



North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership
STRATEGIC PLAN | 2023-2028



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership acknowledges that our collective work is carried out on the traditional, ancestral and stolen territories of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and the səilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We honor those who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial. We are grateful for the generosity shown by First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples across Canada in welcoming newcomers and im/migrants to their lands.

We also recognize the historical and ongoing harms experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada as a direct result of the racist, colonial systems imposed in this country. As we work towards building communities that are equitable and resilient, we commit to walking in solidarity with Indigenous neighbours and creating opportunities for (un)learning that enable new paths for justice and truth.





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INTRODUCTION

History of NSIIP

The Government of Canada has a long history of funding Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) to support communities to improve the settlement and integration outcomes of new im/migrants.¹ The focus of LIP tables is to mobilize local stakeholders to: 1) foster a systematic approach to engage service provider organizations (SPOs) and other institutions to integrate newcomers; 2) support community-based knowledge-sharing initiatives and local strategic planning; and 3) improve coordination of effective services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration. In British Columbia (BC), the federal government first funded the establishment of LIP structures in 2014.

The North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership (NSIIP) is the LIP for the communities of the North Shore—namely, the District of North Vancouver, the City of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver. NSIIP has a long history of community convening work: it was first established as a local planning table in 2007 by Impact North Shore (formerly the North Shore Multicultural Society) with funding from the United Way of the Lower Mainland. When funding models shifted, the work of the North Shore LIP was supported by the Province of BC’s Welcoming Communities programming stream. In 2014, alongside 17 other LIP structures across the province, NSIIP received funding from the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). IRCC continues to fund NSIIP’s current collective action initiatives.

¹ “Im/migrants” is an inclusive term acknowledging that migration includes everyone that moves from one place to another with the intention of settling, permanently or temporarily.

Since its inception, NSIIP has maintained a strong governance structure and worked collaboratively with over 35 stakeholder groups to support the successful delivery of numerous initiatives research, knowledge mobilization, and capacity building events and trainings. The guiding vision of the partnership is to build a welcoming and inclusive North Shore community in which everyone has opportunities to thrive, contribute and belong. To achieve this vision, NSIIP members work collaboratively with organizations, businesses, and the broader public to enable the successful integration and community participation of all newcomers and im/migrants living, working, and studying across the North Shore.

In addition to the contributions of partner organizations, NSIIP's work is guided and supported by an Immigrant Advisory Council (IAC). Centering the lived experiences and wisdoms of im/migrants living on the North Shore is integral to enabling NSIIP's efforts towards more community-level inclusion and integration. The Council provides feedback to NSIIP on its emerging priorities and areas of work, shares promising practices and research, serves as a resource for local service providers, and enables connections to ethno-specific communities to share information and encourage participation in NSIIP's work.

The Immigrant Advisory Council is comprised of 16+ immigrants who live and/or work on the North Shore. Members are selected by the NSIIP membership for two-year terms with diverse representation of people from a range of countries of origin, length of time in Canada, occupational backgrounds, ages and genders. All Council members also have experience, knowledge, abilities, or skills related to immigrant integration and are non-partisan.

Project Rationale

As a strategic planning body engaged in supporting the development of community-based settlement and integration strategies, the North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership (NSIIP) strives to identify priorities that are aligned with changing local socio-economic contexts

and responsive to the emergent needs of im/migrants. To this end, the goal of the NSIIP Strategic Review & Renewal Project was to confirm the relevance and alignment of the strategic priorities laid out in the original 2016-2019 strategic plan—the themes of which continued to shape the NSIIP's directions and work up until 2022.

NSIIP STRATEGIC PLAN: 2016–2019

The initial federal government contract received by Impact North Shore to convene the NSIIP planning table included the development of a 3-year Settlement and Integration Strategic Plan. To guide this project, NSIIP conducted extensive community research and consultation work between April 2014 and December 2015.

The key findings that emerged set clear direction for the priorities, goals and objectives put forward in the NSIIP Strategic Plan 2016–2019, including the following thematic areas:

1. Access to Information and Services
2. Community Connections and Intercultural Relationships
3. Employment
4. Civic Engagement (formerly called “Representation”)

EXTENSION OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2020–2022

In March 2020, at the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the individual and collective capacity of NSIIP members to address to emerging systemic barriers to im/migrant integration and inclusion was challenged in unforeseen ways. Rather than investing resources into the development of new strategic directions at a time of environmental volatility, the NSIIP planning table decided to extend the priorities and goals of the original Strategic Plan. Between 2020 and 2022, NSIIP developed more streamlined annual strategic documents to articulate emerging community trends and build flexibility into the action-oriented efforts of the planning table.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW NSIIP STRATEGIC PLAN: 2023–2028

For im/migrant communities on the North Shore, in British Columbia, and across Canada, the impacts of the pandemic were significant and profound. When examining im/migrant community-level outcomes related to COVID-19, it is clear that the pandemic deepened existing inequities in our systems and institutions and exacerbated im/migrant exclusion; racism and stigmatization; health vulnerabilities; poverty and access to secure housing; and barriers to labour market integration.

Other national trends surfaced new challenges in supporting the integration of im/migrants at a local level. These factors included, but were not limited to: changes in migration flows and the priorities identified in Canada's expanding immigration system; a volatile economic landscape that included lay-offs, high unemployment rates, increased costs of living; and declining mental and physical health resulting from isolation and decreased social and community ties.

This report is the culmination of a process of strategic review and renewal focused on examining the emerging needs of im/migrant communities across the North Shore in order to identify future NSIIP priorities.





NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY PROFILE

Similar to many other communities across Canada, im/migration is a driving force of population growth on the North Shore. Census 2021 data indicates that the North Shore population grew to a total of 190,410, an increase of 5% as compared to Census 2016. Within the North Shore region, the City of North Vancouver experienced a higher population growth rate of 10% as compared to the neighbouring municipalities of District of North Vancouver (3% growth rate) and District of West Vancouver (4% growth rate).

Notably, the relative size of the immigrant population compared to the overall population has increased across the municipalities on the North Shore. Comparing Census 2016 and Census 2021 data, the immigrant population on the North Shore grew by 8% whereas the non-immigrant population grew by only 2% during this same period. Recent Census statistics also indicate that 59% of the North Shore population are non-immigrants², 37% are immigrants³, and 3% are non-permanent residents.⁴

2 According to Statistics Canada, “non-immigrants includes persons who are Canadian citizens by birth.”

3 According to Statistics Canada, “immigrants includes persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents...Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this category. In the 2021 Census of Population, ‘Immigrants’ includes immigrants who were admitted to Canada on or prior to May 11, 2021.”

4 According to Statistics Canada, “non-permanent residents includes persons from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status (asylum claimants). Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included, unless these family members are already Canadian citizens, landed immigrants or permanent residents.”

