENIORS

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My name is Alicia Zapata.

I am 65 years old and from Colombia. I obtained my Canadian Permanent Residency status in Colombia before my arrival in Vancouver in 1988 at the age of 37. I was sponsored by my brother-in-law to come to Canada with my husband and child, who was five years old at the time.

I have a bachelor's degree in Social Work (from Colombia), and 20 years of experience in this field. I tried to apply my professional knowledge and skills here but faced many barriers such as English language proficiency, parenting, divorce, financial issues, and a new pregnancy.

I integrated myself into society by volunteering and due to my economic situation I entered the cleaning business. This gave me some financial support, but not the possibility of having a proper income to plan my future retirement.



**My name is Fatemah Qurbani**

I came to Canada from Iran several years ago with my husband and children. I would describe my life in Iran as a disaster. I have been a victim and a survivor of sexual, physical and domestic abuse since I was a baby. I was married at a very young age to a man who is much older than me. He has been sick since we got married and I became his primary caregiver. I have five children and we all live together in a three-bedroom apartment. Due to my husband's chronic medical condition, my children constantly need to be excused from school to stay with their dad when he is at the hospital because we were told that the government cannot offer translators at all times to help us with the language barrier.

My husband and I are both ill and require daily home care. Our combined incomes, however, do not cover the cost of any home care. We have no family to help us either with care or with money to pay for home care.



**My name is Jamila Naqib.**

I came to Canada almost 5 years ago from the USA due to some family violence. During the civil war, I had left Afghanistan and went to Pakistan. I was a high school teacher back home and I had been able to pursue my career in Peshawar, Pakistan as a teacher trainer at one of the UN organizations.

I am a widow and have no children. As a result, I am very lonely and isolated. My source of income is through social assistance or welfare. I receive \$360 per month and I live in a shared one bedroom apartment. I cannot afford the cost of my own living. I go to food banks near my home to get extra food; otherwise I would be hungry for the whole month. My health condition is very fragile and I often go to emergency for malnutrition.



**My name is Khurshid Alami.**

I am from Afghanistan and left there almost 40 years ago. I traveled to Iran with half of my family due domestic violence and abuse by my husband and in-laws. I have 4 children. However, I live with only three of them. One of my children was taken away from me when he was first born and I was forced to leave my home and move to Iran. My life in Iran is the darkest chapter in my life history for all the hardship, poverty, and discrimination against Afghans.

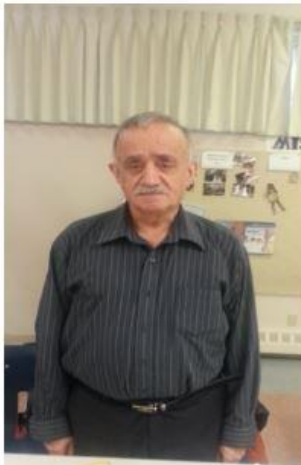
I arrived in Canada 10 years ago at age of 57. There was a huge error in my paperwork. At the time of my arrival, the officials wrote in a birth date which stated that I was 43 years of age, even though my physical appearance should have proved that I am older. My older son's paperwork, meanwhile, showed that he was 38 years of age. I have been unable to get my paperwork which I very urgently need.



My name is Maimona Emam.

I came to Canada 30 years ago after travelling from country to country. I have a Master's Degree and some English language background. My first stop in Canada was in Winnipeg where I had a chance to grow and find a job as a settlement worker. I had been working for 10 years until I fell seriously ill. Based on a friend's advice, I moved to Vancouver.

I now live in a care facility and am entirely without money before the end of the month. The cost of my stay in the facility keeps rising, while the monthly benefits do not change. At this time, 90% of my allowance is being deducted by the care facility finance management office. This also means that I cannot buy adequate food including the Halal items that my religion requires. There is no money for other expenditures, no matter how basic.



My name is Mohamad Kabir Farkhari.

I came to Canada from Tajikistan several years ago with a deep sorrow and huge loss of all my family members including my loving wife and children. I lost my family in a plane crash in northern Afghanistan. My son and I are the only survivors of that unfortunate tragedy. After that horrible tragedy in my life, my son and I have both been living with mental health issues.

Recently, I had a stroke and am currently under treatment. Most of my medications need to be of a specific brand. However, I can only afford the most generic ones. My income is not enough to rent a separate apartment or hire somebody as a caregiver.



My name is Rufina Garcia.

I am 55 years old and am originally from Mexico. I came to Canada as a refugee claimant with my family: my husband, two sons and one daughter.

My professional background is in business administration, and I have worked as a teacher as well. I did not speak English when I came, so I studied the language for six months. I then worked as a volunteer at the Hispanic Community Centre.

