CONNECTING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF RICHMOND, B.C.

Masters Project Report
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Richmond, British Columbia stands out amongst Canadian cities by having one of the nationally highest concentrations of immigrants in its population, as 62% of Richmond’s residents are first generation immigrants. Although immigrants from China and Hong Kong constitute a significant percentage of overall immigrants to Richmond, in the last 8 years, there have been notable numbers immigrating from the Philippines, Taiwan, and India. Along with the high population of immigrants comes the challenge of engaging newcomers as well as non-English speakers in unfamiliar City government processes.

In response to the identified needs and recommended actions from the 2013-2022 Social Development Strategy as well as the 2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan, the Connecting Immigrant Communities to Local Government project was created. This project attempts to answer: How can the City of Richmond support immigrant civic engagement? Civic engagement is defined as knowledge about civic processes and the capacity to participate in local planning and governance.

The project reached out to three different groups of stakeholders to receive input about opportunities to improve immigrant civic engagement. These three groups included City of Richmond staff, staff from immigrant-serving community organizations, and immigrant residents in Richmond.

In Richmond, the non-profit and public sector offer various programs that focus on sharing information with newcomers about how City Hall and other levels of government function. There are also a few initiatives that try to strengthen connections between immigrants and City Hall. The gap that exists in Richmond is a long-term educational program that provides consistent support and training for immigrants on how to engage with their City and community at a decision-making level.
Immigrant residents face multiple barriers when interacting with City Hall. The primary barrier is language, as many newcomers have limited English language skills and City staff may be using high-level, professional means of communication. The Canadian government’s federal structure can be confusing for both newcomers and established immigrants, and the City’s consultation processes can also be intimidating for people who do not regularly interact with City Hall. Immigrants from certain countries may have a strong mistrust of government due to their former experiences with more authoritative governance systems. For some immigrants, City Hall may not be a welcoming space due to a perceived lack of staff and citizen participants from their racial background.

City staff also face various challenges when they are attempting to engage immigrant residents in their planning processes. Staff struggle with providing appropriate translation due to a lack of resources and clear corporate guidelines. Staff also face difficulties finding translators trained in the City’s technical fields. City staff often conduct outreach to the general public as a whole and are limited in their capacity to target specific demographics due to time and financial constraints. Moreover, engaging immigrant residents in meaningful discussions requires facilitation skills that many staff are not trained in.

The City of Richmond has a role in supporting immigrant civic engagement and there are opportunities for the City to improve their outreach to immigrant communities. The following table is a summary of this report’s recommendations, based on the feedback from this project’s participants.
### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Quick Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>City Department</th>
<th>Link to Existing Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expand the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage</td>
<td>Community Social Development, Communications</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 33)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve visibility of the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program (Strategic Direction 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a City info sheet about government jurisdiction</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program (Strategic Direction 1)</td>
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<td>Host a Chinese language session on the City’s development guidelines and zoning by-laws</td>
<td>Policy Planning, Development Applications</td>
<td>2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program (Strategic Direction 1)</td>
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#### Long Term Steps

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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Host an annual “Welcome Workshop” with community partners</td>
<td>Community Social Development</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Theme 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a City Hall 101 program</td>
<td>Clerks, Community Social Development</td>
<td>2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program (Strategic Direction 1)</td>
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<td>Offer facilitation training for City staff</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 16.4)</td>
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<td>Strengthen relationships with faith-based organizations</td>
<td>Community Social Development</td>
<td>2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program (Strategic Direction 2)</td>
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<td>Recognize second language skills as assets</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 27)</td>
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<td>Implement City Hall tours by citizen leaders</td>
<td>Community Services, Volunteer Development</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 27)</td>
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## Ongoing Steps

<table>
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<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use plain language</strong></td>
<td>All departments</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 25.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continue with “Study Circle” style engagement</strong></td>
<td>Community Services, Policy Planning, Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 25.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Create a welcoming City Hall</strong></td>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 19.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledge Aboriginal history</strong></td>
<td>Community Services, Policy Planning</td>
<td>Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022 (Action 20.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Raise awareness of non-European histories</strong></td>
<td>Community Services, Archives Richmond Museum</td>
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Richmond, British Columbia stands out amongst Canadian cities by having one of the nationally highest concentrations of visible minorities as well as immigrants in its population. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 62% of Richmond’s residents are first generation immigrants. A significant percentage of Richmond’s immigrants come from China, but there are also large groups migrating from the Philippines, Hong Kong, India, Taiwan, and many other countries (Statistics Canada, 2011). With the high levels of visible minorities and foreign-born residents in Richmond, the municipal government faces a challenge in ensuring fair and equal access to civic learning and decision-making.

Many theorists recognize the importance of integrating visible minorities and immigrants into the political system. Yvonne Lai and Michaela Hynie (2010) discuss how a lack of civic engagement can lead to elevated levels of unemployment and social unrest as well as a weakening of social values. Jorge Ginieniewicz (2007) argues that incorporating minorities into the political system is crucial for diminishing segregation and reducing vulnerability. Ginieniewicz highlights how political participation is necessary to “gain space, make the community more visible, influence the allocation of human and economic resources, as well as to put forward an agenda that would deal with the issues that have a direct impact on the daily life
of community members" (p.328). In other words, political participation gives power to residents because they know how to navigate the system to access resources. This becomes especially significant for traditionally marginalized communities. Civic participation can also lead to a sense of belonging and is a means of community unification. Leonie Sandercock (2003) contends that “a sense of belonging in a multicultural society cannot be based on race, religion, or ethnicity but needs to be based on a shared commitment to a political community” (p.103).

The City of Richmond’s 2013-2022 Social Development Strategy has recognized immigrant engagement related challenges. These include the integration of immigrants into the general community and the barriers to civic participation that many newcomers face. As a response, the Social Development Strategy names ‘Facilitating Citizen Engagement’ as a theme and calls for additional attention to be paid to encourage and enable increased participation of both established immigrants and newcomers. The strategy also notes that individuals with limited English language skills face barriers when trying to participate in City programs, and therefore the City has a role in nurturing civic engagement by providing opportunities for participation while improving its communications to appeal to a wider cross-section of people.

This strategic direction is supported by the 2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan and Work Program, which recommends the action items of identifying and articulating barriers faced by newcomers along with encouraging dialogue between immigrants and Canadian-born residents.

In response to the identified needs and recommended actions in the 2013-2022 Social Development Strategy as well as the 2012-2015 Richmond Intercultural Strategic Plan, the Connecting Immigrant Communities to Local Government project was created. This professional report is based on an internship with the City of Richmond conducted between October 2013 and June 2014. This internship involved community outreach and writing a report for the City of Richmond, particularly for its Social Community Development department. The report for the City became the basis for the writing of this professional report submitted as a capstone requirement for the MA Program at the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning.

This report explores the question: How can the City of Richmond support immigrant civic engagement? Civic engagement is defined as knowledge about civic processes and capacity to participate in local planning and governance.
The specific objectives of the project include:

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<th>Objective</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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<td>To determine the role of the City in supporting immigrant civic engagement and to reduce recognized barriers.</td>
<td>To research best practices from around the world that have been successful in increasing immigrant civic engagement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To identify the challenges that the City of Richmond faces when trying to support immigrant civic engagement.</td>
<td>To identify the knowledge gaps and barriers that immigrants face around engaging with the City’s civic processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To engage immigrant residents in a dialogue about City Hall processes and opportunities for citizen involvement.</td>
<td>To create an overview of the past and existing programs in Richmond, both public and non-profit, that support immigrant civic engagement.</td>
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To accomplish these objectives, a variety of research methods were used. The next section will elaborate on how this project was structured as well as which stakeholders were engaged.
The **Connecting Immigrant Communities to Local Government** Project was conducted using the case study methodological approach, due to the specific geographic and local context of the research. Various scholars have defined the case study as an intensive study of a single unit in order to understand the features of a larger class of similar phenomena (Gerring, 2004; Baxter, 2010).