Immigration trends continue to shape the growing diversity across North Shore communities. According to Census 2021 data, the top five places of birth among recent immigrants on the North Shore are Iran (20%), China (15%), Philippines (10%), United Kingdom (8%), and USA (7%). Moreover, recent statistics indicate that 45% of people on the North Shore have knowledge of two or more languages. In addition to English, the most common languages spoken across the North Shore are French (10%), Iranian-Persian (10%), Mandarin (6%), Spanish (4%), and Tagalog (3%). Interestingly, the proportion of people who are bi-/multi-lingual increases among those who are younger; more than half (51%) of people age 15 to 44 years on the North Shore have knowledge of two or more languages.

Age diversity continues to be significant across immigrant populations on the North Shore with the core adult working age group (25-64 years) making up 62% of immigrants according to Census 2021 data. In the younger age brackets, 4% of the immigrant population are children ages 0-14 years and 7% are youth ages 15-24 years. Among recent immigrants, the proportion of individuals in this younger age demographic increases with 0-14 years old children representing 16% of the newcomer population and youth ages 15-24 representing 9%. Of particular interest, children make up 25% of recent immigrants in the District of West Vancouver, which is much higher than the North Shore proportion overall. Older adults age 65 and up form just over a quarter (27%) of immigrants on the North Shore but decreases to 5% among recent immigrants, a reflection of Canada's current immigration system that prioritizes younger skilled immigrants in the core working age group.

Most immigrants on the North Shore arrived in Canada as economic immigrants. Census 2021 indicates that among immigrants on the North Shore who came to Canada between 1980 and 2021, almost three-quarters (73%) are economic immigrants, followed by immigrants sponsored by family (20%), and refugees (6%). Census 2021 data also indicates that more than a quarter (27%) of immigrants on the North Shore with permanent resident status previously worked and/or lived in Canada as temporary residents (i.e. work permit, study permit, other type of permit, or as an asylum claimant) before acquiring official immigration status. This trend parallels a national trend marking an increase in the number of temporary residents converting to permanent residents in Canada.

Since the 2021 Census, the Canadian government has welcomed immigrants at a record pace and set ambitious targets in order to meet the demographic growth and labour market needs of the country. In 2022, Canada reached its target of 431,645 new permanent residents. This surpasses the 406,000 new permanent residents who arrived in Canada in 2021. Over the next three years, Canada will continue to welcome an increasing number of newcomers with a target of half a million new permanent residents in 2025. The social and economic integration of immigrants in Canada as a whole, and in local communities such as the North Shore, is a crucial factor in not only attracting newcomers to Canada but also retaining them.





RESEARCH OVERVIEW

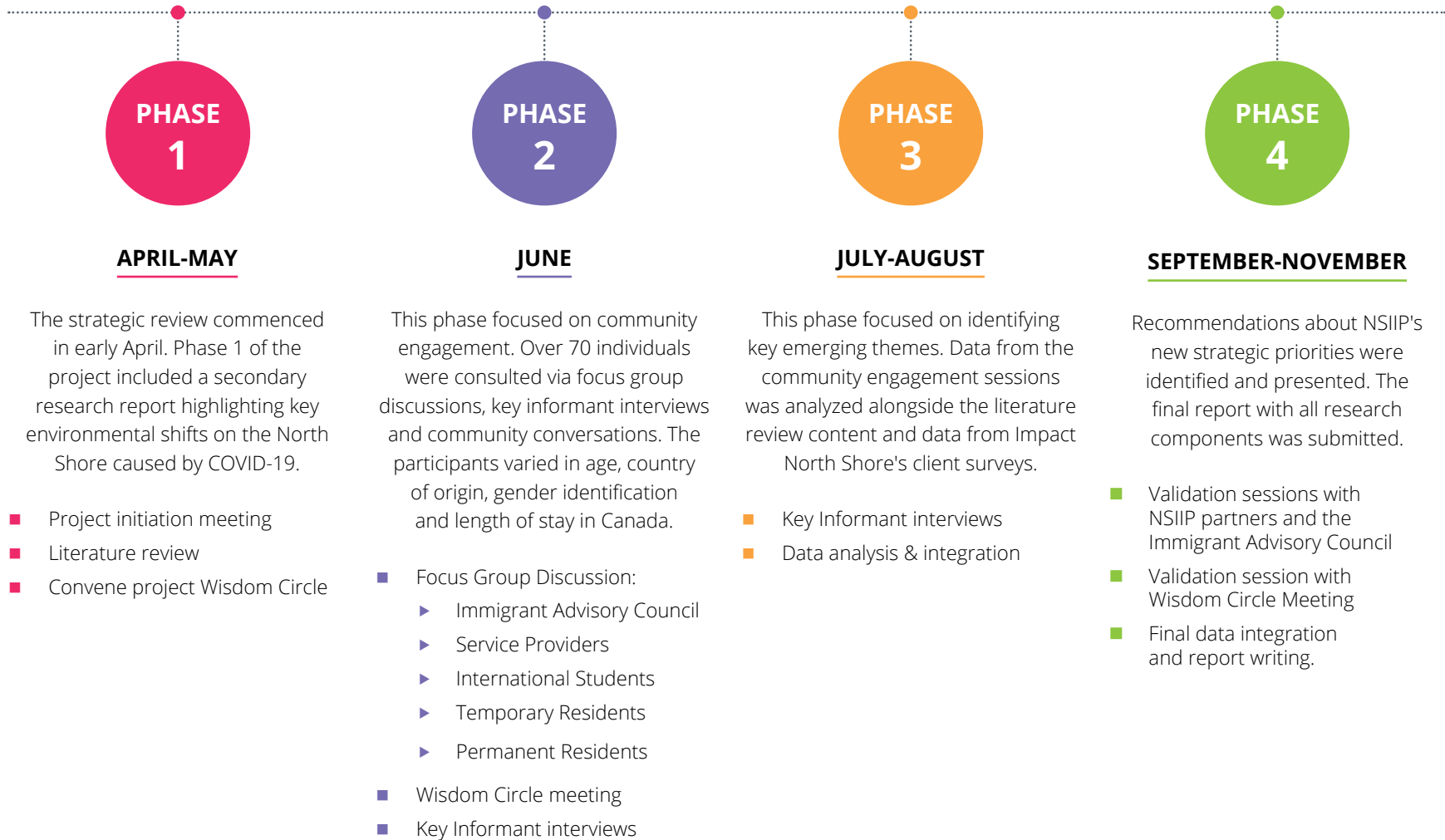
Project Objectives

The purpose of the NSIIP Strategic Review 2022 was to determine a series of recommendations around priorities, objectives and actions to best meet the emerging needs of im/migrants in the post pandemic landscape of the North Shore. NSIIP contracted with Chetana Consulting to lead the research and community engagement components of the work.