After one year, I started to work as a room attendant and did this for eight years. My health deteriorated after several accidents at work and as a result I have been through the Workers' Compensation Board several times to claim short term disability. I am currently applying for permanent disability due to physical and mental health issues like severe depression.

Now I am a single mother and live with my daughter who goes to college. I do not have any retirement plan and am a low income senior.



My name is Shanaz Noori.

I am from Afghanistan and immigrated to Canada from India. Moving to India from Afghanistan caused a permanent separation between me and my husband. It has been a very long time since we have seen each other in person because I cannot afford the trip back to Afghanistan.

Now I live with my son and daughter-in-law. My income is considered to be family income because my daughter-in-law has young children and cannot work, and I don't have any control over my own money.





My name is Ziagul Meherzad.

I am an Afghan senior who came to Canada through the Family Sponsorship Program. My son sponsored my husband and I and provided us with accommodation for 10 years. We were then placed under government care after the initial 10 years.

We both receive only OAS allowance which merely covers our basic needs. We live in an apartment building that is not very convenient and that charges high rent. On top of that, we both need to buy medication for our diabetes and heart conditions, which is very expensive. We have insufficient income and cannot buy appropriate food to suit our health conditions.

## 7 CONCLUSION

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The Moving Forward – Unheard Voices forum brought together for the first time seniors from smaller ethno-cultural communities along with various community, academic and government stakeholders. The purpose of the forum was to share and learn about some of the unique challenges faced by newcomer seniors as well as providing an opportunity to discuss some suggestions on how these challenges could be addressed. Besides the recommendations that the seniors presented at the forum and found earlier in this report (see section 5) several ideas emerged from participants during the small group discussions.

Immigrant seniors are very diverse so solutions and programs that target them must be equally diverse taking into consideration culturally responsive and age appropriate factors. Seniors who arrived in Canada previously as refugees may face unique challenges including trauma, protracted stay in refugee camps, low literacy plus the additional financial hardship due in part to having to repay their interest bearing transportation loan. Whether someone arrived in Canada as a family sponsored immigrant senior or former refugee, seniors want the opportunity to participate in discussions, policy and program areas that directly impact them.



There was general consensus that English language classes need some adjustments to better cater to older learners including having more designated learning opportunities such as



conversation circles, in-classroom first language support resources, more accessible locations and language mentoring supports. Although current federally funded LINC classes intentionally bring together learners from diverse source countries we may want to consider ethno specific classes for seniors in the early stages of language acquisition process. There is also a need for more settlement related appropriate language curriculum that specifically targets seniors.

Many attendees felt that the current local immigration partnership initiatives that are undertaking an inventory of existing settlement related services was encouraging to obtain better insights into current programming. However, regardless of the inventory process most

forum participants felt that newcomer seniors would benefit from more targeted outreach programs, community capacity initiatives and culturally specific mental health supports, particularly for refugees. How to effectively reach isolated non-English speaking seniors garnered various suggestions including better linkages and targeted information through existing ethnic media as well as through various ongoing initiatives at the neighbourhood level.

Further collaboration-partnership and the need for ongoing targeted discussions between the three levels of government, health authorities, community groups and seniors themselves emerged as another underlying need. Although there are shared experiences and common challenges faced by both Canadian born and newcomer seniors, there remains the need for more targeted first language resources and pre-arrival orientation to better prepare newcomer seniors to their new life in Canada. Seniors alike would benefit from increased financial resources to properly manage their needs. Recent changes to Canada's immigration policies specifically extending the sponsorship financial obligation from 10 to 20 years raised concerns that this change could further increase the vulnerability (eg elder and financial abuse) among family class sponsored seniors.

Lastly, the current public discourse that newcomer seniors are a drain on the public purse needs to shift with a greater emphasis and increased awareness of the contributions that Immigrant and Refugee Seniors bring to the country (experience, education, as well as unpaid/volunteer work and childminding support).



## 8 APPENDICES

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### 8.1 AGENDA



### **Moving Forward: Unheard Voices**

**March 3, 2015**

### **Forum Agenda**

<b>9:00 - 9:30am</b>	<b>Registration and Refreshments</b>
<b>9:30 - 9:45am</b>	<b>Welcome – Opening Remarks</b> Chris Friesen Shapiri Pashan Alicia Zapata
<b>9:45 - 10:05am</b>	<b>Setting the context</b> Chris Friesen
<b>10:05 - 10:20am</b>	<b>Personal Stories</b> Gulpakiy Amani Miriam Villalba
<b>10:20 - 11:30am</b>	<b>Small Group Discussions</b>
<b>11:30 - 11:50am</b>	<b>Report Back</b>
<b>11:50am - 12:00pm</b>	<b>Seniors' Recommendation, Wrap Up and closing remarks</b> Latifa Jawansheer Jamila Naqib Ana Maria Jimenez