John Gerring (2004) illustrates four possible components of a case study, including: 1) a qualitative method with a small sample, 2) being ethnographic or otherwise ‘in the field’, 3) characterized by process-tracing, and 4) investigates a single phenomenon or instance. These components are identifiable in this project. I used the qualitative method of interviewing as well as discussion groups in order to investigate the particular phenomenon of immigrant civic participation in Richmond. This case study can be used to clarify the features of a larger class of similar phenomena, which are the characteristics of civic participation of immigrants in Canadian cities.

In terms of a temporal framework, my research is cross-sectional, which means that a snapshot is provided of the distribution of factors as well as outcomes in a population at a specified period of time (Darity, 2008). Although a longitudinal study would be beneficial as a follow-up could determine whether the original explanations have endured over an interval period (Baxter, 2010), this is beyond the scope of this research project due to time and resource constraints. One recommendation for future research is to repeat the interviews with this project’s participants in order to analyze any changes in responses.

It is also important to remark that this study abides by the philosophy of action research. Stratton (2008) establishes action research as intending to promote change by engaging participants in a process of sharing knowledge as well as encouraging a willingness to enact change. One of my stated objectives is “to determine the role of the City in supporting immigrant civic engagement and to reduce recognized barriers”. This research leads to recommending actions for the City of Richmond to take in order to support an increased level of civic participation from immigrant communities.
METHODS

This research project engaged three major stakeholder groups: City of Richmond staff, employees of immigrant-serving community organizations, and immigrant residents, both recent and well established. During the project, the following methods were used:

1) LITERATIVE REVIEW

There was an initial review of current scholarship about barriers to immigrant civic participation within the Canadian context. In addition, there was a review of best practice case studies on immigrant civic engagement in other municipalities.

2) MAPPING OF PROGRAMS

There was research into the existing and past immigrant programs within Richmond’s non-profit sector that address civic participation. There was also research to identify existing and past projects within the City of Richmond that address civic participation of immigrant residents.

3) INTERVIEWS WITH CITY OF RICHMOND STAFF

A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with 11 City staff in order to identify city challenges around supporting immigrant civic participation, perceived knowledge gaps in the immigrant communities, and staff’s creative ideas for improving civic engagement. (See Appendix A for City of Richmond staff interview questions.)

4) INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with 12 key leaders of community organizations that provide immigrant services. The purpose of these interviews was to identify current programs that engage immigrant residents in civic processes, existing barriers to civic participation, community perceptions of the role of the City in supporting immigrant civic engagement, and opportunities for project partnerships. (See Appendix B for Community Partners interview questions.)
5) WORKSHOP FOR RICHMOND IMMIGRANTS

In response to the needs identified by City staff and community partners, a workshop called “Find Your City, Find Your Voice” was hosted by the City of Richmond on May 1, 2014 for immigrant residents in Richmond. The workshop involved around 30 participants and offered them the opportunity to learn about the roles of City Hall and City Council. Workshop participants were engaged in discussions about their perception of City Hall and their perceived role in civic processes in a group format. (See Appendix C for the “Find Your City, Find Your Voice” workshop agenda.)

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this research study is the absence of in-depth interviews with immigrant residents. This project engaged City of Richmond staff and community leaders in audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews about immigrant civic participation. Immigrant residents were engaged in this topic through a workshop discussion group format. Volunteer note-takers were assigned to record their comments, but spoken points may have been missed.

Also at the workshop, a Cantonese-speaking discussion group was offered as an option. Due to limitations in our volunteers’ language ability, we were unable to offer other language discussion groups.

One suggestion for future research is to engage recent immigrant residents in Richmond in semi-structured interviews for a more in-depth analysis of their civic participation. These interviews also need to be conducted in non-English languages in order to reduce barriers to participation.
Research on Civic Engagement

Many Canadian academics and researchers have looked into the issue of immigrant civic participation. Civic engagement can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways, including running for elections, voting, lobbying political parties, attending city council meetings, being a board member, reading political news, and more. Often, researchers frame the concept of civic participation as voting, but as the above list demonstrates, it can expand into many other activities. Fundamentally, civic participation is about being an active citizen.

“Citizenship to us is not waiting upon the decisions on everything to be handed down from above, whether in the form of legal edict or religious judgement, but is being prepared to find a solution through argument, mediation and creativity.” (Wood & Landry, 2008, p.283)

The question of whether immigrants vote less than residents born in Canada has produced conflicting results in research studies. The Canadian Ethnic Diversity Survey shows that the rate of voter turnout for immigrants (77.6%) is almost the same as non-immigrants (78.8%) (Yu & Ahadi, 2010). The survey notes that the difference lies between first generation immigrants who have arrived since 1991 (53%) and those arriving before 1991 (83%). This gap comes from unequal access to financial resources and social networks, limited knowledge about political processes, as well as linguistic challenges. On the other hand, the 2003 General Social Survey shows that 58% of immigrants had voted in a recent federal, provincial, or municipal election, compared to 80% of Canadian-born respondents. Since there is no consensus about the voting behaviour of immigrants from research studies, government staff should be wary of making claims about immigrant voting levels.

To explore civic participation patterns of immigrants, a 2008 study looks at how demographic factors impact behaviours. Researchers discover that immigrants who are 20 to 29 years old are less likely to vote in federal and subnational elections than older immigrants (Tossutti, Wang, & Kaas-Mason, 2008). Also, immigrants reporting lower incomes are less likely to vote than wealthier immigrants. Surprisingly, the study finds that more education does not correlate with higher
voting turnouts (ibid). In terms of membership in voluntary associations, immigrant males with a post-secondary education and a personal income of more than $50,000 are more likely to participate. In addition, the odds of associational involvement increases by 49% for more established immigrants (ibid).

In a Canadian study of Hong Kong immigrants, researchers find that there are gender inequalities in the exercise of citizenship rights and participation. Their study finds that settlement services tend to favour the “male breadwinners” from nuclear families (Preston, Kobayashi, & Man, 2006). In addition, men are found to be more likely to participate in Canadian politics and they are also more likely to be financial supporters of Canadian political parties (ibid).

Jorge Ginieniewicz (2007) conducted another case study on Latin American immigrants in Toronto. He discovers that the major influencing factors that promote their political participation are personal networks and tolerance of Canadian society. Ginieniewicz also remarks that memories from non-democratic regimes do not necessarily have a negative impact on immigrants' level of political participation in Canada. Studies actually demonstrate that immigrants from non-democratic countries have a higher level of trust of their host country's institutions than native-born residents (Ginieniewski, 2007).

Sherry Yu and Daniel Ahadi (2010) explore how an interest in news and current affairs is another measure of civic engagement. In 2000 and 2003, 73% of immigrants said that they follow the news every day, compared to 70% of Canadian-born respondents. Level of interest was the highest among immigrants who have lived in Canada for 26 years or more, at 81%, but this lowered to 63% for recent immigrants (Yu & Ahadi, 2010). Surprisingly, the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating notes that within the immigrant community, interest in public affairs is also high among those with less than a high school education (ibid).
However, if immigrants in Greater Vancouver are relying on ethnic media to be aware of current events, they will likely be disconnected from local political and civic life. Yu and Ahadi (2010) note that one-third of ethnic media content in Vancouver has its production origin outside of British Columbia, meaning that they do not necessarily reflect local issues. There is also the under-representation of national and provincial news in Vancouver ethnic media, which is at 10% of the total news content (ibid).