The project applied various frameworks to the enquiry:

- a ***social determinants of health lens*** that explored im/migrants' experiences through their interactions with multiple services and sectors: health, employment, housing, education etc;
- an ***anti-oppression lens*** that centered the experiences of racialized im/migrants in the project design and focused on the impacts of structural racism; and
- an ***intersectional lens*** that recognized how age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation and other social markers influence the ways in which people are seen by others and their interactions with systems, structures and institutions.

2022 Project Timeline



Methodology & Timelines

The key project components included:

1. Establishing a Wisdom Circle to guide the project design
2. Conducting a comprehensive literature review including a review of Census 2021 demographic data
3. Evaluating community trends in Impact North Shore's 2021 Client Outcomes Survey
4. Conducting focus groups with diverse im/migrant groups and service providers
5. Conducting key informant interviews with community leaders and experts
6. Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data sources and recommending priority areas of focus for NSIIP
7. Validating proposed new priority areas with key stakeholders

WISDOM CIRCLE

The Wisdom Circle served as an advisory group guiding the project design, delivery and data integration. The group was comprised of 13 individuals including current NSIIP members, Immigrant Advisory Council members, and diverse community and settlement service providers.⁵

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review sought to establish a broad understanding of the complex and intersecting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on im/migrants, with a focus on the localized BC and regional North Shore contexts. The literature review data informed the initial development of questions used in the community engagement phase of the research.

⁵ Please see Appendices for a complete list of Wisdom Circle members and a Group Agreement document.

IMPACT NORTH SHORE'S CLIENT OUTCOMES SURVEY

Over 380+ responses from Impact North Shore's 2021 Client Outcomes Survey were analyzed to identify community trends and pandemic-related vulnerabilities. The data offered important localized insights that were key to shaping the question guides used for the focus groups and key informant interviews.

FOCUS GROUPS

The intent of the focus groups was to elicit more comprehensive stories about the experiences and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of im/migrants on the North Shore. A total of 5 focus groups were hosted engaging 70+ community members including permanent residents, international students, temporary workers, members of NSIIP's Immigrant Advisory Council (IAC), local service providers and other key community partners. It was important to engage temporary residents in this project given their growing presence on the North Shore and the introduction of several new immigration pathways to permanency during the pandemic.

Recruitment for focus group participants was done through social media (ex. LinkedIn, Facebook, Telegram, and WeChat groups) and community networks. A small honorarium was provided to all community participants. The semi-structured, facilitated conversations were hosted in person (at the North Vancouver Public Library) and online via Zoom. Notes from the focus groups were kept anonymous to protect the confidentiality of all participants. Due to budget limitations, all focus group conversations were conducted in English.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

A total of five key informant interviews were conducted with senior representatives from the Squamish Nation, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, the First Nations Health Authority, a local school district and a chamber of commerce. The intent of the interviews was to provide additional perspectives to complement the wisdoms gathered in the focus groups.

DATA SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team engaged in a thematic analysis of the data emerging from the community engagement activities. Themes were ranked by frequency and saliency across communities and participants with different im/migration status. This data was then mapped against the research and data trends from the literature review and Impact North Shore's Client Outcomes surveys. Consideration was also given to: 1) mandate and scope of Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) work; 2) alignment with the overarching vision and mission of NSIIP; and 3) opportunities for leveraging relationships and resources to maximize opportunities for positive collective impact.

VALIDATION & ENDORSEMENT

A set of recommendations was developed addressing a broad, but situationally relevant, range of potential priority action areas for NSIIP. NSIIP staff and co-chairs facilitated a process of review and endorsement by key stakeholders and partners with the goal of implementing new NSIIP strategic priorities as of April 2023. This work also included a re-articulation of the partnership's vision and mission statements along with our guiding collective values.





SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

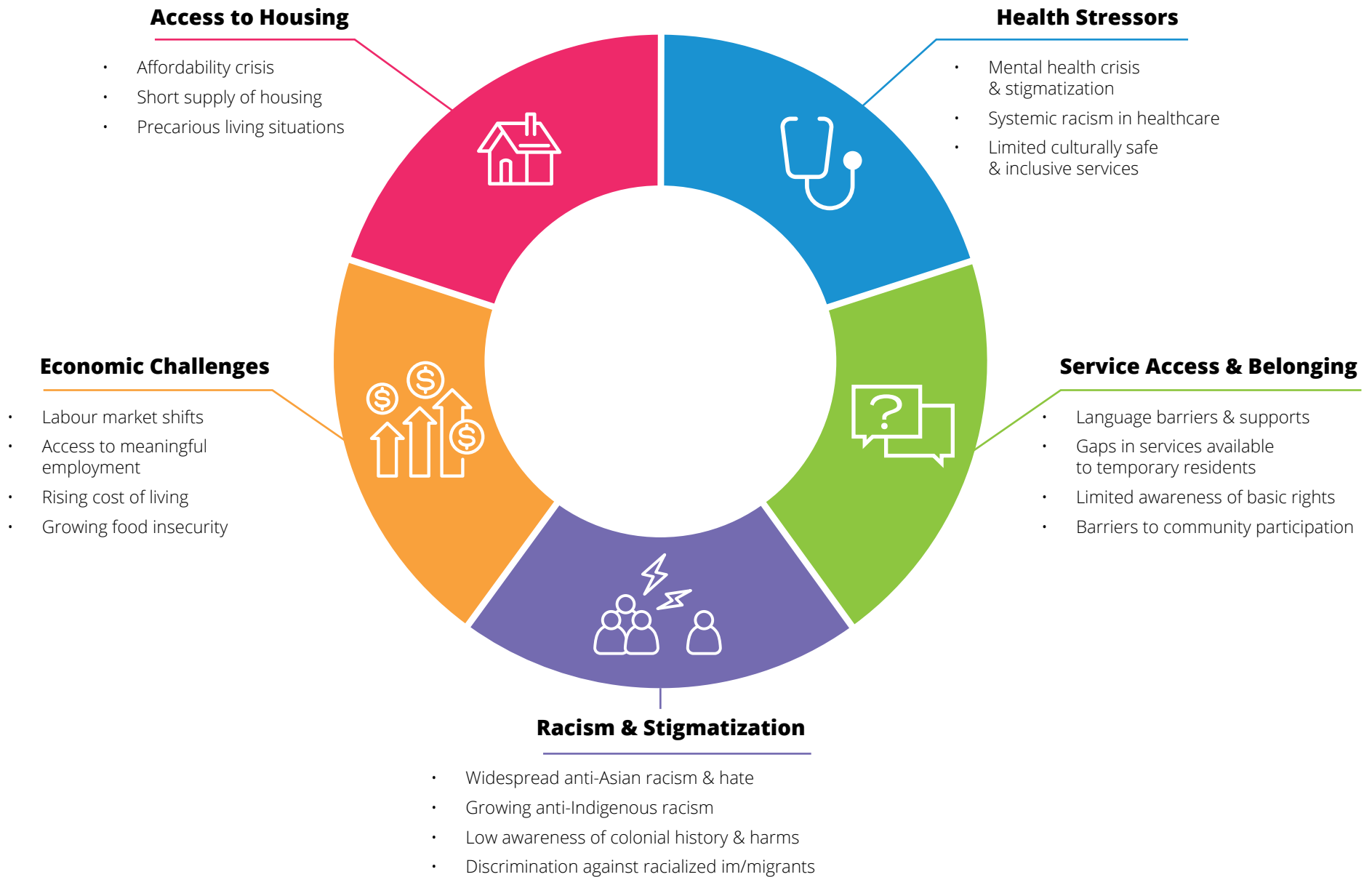
Challenges for Im/migrants in North Shore Communities

