

Summary of NSIIP Immigrant Focus Group

Why did you choose to live on the North Shore?

Good weather, natural resources and environment: beautiful mountains and beaches (20 comments)

- Environment is good. West van is the best place to live , compare to Coq, no pollution , schools / elementary schools are the best in the Metro Van, Mountain is beautiful
- Kids love the sea and mountains
- First the environment
- According to Feng Shui, a Chinese philosophical system of harmonizing everyone with the surrounding environment, a home facing the sea with a mountain at the back is the best for its family members
- Weather is good in NS – “I love rain”
- Good view: sea, mountain, trails, hiking,
- Nature. Family here told me it was better here than everywhere else because of the weather – I like rain.
- That the natural environment was also appealing and resembles the North of Iran.
- Beautiful
- Good weather
- Compared to the rest of the world, this is beautiful. We have to be grateful.
- Attracted to the quiet; beautiful view of the water
- Compared to the rest of the world, this place is wonderful
- Mountains
- Beautiful natural setting
- Beautiful natural setting. Hiking trails. Mountains, forest, ocean.
- Enjoys the combination of a residential area and proximity to downtown, as well as proximity to beaches (several participants agree)
- Nature, parks, safety
- Hiking trails and mountains
Small town / less urban / more traditional feel

Friends, family members and people from same ethnic community live on the North Shore; easy access to services and help in first language (22 comments)

- Friends, Iranians living in NS, Iranian community; need friends’ help. At the beginning, I had language challenges and need information in my home language.

- Friends and families are living in here already
- Speak Farsi in my neighbourhood; speak Farsi everywhere, when shopping and banking, etc.
- Seven participants of fist group chose moving to North Shore because friends and families are here.
- Five people of April 20ths group had family here.
- Boyfriend on North Shore.
- One person did research and found that the North Shore has a large Iranian population. He came here for that reason and he likes it and will stay here. He likes the “Persian Area” because he can find many business and friends who speak his first language.
- One individual likes both the Iranian atmosphere for weekends, and appreciates more multiculturalism at work. He prefers to have a strong Iranian Community for one or 2 years, and then disperse after settling. Another person agrees.
- It`s like living in Persia; many people in the area are Iranian. Wider Iranian community.
- Many seniors came here because members of their family were already here.
- Most are seniors who came after their children came here to study.
- Looks like Iran
- Feels like living in Persia
- Most participants has a family here. Some have only friends here. Many seniors came here to follow their children who are going to university, etc.
- Persian restaurants
- Looks like Iran
- There are Persian people, stores, restaurants and family doctors
- One of my friends lived here and recommended it - said it was nice -
- many Iranians - feels comfortable to have a connection to the Iranian community
- Other participants of various ethnicities also came because of family / friends.
- One participant moved here to be with her husband
- One participant moved here because she found it more people

Diversity of population and culture: more chances to practice English (6 comments)

- Wanted kids to adapt to the local community so choose a place not dominated by other Chinese immigrants
- Majority of residents here are from different cultures but all get along well. “People here really respect each other.” Chinese, Iranian, Caucasians, all are nice to each other here. Not like that in Richmond or downtown.
- There were many opportunities to speak English because there are not many folks from Taiwan.
- There is a good balance among many cultures of origin – this makes it easy for me to join in groups / lectures / reading clubs – receive lots of good info by word of mouth. But how else can I get information about more activities?
- Lots of Persian shops and restaurants

- Persian restaurants, shops

People and neighbours are friendly: feel safe in the community (19 comments)

- Neighbours are nice and friendly; people are very nice
- Follow my feeling: I went to Richmond but did not like the environment in Richmond and then drove around and felt NS is a place to live; first on feeling
- Sense that there is a community of people who care and who teach them
- Lawyers and artists from the middle class people; more professional people around; children's parents are well educated
- One woman knew no one but heard from a friend it was a good place.
- People on North Shore are nice, polite, welcoming, and inclusive.
- Our neighbourhood is very nice. Recent years have seen more immigrants moving into their neighbourhood.
- They don't hear complaints about immigrants here like they do elsewhere.
- We find people very friendly here, compared to say Vancouver.
- Sense of community
- Caring people here
- There are many people here who want to help and teach
- Safe, but not as safe as it used to be (some people said they do not go out after dark anymore)
- Safe – low crime rate compared to other municipalities
- Quiet and Peaceful
- Safety
- Safety
- Quiet neighborhoods, safe (not as safe anymore; more robberies, car theft—now she doesn't feel safe, although not all feel this way)
- Feels very peaceful here, and also safe to live here without my husband (others live without their husbands, who are I country of origin, and agree)