A 2011 report by the Centre for Voluntary Sector Studies in Toronto shows that ethnic minorities tend to be poorly represented on the boards of non-profits. There is a disconnect between the leadership of voluntary organizations and the population demographics of our region. In Vancouver, the average diversity of boards, calculated from the number of visible minorities out of total board members, is 21% (Meinhard, Faridi, O’Connor, & Randhawa, 2011). The study also found that the greater the number of ethno-specific charitable organizations, the lower the participation of visible minorities in mainstream charitable organizations (ibid).

Entry points to civic participation for newcomers can be within the migrant community through volunteer work or involvement in settlement services. Another important entry point to Canadian civic society is religious organizations. Research led by Livianna Tossutti, Ding Ming Wang, and Sanne Kaas-Mason (2008) highlight how the internal structures of religious institutions often shape patterns of civic engagement, through drawing people together to address common concerns as well as encouraging volunteering and charitable activities. Their research links religiosity or regular church attendance to higher rates of electoral turn out, political interest, and voluntary organization membership. Odds of associational involvement increase by 85% for immigrants who worship on a weekly or monthly basis.

The literature overview in this section shows that there are many various patterns of engagement for Canadian immigrant communities and at times, research can prove conflicting patterns. Studies have explored specific ethnic groups in particular cities, but these patterns of participation may be different in a separate context. This project is a further exploration into Richmond, British Columbia as a case study. How the context of Richmond compares to other Canadian cities would be an interesting area for future research.
Profile of Immigrants in Richmond

Richmond, British Columbia has grown into a culturally diverse Canadian city because of its position as a magnet for foreign immigration. As previously mentioned, Richmond’s population has one of the nationally highest concentrations of visible minorities. Richmond also has a high concentration of immigrants whose most common language spoken at home is a non-English language. Richmond’s diversity is a strength as it brings multiple perspectives to the city, but it also presents a challenge for being inclusive while engaging residents in city planning.

The immigrant population in Richmond is not one uniform group. There are many differences amongst immigrants living in this city, and some of those variances include language, ethnicity, as well as number of years in Canada. When the city is trying to engage immigrant residents in Richmond, we need to ask the following questions.

**WHAT LANGUAGE DO THEY SPEAK?**

English is still the most common language in Richmond, with 93,715 residents identifying English as the language spoken most often at home (Statistics Canada, 2011). However, there are 26,550 residents speaking Cantonese at home and 17,920 residents who use Mandarin as their household language.
The next two most popular household languages include Punjabi at 3,630 residents and then Tagalog at 3,305 residents. In Richmond’s communities, there are many residents who are most comfortable speaking in non-English languages, which is important to consider for public consultation.

**Figure 1: Languages Spoken in Richmond**

**HOW LONG HAVE THEY LIVED IN CANADA?**

Immigrants in Richmond are in various stages of settlement, from being newcomers to being well established in the community. 62% of the residents in Richmond have immigrated to Canada in their lifetime, and the majority (22%) immigrated between 1991 and 2000. The second largest portion (19%) immigrated between 2001 and 2011, and Statistics Canada (2011) reports that 18,685 people immigrated to Richmond between 2006 and 2011.

**Figure 2: Generation status of Richmond’s residents**

*Based on generation status from 2011 N1HS data*
WHERE WERE THEY BORN?

This question can also be expanded into “Which country did they live in before Canada?” or “Which countries have they lived in for extended periods of time?”. These questions are important because knowing the answers will give you a sense of what level of engagement or type of interaction with government bodies an immigrant resident may have experienced.

Top 10 Places of Birth of Richmond’s Immigrants

* Based on immigrant status and selected places of birth from 2011 NHS data
WHICH IMMIGRANT CATEGORY ARE THEY IN?

There are multiple visa and residency categories that immigrants can come to Canada through. One major defining factor is whether an immigrant is permanent or temporary. In the graph below, the orange bars show permanent resident categories while the blue bars show temporary immigrant categories. Evidently, Canada had significantly more temporary immigrants than permanent immigrants in 2012. This gap is a reflection of the current Conservative government’s immigration policies.

Within both categories there are multiple sub-groups. For permanent immigrants, people can arrive through the family class, as an economic immigrant, as a refugee, as well as others. For temporary immigrants, people can arrive as a temporary worker, as a student, as a refugee claimant or through other humanitarian cases. There are wide differences amongst these groups in terms of socio-economic class and privilege that need to be taken into consideration.
TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

It is important not to generalize about the immigrant population in Richmond. Within the public imagination, there tends to be certain assumptions that the immigrants in Richmond are “Chinese”. Although immigrants from China constitute a significant percentage of overall immigrants to Richmond, there are still large groups from the Philippines, India, Russia, the United Kingdom, and many other countries. In order to recognize the presence of the diverse ethnic minority groups in Richmond, the City should work towards establishing and strengthening partnerships with underrepresented populations.

There is also huge diversity within the “Chinese” subset of the immigrant population, as they come from different regions, such as Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. Each region has a distinct governance context and very different experiences of civic engagement.

Understanding the complexity and variety of the immigrant population in Richmond is vital for designing the City’s public consultation processes.
As the previous section has demonstrated, there is a large and diverse immigrant population in Richmond. To address this demographic trend, the non-profit community in Richmond has produced a wide spread of services around immigrant settlement and engagement. Most of the immigrant services in Richmond focus on meeting fundamental needs, such as housing, employment, school enrolment, and accessing government assistance.

However, there is an additional learning curve after initial settlement, and that is education around how to be an active citizen and how to be involved in community building. In other words, it is education around civic engagement. So what has happened or is happening around Richmond to support immigrant communities in learning civic engagement? Below is an overview of existing or past programs that are related to learning about government processes or connecting newcomers to City Hall. (Note: Please be advised that this section is not a complete inventory. There are numerous non-profit organizations involved in different projects, and so it is difficult to capture all programs.)

The City of Richmond has also been involved in many of the following programs offered by community organizations through a partnership model. This approach means that the City often provides practical support to non-profits as they implement their programs.

**CITY OF RICHMOND**

*Social Development Strategy: Study Circles Project (2012)*

As part of the Social Development Strategy’s public consultation process, the City of Richmond partnered with the Richmond Civic Engagement Network to facilitate study circles. These study circles were facilitated by community volunteers and were targeted towards groups who face barriers to civic participation. One study circle was created specifically for immigrants, and they were held in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English.

The Newcomer's Guide was developed due to the 2004-2010 Intercultural Strategic Plan. The guide includes a section on civic engagement and voting, and copies have been translated into Chinese, Tagalog, Punjabi and Russian.

Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee (Ongoing)

The mandate of the Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee is to enhance intercultural harmony and strengthen intercultural cooperation in Richmond. The committee has produced the 2012-2015 Intercultural Strategic Plan. This plan includes the strategic actions of "the encouragement of dialogue and discussion with immigrants on involvement in civic life" and "the provision of training in public participation".

City Tours (Ongoing)

The City of Richmond, in partnership with local community organizations, offers city tours for newcomers. The City provides the bus and a tour guide, while the organization provides translation and does recruitment. The tour is 3 hours and explores 3 public facilities, which may include a community centre, park, and City Hall.

Public Participation Toolkit (2009)

This toolkit is intended to provide a guide for City of Richmond staff for valuing and encouraging public participation as well as creating effective partnerships. The toolkit includes a section on involving diverse communities, particularly ethnic minorities and immigrants.
Pesticide-Free Gardening in Chinese (2010 to 2012)

The Sustainability department at the City of Richmond held an environmental stewardship workshop that targeted the Asian community. Their goal was to explore branding for the Sustainability department and particularly what resonates with certain cultures. This workshop discovered that immigrants relate to nature in a different way.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Workshop with a Local MP (June 2013)

A workshop for English language learning students was held with guest speaker Libby Davies, who is a Member of Parliament. The students were able to ask Davies questions about her life in politics and learn more about how Parliament functions.