The most significant challenges faced by im/migrants in North Shore communities were classified into the following board categories:

1. Economic Challenges
2. Access to Housing
3. Health & Mental Health Stressors
4. Service Access & Community Belonging
5. Racism & Stigmatization

Within each of these categories, there were multiple overlapping issues and barriers that surfaced. Commonalities in the experiences of im/migrants and other equity-deserving groups on the North Shore were also identified. This report brings specific focus to the unique experiences of im/migrants and newcomers as distinct and different from the experiences non-immigrants in the North Shore.

Emerging challenges for North Shore im/migrants



Economic Challenges

Labour market shifts, the rising cost of living, and challenges in accessing meaningful employment were three key themes that emerged for im/migrants in the post COVID-19 environment. Systemic inequities in race, class and gender shape access to economic security.



LABOUR MARKET SHIFTS

Im/migrants make up more than half of the labour force across Metro Vancouver: Census 2021 data shows that the labour force is made up of approximately 1,468,000 people age 15 years and older of whom 45% are immigrants and 6% are non-permanent residents. Yet research showed that many of the jobs most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic tended to be lower paying, part time or temporary jobs that were disproportionately occupied by Black, Indigenous, racialized and im/migrant workers.⁶

In BC, women were hit hardest by the pandemic as they were more likely to be in the bottom wage quartile and were overrepresented in either frontline jobs with a higher risk of infection and/or sectors that are most likely to suffer job losses.⁷ As in other parts of the province and country, low-income women, Indigenous and racialized women, mothers with young children (especially single mothers), recent im/migrant women, and young women were affected the most significantly by the labour market shifts that occurred during and after the pandemic.

These realities map on top of systemic inequities and disparities in employment rates that existed prior to the start of the pandemic: im/migrants, particularly recent immigrants, historically have much higher unemployment rates as compared to non-

immigrants. Census 2021 data indicates an unemployment rate of 8.3% for non-immigrants in Metro Vancouver compared to 9.0% among immigrants and 9.1% among recent immigrants.

RISING COST OF LIVING

The rising cost of living emerged as one of the main barriers to belonging and community integration for im/migrants in the post COVID-19 environment. Intersecting systemic inequities create the conditions in which racialized and Indigenous people are more likely to feel financial insecurity. A 2021 study shows that over 30% of racialized British Columbians and over 32% of Indigenous workers between the ages of 15 and 69 lived in households that found it “difficult” or “very difficult” to meet basic financial commitments, compared to only 17% of their white peers.⁸

Furthermore, according to a recent report by the City of Vancouver, Indigenous and racialized residents, particularly Black residents, were more likely to experience income poverty than white residents.⁹ Census 2021 data also indicates that im/migrants are more likely to be in poverty. The poverty rate of non-immigrants in Metro Vancouver was 8%, compared to 13% among immigrants, 17% among recent immigrants, and 43% among non-permanent residents. Data from Impact North Shore’s Client Outcomes survey in 2021 corroborates these data trends: over 70% of respondents reported a consistent decrease in overall household income. Additionally, 45% of respondents indicated a direct decrease in income due to employment loss.

While the effects of soaring inflation rates were felt across the country, the experiences of North Shore im/migrants were exacerbated by additional factors highlighted in the focus groups:

6 Ivanova, Iglia. “Inequality, employment and COVID-19: Priorities for fostering an inclusive recovery in BC.” Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. July 2021

7 TD Bank Group. Young Canadians and diverse communities among the hardest hit financially by COVID-19, TD survey shows. July 2020. <https://td.mediaroom.com/2020-07-09-Young-Canadians-and-Diverse-Communities-Among-the-Hardest-Hit-Financially-by-COVID-19-TD-Survey-Shows>

8 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey Supplement, July 2020 to February 2021.

9 “Vancouver Poverty rate by selected demographics.” Populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19: Current State Assessment Report. City of Vancouver, January 2021.

- **Limited transit infrastructure:** Many im/migrants who work or study on the North Shore live in other Metro Vancouver communities where the cost of living is lower. The high cost of fuel makes it increasingly difficult to commute to the North Shore. Limited transit infrastructure also poses a challenge to im/migrant families accessing services/programs.
- **Lack of affordable childcare:** Limited childcare options and/or lack of extended family support in im/migrant families often means that one parent may be required to remain at home with children. This contributes to lower overall household income and heightened financial insecurity.
- **Increased food insecurity:** Many im/migrants work in sectors such as retail and hospitality which were significantly impacted by the pandemic. These jobs often pay lower wages and im/migrants in these roles were more likely to be laid off during the pandemic. An increase in financial insecurity also meant more food insecurity, evidenced by an increasing number of im/migrants accessing food banks for support.

ACCESS TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

Historically, im/migrants have faced barriers to accessing meaningful employment as their prior credentials and experience are often not recognized by employers in Canada. Inability to find employment aligned with prior education, skills and professional experience is a well-documented challenge for im/migrants and leaves many newcomers underemployed. Statistic Canada's 2023 labour force survey indicates that the unemployment rate of recent immigrants was 8.2%, immigrants landed more than five to 10 years

“ Diversity & Inclusion is not on the radar of smaller employers—trying to find “bodies” to fill roles. They may not even be aware of the biases that exist in their HR practices—they prefer to hire the familiar.”

– KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

earlier was 5.8%, immigrants landed more than 10 years earlier was 5.1%, and that of people born in Canada was 5% in 2022. The unemployment/underemployment of im/migrants costs Canada more than \$50-billion a year—about 2.5% of the GDP—in lost income.¹⁰ While many studies point to the cost benefits of building more diverse workforces, reluctance to hire foreign talent is a trend that cuts across many sectors and industries.