Good education system, especially for children (14 comments)

- The education for kids
- Stayed in friend's home in Surrey and lived in Surrey for few weeks and then searching the education and was advised by friends to move on the North Shore
- Moved from Vancouver as there are too many students in Vancouver's schools speaking in Chinese. On the North Shore, there are fewer Chinese students and it give kids more chances to practice English
- One person had a friend recommend the North Shore – but he would like to move because he wants to be closer to universities and colleges.
- One woman heard that public education on the North Shore was excellent.

- Good schools
- They did research on the Internet before they arrived. Knew of Vancouver already; researched different municipalities; looked at school rankings.
- Priority was the schools
- Daughter wanted IB diploma so attracted to West Van High; school recommended by sister
- Started out living in Richmond then worked in Vancouver; then married and lived in Burnaby to be close to SFU but always attracted to downtown for parks and events; so moved downtown. Then, had small children and didn't want kids going to low-ranked Vancouver schools. So wanted kids to go to WV school; did 2 years of living downtown but kids commuting to WV for school which was hard on the family and extended family. Then family decided to move to WV. "We learned the hard way" that the North Shore is the best place to live. Tough experiences with daycares, schools, moving, commuting. "I don't think I'm going to move to anywhere else within the next few years."
- Having kids happy in school brings a feeling of being settled also to the parents.
- It is safe for kids and there are good schools.
- I heard the schools were good here (another participant seconded this, and another)
- Quality of the education for our children – we have heard that NS schools are excellent compared to other areas

Convenience: easy access to shops, facilities, community agencies and services (10 comments)

- Found the services are easy to access, like drug stores, etc.
- They like the library; offers Reading Club, English corner; large area for kids
- Access to shopping and community resources and services
- Amenities
- Shopping
- Small town feel in West Van – not many high rises – tried the atmosphere in coffee shops
- Insurance cost on the North Shore is cheaper
- Like the library and community centre
- Libraries
- Enjoys the library

Easy access to services, i.e. settlement services and language classes (8 comments)

- The North Shore Multicultural Society gives the strongest support of any service agency in any community I've ever experienced.
- Good HealthCare in Canada
- Meeting people like Liz / learning about classes like this are so useful for learning about Canadian Culture, but I was surprised that it took me over 5 years to learn about it.

- Free classes in churches and private tutoring have helped – but the class at the library was most helpful. We especially appreciate the volunteers Liz invites. Confidence and feeling of welcome transfers to other situations like soccer games
- The conversation circle atmosphere improves confidence more than lecture-style classes
- Like the English classes offered at the John Braithwaite Community Centre.
- The schools also welcome the moms. The book club helps us meet one another as well (library) these things support us to build a network of friends.
- Easy access to services

Transportation is convenient: easy to get around; no traffic jam; easy to park (7 comments)

- Convenient on public transit, and traffic; easy to get around (some people don't agree)
- No traffic jam
- One person tried downtown first – felt more comfortable on the North Shore. Close enough to downtown and far enough away.
- Easy to get around.
- In 1999 Richmond was quieter than it is now. They had no car and relied on bus; then a bus strike in 2000. Had to rely on kindness of boss to drive her home after waitressing shift. On the North Shore bus is very convenient.
- Near downtown, near UBC, express bus to UBC
- Easy to park

Enjoyed the entertainments and recreation activities (3 comments)

- Block party
- Good recreation
- The Community Centre is so good. Although kids programs are a little pricey compared with other places.

Gender equality (2 comments)

- Women's future is better here because in Persia, men and women are not equal.
- Equality between men and women makes it feel like home. Mother is educated and couldn't abide being treated as less than equal for either herself or her daughters.

Other

- Quaint

What does settlement and integration mean for you?