RICHMOND CENTRE FOR DISABILITY

Chinese Support Group (Ongoing)

The Chinese Support Group at the Richmond Centre for Disability consists of a network of Chinese-speaking families that have a member with a disability. The group mentors each other around navigating government services for people with disabilities. In recent years, the group has started working towards changing disability policies to better suit their needs. They are currently exploring a housing project.
RICHMOND FAMILY PLACE

Beyond the Veil (Ongoing)

“Beyond the Veil” is a program about building partnerships and sharing knowledge between the City of Richmond and the Muslim community. Its aim is to create better cultural understanding between City staff, service sector staff, and Muslim residents in Richmond.

RICHMOND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community Tour (March 2014)

RMCS facilitated a Community Tour, in partnership with the City of Richmond, for families who are new to Richmond. This was an interactive tour of Richmond where participants had the chance to learn about the roles of City Hall as well as a chance to visit important historical and cultural sites around Richmond.

Citizenship Preparation Classes (Ongoing)

This is a series of educational workshops on Canadian geography, heritage, and the Canadian government and judicial system. It also provides advice on preparing for the Canadian citizenship test.

Eat Talk Connect (May 2012 and October 2013)

A “power lunch” was organized for new Canadians and Richmond city officials. New Canadians cooked homemade lunches to share with City staff, officials, and councillors. Groups participated in a dialogue about resettlement, local customs, and building a more inclusive community.
SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

One-on-one Counselling (Ongoing)

Settlement Workers in Schools offers one-on-one counselling for newcomer families with children on how to navigate the legal and government systems.

Workshops (Ongoing)

There are ongoing workshops that are organized by Settlement Workers in Schools that cover a diverse range of topics that are relevant for newcomers. One of the popular topics includes the rights and responsibilities of a Canadian citizen as well as how community resources function.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S

PR Card and Citizenship Application Workshop (Ongoing)

This workshop is held in partnership with the Richmond Public Library, and it offers assistance for newcomers in the application procedure for obtaining permanent residency and citizenship. Citizenship test preparation includes information about the Canadian political context.

Virtual Citizenship Resource Centre (Ongoing)

This is a free online resource that helps newcomers prepare for the Canadian citizenship test. Tools include information on how to become a Canadian citizen, online workshops, self-study sessions, sample quizzes, as well as one-on-one e-guidance.
TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES

In Richmond, the non-profit and public sector offer various programs that help newcomers gain knowledge about how City Hall and other levels of government function. Most of the programs listed above are about sharing information. This is partly channelled through citizenship test preparation courses for a standard test that is mandatory for immigrants to obtain Canadian citizenship status.

There are also a few initiatives that focus on building connections between immigrants and City Hall. These include Richmond Family Place’s “Beyond the Veil” program as well as Richmond Multicultural Community Services’ “Eat Talk Connect”.

What is missing are programs that specifically support newcomers and more established immigrants in becoming involved in community decision-making. Participating in decision-making processes can happen both in the public realm, such as through citizen advisory committees, or in the private realm, such as through boards or philanthropy councils. The gap that exists in Richmond is a long-term program that provides consistent support and training for immigrants on how to engage with their City and community at a policy level.

The next section will provide some best practice examples of what this form of immigrant civic engagement can look like.
Best Practices of Immigrant Civic Engagement

There are many best practices of immigrant civic engagement across the world, and what is provided in this section is not an exhaustive list. I have chosen the following programs to illustrate examples of how cities and community organizations are engaging immigrants in community decision-making and active participation in city planning.

Vancouver

Mount Pleasant Area Community Action Circles Project
Vancouver, British Columbia
May 2013 to February 2014
www.mpnh.org

The goal of this project is to strengthen the capacity of community members to support the successful integration of newcomers and increase local participation in civic and community affairs. The project aims to mobilize and leverage the reach of various community networks to foster greater engagement in the community, and it does so through a Neighbourhood Action Committee. This project is managed by the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House and funded through the City of Vancouver’s Welcoming Communities program.

The Maple Bamboo Initiative
Vancouver, British Columbia
2007
www.helpinghouse.org/maplebambooprogram.htm

This program, run by the Multicultural Helping House, aimed to help newcomers build their capacity to engage in public processes in Canada as well as to open up Canadian processes to be more
inclusive of diverse communities. 60 volunteers were drawn from seven immigrant communities to be trained in civic participation and then were immersed in public processes of their choice. The seven communities included the Filipino, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, African, and Hispanic populations. Newcomers were partnered with host organizations in order to learn the skills of providing input in public forums that affect decision-making.

Canada

DiverseCity – The Greater Toronto Leadership Project
Toronto, Ontario
2008 to present
maytree.com/integration/diversecity-leadership-project

Maytree Foundation runs the DiverseCity program, which is about increasing the ethnic diversity of leadership in the Greater Toronto Region. DiverseCity onBoard connects highly qualified candidates from racialized and under-represented immigrant communities with governance positions in agencies, boards, commissions and non-profit organizations. Participants are given the opportunity to attend Maytree’s training courses, seminars and events. DiverseCity School4Civics offers training and mentoring programs that provide a civic literacy primer in order to equip leaders to run for elected office or to manage campaigns.

Newcomer Advocacy Committee
Toronto, Ontario
2008 to present
mnlct.org/engagement/newcomer-advocacy-committee

The Newcomer Advocacy Committee (NAC) is managed by the Mennonite New Life Centre and supports newcomers in engaging in reflection and action for social change. The NAC has worked to formulate policy recommendations, identify allies, and engage in
dialogue with local politicians. Advocacy issues include: employment equity, paid internships for internationally trained workers, and municipal voting rights for permanent residents. The NAC has organized a community forum on newcomer employment and civic participation, put on a Mayoral Candidates Debate on Immigrant Inclusion, and created a documentary called "Raising our Voice".

**Toronto Civics 101**
Toronto, Ontario
2009
[www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=25e1acb640c21410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD](www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=25e1acb640c21410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD)

175 participants from across the city were randomly selected from 900 applicants to attend Toronto Civics 101, a special learning series. The series consisted of 6 sessions from September to December and covered planning processes, how council makes decisions, Toronto's fiscal framework, municipal elections, and discussions on leadership. Each session included presentations, activities, and group discussions.

**International**

**Refugee Women Civic Leadership Institute Pilot Project**
Seattle, Washington
2014
[www.seattle.gov](www.seattle.gov)

This $100,000 pilot project from the City of Seattle aims to engage and train female refugees in making their voices heard in civic processes. The goal of the institute is to better integrate Seattle’s refugee female communities into Seattle’s civic, economic, and cultural life. This project also compliments Seattle’s Safe Communities Initiative, as the female refugee participants will also train officers from the Seattle Police Department in an effort to increase cultural understanding and trust.
West Midlands Civic Leadership Program
Birmingham, United Kingdom
April 2013 to present

This program, run by Operation Black Vote, introduces forty potential ethnic minority leaders in Wolverhampton and Birmingham to the reality of public life in four main areas over the course of six months. The four areas include: politics (through placements with local councillors), education (placements with school governors), the criminal justice system (placements with Safer Neighbourhood Teams), and the community sector (placements with charity trustees). Participants shadow officials for up to ten days over the course of six months, supported by additional practical training.