Research shows that the dramatic economic downturn cause by the global COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the barriers to accessing meaningful employment for im/migrants. Qualitative data gathered in the focus groups highlights the following trends:

- **Challenges in accessing volunteer opportunities:** Im/migrants, including international students and temporary workers with Canadian education, often seek volunteer opportunities to fulfill the requirement of “Canadian experience.” These opportunities were curtailed during the pandemic: while some volunteer roles were eliminated, others were re-envisioned in ways that were less likely to support job prospects in areas of expertise.
- **Transferability of work skills and experience:** Canadian employers often have challenges in understanding the credentials and experiences of im/migrants from outside of Canada, and how these skills transfer into roles in a Canadian context.
- **Overcoming the requirement of Canadian work experience:** Even within a tight labour market, bias among employers contributes to a climate in which they may be hesitant to hire im/migrant talent. Local employers continue to show reluctance in hiring im/migrants that do not have prior “Canadian work experience” due to concerns around English language proficiency and workplace “fit.”

The economic integration of im/migrants is an essential component of creating attachment to a community and a sense of belonging. Without access to employment opportunities that reflect acquired expertise and the means to support a family, there is a heightened risk that im/migrants on the North Shore will be forced to leave and settle elsewhere.

¹⁰ Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council—Facts & Figures: RBC Economics, December 2019.

Access to Housing

Challenges to affordable, adequate housing disproportionately affect the settlement and integration of im/migrants across North Shore communities. Access to housing security is heavily informed by existing systemic inequities in race, class and gender.



As BC faces a large-scale housing crisis, many areas of the Greater Vancouver region have become unaffordable¹¹ for residents. According to Census 2021 statistics, almost 60% of households in Metro Vancouver spend more than 30% of their income on shelter costs. Immigrants in Metro Vancouver are also more likely to spend a higher proportion of their income on housing: while 20% of non-immigrants spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs, this increases to 25% among immigrants, 28% among recent immigrants, and 36% among non-permanent residents.

North Shore communities are not immune to the impacts of the housing crisis: in an Impact North Shore client survey conducted in Spring 2022, 68% of im/migrant respondents who reported that they were experiencing poverty identified housing as their top concern. In this same survey, 82% of respondents named high rent as one of the key issues they were facing and 12% reported precarious living conditions (unsafe environments or being under-housed). A recent housing needs report by the District of North Vancouver confirms that housing pressure experienced across the North Shore is impacting the affordability and livability of the region and has significant implications for long-term growth, sustainability, and inclusion.

“The biggest issue or obstacle that newcomers face when they come to the North Shore is the high cost of rent, which often discourages people from coming here”

– FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Census 2021 data also underlines the significant disparities in the housing situation of immigrants and their non-immigrant counterparts. While 11% of non-immigrants in Metro Vancouver are living in households with core housing needs¹², this increases to 15% among immigrants, 18% among recent immigrants, and 23% among non-permanent residents. Furthermore, under-housing and hidden homelessness is much more prevalent within im/migrant communities than non-immigrant communities.¹³ To address affordability challenges, it is not uncommon to find large families sharing a small apartment or multiple people sharing accommodation.

“As an international student, I paid a very high rent and my landlord would increase the rent at short intervals and threaten me with eviction if I didn’t comply. I was not aware of my rights as a Canadian resident at the time and gave in to his demands.”

– FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

Not surprisingly, the ability to secure safe and affordable housing emerged as a key concern for focus group participants. Qualitative data gathered in this project highlights the following trends on the North Shore:

- **Lack of social networks affects housing security:** Im/migrants face particular hardships in navigating an unaffordable housing market since they often do not have strong networks of family/friends to act as a social safety net when they cannot secure housing.
- **Inadequate housing affects participation in the workforce:** The necessity of working and/or studying from home during the pandemic affected im/migrants disproportionately as they often struggled to access adequate space and/or privacy adequate for these arrangements.

11 According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), housing is deemed to be “affordable” when the costs are equal to under 30% of the total before-tax income of a household.

12 According to Statistics Canada, “core housing need refers to whether a private household’s housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability or suitability, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (attains all three housing indicator thresholds).”

13 City of Vancouver, Housing Needs Report, April 2022. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/pds-housing-policy-housing-needs-report.pdf>

- **Discrimination when applying for housing:** In addition to the issues of limited rental housing supply and sky-rocketing housing costs, racialized im/migrants are more likely to face discrimination while looking for rental housing. Lack of local references and limited credit history in Canada are often deterrents for potential landlords.

Housing crisis stressors experienced by im/migrants living on the North Shore are compounded by barriers to economic inclusion and have a direct link to individual/family health and wellness outcomes. Exploring innovative ways to address housing challenges faced by im/migrants is an imperative component to building inclusive, vibrant North Shore communities and supporting positive settlement and integration outcomes.

Health & Mental Health Stressors

Limited access to mental health supports and the significant effects of socio-economic stressors were key themes that emerged for im/migrants in the post COVID-19 environment. Systemic inequities in race, class and gender significantly shape access to culturally relevant and inclusive health services.



Reliable access to coordinated, inclusive health services contributes directly to supporting positive settlement and integration outcomes for im/migrants and their families in local communities. While the North Shore is often perceived as having better access to health care in terms of shorter wait times for diagnostics and specialist appointments relative to other Metro Vancouver municipalities, the growing pressures on the Canadian healthcare system are resulting in increased service barriers for im/migrants.

Environmental and economic constraints linked to racial inequities create practical barriers to accessing healthcare and support services. In Canada, Black women indicate that their health concerns are dismissed more frequently than white women. Overt prejudice and biases directed toward patients who are Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+, homeless, and im/migrants are also a recurring problem in Canada's healthcare system.¹⁴ For im/migrant families with young children, vulnerable seniors, or individuals with chronic health issues, the effects of inconsistent access to quality care can be compounding.

IMPACTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRESSORS

Evidence of disproportionate socio-economic effects of the pandemic on women, and subsequently on families, led to worse self-reported mental health amongst women as compared to men. Racialized participants in a recent research study were also more likely to suffer from COVID-19- related financial insecurity, a contributing factor in their declining overall mental health.¹⁵ This reality is corroborated by data from Impact North Shore's 2021 Client Outcomes survey: of 300+ respondents, 75% noted a decrease in overall family income since the start of the pandemic, with 13% reporting a permanent loss in employment. Im/migrants and other racialized groups were also more likely to report facing an increased risk of harassment, attacks, and stigma—adding to the complexity of physical and mental health impacts of COVID-19.

14 Western University. "More Exposed & Less Protected in Canada: Racial Inequality as Systemic Violence During COVID-19." pg 3.

15 Statistics Canada. "Impacts on Immigrants and People Designated as Visible Minorities." <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/2020004/s6-eng.htm>

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Lack of linguistically appropriate and culturally safe mental health services and support programs continues to be a significant challenge for many im/migrants. Data from Impact North Shore's annual Client Outcomes survey conducted in 2021 shows that of over 300 respondents, only 11% indicated accessing mental health services despite 68% noting heightened feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression related to the pandemic.