Making/having friends here creates a sense of belonging (12 comments)

- Making friends here is important so you feel connected. Even if they're immigrants as well, it gives you activities to do and makes you feel settled. Immigrant friends share their experiences so you can also learn from them.
- When daughter was in university and she had a home and friends, she felt at home.
- Easy to make friends here; had a hard time making friends in Montreal. People are more open here, have less stress which makes them more open. "I didn't have any problems making new friends."
- Having people in your network if you are sick / have an emergency (many others agree)
- Connecting with local people, for example through hiking programs
- Friends
- Health care is accessible, doctors treat him well, he has friends including Canadian friends
- Friendly neighbourhood, same like you live in an area you feel like a home
- Friends.
- Easy to make friends with people from the same culture because they share the same background. Locals are friendly and curious to know you, but not true friends.
- Making friends easily
- All participants said the friendly neighbourhood is important (April 21th's group)

Better English skills to communicate with others (8 comments)

- Can speak English, have my parents with me
- I will feel my English is good enough when I can understand everything on the TV; when I can speak English as good as Canadians.
- Be Fluent in English so we can communicate with others. Classmates of April 20th agreed.
- Good English Skills
- Ability to communicate with people even if your English isn't perfect
- I feel settled now, but I need more language courses to become a better communicator in English and feel integrated
- Feel comfortable and confident talking to people
- Be Fluent in English so we can communicate with others. Classmates agree.

Side talk: What do you see as the difference between language skills and communication skills? You can use body language or find a word rather than the "perfect word" or the "right word."

Engaging in local activities, i.e. doing volunteer jobs; attending events; visiting landmarks (6 comments)

- Becoming involved – volunteering – however this is a new concept for many of us – support to learn how / where to volunteer would be nice. It can be
- Participating in events or volunteering
- Cooking programs made me feel welcome – I now understand when I go to the grocery store
- Visiting museums and landmarks gives me a sense of belonging.
- Yes, they feel it's home; they belong here
- I have 2 daughters and if we stayed back there, they'd have no future. Here, we are at home.

Employment and job security (5 comments)

- The most important thing is finding a job so you're not stressed about financial issues. Also a job gives you more interaction with outside society.
- Have a job (same as in my country); now I have to start from the beginning, it is hard
- The most important factor is finding a job. We are very educated but we can't find work in our field of origin. We need to find jobs that use our skills, and a network of friends – both colleagues and friends for children.
- Every single participant (of the April 20th group) agrees finding a job is the most important issue. One woman states her husband must travel back and forth between Iran and Canada to work, and has no opportunity to gain citizenship. She says this situation is not logical.
- The most important factor is finding a job. Doesn't have to be exactly in our field, but preferably in a related field.

Easy access to services that help the settlement process (3 comments)

- Accessible to services
- Some ingredients are organizations and supports like the Library, JBCC, and NSNH
- Free programs take away a burden
- Education – sufficient number of academic English classes (Cap U) to eliminate wait lists.

Owning a property (3 comments)

- Buying a house
- Buying a home is also important.
- Settlement is finding a home (physically)

Understanding of the culture (1 comment)

- Understanding the culture

What people, programs, services, activities, etc. helped you to settle and integrate?

Immigrant service providers, i.e. NSMS and MOSAIC and their programs and workshops, i.e. English classes, employment and settlement counselling services, driving in winter workshop, and tax clinic, et. (28 comments)

- NSMS: English classes; consultation for employment, settlement counselling services
- Just here – NSMS
- NSMS has been very helpful
- Chinese people has an organization that helps immigrants, i.e. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in Vancouver
- NSMS / MOSAIC Language Centre. Learned about it within 1 week. 1 person from a friend, 1 from the airport / internet. 3rd and 4th person – word of mouth 1 or 2 weeks. 1 person from Philippines came after a year. 3 more folks heard by word of mouth and came within 1 week. Another person 2days. 1 person waited 5 years to have perfect English before accessing NSMS (Japanese speaker)
- Services at the airport / internet
- Information sessions, Employment Center. Tax return workshop. Driving in winter workshops.
- MOSAIC. Skills Connect. Training Innovations.
- NSMS was most frequent.
- NSMS English classes; help with medical insurance enrollment also at NSMS
- Everybody went to NSMS
- Good conversation classes at JBCC
- Husband took ESL classes with SUCCESS; they gave him a lot of information about Canada; very helpful.
- MOSAIC in North Vancouver gave English classes and many other services.
- Skills Connect program, English classes, employment services at NSMS were all helpful on arrival.
- North Shore Multicultural Society
- English classes
- Counsellors
- NSMS

- MOSAIC Language Centre
- Skills Connect
- CIC Website “Your first hundred days in Canada.”
- This Program (language class)
- English Classes at NSMS
- Many participants find these programs very visible and easy to find
- Information sessions, Employment Center. Tax return workshop. Driving in winter workshops.
- MOSAIC. Skills Connect. Training Innovations.
- NSMS was most frequent.