Pact for Integration
Stuttgart, Germany
2001
https://www.stuttgart.de/en/item/show/353514/1/publ/4843

In 2001, the Stuttgart City Council adopted the Pact for Integration and instituted a sweeping program of policies and activities aimed at equal opportunity for participation, social cohesion, and the capitalization of cultural diversity as a community and economic asset. Part of this program included lobbying for the right of all non-German citizens to participate in local elections. In the interim, Stuttgart residents without German citizenship were able to vote for representatives on an “International Committee”, which was a local consultative lobby that consisted of elected migrants, appointed experts, and City councillors.

RESOURCE
For more good ideas in immigrant integration and innovative practices that create inclusion and urban prosperity, you can visit citiesofmigration.ca. Cities of Migration is a website, run by the Maytree Foundation, that seeks to improve local integration practices in major immigrant receiving cities worldwide through information sharing and a learning exchange.
One of this project’s objectives was to explore the challenges and barriers that immigrant residents face, particularly newcomers and adults, when they try to engage with City Hall and civic processes.

These challenges and barriers were identified by three groups: City staff based on what they have witnessed in their professional experience, community partners that offer immigrant services based on what they have witnessed in their work with immigrants, and immigrant residents who attended our workshop based on their personal experiences.
English Language Skills

One of the primary barriers that immigrants face when it comes to engaging with City Hall is language. As the 2011 Census Data shows, only 49% of Richmond residents identify English as the language they use at home. Language also becomes especially more complex and difficult to understand when it comes to participating in decision-making processes that considers policies and planning. Different levels of English language ability also create power imbalances where those who are fluent in English have a more dominant voice during discussions.

A case example about a repercussion from imbalanced English language skills can be seen in one of Richmond’s city advisory committees, where tensions have increased because some immigrant members do not have the necessary English language skills to take on all obligatory tasks. This has created additional burdens for the committee members who are fluent in English while limiting the participation of some immigrant members.

Confusing Government Structure

The Canadian federal system, where there are 3 levels of government that are responsible for their own set of services and programs, can be confusing for both newcomers and established immigrants. Government systems in the origin country of immigrants may be vastly different, so there is uncertainty about the roles of City Hall as well as the relationship between City staff and City council.

“Language barrier is a cause for discomfort and stress.” – Immigrant resident

“Are there Cantonese/Mandarin speaking staff and interpreters at city hall? This is a barrier to many – it leads newcomers to avoid city hall.” – Immigrant resident

“Many immigrants...are still very much confused by the three levels of government. And I think in general, other than the fact that you go through a citizenship training, there is really not much out there that is [structured learning] for people to really understand how they’re different, how they work together, and so on.” – Executive Director at a Community Organization
Mistrust of Government

Newcomers to Canada have different understandings and relationships with “democracy”. Interactions and experiences with government in their origin countries for some immigrants may have been authoritative, unstable, or even violent. This can cause some immigrants to feel a sense of wariness, hesitation, or fear of becoming engaged with city governments. Assumptions exist that individual citizen voices will not be heard and that the government should not be trusted.

“No, I’m here. I want to live in peace. I don’t want to talk. I don’t want to be involved with politics because it might cause me a lot of stuff.” – Immigrant Support Worker reflecting on clients’ comments

“In Shanghai...it’s very hard to contact the government people there. Sometimes I’m not comfortable with the armed guards at the doors...Back there, the federal government pretty much controls the provincial government. The mayor doesn’t have as much power as here.” – Immigrant resident

“I was meeting with a fellow who works at the Richmond Chinese Cultural Association and I had suggested that we meet here at City Hall...he actually questioned why we would meet at City Hall if we didn’t do something wrong.” – Coordinator at a Community Organization
Professional Jargon

The City needs to be considerate of the terms that they are using and how they can clearly define them. Commonly used words in government settings may not be easily understood by the general public. The likelihood of miscommunication increases with immigrant communities, as they may have a vastly different cultural interpretation of what terms mean.

“[W]hen we say food security to folks, the immediate knee-jerk reaction is that it is people with guns rounding up food...” – Coordinator at a Community Organization

“If the City writes reports and notices and all in high level language, you’re not going to get the people out...if you can’t provide translation services, at least write it in plain language and use pictures!” – Board Member of a Community Organization

Intimidating Consultation Processes

Aspects of public consultation processes, such as Public Hearings and City Council meetings, are intimidating processes as public speaking is daunting for many people. There is the need for greater attention on how to create more casual and comfortable public engagement processes. In addition, public consultation models may not be effective if they are not based on an understanding of cultural differences towards sharing opinions in a public setting. City facilitators need to be actively intervening to ensure that participants have the opportunity to speak in a manner that is comfortable for them. For resources on cross-cultural public consultation models, please refer to Appendix D.

“I worked with [Chinese] elders...trying to get them to go to town hall, and they were just like – I really had to promise them that everything would be okay, don’t worry...because they were just so scared of that process.” – Community Organizer
Historical and Present Recognition

One community organizer had commented that engagement cannot happen without historical identity as well as a sense of place and belonging. To create meaningful involvement, there needs to be an additional recognition of the historic and current systemic discrimination experienced by ethnic groups. Also, the legacy of colonialism and the histories of the First Nations peoples in the region have to be acknowledged. For further resources on decolonizing models of public engagement, please refer to Appendix D.

Recognition needs to happen in the present as well as historically. Certain visible minority groups feel that they are invisible in Richmond and that their presence is overshadowed due to their smaller population. Visible minority communities need additional opportunities to share their stories and perspectives.

Perception of “White Spaces”

A person’s comfort with events and workshops at City Hall may be strongly linked to their ability to relate to other participants at the event. One factor that plays into making this connection is ethnic identity. What was heard throughout this project’s interviews was that the City’s public consultation processes may be interpreted as “white spaces” due to the demographic make-up of the participants. This perception may discourage newcomers from attending consultation events at City Hall.

Community members also noted the importance of having diversity in front-line staff, as being able to interact with staff who can relate to one’s culture and language is an important factor in creating a welcoming atmosphere.

“[O]ur visibility was diminished. We didn’t was existing at all. So what we doing now, is to make the City understand that we’re here, we will be here, and we have to be here.” – Immigrant Resident

“Visibility is very important to our community. When I go in [City Hall], I don’t see no one relate to me, who...when I see, for example, a black man working behind the counter, our mentality, what we have is – I can go and walk at that station and ask for that person.” – Community Organizer
“[W]hen I think about the demographic make-up of a lot of the open houses or planning committees that I attend…it’s very rare to see people of colour in the audience. And I mean that in the sense of the community side, from the developer staff side, there is good representation. But for those people who are coming to contest a planning application or a policy, very rare to see, yeah, non-whites there.”
– Coordinator at a Community Organization
When it comes to supporting immigrant civic engagement, municipal governments also run into barriers and challenges. City departments regularly conduct public outreach as they create strategies and plans, host events and workshops, distribute communications media, and more. Although there is the desire from City departments to include newcomers in their public engagement processes, City staff struggle with various obstacles in their attempts to be inclusive.
Resources for Translation

The City’s official communications protocol is to use the English language. This creates a challenge for departments who are attempting to conduct inclusive public outreach, as only 49% of Richmond residents speak English at home. Staff are struggling to communicate effectively to a significant population of non-English speakers.

Currently, there are no formal City resources for translation, and as a result, City departments often rely on volunteers from community partners to provide interpretation at events. Although there is the need for translation of the City’s printed materials, the hiring of translation for written communication is rare.

The will to use translation or interpretation varies across City departments, and so the decision to offer translation at City events is often made on a case-by-case basis. However, the Community Social Development department is in the process of creating an official translation policy, which will help set a standard across City departments for the use of translation.

Appropriate Translation

When City staff are searching for translation services, they face the additional challenge of finding a translator who understands the technical language of the professional field. It is not enough to hire someone who is fluent in the required language, but the interpreter should also have a working knowledge of the jargon used by City departments.