## 8.2 POWERPOINT SLIDES

# Moving Forward: Unheard Voices

*Immigrant Seniors Forum*



# Agenda

9:30-9:45	Welcoming and Opening Remarks
9:45-10:00	Setting the Context
10:00-10:15	Personal Stories
10:15-11:30	Small Group Discussions
11:30-11:50	Report Back – Seniors' Recommendations
11:50-12:00	Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks

# Honouring the work of Naomi Staddon



# Moving Forward: Unheard Voices

*Setting the Context*



# Immigrant Senior Arrivals to Canada

- Immigrant seniors (65+ years upon arrival) are a growing age cohort
- Three-fold increase in seniors arrivals from Asia and Pacific, as well the Middle East and Africa (from 4,936 in 2010 to 14,012 in 2013)

Data Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada

# Refugee Senior Arrivals to BC

- Smaller arrival numbers than overall immigrants
- 2% of Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) arrivals are age 65+
- Two-fold increase in arrivals of refugees ages 65+, as well as those ages 55-64 (from 33 in 2010 to 63 in 2014)

Data Source: IRIS/IRCC

## Refugee Senior Arrivals to BC

- Increasing arrivals from 'new and few' communities:  
Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Liberia and Syria
- Growing number of seniors from the Middle East region and Muslim faith
- Top 3 destinations (65+ seniors): Tri-Cities, Burnaby, Surrey

Data Source: IGC/IFRC

*Many immigrant and refugee seniors fall through the cracks of contradictory government policies and insufficient programs in Canada and, as a result, live their last years in poor health and poverty*

## Immigrant & Refugee Seniors: Impact of Public Policy & Migration Experiences

- Face additional income insecurity (refugee seniors) due to repayable interest bearing transportation loans
- Arrive with more complex needs and characteristics that impact ability to learn English or earn income
- Newcomer families who have the means can apply to reunite with their parents-grandparents:
  - sponsor is financially responsible for 20 years
  - sponsor dependency creates conditions for senior abuse

## Migration Experiences Among Immigrant & Refugee Seniors: Impacts

- Previous work experience and education often not recognized (impacts those ages 55-64);
- Lack of familiarity with Canada and Canadian society Cultural/family norms (eg seniors providing child care to grandchildren)
- Weaker social networks & supports (especially 'new and few' communities)

## Immigrant & Refugee Seniors: Impact of Public Policy & Migration Experiences

Access to income security: eligibility and amount depends:

- If you arrive at age 65+ and did not work in Canada you will not be eligible for OAS for 10-20 years
- Immigration category (e.g. family sponsored)
- Residency requirements determine CPP, OAS or GIS eligibility
- BC - basic income support allowance (single 65 year old)
  - \$906/month – less than \$11,000 annually



*Now let's hear from you...*

## Small Group Discussion Question

**What suggestions do you have for actions which would address any of the issues raised today?**

- What possible program or service ideas do you have to better outreach to seniors from smaller ethno-cultural communities?
- Are there suggested strategies to increase engagement with policy makers on specific income security and employment areas?
- How can we increase newcomer seniors' access to information and services?

## Moving Forward: Unheard Voices

*Recommendations from the  
Seniors Perspective*



## Recommendations: Seniors' perspective

**We recommend:**

- With growing proportionate increase in immigrant seniors and children poverty rates – income assistance rates and/or supplements should be increased to LICO;
- As low income seniors we are concerned about our grandchildren in the school system - we recommend the provision of additional resources for schools serving children from less well-off groups;

## Recommendations: Seniors' perspective

- The Revenue Support Grant formula and other funding mechanisms should be more strongly weighted to reflect need and socioeconomic disadvantage
- Investment in skills training programs that target 55+, have work experience component, wage subsidy and specific language training

## Recommendations: Seniors' perspective

- Specialized funding for culturally and age responsive mental health and trauma treatment programs-supports as well as programs that reduce social isolation are needed;
- Although we are grateful to the Government of Canada for allowing us to rebuild our lives in this country, the transportation loan program for refugees should be eliminated;

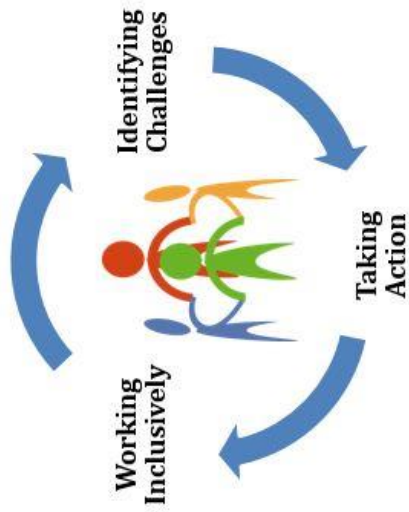
## Recommendations: Seniors' perspective

- The creation of more affordable social housing
- Development of high quality public transport system which is integrated with other forms of transport and is affordable to the user
- Integrated policy for the provision of affordable, high quality day care and pre-school education with extra resources for disadvantaged communities.