Qualitative data gathered from the focus groups in this project highlight the following trends on the North Shore:

- **Limited knowledge of and access to mental health services:** Participants spoke to a lack of awareness about existing North Shore mental health programs. In addition, concerns were raised about the limited range of mental health services available in first language and unaffordable service fees.
- **Limited opportunities for connection:** Im/migrants identified fewer opportunities for networking and connecting in community during the pandemic. This has led to heightened challenges in developing social networks and support mechanisms for sustaining emotional and mental well-being.
- **Decreased connections to workplaces:** As employment opportunities decreased and unemployment rates soared, so too did regular connections to workplaces. Participants described how severed ties to jobs and colleagues contributed to increased isolation and compounded pre-existing mental health vulnerabilities.

“Newcomers are unaware and many times unable to reach out for support.”
- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

While there are glaring gaps in data mapping the full effects of these realities on the lives of im/migrants, there is an undisputed correlation between systemic racism and biases in health care systems and im/migrants' ability to access and navigate linguistically and culturally relevant care. A greater focus on information dissemination, knowledge sharing, coordinated service delivery and referrals, and increased cultural competency could significantly improve im/migrants' overall physical and mental health as an integral aspect of their settlement experiences on the North Shore.

Service Access & Community Belonging

Barriers to building intercultural connections, exclusions based on linguistic and cultural diversity, and challenges navigating local community services can significantly affect the settlement and integration of im/migrants across North Shore communities. These barriers to positive experiences of inclusion and belonging are compounded by existing institutional and systemic inequities.



For im/migrants, building connections to the community is a critical component of establishing a sense of social belonging. Public gathering spaces such as schools, community centres, sport clubs, places of worship, and other community organizations often enable relationship-building that supports the settlement experiences of im/migrants. Opportunities to build strong community ties helps to foster interest in and supports im/migrants' capacity to become more civically engaged in community life across the North Shore.

During the pandemic, when many public gathering spaces were closed or operating in a much more limited capacity, many im/migrants experienced heightened challenges in building connections to community. Data from Impact North Shore's Client Outcomes survey in 2021 shows that of over 300 respondents, 32% indicated a weaker sense of belong to the local community as a result of reduced opportunities to participate in community activities. In addition, despite referrals from settlement services, im/migrants are not always accessing community services due to various compounding barriers: location access, lack of information, lack of first language or culturally inclusive services, limited transportation options, fear of stigma and shame etc.

Further, stereotyping and discrimination based on linguistic diversity and cultural differences can compromise opportunities for relationship-building and fuel division between individuals and groups. Qualitative data gathered from the focus groups in this project highlight the following trends across the North Shore:

- **Language Barriers:** Participants identified that challenges in differing levels of English language fluency can lead to barriers for im/migrants accessing community services and heighten potential of exploitation by landlords, employers and others. Limited multi-lingual staff and lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate resources were flagged as barriers.

- **Gaps in services for temporary residents (including international students):** While facing discrimination due to language barriers is commonly experienced as a settlement challenge, it was also noted that temporary residents had limited knowledge of available community-level English language classes. Language barriers were identified as a gateway issue that led to successive barriers to attaching to stable and better paid work opportunities etc.

“ As international students, some of us moved here with our spouses and their English is not as good as ours... but they cannot participate in classes that are only for Permanent Residents. When someone improves their English, they can get a Canadian PR faster, but [our spouses] are not able to use these services so it is a barrier for them.”

– FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

- **Awareness of Basic Rights & Civic Opportunities:** Focus group participants reported a lack of awareness and understanding around basic rights in Canada and the ways in which Canadian systems function. In some cases, these gaps in knowledge limited im/migrants’ abilities to reach out for help and/or advocate for themselves in situations that felt unjust or exploitative.

- **Challenges connecting with volunteer opportunities:** Varied understandings of civic engagement across different cultures can contribute to the limited engagement of im/migrants with North Shore organizations and in the broader community. Participants shared that details about local volunteer roles can be difficult to access—particularly when only available in English.

- **Lack of im/migrant and racialized leaders on the North Shore:** Focus group participants noted that rarely seeing im/migrants or racialized community members in leadership roles leads to assumptions about limited opportunities for participation in civic life.

“ Across the North Shore, there is a real lack of racialized people in positions of power and leadership... it is harder to get newcomers and im/migrants to feel a sense of belonging as a result.”

– KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

It is imperative that individuals, organizations, and service providers take steps to build safer, more welcoming and inclusive work and community spaces—including building understanding of and addressing linguistic inequities. Increasing opportunities for more social interactions (via language classes, community service usage etc.), for building strong relationships with neighbours, and for deepening connections with service providers is also an integral part to growing a sense of belonging, encouraging civic engagement, and supporting the resilience of im/migrants settling across the North Shore.

Racism & Stigmatization

While racism and xenophobia are embedded within the systems and structures that shape our communities, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a significant increase in anti-Asian and anti-im/migrant sentiments. Discrimination based on race has emerged as a defining issue impacting the settlement experiences and lives of im/migrants on multiple systemic levels—whether connected to finding meaningful employment, securing safe and affordable housing, accessing health and mental health supports, or building connections and a sense of safety and belonging in community.



Recent research highlights the increase in prevalence of racism across multiple institutions, sectors and community spaces.

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in reported incidents of anti-Asian hate across the Metro Vancouver area and BC as whole. In their 2020 year-end report, the Vancouver Police Department cited a 71.7% increase in reported anti-Asian hate crimes. Crime and violence targeting racialized and Indigenous peoples also increased in 2020, with a 37% increase in police-reported hate crimes across Canada as compared to the previous year.¹⁶

Community-based reporting mechanisms such as the reporting centre hosted by project 1907 capture staggering trends in incidents of racism, hate and violence experienced by the Asian diaspora in Canada. A total of 943 reports were received through online platforms in 2021, representing a 47% increase in reports as compared to

2020.¹⁷ Reports were submitted in every province and territory across the country. Reports by South Asian and Southeast Asian people increased dramatically, by 318% and 121% respectively, with women continuing to make up nearly two-thirds of the reports.¹⁸

These statistics reveal only the reported incidents of racism, hate and violence directed towards Asians and other racialized community members. The trends in both reported and unreported incidents of anti-Asian racism and xenophobia remain high even in a post-COVID environment.

ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM

Anti-Indigenous racism, documented in increased acts of violence and discrimination directed towards Indigenous community members (notably within the health care system)¹⁹, also came to the forefront in new ways during the pandemic. Anchoring this shift in awareness was the discovery—and formal acknowledgement by the Canadian federal government—of several unmarked residential school children's graves in locations across the country.

“First Nations are fighting against a system that has stolen our land, language, history and culture—many immigrants come from other forms of political and cultural oppression... How can we create a shared dialogue?”

– KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

While many approaches to settlement service delivery and programming encourage im/migrants to adapt to Canadian culture norms, there are growing opportunities to question the conditions in which im/migrants internalize white supremacist norms and, in turn, perpetuate anti-Indigenous racism in local communities.