In many instances, the translator hired does not have an understanding of the technical language used by the City department and this creates miscommunications. As a result, City staff time is used to check over translated material for errors. This task is not a component of official job descriptions and often becomes an additional task done at the side of a desk. There is the need to recognize the time invested by bilingual City staff to edit translated materials.
Inadequate Representation

City staff recognize that most of their consultation processes are targeted towards the general public. As a consequence, newcomers and immigrants are grouped into that as a whole and it becomes difficult for staff to address their specific needs. Staff also deal with a lack of resources and time to conduct specialized consultation towards particular demographics such as newcomers.

When City staff are looking to hear immigrant perspectives, they often have to rely on leaders from the non-profit and community sector to represent immigrant issues. This style of consultation is beneficial with the time constraints that City staff have, but it overlooks the need for direct outreach with immigrant communities.

However, this need for direct engagement of immigrant communities was addressed through the recent Study Circles Project for the latest Social Development Strategy’s public consultation. One study circle was created specifically for immigrants, and they were held in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. The City should put more funding into this style of specialized public engagement.

Skilled Facilitation

Some sections of Richmond’s immigrant populations, such as those who are refugees, low-income, or non-English speakers, are considered vulnerable groups. The ability to facilitate meaningful discussions amongst vulnerable populations is a trained and developed skill. Not all staff members are suitable for this role, and yet many are expected to take on this role at City workshops or events. Inappropriate facilitation can lead to decreased participation in City processes by community members.

In order to properly facilitate safe and comfortable environments for vulnerable populations to engage in discussions, City staff need to receive sufficient training in facilitation. Another option is for the City to explore providing funding to hire professional facilitators for consultation processes with vulnerable communities.
COMPARING COMMUNITY VERSUS CITY PERSPECTIVES

In the comparison of community and City perspectives on barriers to civic engagement, there are some overlaps and differences in perception. Both groups recognize the importance of language as a major factor influencing accessibility. Immigrant residents note that they are struggling with their English language skills, while City staff are struggling with obtaining resources for appropriate translation.

Community members and City staff also both acknowledge that existing public consultation formats need improvement. Community organizers point out that current consultation processes are intimidating for many residents and do not welcome input. City staff highlight that a component of effective consultation is having skilled facilitation, and staff require more training on this ability.

However, there are perceptions of barriers mentioned by community members that are missed by the City. Community members highlight the issues of race and the history of colonization. City Hall as a “white space” is an impression that some community members have and they also point out that interacting with City staff who they can racially identify with is important for creating comfort. The gap between community and City perspectives is important to pay attention to when considering the City’s role in civic engagement.
Recommendations

This project’s process involved engaging City staff, community partners involved with immigrant services, and immigrant residents themselves in a discussion about the challenges and opportunities in increasing immigrant civic participation. Through that series of discussions and a final workshop for immigrant residents, the following recommendations were formed.

**Quick Steps**

**EXPAND THE “NEWCOMER’S INFORMATION” WEBPAGE**

The City of Richmond’s official website has a page on “Newcomer’s Information” under Social Planning, which currently consists of an advertisement for this project’s “Find Your City, Find Your Voice” workshop event as well as translated copies of the Newcomer’s Guide in English, Chinese, Tagalog, and Punjabi.

There is the opportunity for the City to expand this webpage to include more relevant information and resources for newcomers. This webpage can be expanded to include information about the orientation tours offered for newcomers that includes an introduction to City Hall as well as City facilities.

In addition, it would be beneficial to include a few key City contacts, who are regularly involved with immigrant communities, on the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage in order to encourage newcomers to reach out to the City and ask questions. The expanded webpage can also share information about immigrant programs and events provided by community partners.

**Department:**
Community Social Development, Communications

**Link to existing policy:**
Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022

Action 33 – Develop mechanisms and guidelines to expand use of the City’s communication channels (e.g. website) to help community agencies publicize their services, programs and events.
In 2009, the City of Richmond produced a user-friendly guide detailing frequently asked questions of the City as part of a “Richmond 101” learning series. Another suggestion is for the City to include an updated version of this guide on the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage.

**IMPROVE VISIBILITY OF THE “NEWCOMER’S INFORMATION” WEBPAGE**

Currently, the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage is relatively buried in the City website’s navigation system. This series of links may not be user-friendly, as website visitors may not naturally know which website tabs to click on in order to find information for new immigrants.

Moreover, new Canadians may not use the term “newcomer” when they are searching for information related to their settlement. Other more common terms such as “immigrant” and “new Canadian” do not connect visitors to the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage or the Newcomer’s Guide when entered into the City website’s search engine.

To improve the visibility of the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage, this report recommends that a link to the page should be included under the “Featured Topics” section of the City’s homepage. Considering the significant number of immigrants that Richmond receives on a regular basis, it would be sensible to draw more attention to the information and resources that the City offers for newcomers.

Another recommendation is to tailor the search results so that more key words related to immigration will easily link to the “Newcomer’s Information” webpage as well as the Newcomer’s Guide.
CREATE A CITY INFO SHEET ABOUT GOVERNMENT JURISDICTION

A common feedback heard from City staff was that during the process of public consultation, residents would spend time discussing an issue that is not under local government jurisdiction. This challenge is not only applicable to immigrant residents, but to Richmond residents as a whole. The general public does not have a clear understanding about which roles and functions the federal, provincial, and municipal levels are responsible for.

In order to clarify Canadian government jurisdiction, the City should create a brief info sheet that outlines the three levels of government in Canada and the areas that each level is responsible for. Clearly communicating these government roles is critical for managing public expectations for the municipality.

This communications document needs to be in plain language and include direct images. Using pictures is particularly important for communicating to Richmond’s non-English speaking population. This info sheet should also be made available on the City’s website and in the updated Newcomer’s Guide.

HOST A CHINESE LANGUAGE SESSION ON THE CITY’S DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES AND ZONING BY-LAWS

During our consultations, Chinese-speaking participants expressed the desire to learn more about the City’s development process. These Chinese residents voiced their concerns about Richmond’s growing population and the number of high-rises that have been emerging in the city centre area. They requested a Mandarin and Cantonese session with City planners where they can ask questions about how development is approved and how current development fits into the City’s plan.
Two sessions, one for Mandarin-speakers and the other for Cantonese-speakers, should be held with either a City planner who is fluent in these languages or with an interpreter. These sessions can include an overview of the basic tenets from the recent Official Community Plan, the upcoming major planning projects, a brief introduction to the development process, and a Q&A component.

HOST AN ANNUAL “WELCOME WORKSHOP” WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

There is an array of community non-profit organizations in Richmond that offer services for newcomers and immigrants. In order to make it easier for newcomers to understand the large variety of services and programs that they have access to, the City should invite their community partners who are involved with immigrant services to host a “Welcome Workshop” at City Hall.

The “Welcome Workshop” can be a one-day annual event held in either the lobby of City Hall or in the 2nd floor meeting rooms. Community partners can bring their staff, posters, brochures, and other advertisements to spread the word about their services amongst the immigrant communities.

An additional benefit to hosting the “Welcome Workshop” is that it would bring newcomers into City Hall and help present City Hall as a comfortable space for community activities. Having diverse representation in community partners at the “Welcome Workshop” can also challenge the notion of City Hall as a “white space”. The City can also use the “Welcome Workshop” as a channel for communicating about diversity services and the Newcomer’s Guide.
DEVELOP A CITY HALL 101 PROGRAM

The highest degree of interaction between a citizen and government happens at the local level with municipal governments. It is at the local level that residents have the greatest ability to exert influence, and yet the general public’s awareness and knowledge about City Hall is often limited.