## 8.3 SETTING THE CONTEXT HANDOUTS

# Imagine if...

You are a senior receiving Old Age Security and you are the sole provider for a family of five. You come to Canada from Afghanistan through the family sponsorship program, hoping for better opportunities and a better life for your family. Without sufficient knowledge of English or work experience in Canada, however, it is difficult to find a good job. You learn this the hard way when your son is stuck working for minimum wage, and your daughter-in-law is fired from her job due to a language barrier. With OAS, you are the only one with minimal but steady income. It all comes down to you to pay the rent and the monthly bills. With these financial responsibilities, you neglect your own health, not having enough money for your own medications.



You are 66 years old and born in Uruguay. You have a bachelor's degree in education and have worked as a teacher for 25 years. Moving to Canada with your family, you continue to pursue your dream of teaching. Despite having taught already for several years, you have to return to school to gain teaching credentials in Canada. Your teaching career is put on hold, however, as your husband falls ill and passes away, leaving you to take care of the family financially. Following this is a series of challenges trying to gain income security. Having found work in the cleaning business, you are ineligible for survivor benefits because your income is too high. Your CPP and OAS payments amount to just over \$550, and GIS is just under \$900. This covers your basic living costs and medical expenses, but leaves very little for retirement.

## Moving Forward: Unheard Voices





## Factors Influencing Experiences of Immigrant and Refugee Seniors

### Policy Impacts

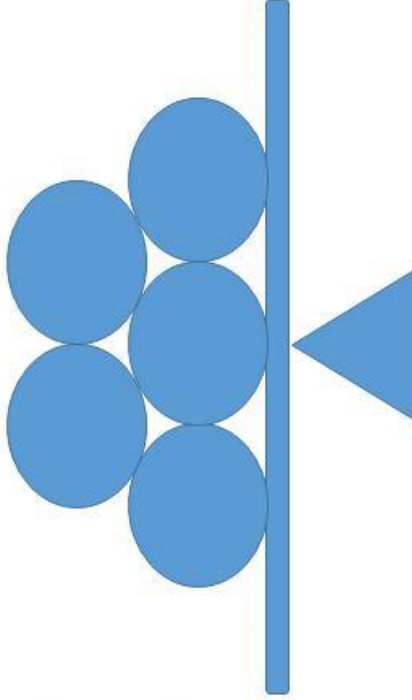
- Immigration Policies (eg Immigration & Refugee Protection Act, Balanced Refugee Reform, 10 year Supervisa)
- Income Support (eg Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Social Assistance)
- Health Care (eg Interim Federal Health Program, Carecard)

### Income Security

- Age at time of arrival impacts and/or immigration category impacts Canadian Pension Plan / Old Age Security / Guaranteed Income Security eligibility and amounts
- Previous work experience and education not recognized
- Catch 22 - can't get a job without Canadian Experience, but can't get Canadian Experience without a job
- Some may arrive with no previous work experience and/or formal education, while others may be illiterate in first language
- Transit pass for seniors

### Migration

- Immigration category (eg Family Class, Government-assisted Refugee, etc.) impacts eligibility for programs/services (eg 3 month waitlist for Carecard)
- Errors on paperwork (eg wrong birthdate - may say 55 when person is 65)
- For refugees: impact of protracted refugee situations on physical/mental health, trauma/torture



### Ethno-cultural Influence

- Family connections and cultural expectations (eg multi-generational households)

### Migration Impact

- Language barriers
- Loss of networks (personal and professional)
- Lack of familiarity with culture and society
- Social isolation