Libraries and their programs (8 comments)

- Library
- Library is helpful; Kids programs,
- Library helped with story time and info on how to improve children’s English. Strong Start Program for Children also helped.
- Also library was helpful
- Libraries
- Library
- The library is very important for us – the class – learning about books – meeting Liz – who makes the library feel like our home
- Library helped with story time and info on how to improve children’s English. Strong Start Program For Children also helped.

Schools and SWIS program (6 comments)

- A few participants said they received help from SWIS (April 21th’s group)
- School Board has Chinese settlement workers
- One year for me is enough to integrate; connected through children’s school that have information in Chinese which is very helpful; felt comfortable in the community and the Mont school makes me to feel in a big family.
- Education system (free) – people were helpful
- Education System
- Teachers

Community agencies and community centres (5 comments)

- Women's Center
- Rec Center
- North Shore Neighborhood House

- John Braithwaite Community Centre
- Lucas Centre

Neighbours and friends (4 comments)

- Neighbour is very good: At the first day a neighbour knocked my door and gave me some information and materials about my neighbourhood
- One person from a friend
- Friends helped with a lot when they arrived.
- Friendship Circle

Church programs (1 comment)

- Church Programs (Highland United - ongoing ESL Class)

Cultural and festival events in the community (1 comment)

- Easter: Beautiful garden, egg hunting, children love it

Others:

- One woman had small kids so no time for classes; learned everything on her own.
- Lewis (?)
- Medical Insurance

What was difficult about settling on the North Shore? What caused you the biggest problems?

High living cost (12 comments)

- Cost of living
- Housing cost
- Expensive place to live
- Housing prices.
- Housing was expensive
- Housing is very expensive
- Dental expenses are high and when they convert Persian money, it's very expensive.
- Daughter has to drive to Surrey daily for work and paying the toll is expensive.

- Dental expenses are very high here.
- We are spending Persian money here, so, with inflation, it is very expensive.
- Housing prices – both rental and home purchase – are prohibitive.
- Price of houses is very high

Hard to get credits at the beginning for rental and mortgage (3 comments)

- Newcomers need support to find a house / rent a house/ buy a house / buy a car. Even if you have financial means it is hard to get credit. Many people have family members co-sign.
- One person uses cash even for home rental / buy a car.
- One person was turned down 3 times to rent an apartment because he was not able to show credit history.

Employment barriers (12 comments)

- When you apply for a job as a newcomer they require Canadian Experience. The upgrading requirements are too high. It is very costly to recertify and it is no guarantee of a job in your field.
- Almost all Iranians and other Immigrants are skilled workers and had high positions in country of origin – but now must start from zero even though they are not young.
- Finding a job was a barrier
- Mismatch between skills and opportunities. Skilled people end up with entry-level jobs.
- So hard to find a job; many qualifications needed.
- Missing: proficiency recognition. “That’s the biggest part that’s missing here.” 11 years of teaching experience in China; SUCCESS worker told her it was unlikely she could get a job teaching because of her English level. “So basically I stopped thinking about going to work here.” She heard a story where kids laughed at Chinese teacher’s accent which discouraged her greatly.
- After 13 years in Canada not working, the well-publicized teacher shortage had her go to the BCTF about the possibility of her getting work as a teacher. Again they made her feel it was almost impossible. “That’s the biggest criticism I have from when I arrived here.”
- Starting a business here. A woman describes how her husband wanted to start a business but it was too difficult; competition from large, established companies made it difficult for him to attract customers. Also, difficult rules and regulations. Husband persevered but still not satisfied with his level of success.
- Finding a job
- The upgrading requirements are too high. It is very costly to recertify and it is no guarantee of a job in your field. Some specialist doctors in the group state is basically impossible for them to ever practice Medicine on the North Shore
- It is difficult to find work in my field (I am a teacher with a Masters) but finding work is very hard and I don’t know how to move past that.
- It is difficult to build a professional network

Language barriers (11 comments)

- Depends on English skills
- Don't understand the idioms.
- Watching CBC is difficult: don't understand the details, just understand the main idea of the news
- Keep good communication with my daughter's teacher; hard to express my thoughts and feelings
- Settling the first house: lack of communication and bargaining skills, i.e. how to handle complains etc.
- Speaking English.
- Language was no.1 barrier
- Language
- Speaking English.
- There are good programs to bring you up to a basic English level / get you settled – finding programs to move to the next level can be difficult
- Seems like westerners are not that interested in me – feel invisible. Can't communicate due to the language barrier – didn't feel comfortable at first