Both the City of Vancouver and the City of Toronto have recognized the role of municipal governments in supporting civic education. The City of Vancouver’s Engaged City Task Force’s “Quick Starts Report” calls for a standing section on the City’s website that explains City processes in an easy-to-read, accessible and graphic format. The City of Toronto has held a civic literacy pilot to educate the public about how the City government works in decision-making, planning, finances and elections, which had over 900 applicants.

In 2009, the City of Richmond introduced a “Richmond 101” learning series about the roles and functions of City Hall for non-profit agencies and some professional citizens. This series involved education around the responsibilities of different City departments and led to the creation of a user-friendly information sheet about City Hall.

The City of Richmond should further develop the “Richmond 101” program and have participation be open to any resident in Richmond. The expanded program can include more information on how citizens can influence decision-making and planning processes in different City departments.

OFFER FACILITATION TRAINING FOR CITY STAFF

A critique expressed by a City staff about the nature of municipal workshops is that they are often facilitated by a City staff member who has not
received adequate training in facilitation. The task of facilitating meaningful discussions, particularly among vulnerable populations, is a skill that takes education and time to develop. Immigrant communities include groups who are refugees, low-income, racialized, and are in other ways marginalized. Discussions with these vulnerable groups must be led by a facilitator that is experienced in creating safe spaces.

To address this need, Human Resources at the City of Richmond should explore the opportunity to create a facilitation training class specifically for working with vulnerable populations. Currently, there is a series of training classes that City employees have access to and one is about “Facilitating Engaging Meetings”. However, this class is focused on facilitating effective work meetings, which is a different issue from facilitating public engagement.

One component of this facilitation training should include culturally sensitive forms of public engagement. For resources on what these models can look like, please refer to Appendix D.

**STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

Research has shown that one of the major points of entry for community engagement for immigrants is faith-based organizations. Many newcomers, who are not yet connected to City facilities, are already participating in their religious institutions. The City should conduct more outreach work and strengthen relationships with faith-based organizations in Richmond in order to reach out to newcomer communities.

One recommendation is to invite leaders of faith groups to come to City Hall for a tour. This will provide the opportunity for the leaders to learn more
about the City services that their congregation can access. It also gives the City the chance to build its network of community champions. Having faith-based organizations as mediators can also help build trust in local government for newcomers.

RECOGNIZE SECOND LANGUAGE SKILLS AS ASSETS

Considering the demographic of the Richmond population, City staff who are able to speak a second language can be valuable assets, especially in front line or community engagement positions. A second language should be included in the desired qualifications section of job descriptions for positions that routinely interact with the general public.

One option that should be explored is the possibility of offering bilingual staff in key positions a bonus for their second language skills. There is a set precedent for this in other organizations, such as the Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus in the United States Military. This bonus is paid on a monthly basis and varies from $100 to $1000 based on the language, level of demonstrated proficiency, and the member’s occupation.

The City should further explore opportunities around second language bonuses for City staff that routinely work on translation or interpretation. There are existing barriers, such as union regulation and budget limitations, which still need to be addressed.

IMPLEMENT CITY HALL TOURS BY CITIZEN LEADERS

Presently, the City of Richmond’s Community Services Department coordinates orientation tours...
for new immigrants to City facilities. These tours are held in partnership with a number of immigrant-serving agencies and they introduce newcomers to the range of recreational, cultural activities, and social services offered by the City and its partners.

In order to bridge connections between newcomers and more established immigrants, the City should explore starting a volunteer training program for “City ambassadors”. These City ambassadors would be established immigrants who could help lead the orientation tours and provide advice for newcomers about accessing City facilities that would include a cultural lens. Newcomers would benefit from being able to receive guidance from a Richmond resident who has experienced settlement. Moreover, seeing an established immigrant as a guide to City Hall can contest the notion that City Hall is a “white space”.

The City would need to lead an extensive training program for the City ambassadors in order to ensure accurate and appropriate communications.

Ongoing Steps

Link to existing policy:
Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022

Action 27 – Support and encourage community-based efforts to attract and develop the leadership potential of people who live or work in Richmond and, as appropriate, coordinate these efforts with the work of municipal advisory committees.

USE PLAIN LANGUAGE

As mentioned in this report’s section on City Perspectives on Challenges for Engagement, accessing resources for translation is difficult, particularly for written documents. In the case that the City is unable to translate printed or online material, it is important that any document that is intended for public reading is written using plain language. For many newcomers who are learning English as a second language, simple and easy-to-read language is crucial for their understanding.

Another communication practice is to incorporate as many related images as possible in presentations and public documents. Using graphics in explanations of regulations and processes is useful.
for increasing comprehension.

A useful tool that City staff can use to check the readability of their language is the Readability Statistics option in Microsoft Office. This will check the grade level of the language used in a document. The following link provides a step-by-step guide on how to use this function.


CONTINUE WITH “STUDY CIRCLE” STYLE ENGAGEMENT

The Study Circles facilitated by community volunteers as part of the Social Development Strategy’s public consultation process are a good model to follow for future community engagement. The traditional processes of public hearings and open houses may be intimidating spaces for newcomers. Conducting public engagement through intimate and comfortable group discussion settings with facilitators who are not City staff can feel more welcoming for new immigrants.

CREATE A WELCOMING CITY HALL

One of the barriers that immigrants face when it comes to civic engagement is a fear of government and the sense that one does not go to City Hall unless there is a “problem”. This means that there needs to be further efforts from the City of Richmond to bring more community events to City Hall in order to cultivate a welcoming and safe space.

The City has already begun to do this through allowing non-profit partners to use meeting spaces,
holding a free series of artist talks, having community film screenings, and more at City Hall. Having family-oriented or culturally-oriented festivals in City Hall’s lobby would be especially appealing to newcomer and immigrant communities, and has been done through events managed by Diversity Services. An ongoing recommendation is to continue to reach out to community partners to design open cultural celebrations that can be held in City Hall to encourage more members of the public to use the space.

ACKNOWLEDGE ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Community members have highlighted that there needs to be more recognition of colonial history in Richmond. One way that the City can support awareness about Aboriginal history and issues is by acknowledging that Richmond is on Coast Salish lands at the beginning of appropriate City events. Making this acknowledgement is especially important at events that focus on the topics of diversity, multiculturalism, or inclusion. Taking this step can raise awareness among the public about the history of Coast Salish communities in the region.

The City can also invite Coast Salish elders to conduct a welcome at the beginning of public events or workshops. It would be beneficial for residents to hear about Aboriginal history and issues directly from elders who have the greatest understanding.

In addition, the City should work closely with community representatives from Richmond’s urban Aboriginal population to develop ideas for how to continue to acknowledge First Nations histories.

Department:
Community Services

Link to existing policy:
Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022

Action 19.2 – Facilitating the development and coordination of intercultural events that provide opportunities for active learning about the traditions of different cultures.

Department:
Community Services, Policy Planning

Link to existing policy:
Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013-2022

Action 20.1 – Gain a better understanding of the needs of Richmond’s urban Aboriginal population, and opportunities for future collaboration.
RAISE AWARENESS OF NON-EUROPEAN HISTORIES

Early Richmond history is often portrayed as predominantly white European. However, there are alternative narratives of early development in Richmond that includes First Nations, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and other communities of colour.

The City of Richmond, through its official archives, has already created historical guides and collected documents regarding early histories of visible minority communities.

An additional role that the City can play is to promote awareness of non-European histories in order to recognize the diversity of cultural communities that had an active role in Richmond’s early development. The City can have a role in facilitating connections between community organizations and the Richmond Museum’s resources on non-European histories.
A healthy and vibrant community is a place where the residents are engaged and have the desire to participate in creating positive change in their city. When it comes to the Canadian federal system of governance, the level where citizens have the greatest impact and influence is at the municipal level.