**Factors Influencing Financial Support for Immigrant and Refugee Seniors – Financial Security**

	Eligibility	Factors affecting Immigrants and Refugees
<b>Canada Pension Plan (CPP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Available from age 65, though may take a permanently reduced CPP retirement pension as early as age 60</li> <li>- Provides earnings-related pensions for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- retirees who have participated in the paid workforce</li> <li>- individuals who have become disabled, and</li> <li>- benefits for dependents of disabled or deceased contributors</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Funded through equal contributions of employers and employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Late migration and/or difficulties with labour market barriers may impact immigrant and refugees' ability to build earnings-related pension credits through CPP</li> </ul>
<b>Old Age Security (OAS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guaranteed annual income for seniors (age 65+)</li> <li>- regardless of whether the recipient has participated in the workforce</li> <li>- Funded through General Tax Revenues</li> <li>- Indexed to inflation, not average wages</li> <li>- Available to most Canadians 65+ provided residence requirements are met</li> <li>- Flat rate benefit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be a Canadian citizen or a legal resident at the time the OAS pension application is approved</li> <li>- have lived in Canada at least 10 years after age 18 to qualify</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Amount of benefit is shaped by how long the recipient has lived in Canada. To get full benefits an individual must have lived in Canada for 40 years after age 18</li> </ul>
<b>Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guaranteed annual income for seniors (age 65+)</li> <li>- regardless of whether the recipient has participated in the workforce</li> <li>- Funded through General Tax Revenues</li> <li>- Indexed to inflation, not average wages</li> <li>- Income-tested benefit (ie different rates apply for couples vs. singles)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most immigrant seniors immigrate to Canada through the family class program. Family Class immigrant seniors are ineligible for GIS, spousal allowance and survivors allowance while sponsored (up to a maximum of 20 years after arrival)</li> <li>- Partial benefits may be paid to those who do not meet the residency requirements.</li> <li>- Low income immigrant seniors who receive partial OAS may qualify for enhanced GIS supports</li> </ul>
<b>International Security Agreements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordinates the OAS and CPP programs with the social security programs of other countries for the benefit of individuals who have lived and/or worked in Canada and participating countries. The agreements help eligible individuals qualify for old age, disability and survivor benefits from both Canada and other countries. Canada has signed agreements with 56 countries, primarily in Europe and the Americas. Notable exceptions include: Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, China and all of Africa (with the exception of Morocco).</li> </ul>	

## 8.4 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



### Discussion

*What suggestions do you have for actions which would address any of the issues raised today?*

**Example:**

- **What possible program or service ideas do you have to better outreach to seniors from smaller ethno-cultural communities?**
- **Are there suggested strategies to increase engagement with policy makers on specific income security and employment areas?**
- **How can we increase newcomer seniors' access to information and services?**

Afghan Seniors in Action



## 8.5 SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS BY TABLE

### 8.5.1 Table 1

#### **Problems, Issues, Challenges**

- lack English proficiency; harder to learn English at older age
- difficulty navigating Canadian culture; lack knowledge of programs & services
- challenges of finding work
  - language barrier
  - lack Canadian experience and/or education
  - advanced age
- forced to integrate into Canadian society too quickly and have to figure everything out all at once
  - work to support self & family
  - gain Canadian education and/or experience in one's own field
  - explore settlement programs & services
- immigrant seniors isolated in Canada
  - transportation not convenient
  - lack of nearby services (eg. grocery stores)
- government lacks knowledge of the existence & needs of smaller communities
- immigrant class affects accessibility of settlement programs & services

#### **Needs and Potential Solutions**

- more English-learning facilities
  - specific teaching methods catered to older learners
- more funding for translators
  - help immigrants navigate language & cultural barriers
- mentorship programs
  - one-on-one attention to guide immigrants through Canadian society according to their unique individual settlement needs
  - help immigrants form connections in new society
  - keep immigrants engaged in society
- more flexible settlement programs & services (to work around work hours)
- better access to information – availability & accessibility of programs / services
  - more outreach programs – deliver information to isolated seniors
  - allows isolated seniors to voice their needs
- more support for small communities to nurture & support integration into Canadian society; immigrants can make use of their experiences and reach their full potential if given the right support
  - meeting space
  - culturally-specific counseling services
- more networking opportunities
  - immigrants learn about available programs & services
  - government & public programs learn about the needs of immigrants

## Existing Solutions

- Ministry of Social Development offers employment program
  - foreign credentialing services
- ‘Welcome to Coquitlam’ event
  - welcomes new immigrants to city
  - provides information and connections to programs & services
  - provides opportunity to connect with government officials (*participants noted this should be replicated throughout other communities*)
- local immigration partnerships in BC
  - partnering with key organizations to improve conditions for newcomers

### 8.5.2 Table 2

What actions could be implemented to address challenges faced by immigrant seniors trying to support an entire household on an inadequate income, as well as the challenge faced when professional qualifications don't garner employment worthy of their degrees but cleaning jobs instead.

- About 3 years ago there was a strong campaign for OAS
- The recent increase to 20 years represents a step backwards.
- Different barriers to employment for immigrants in different provinces across Canada.
- fragmentation of programs and policies for immigrants/refugees in Canada, and also call for more supports for English language skill development
- there is a need for a ‘mapping’ of agencies that serve immigrant/refugee seniors; as well as a need for increased collaboration amongst these service providers
- need more dialogue between immigrant/refugee seniors, municipalities and health care organizations
- need more partnerships, eg in supporting programs targeting immigrant/refugee seniors, among health authorities, municipalities and funders like the United Way
- Language (lack of English) is the primary barrier for senior immigrant/refugees - - need to provide financial support for studying English; the question ‘What is your Canadian experience?’ is a big barrier to employment for people of all ages. People need ways to get experience in Canadian jobs.
- there needs to be a funded effort to coordinate information on OAS, GIS, etc. for immigrant/refugee seniors
- some municipalities like Richmond are in the business of “building communities” and offer forums for recent immigrant/refugees
- there is a real need to increase financial supports for immigrant/refugee seniors in BC
- start with the neighbourhood house and services to seniors in each municipality and build on these
- 411 seniors has English programs and volunteers teaching other seniors and they're very popular; the seniors' centres have an extremely valuable role to play in providing supports of all kinds; funding cutbacks have had a huge impact on their programs though; 411 will nevertheless continue to train seniors who speak different languages to teach English to the seniors in their communities
- collaborative efforts are worth undertaking