Hard to access services and programs because of lack of information as well as long waiting list, i.e. hard to find a family doctor; long waiting list for English classes (12 comments)

- For newcomers it is hard to find NSMS
- It is hard to access the services: long waiting list; waited for two weeks to ask a question
- Finding a family doctor. "It takes so long to find a doctor who speaks Mandarin."
- Doctor is not on North Shore; office is far away.
- Woman at high risk of breast cancer can't get genetic testing here. She must wait for it. (But she gets annual mammograms.)
- Wait lists for English classes at all levels.
- Lack of programming for immigrants (eg. English Classes) in West Vancouver.
- Why does the government discontinue funding for programs like the book club?
- There are not enough settlement and job finding programs – there are long wait lists even for low level classes
- Don't know the events in the community: i.e. on the Halloween, I did not know what is happening on the North Shore
- Do not know where to find volunteer opportunities
- How do we find out how our kids can get into UBC? We hear there are different requirements for Canadian Graduates than for International Students. We didn't know this. How do we find out the rules? Courses are structured differently. And it is difficult to make up lost time. It would be helpful to have this info as soon as possible. We went to the school counsellor.

Hard to make friends: hard to connect with people who have lived here for long time - feel living “on the edge of the society” (11 comments)

- Need friends, but not easy here to get new friends especially at this age,
- Few chances to connect with people who have lived here for long time
- In North Van, making new friends is very difficult. It is a problem not for new immigrants but also for Canadians.
- I feel I live on the edge of the society. I don't know what is happening in the Canadian society, even I have a lot of Chinese friends here, I am not in the Canadian society
- My son felt hard to communicate with classmates, felt lonely and cried every night, no friends at school and no help
- I have been here for two years but not feel it is my home. I still feel I am a stranger here. There are fewer Chinese people living in North Vancouver than in West Vancouver. Nobody can help me in Chinese.
- High school aged kids have a hard time fitting into Canadian society. A mother doesn't want to criticize Canadian kids because it's normal to stick with friends from your own cultural background, but the school kids do tend to group themselves by culture. “I don't know how we can solve this as adults but it's a big problem for society.” Local kids don't need to make friends with new immigrants because they're established. But the immigrant kids do need friends.
- In other countries, kids make friends more easily cross-culturally, with Europeans, Asians.
- They have the right (to not reach out to new immigrants). But what about our children?
- I find it difficult to really mingle with local people – eg. Many parents at my kids' school are working and it's hard to connect / make friends – don't know how to break that barrier
- I thought BC would be similar to the US. Having so many of “our own kind” means we don't have to mingle outside of our group as we did in the States.

No enough recreation and activities, especially for kids and youth (4 comments)

- Not enough indoor activity for kids (that I am aware of). Need more activities like “Go Bananas” for rainy days. Or Cinemas. Miss theaters in Iran that are only for children – very few movies for children on the North Shore. Indoor activities are especially important when it rains.
- Not enough activities for older kids – lack of martial arts programming. Too quiet for youth – shops close too early (for youth and adults)
- The quiet is nice but West Van is boring for youth. Shops close early. Not enough choices of recreation programs that youth actually want to participate in – can't find a martial arts program in West Van for my son.
- There is a lot of growth – more infrastructures is needed to prevent traffic congestion.

Lack of understanding of the culture; cultural shock (7 comments)

- Difficult to interact with neighbours: don't know what to do, what I must to do, what I should not do
- Lack of understanding of the culture
- Heard that Canadians are not friendly, i.e. knocking neighbour's door without an appointment are not appreciated; Idea of block party is for people to meet on the street rather than in a house
- Story: One day I was on the street and accidentally hit on a lady. I put my hand on her shoulder and said sorry, which is common in my home country. The lady was mad and asked why "you touch me". I felt bad as I did not know it is not acceptable in Canada.
- Cultural shock – children have Canadian friends who want to have sleep-over; she was fearful of her daughter sleeping at a stranger's house
- Culture shock
- Difficulties – At NSMS they expect us to do things their way – Eng teacher told me my way is wrong – in Liz's class she is interested in learning our way of doing things. This made me feel more confident – the informality really helps

Ethnic enclaves (1 comment)

- The North Shore is a barrier for Iranian people to get fluent in English because you can always go to the store and connect with people in Persian. I've decided to move away in part for improvement.