One major channel through which change occurs at the local government level is through planning, whether that is for development, transportation, the environment, parks and recreation, or social services. In the next few decades, Richmond will be growing at a steady pace. Metro Vancouver predicts that Richmond’s population will grow to 275,000 by the year 2041. With this growth comes the necessity to increase housing, infrastructure, transportation, recreational opportunities, social programs, and other City services.

Residents in Richmond are witnessing rapid change occur around them, and with their observations comes concerns about the impact of growth on their quality of life. Long established residents in Richmond may feel more comfortable about speaking out to their local
government about their needs and priorities as the city changes, but many immigrants are at a disadvantage because they are unfamiliar with the Canadian governance system and civic culture.

The City of Richmond has a role and responsibility in ensuring that all their residents, regardless of their country of origin or length of time in Canada, have the capacity to engage in the City’s decision-making processes. Although immigration settlement is within the jurisdiction of the federal government, local governments still are responsible for integrating newcomers. The City has a role in educating new immigrants about municipal governance and local development as well as a role in engaging newcomer communities in City processes. Immigrants need to have the opportunity to learn about how local government functions and about the different avenues where they can influence or lobby for change.

The City’s role in engaging immigrant communities is recognized in the 2013-2022 Social Development Strategy through Action 25, which is to “develop a comprehensive communication strategy for encouraging and supporting a cross section of Richmond residents, particularly those who may face barriers to participation (e.g. recent immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.) to participate in City planning and decision making processes”.

City and community building is a collective effort, and great communities are places where residents feel that they have a role in contributing to how their neighbourhoods are formed. For newcomers who are trying to integrate into a foreign community, becoming connected to their City government and having input in the development around them are important steps to feeling a sense of belonging.
Appendix A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CITY OF RICHMOND STAFF

What past programs supporting immigrant civic engagement have you been involved with?

How much influence or control was allocated to immigrant participants?

Where has participation in these programs led to for participants?

Can you name one or two most successful cases for immigrant civic engagement?

What are the knowledge gaps that you perceive immigrants having in regards to civic engagement opportunities?

What are your ideas for improving immigrant civic engagement?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

How do you define civic engagement?

Has your organization been involved with projects that support immigrant civic engagement? If so, please provide details.

What knowledge gaps about City processes have you noticed from your immigrant clients?

Have you heard about challenges experienced by your immigrant clients while interacting with the City of Richmond?

Have you seen or heard instances of City staff making inaccurate assumptions about immigrant residents?

What do you think the City's role should be in supporting immigrant civic engagement?
## "Find Your City, Find Your Voice"
### Workshop Agenda

**Date:** May 1, 2014  
**Time:** 6:00 to 9:00 p.m  
**Place:** Richmond Public Library, Brighouse branch  
100 – 7700 Minoru Gate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ROLE(S)</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
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| 6:00 – 6:15 p.m | All volunteers (Greeting participants and guiding to their tables) | Registration  
|             |                                   | o Opportunities to grab food  
|             |                                   | o Mingling  
|             |                                   | o Organizing tables according to language ability  
|             |                                   | o Ask about mobility needs                                                                 |
| 6:15 – 6:20 p.m | Eliana                             | Welcome  
|             |                                   | o Brief explanation of workshop  
|             |                                   | o Introduce Chak Au, Alan Hill and Lee Anne Smith  
|             |                                   | o Thank library for sponsoring room  
|             |                                   | o Community Agreement  
|             |                                   | o Introduce Roberta Price                                                                 |
| 6:20 – 6:30 p.m | Roberta Price                      | Welcome to Coast Salish lands, unceded territories                                         |
| 6:30 p.m    | Alan                              | Introduce Councillor Chak Au                                                               |
| 6:30 – 6:35 p.m | Chak Au                           | City Council Welcome                                                                      |
| 6:35 – 6:40 p.m | Eliana (Intro) Facilitators Table groups | Table ice breakers  
|             |                                   | o Name, Why you came, Favourite place in Richmond                                          |
| 6:40 – 7:00 p.m | Alan                              | City Hall 101  
|             |                                   | o Brief: What does city hall do?  
|             |                                   | What does city council do?  
|             |                                   | o What will be changing in the city? (Eg. New Minoru complex, Garden City Lands, Community Needs Assessment)  
|             |                                   | o How to share your thoughts: [www.letstalkrichmond.ca](http://www.letstalkrichmond.ca)  
|             |                                   | Open Houses  
|             |                                   | Public Meetings  
|             |                                   | Presenting at City Council
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
<th>Note-takers</th>
<th>Table groups</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 – 7:02 p.m</td>
<td>Eliana</td>
<td>Introduce “What does city government mean to you?” Activity</td>
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</table>
| 7:02 – 7:25 p.m | Facilitators Note-takers Table groups | “What does city government mean to you?” Discussion  
  - Do you go to city hall?  
  - What do you do at city hall?  
  - When you want to talk to the city government about something, what do you do?  
  - How do you act differently (or the same) with the government here versus in your origin country?  
  - What do you find confusing about city hall? |
| 7:25 – 7:30 p.m | Facilitators Table Groups | Sticky Note Activity  
For participants: Write one thing that you want to learn more about or a question that you have about city hall on a sticky note. Write down your contact info.  
(**Eliana will respond to the written questions at a later date)** |
| 7:30 – 7:45 p.m | Break        |             |              | Opportunity to grab food  
  - Mingling |
| 7:45 – 7:47 p.m | Eliana       | Introduce “Our Special Places” Mapping Activity |
| 7:47 – 8:10 p.m | Facilitators Note-takers Table groups | “Our Special Places” Mapping Activity  
On the maps provided, respond to the following questions based on the colour legend and stickers provided.  
  - Where do you go to relax and to have fun?  
  - Where do you go to get help finding jobs?  
  - Where do you go to get services for your kids (if you have them)?  
  - Where do you go to celebrate your culture (or other cultures)?  
  - Are there places where you do not feel welcomed or comfortable? |
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Facilitators/Note-takers/Table groups</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:10 – 8:15 p.m</td>
<td>Facilitators</td>
<td><strong>Debrief</strong></td>
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<td>Note-takers</td>
<td>Looking at the map, is there anything that is unexpected or surprises you?</td>
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<td>Table groups</td>
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<td>8:15 – 8:17 p.m</td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td><strong>Introduce “Connecting Your Passions to the City” Activity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:17 – 8:40 p.m</td>
<td>Facilitators</td>
<td><strong>“Connecting Your Passions to the City” Activity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Note-takers</td>
<td>All participants break out into groups based on their chosen “passion”.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Table groups</td>
<td>“Passion” topics are:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Arts &amp; Culture</td>
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<td>- Transportation</td>
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<td>- Child Care</td>
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<td>- Affordable Housing</td>
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<td>- City Planning</td>
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<td>Participants will write a short note to a city staff on their chosen topic on:</td>
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<td>What is working well and what are their needs that are still unmet?</td>
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<td>8:40 – 8:50 p.m</td>
<td>Alan</td>
<td><strong>Closing Remarks</strong></td>
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<td>Offer participants a free city hall tour</td>
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<td>Hand out volunteer info session pamphlet</td>
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<td>Ask participants to fill out the feedback form</td>
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Appendix D

Cross-Cultural Public Consultation – Additional Resources


Appendix: Masterplanning and Interculturalism: The Knowledge Questions


Chapter 8: Inclusion


Decolonizing Public Consultation – Additional Resources


Chapter 8: Learning at the Margins: Margo Fryer and Pamela Ponic on Deconstructing Power and Privilege