16 Statistics Canada 2020, Impacts on Immigrants and People Designated as Visible Minorities.

17 “Another Year: Anti-Asian Racism Across Canada Two Years into the COVID-19 Pandemic”. Chinese Canadian National Council and project 1907, March 2022. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb77af7eb1c7b5da7cc067e/t/628da7d8092ffd75ee762bd4/1653450725968/Anti-Asian+Racism+Across+Canada+Two+Years+Into+The+Pandemic.pdf>

18 Ibid.

19 In Plain Sight Report: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health care <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Full-Report-2020.pdf>

Im/migrants on the North Shore are not immune to experiencing racism in its different forms—from micro-aggressions to more overt racist incidents. Data from Impact North Shore's Client Outcomes surveys in 2021 shows an increase from 11% to 14% of respondents identifying experiences of racism. Moreover, 9% of 300+ survey respondents in 2021 described personal encounters of racism and discrimination as factors that directly impacted a weak sense of belonging to North Shore communities.

Experiences of racism touch multiple facets of the settlement and integration experiences of im/migrants to the North Shore. Qualitative data from the project focus groups highlights the following trends:

- **Safety in public spaces:** Asian participants spoke candidly about their anxieties of being spat at or called racist slurs in public spaces, sentiments which led to heightened concerns about going for walks or carrying out daily activities in the community—individually or with family members.
- **Lack of knowledge of Canada's colonial past:** Many im/migrants are unaware of Canada's history of settler colonialism and the relationship of Indigenous communities to this land—historically and in the present day. Participants shared how shocking it was to learn the truths about the colonial violence, forced displacement and cultural erasure of Indigenous peoples and how it challenged their perceptions of connection to place, land, and community.
- **Community silence about racism:** Focus group participants spoke about the challenges of discussing harmful, racist interactions with community members when also feeling grateful for the opportunities available to them as im/migrants to Canada. Lack of clarity around what constitutes a racist or hate-based incident, and how to address these incidents, also contributes to a culture of silence, denial and inaction.

Despite the attention garnered by the upward trends in reported incidents of racism in the COVID-19 environment, there is a large gap in data that systematically maps the scale—and magnitude of effects—of racism at local community levels, on a provincial scale, and on a national scale. By embedding anti-racism and decolonial frameworks in collective community efforts that support the integration and inclusion of im/migrants in North Shore communities, there is an opportunity to challenge the systemic cycles of oppression that influence and shape settlement experiences.





STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The strategic framework guiding the work of the North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership (NSIIP) includes a vision and mission statement, core values, and identified priorities with clearly articulated collective goals and objectives.

Vision, Mission & Values

The confirmed NSIIP Vision and Mission statements are as follows:

- **Vision:** We envision an inclusive, anti-racist North Shore in which everyone has opportunities to thrive, contribute and belong.
- **Mission:** We work collaboratively with organizations, businesses and community members to enable the successful integration and participation of all newcomers and im/migrants in North Shore communities.

The core values guiding the collective efforts of the partnership include:

- **Collaboration:** We work together in a respectful, inclusive manner that builds on best practices and innovation while being accountable to the community.
- **Responsiveness:** We strive to be flexible in our actions and responsive to the emerging needs and aspirations of newcomers and im/migrants in local communities.
- **Impact:** We are dedicated to achieving change at community- and systems-levels that has a meaningful impact on the lives of newcomers and im/migrants.
- **Equity:** We commit to applying intersectional, anti-racist lenses in our work and to creating space for diverse wisdoms by centering newcomer and im/migrant voices.

The NSIIP members also articulated a Reconciliation Statement as integral to the foundation of the work being led in community by the partnership table:

We humbly acknowledge that our collective work is done on the traditional, ancestral, and stolen territories of the Skw̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish) and the səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We strive to walk in good relations with our Indigenous neighbours and to learn how to intentionally embed reconciliation and decolonizing practices in our work.

Strategic Priorities

The confirmed 2023-2028 NSIIP Strategic Priorities have been identified as follows:

1. **Health & Well-being**
2. **Social Belonging**
3. **Economic Inclusion**
4. **Civic Engagement**

While some NSIIP directions have shifted more substantially from the priorities identified in the original 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, others remain similar in scope and depth—a reflection of the continued challenges related to im/migrant integration and inclusion in these arenas.



PRIORITY 1

PRIORITY

Health & Well-being

GOAL

Im/migrants access a wide range of coordinated, culturally relevant services on the North Shore that support their health and well-being as individuals and families.

OBJECTIVES

- Educate community service providers and local institutions about the health and mental health needs of im/migrants;
- Improve the cultural competency of service providers and ensure adequate use of translation/interpretation and other needed services;
- Create tools to better inform im/migrants about available health, wellness and community recreation services;
- Address barriers to affordability that have negative health outcomes on im/migrant families;
- Enhance collaboration between health, community and settlement services to respond to mental health challenges associated with im/migration;
- Increase awareness of and address systemic racism in the health care sector;
- Support community-led research that builds capacity to embed equity lenses and frameworks across North Shore health and community service sectors.



PRIORITY 2

PRIORITY

Social Belonging

GOAL

Newcomers and long-time residents build meaningful relationships that foster a sense of belonging in safe, connected North Shore communities.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish strategies to ensure im/migrants have equitable access to North Shore services, programs and community engagement activities;
- Increase public awareness of im/migration stressors and challenges and actively work to remove barriers to belonging for im/migrant populations;
- Design public engagement initiatives that build a culture of inclusion and ensure that im/migrants to the North Shore feel safe and supported;
- Increase community understanding of language equity and its effects on belonging and exclusion;
- Actively work to dismantle racism in all its forms and increase the cultural competency of local communities and structures (ex. public institutions and organizations such as schools, libraries, recreational facilities, community centres, and law enforcement);
- Address discrimination issues by collaborating across sectors on equity and inclusion initiatives;
- Build relationships between settler and Indigenous communities and support community-level responses to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).



PRIORITY 3

PRIORITY

Economic Inclusion

GOAL

Im/migrants are economically integrated in the community and their skills, knowledge, and expertise are recognized as integral to building a vibrant North Shore economy.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish partnerships with business, industry and government to promote the benefits of hiring im/migrants at all levels and build workplace integration practices;
- Engage, educate and support local employers to effectively recruit, hire and retain im/migrant talent;
- Highlight the contributions of im/migrants in the local labour market
- Build the capacity of local employers to address racism and other forms of discrimination in workplaces and improve equitable practices;
- Champion advocacy efforts for skill recognition and accreditation changes with professional associations and the government;
- Collaborate with local business associations and chambers of commerce to develop strategies and practices to attract and support im/migrant businesses.