- collaborative skills need to be shared more widely
- Vancouver Coastal Health has pulled back from meeting community needs in terms of funding
- Fraser Health has given research into multicultural seniors a higher profile and more funding
- pre-arrival stage for immigrants represents an opportunity for informing seniors and families
- there are 152 dialects spoken in Burnaby; English language skills are important to acquire
- the large communities of immigrant/refugees don't have the problems that the smaller ones do
- the Seniors Advocate has an advisory council of some 30 people, and these people will be accessible to multicultural seniors due to representation on the council
- the Seniors Advocate is interested in making the MSP more accessible to seniors in BC
- it is important to note that many older immigrant/refugee women are illiterate in their home language
- Resources and Further information
  - [Research Gate](#) page on Sharon Koehn's SFU website for an article co-authored with Charmaine Spencer, which documents the barriers and forms of discrimination experienced by immigrant/refugee seniors
  - COSCO News offers coverage of immigrant/refugee seniors' issues
  - Most community newspapers have a seniors' column; look to these papers for local information
  - Metro Vancouver Cross-Cultural Seniors Network
  - Seniors-led planning tables in the Lower Mainland (UWLM funded)
  - Seniors advisory committees in municipalities, e.g. Vancouver, Richmond, New Westminster

### 8.5.3 Table 3

- There is a need for increased awareness of the contributions that Immigrant and Refugee Seniors bring to the country (experience, education, as well as unpaid/volunteer work and childminding).
- Have mentorship programs (peer support) to welcome the Immigrant and Refugee Seniors to the country, to provide information and referrals. Increase the capacity of seniors to be connectors in their communities (eg through training to become settlement mentors).
- Use of the mass media that already exist in every language to promote awareness of existing services and programs, including targeted programming (eg intergenerational programs, women-only swims)
- There is a need for awareness of the influence of Government-language on how immigrant and refugee seniors are perceived in the broader community
- The group explored the potential for collective data collection. Identify data required by policymakers to support either policy changes or programs and then integrate this data into all policy/program evaluation.
- There is a need to increase the awareness of the unique needs of immigrant and refugee seniors (eg on Local Immigration Partnership tables, etc)
- The lack of core-funding makes it difficult for organizations to engage over the long-term. Existing programming is often short-term (eg 1-2 years) and prioritizes innovation, with little opportunity for ongoing stable funding. Continuous funding would better enable organizations to work more strategically.
- More cooperation between senior groups and organizations. Working together can help to have more impact.

#### 8.5.4 Table 4

- Not all seniors are the same: Refugee seniors can have very different needs from sponsored seniors.
- Fraser Health Diversity Service is developing orientation pamphlets and website to help newcomers to access information on Canadian health care. Available in different languages at community centres, libraries, etc. Could also be made available at the airport.

#### **Language Issues**

- Government funding is not covering the cost of translation.
- There is a need for outreach to seniors who are non-English speakers with age-friendly programs where English is not necessary, (e.g. dancing, gardening, etc.) as lack of translators can be a barrier.
- Promotional materials need to be in all languages –although some seniors are also illiterate in their first language.
- Once seniors become Canadian citizens, they are no longer eligible for language classes.
- Conversation circles/classes on a regular basis can be helpful, especially when senior-specific.

#### **Volunteering Opportunities**

- Seniors at the table expressed a desire for more opportunities for seniors to volunteer to help other seniors in their first language and use their skills. This can also lead to more integration of the community, i.e. seniors helping seniors.

#### **Neighbourhood / Community Action**

- Small Neighbourhood grants are available from the Vancouver Foundation to bring communities together and combat isolation. These grants can provide funding for community gardens, street parties, etc).
- Community programs can combat isolation.
- Also elder abuse and domestic violence issues can sometimes be revealed in these more casual, “non-official settings”
- Neighbourhood community kitchens: Could start from seed funding.
- Involve seniors from same culture in preparation, group meals. To combat isolation, encourage proper nourishment, etc.