Not enough ethnic food and restaurants (2 comments)

- No enough Chinese food
- Lack of high quality Chinese restaurant

Challenges of transportation i.e. traffic congestion and difficulty of commuting between City of Vancouver and North Shore (7)

- Getting back is difficult – the bridge
- Transportation is not good: there is only one bus at House bay and run every half hour
- Traffic on the bridges – routes to downtown.
- Sea Busses should be more frequent and there should be more bus lines across into downtown.
- Traffic on the bridges – routes to downtown.
- Busses can be slow, lots of traffic congestion
- Difficulty of commuting to UBC – what about another Sea Bus? West Van to UBC?

Away from family members and hard to apply visa for parents (1 comment)

- Challenge of my parents getting visa to come. If I my parents could come, I would have felt more comfortable

Not a safe place (2 comments)

- West Vancouver is not so safe; many drugs
- Streets are too dark.

Lack of volunteer opportunities (1 comment)

- Very difficult to find volunteer work.

Others:

- No Iranian embassy in Canada so they struggle with paperwork; it all has to go through the US
- There is no Iranian Embassy in Canada.
- I have been here for almost one year. It will takes at least 5 years to integrate as I have to involve myself in Canadian culture, have to be more flexible, be open minded to accept other culture, need to know the other culture then understand it and then accept it. There are many stages.

Side talk (April 20th)

Do you feel, beyond the job piece, a sense of belonging on the North Shore?

Yes – just on the North Shore – several people. Yes North Shore and beyond.

What could be done to assist immigrants achieve a greater sense of belonging to the North Shore?

Increase accessibility of information about services and programs for newcomers, i.e. increase awareness of services information; offer more employment services, English classes as well as offer subsidy of community programs (13 comments)

- To share the information with newcomers, teach newcomers where to get the information and who can help them to get the information
- Where to join communication groups; where to improve communication skills.
- Toastmasters clubs is a good place to start. Thousands in the world and hundreds in BC.
- One woman asks, Why does the government cut services to immigrants?. I.e. Diploma program at Lucas Centre, now must go downtown for that program.
- Professional courses at my language level – I feel confident to take courses toward becoming a practicing accountant based on my language level, yet my English is not sufficient for admission.
- Programs like the one Liz runs (language program)
- Higher levels of language education / courses should be available
- There is a gap between what is taught in the classroom in our country of origin and our real language needs in Canada – there is a need for programming that helps us bridge / learn to use our language / access services
- One participant can't find a GP despite calling in at many offices. More GPs would be helpful.
- Suggestion: join a club that you have interest; then you feel easy to talk with other people
- Continuing English Classes – these classes help. I have heard there is a decrease in budget.
- We will take more classes – we will go to MOSAIC BLC for level 8. It would be great to have Level 8 at NSMS.
- Support finding an appropriate job (related to my field)
- One woman would like reduced rate for fitness membership at Rec Centres.

Create more volunteer opportunities (9 comments)

- Volunteer is a good way to engage in the community; can start at the children's school; easy to volunteer at Children's school but not a specific position
- Volunteering at school library where to meet and talk with other volunteers; always do volunteering; building up relations
- Volunteering with my son's team help's me have fun even though I am quite shy. Pushing yourself forward to try something.
- Volunteered with NSMS and the Canadian Cancer Society and as a Lab Tech at UBC. Nice that I can volunteer in my field. With Canadian Cancer Society it feels good to give back and help others.
- I volunteer
- As a newcomer some people feel like a visitor or guest because you receive so much help and you don't feel you have something to give. Sometimes volunteering makes people feel at home because they no longer feel like a guest – they are contributing and so feel a sense of belonging.
- Volunteering in different places helped her make friends and gave her information.
- Volunteering is helpful - you can volunteer once you learn something
- She wants to find a proper way to contribute to society; "I want to have my voice heard sometimes." Not enough to just volunteer at kids' school. A woman was asked to be interpreter

for Chinese children but ended up being just like a babysitter. Wants something more meaningful and get recognition for it. “You are here. You need to be recognized.”

Offer public education and increase awareness of benefits of immigration (3 comments)

- Would like to see positive contributions of immigrants reflected in media; not just the negative impact. “We bring real value to this society.”
- To give a true picture to new immigrants, should tell story that they’re not just here to use local resources and fight with the local residents.
- More positive stories in media about different cultures and reality of those cultures.