PRIORITY 4

PRIORITY

Civic Engagement

GOAL

Im/migrants are actively engaged in civic life and guide the growth and development of equitable North Shore communities.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote the benefits of including im/migrant voices at all levels of civic and democratic life;
- Support racialized im/migrants in leadership roles—including in service planning and on community and municipal boards/committees;
- Promote local volunteerism and support opportunities for im/migrants to take on active roles in civic and democratic life;
- Support education and im/migrant mentorship opportunities to build understanding of democratic systems in Canada, BC and the North Shore;
- Increase awareness of promising practices and pathways to inclusive civic engagement;
- Work alongside community leaders and North Shore councils, boards and committees to build more inclusive leadership structures.



CONCLUSION

The strategic visioning process is dynamic, iterative, and forever changing. As a planning body engaged in the development of community-based settlement and integration strategies, the North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership (NSIIP) strives to be nimble in the face of changing socio-economic contexts and responsive to the emergent needs of im/migrants. To this end, NSIIP Strategic Review & Renewal Project sought to confirm the relevance and alignment of the strategic priorities laid out in the original 2016-2019 strategic plan and set a clear path forward for collective action.

For im/migrant communities on the North Shore, in British Columbia, and across Canada, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were significant and profound. When examining im/migrant community-level outcomes related to COVID-19, it is clear that the pandemic deepened existing inequities in our systems and institutions and exacerbated immigrant exclusion; racism and stigmatization; physical and mental health vulnerabilities; poverty and access to secure housing; as well as barriers to labour market integration. This project engaged in a robust analysis of quantitative and qualitative data sources to build understanding of the effects of these intersecting dynamics on the integration and inclusion for im/migrants.

The project culminated in the creation of NSIIP's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan articulating revised strategic priorities supported by revised vision and mission statements. The renewed strategic framework builds upon the existing strengths and assets of the individuals, organizations and institutions that make up the vibrant fabric of the North Shore.

The priorities will enable diverse stakeholders to move together more effectively towards NSIIP's vision of a welcoming and fully inclusive community in which everyone has opportunities to thrive, contribute and belong.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the Chetana Consulting team (Sangeeta, Isha, Hanif, and Chandrima) for their contributions to the research and community engagement components of this project. In addition, the project would not have been possible without the generosity of all the NSIIP Table members, members of the NSIIP Immigrant Advisory Council, participants in the focus groups, key informants, and members of the Wisdom Circle. Your insights, knowledge, expertise and lived experiences were crucial to this work.

The priorities will enable diverse stakeholders to move together more effectively towards NSIIP's vision of a welcoming and fully inclusive community in which everyone has opportunities to thrive, contribute and belong.



APPENDICES

Wisdom Circle Members

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Ana Fortes	<i>Capilano University—Community Development & Outreach Department</i>
Annwen Loverin	<i>Silver Harbour Senior's Activity Centre</i>
Barbra Moon Jeong	<i>NSIIP Immigrant Advisory Council</i>
Connie Shevchenko	<i>Impact North Shore—Language Services</i>
Cristina Rucci	<i>City of North Vancouver</i>
Fariba Aghdassi	<i>North Shore Community Resources (NSCR)</i>
Julia Kaisla	<i>Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)</i>
Marc Larrivee	<i>Impact North Shore—Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) Program</i>
Corrine Kinnon	<i>West Vancouver School District (SD43)</i>
Minori Ide	<i>District of West Vancouver—Community Services</i>
Navaz Daruwalla	<i>Family Services of the North Shore (FSNS)</i>
Shideh Taleban	<i>North Vancouver City Library</i>
Vida Sandoughdar	<i>North Vancouver Recreation & Culture Commission (NVRC)</i>

Wisdom Circle Community Agreement

The North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership (NSIIP) is embarking on a process of strategic review and renewal of our key guiding principles and action areas of work. As convenor of the North Shore LIP, Impact North Shore has hired a team of researchers and facilitators to lead this project. The Wisdom Circle for the NSIIP Strategic renewal project will serve as an advisory body made up of community leaders & stakeholders who bring varied expertise, lived experience, connections, and insights to inform the process. The recommendations and outcomes of the project will set the course for the work for the NSIIP table over the next 3 years.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Together we know a lot. We honour that the group holds tremendous wisdom and that the answers are in the room. Everyone can be an expert. To elicit this, we commit to being curious and respectful with one other. This principle can be activated by encouraging questions instead of assumptions, and enabling anyone in the room to take turns leading.

Take space, make space. We commit to making room for people who think out loud by asking them to breathe before speaking; and holding extra room for people who prefer to think quietly by encouraging them to move up a little faster. This is sometimes known as a “step up/step back” approach but with less ableism embedded in the language.

Lean into discomfort. We recognize that we are only growing when we are on the edge of our learning. Sometimes this is hard!

Uphold confidentiality. We seek to invite in knowledge from beyond the wisdom circle space. We commit to doing this without sharing a group member’s personal stories & information, or attributing things to specific people without their permission.

Do our best. Mistakes are okay! We will make room to say “ouch, oops, move on.” It’s okay to try, to learn, to do-over, and to be better. The practice of asking for help is an important part of our movement towards a better world.

ROLES & EXPECTATIONS:

Research Team:

- i. Develop meeting agendas, share pre-meeting materials in advance.
- ii. Establish clear lines of communication with the members of the Circle that honours their expertise, experience, and insights.

NSIIP Staff members:

- i. Provide convening and logistical support to the research team and members of the Circle to enable full participation in the project.
- ii. Act as liaison between Circle members and the research team.

Circle members:

- i. Members participate in meetings with positive intent and with a desire to supporting the NSIIP Table in achieving the project goals.
- ii. Members reach out to their networks to encourage participation in focus groups, survey work and/or other project activities.

PROFILE OF CIRCLE MEMBERS:

A total of 10-12 members with broad representation from, but not limited to, the following communities and sectors: im/migrant networks, social services, health, education, culture & recreation, housing, municipal services and business/economic development.

MEETING FREQUENCY:

Meetings will be convened a total of 2 times between May and July 2022:

1. At the end of the secondary research & literature review to present findings and get insights for the focus groups – late May (online)
2. Present draft report and recommendations – early/mid July (online or in person)

Between meetings, the Circle members will receive regular project updates via email from the Research team and requests for input on an as needed basis

MEMBER COMPENSATION AND REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES:

Members whose time for participation in the Circle is not covered by their employer, will receive compensation at a rate of \$50/ meeting as a recognition of their important contributions to the project work. On an as needed basis, we will also cover any expenses (such as elder care or child care, travel etc.) that are incurred by a member in order to participate in the meetings.



Contact Information

If you are interested in the work of the North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership, or would like further information on any of its initiatives, please visit our website at:

nsiip.ca

or, follow us on Facebook and Twitter at:

f [facebook.com/nsiip](https://www.facebook.com/nsiip)

t twitter.com/NorthShoreIIP

or, give us a call at our head office:

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