#### **Ending Isolation**

- How to reach isolated seniors is a big issue.
- Booths/tables with pamphlets, etc. in malls, libraries, community centres, will attract seniors but also their families/grandchildren who can bring home information in first language for seniors.
- Often seniors are the child minders for the family and would require childcare in order to attend activities and workshops.
- In outer areas, there are less services and isolation may be even greater. Also with more and more development in outer areas, will affordable housing continue to be available? In continually more remote areas, will services become more and more difficult to find and access?
- Families need to be well-advised on what they and their seniors will face when they arrive. Therefore younger generations need to be educated and informed. Be aware of all the potential difficulties to help deter potential elder abuse.

**Social Policy**

- More targeted help is needed, i.e. more social workers to lighten case load and prevent burn out.
- We should be providing a good start for immigrants arriving here, rather than cutting services.
- Address the issue of misinformation which people get before they arrive in Canada, i.e. that they will be able to work in their professions, etc.
- Need to address policy change with government
- Address the issue politically. Involve seniors who can vote. Use our votes to influence change in a helpful direction.



## 8.6 EVALUATION



### Evaluation Form

1. Effectiveness of Presentation (rating 1-5, with 5 being the most effective)

a. Setting the Context	1	2	3	4	5
b. Personal Stories	1	2	3	4	5
c. Small Group Discussion	1	2	3	4	5
d. Sharing Key Ideas	1	2	3	4	5
e. Seniors' Recommendations	1	2	3	4	5

2. What part of the forum was most interesting to you?

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3. What information was entirely new?

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Additional Comments:

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Afghan Seniors in Action



**SOUTH GRANVILLE SENIORS CENTRE** | 55+  
Connecting Adults 55+ to Your Community



**Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.**

## 8.7 EVALUATION FEEDBACK

In total, 32 evaluation forms were collected by forum participants.

Effectiveness of Presentation**	1	2	3	4	5
Setting the Context	-	-	1	12	19
Personal Stories	-	-	1	11	19
Small Group Discussion	-	-	1	13	18
Sharing Key Ideas	-	-	1	14	17
Seniors' Recommendations	-	-	-	11	21

\*\* Rating of 1-5, with 5 being the most effective

What parts of the forum was most interesting?

- small group discussion (mentioned by 10)
- seniors' recommendations (mentioned by 5)
- personal stories (mentioned by 13)
- call to action at the end (mentioned by 1)
- networking (mentioned by 1)
- sharing key ideas (mentioned by 1)
- diversity of opinions (mentioned by 1)
- developing strategies to assist immigrants & refugees (mentioned by 2)

What information was entirely new?

- existing programs and services
- stories about the Taliban (at small group discussion)
- Afghan Seniors in Action group
- Seniors need child care in order to participate in English language classes and other programs. Senior immigrants are so concerned
- about children's welfare that several of their recommendations addressed the needs of children instead of the needs of seniors.
- existing seniors' issues & solutions
- education programs
- affordable housing grant for volunteers
- restrictions that seniors face: income, eligibility for services, etc.
- recommendations from seniors' perspectives
- policy changes on sponsorship
- seniors' unique personal stories
- lack of English language training available to new immigrants
- interest-bearing transportation loan for refugees

- plight of refugees

#### **Additional Comments**

- well organized forum
- appreciated opportunity to share personal stories
- smaller discussion tables would give attendees more time to speak
- language barrier = cultural barrier = financial barrier
- need more seminars about “senior information”
- seniors need to work together with organizations to integrate & empower themselves; collaboration is the key to action
- disconnect between seniors’ recommendations & discussion
- wish for contact list, forum summary notes, & ppt data sources to be shared with attendees
- as Canadians, we are ignorant of our own policies regarding immigrants & refugees
- need greater involvement from high level decision makers

## 8.8 SPEAKERS LIST

**Chris Friesen** - Chris Friesen has been the Director of Settlement Services, Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS of BC), one of Canada's largest multicultural immigrant serving agencies for over twenty years. He is a frequent speaker on a wide range of immigrant and refugee settlement related topics both in Canada and abroad. Chris is currently leading a multi-year initiative to design and build a Metro Vancouver Regional Service Centre for Refugees located in Vancouver. In late 2015, this 58,000sf facility will become the first facility of its kind in the world, bringing together a variety of community and government services and organizations that will meet the immediate needs of refugees settling in BC. Among his many community leadership roles, Chris is currently President and a founding member of the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA/ACSEI) as well as co-chair of the National Settlement Council.

**Shapiri Pashan** - Shapiri is the President of Afghan seniors in Action, and has been living in Canada for 13 years. She has a master degree in science and was a high school teacher in Afghanistan before having to flee. She also has a certificate in accounting as well as English from VCC. Despite having higher education and internationally acquired work experience Shapiri has struggled to secure employment in Canada.

**Alicia Zapata** - Alicia is originally from Colombia. She has been in Canada for 26 years. She has a Bachelor degree in Social Work. Alicia worked as a Regional Chief for the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, as well as an Anthropology and Community Development Professor, Emergency and Disaster Coordinator, and Community Development Coordinator for a Swiss non-profit organization.