Accommodate religious needs, i.e. creating Prayer rooms in public spaces (1 comment)

- Prayer rooms in public spaces – e.g. Colleges, libraries, so practicing Muslims would feel more comfortable attending programming.

Offer pre-landing services (1 comment)

- Canadian Embassy could offer classes for immigrants prior to going to Canada (an embassy would be needed first)

Create opportunity for newcomer to engage in the community a broader level – raise the voice (1 comment)

- More opportunities for newcomers to engage in the community at a broader level - “I want to have my voice heard sometimes.”

Find out solutions to affordable living (2 comments)

- Landlords could accept bank statements rather than requiring a co-signer.
- New services to support newcomers in renting homes. Control increasing rate of buying and selling homes.

Given our discussion, is there anything that has surprised you (positively or negatively) since you came to the North Shore?

(This section could be removed or combined into the section of good and challenge of living on the North Shore. Pretty much mentioned above.)

Positive:

Safe community and nice environment (7 comments)

- Safety on the NS is surprising
- Everything surprised me
- Clean and great view
- Safety: One day my children forgot to lock the door. I didn't know until I saw the door open but nothing bad happened.
- The weather here is very excellent here because there is very little pollution. The air is clean. The people are calm, and the traffic and hustle and bustle are less here.
- The weather is good
- A bear in my yard. A rabbit in my yard.

Transportation is good (3 comments)

- Driving is good
- I love driving here on North Shore. Good drivers; not rushed.
- The traffic

Friendly people in the community (1 comment)

- People answering her questions are helpful and patient. That was surprising.

Free services for newcomers (1 comment)

- Free services, i.e. free service at airport

Negative

Lack of services (3 comments)

- Lack of English classes and providers
- LINC is not enough because of the long waiting list: 3 – 5 months waiting time
- Long waiting list on the North Shore

Not enough public services (3 comments)

- The garbage collection is every 2 weeks and large industrial bins have lots of garbage surrounding them. This is a bad problem.
- Not enough public bins on the street.
- Garbage collection happens every night in Tehran because of the large population. They also sweep the streets.

High living cost (2 comments)

- High price of houses
- Transit is expensive

Immigrant population (1 comment)

- So many Iranian People – so many medical professional immigrants not working in their field.

Religions shock (1 comment)

- People giving out flyers for their religion / asking me to change religions – this was shocking – I could be killed in my home country if I convert to Christianity.

Homeless (1 comment)

- Many poor people and homeless people downtown. Sometimes on the North Shore on Lonsdale. Everybody chimed in. It's surprising in a country like Canada – I feel empathy toward them.

Food safety (1 comment)

- Injection of hormones into food and this causes an increase in cancer. I was surprised this happens in Canada because in Iran the farmers use pesticides but not hormones. Not sure if this rumor is true.

Do you have any questions or last comments?

Participants had the following questions:

- What does NSMS do? Where is it? Is it free? Are there wait lists?
- What do people born in Canada think of Immigrants and Immigration – do they see it as a benefit, or is there some resentment?



- What is a “real Canadian?”
- Why does the government invite immigrants to come here and then offer fewer and fewer supports
- Why are there so many cuts to programs like this, and is there any way to ameliorate this situation?

Demographics

The table below just illustrates a portion of the demographics as the demographic data of some groups is missing.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Total of 6 Groups
Total Participants	17	11	17	10	16	16	87
Country of origin							
China	13			8	N/A*	3	24
Iran	4	9	17	2		10	42
Japan		1					1
Philippines		1					1
South Korea						2	2
Croatia						1	1
Length of time in Canada							
			N/A	N/A			
less than 1 year	4	6			1	2	13
1 to 3 years	10	4			3	12	29
4 to 5 years	3				1	1	5
More than 5 years		1			11	1	13
Gender							
					N/A		
Male	1	4	4	2		5	16
Female	16	7	13	8		11	55

*N/A: No related data is available for this group.

Occupations: Only a small portion of focus group participants specified their occupation as listed below.

- Medical Doctor: 8
- Technical Inspector: 1
- Banking profession & French Translator: 1
- Engineer: 1
- Nurse: 1
- Dentist: 1
- Interior Designer: 1



- Software Engineer: 1
- Teacher: 3
- Computer Programmer: 1
- Biochemist: 1
- Account: 1