**Gulpaki Amani** -- Gulpaki has been in Canada for 7 years and is one of the key and active member of Afghan Seniors in Action Program. She was a teacher in one of the refugee camp school in Peshawar Pakistan. Her experience having to flee Afghanistan, teach refugee children, providing education for future generations along with working with Afghan children in an after school program in Burnaby has made her more strong , powerful and confident to be here today and share her story with you.

**Miriam Villalba** -- Miriam came to Canada 23 years ago from her home country Uruguay. Miriam has a bachelor degree in Education. Miriam worked as an Elementary School teacher and as a University professor in Uruguay and Venezuela. Previously she also worked in the psychological recovery field with children diagnosed with Down syndrome. Miriam also previously owned a daycare, and an elementary school (grades 1st, 2nd, and 3rd).

**Latifa Jawansheer** -- Latifa came to Canada on Sep 11 2006 having fled Afghanistan 12 years earlier via Pakistan. Latifa was in her first year of secondary school when she fled Afghanistan. In Pakistan she managed to complete her high school, obtained a diploma in project management, thereafter working for the UNHCR as a project manager. Latifa also has credentials in teacher training, counselling as well as a social service worker diploma. Latifa has been working with the Afghan community particularly Afghan Seniors for over 8 years now.

**Jamila Naqib** --Jamila has a master degree in science and teacher training. She has been living in Canada for almost 5 years and is one of the key members of the Afghan seniors program. Jamila is a widow and lives by herself in a shared apartment in Burnaby. Previously, Jamila worked for 10 years with the International Rescue Committee in Peshawar Pakistan, providing training for post-secondary education

in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Unfortunately, Jamila has many health challenges that currently prevent her from working.

**Ana Maria Jimenez** -- Ana Maria came to Canada 30 years ago from El Salvador. Ana Maria has a Sociology and Social Work Bachelor Degree. She worked in the medical field as part of an interdisciplinary team for kidney transplant, cardiology, and gynecology. Also, she was part of the Ministry of Children and Family staff working with children.

## 8.9 SUMMARY OF ATTENDEES

Amani, Gulpaki – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Balbutin, Grace – BC Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support  
Carcamo, Mirta – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Carvalho, Nadia – City of Vancouver  
Contreras, Elizabeth – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Dean, Elsie – 411 Seniors Centre  
Doorani, Hafiza – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Dudley, Alison – Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, & Skills Training  
Edelson, Nathan – 42nd Street Consulting  
Facher, Aliya – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Fakih, Sana – Fraser Health  
Fong, Maylene – Vancouver Coastal Health  
Friesen, Chris – ISS of BC  
Garcia, Chris – Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, & Skills Training  
Gomez, Clemencia – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Grewal, Mohinder – Metro Vancouver Cross Cultural Seniors Network  
Hill, Alan – City of Richmond  
Hopkins, Shannon  
Howell-Jones, Robin – CIC  
Jawansheer, Latifa – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Jimenez, Ana Maria – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Kane, Karen – ISS of BC  
Khalighi, Zahra – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Kloppenborg, Anne – City of Vancouver  
Koehn, Sharon – SFU  
Langolf, Gudrun – Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC  
Lidyard, Dellie – Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee  
Lofthouse, Jean – Ministry of Social Development & Social Innovation  
Logan, Lorraine – Council of Senior Citizens Organizations of BC  
Mackenzie, Isobel – Seniors Advocate of BC  
McLaren, Norma Jean – 42nd Street Consulting  
Medina, Sandra – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Meherzad, Ziagul – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Morrissey, Chris – Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee  
Murguia, Monica – 411 Seniors Centre  
Naqib, Jamila – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Newton, Robyn – SPARC  
Ng, Jennifer – SFU  
Ovington, Helga – City of Coquitlam  
Pashan, Shapiri – Afghan Seniors in Action  
Perrin, Karl – MOSAIC  
Pinto, Eliana – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Pitman, Beverley – United Way  
Ramirez, Leo – Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society  
Rojas, Nolfra – South Granville Seniors Centre

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Samim, Abdul Fatah – ISS of BC  
Shahabuddin, Mehrangiz – ISS of BC  
Sharma, Anita – Ministry of Social Development & Social Innovation  
Sherrell, Kathy – ISS of BC  
Solorzano, Juan – Vancouver Coastal Health  
Spears, Karen – Ministry of Social Development & Social Innovation  
Spindari, Saleem – Metro Vancouver Cross Cultural Seniors Network  
Sutherland, Jessie – Funding Home  
Tobler, Silvia – Legal Services Society  
Torrejon, Maria Jose – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Villalba, Miriam – South Granville Seniors Centre  
Wang, James – Mayors’ Council  
Zapata, Alicia – South Granville Seniors Centre

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