INFORMATION AND SETTLEMENT: DEVELOPING AN INFORMATION AND RESOURCES DIRECTORY FOR THE SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY IN VANCOUVER

by

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Executive Summary

Canada is a country that promotes multiculturalism and diversity. It welcomes people from different ethnicities and cultures with open arms. Vancouver is one of the biggest Canadian metropolitan cities that attract a large number of immigrants every year. However, the accommodations and services provided to immigrants do not necessarily take cultural differences into consideration. For example, there is a lack of resources directory that responds to the particular information needs and preferences of South Asian immigrants, which is one of the largest ethnic groups in Vancouver.

The purpose of this study is to identify the information needs of new South Asian immigrants in Vancouver. Specifically, this study addresses the barriers of South Asian newcomers in accessing information and resources during their settlement period in the City. As a professional project for my master studies at the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia (UBC), and a project for Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society Vancouver Branch, the research findings are intended to help PICS better understand the barriers of South Asian newcomers in accessing information that leads to their use of different resources; identify the most useful and desired information and resources for this particular ethno-cultural group and provide recommendations for the design, delivery and promotion of a culturally-sensitive and accessible directory that connects South Asian newcomers to information and resources in preferred formats and through effective mode(s) of access.

This study employed a combination of literature review, survey and interview methods that allowed the researcher to gather opinions from South Asian immigrants. It also provided the researcher the opportunity to do semi-structured interviews with immigrant service professionals regarding the problematic barriers and issues of South Asian immigrants, and to locate theoretical support from previous studies for the research findings.

The major findings in this study are concerned with both internal and external barriers for South Asian immigrants in accessing information and resources. Internal barriers included the following: (1) language barrier: for example, the elder immigrants and those under family immigration class usually find it challenging to look for information that is only available in
English; (2) computer illiteracy: elder immigrants usually do not have the basic knowledge of using a computer and the Internet to find information and resources; (3) lack of local knowledge: newcomers are not familiar with the information system of the new country in regards to where and how to look for information. External barriers include: (1) information fragmentation: information is not well combined but scattered in and around different locations, organizations and websites; (2) inaccuracy of information: there is a lack of regular updates and amendments of the information available to new immigrants. A rich variety of desired formats of a culturally-sensitive information directory and different preferred modes of access were reported by both South Asian immigrants and immigrant service professionals, based on their experience of working directly with South Asian immigrants for many years. The majority of those surveyed and interviewed chose printed, electronic and multi-media formats. This reflected a heterogeneous nature regarding educational and professional backgrounds, barriers and needs of this cultural group. Immigrant Service Organizations such as PICS were identified as a preferred place to access information and also recommended to promote access to the Directory through their existing communication channels with immigrants. Social places such as community centers and religious places were also reported by many people as key places to access information. This corresponds to the literature on neighborhood institutions as resource brokers that creates an information ground for immigrants to share information formally and informally. Traditional media campaigns have also been an effective way to raise awareness of such a Directory to a wide public audience.

The research findings and recommendations will contribute to developing a culturally-sensitive and accessible directory for new South Asian immigrants. Evaluation of the design, delivery, outcomes and efficiency of the Directory should be implemented in the future. This study is also intended to be a model for a similar project on other ethnic groups that has cultural practices and preferences different from the mainstream population as well as from other immigrant groups, and that encounter specific barriers to accessing adequate information and resources.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“They do not just fit in to what is here but participate in the process of defining what is here.”

---- Hiebert, 1999, p.79

1.1 Problem Statement

Canada is a country of immense diversity, where reside a variety of ethnic groups, including the First Nations, English and French descendants, Chinese, Latin-Americans, South Asians, etc. The government of Canada adopted the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 to officially recognize and promote the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian residents. The success of the multiculturalism policy is largely reflected in the influx of immigrants from all over the world during the past two decades. According to the most recent census data, Canada has an immigrant population of 6.2 million, which is about 20% of the total population. About 16% of the 1.1 million immigrants who came to Canada between 2001 and 2006 settled in British Columbia, whose foreign-born individuals accounted for 27.5% of the province’s population. Vancouver, one of the three most popular cities for the newcomers, (the other two being Toronto and Montreal), attracted 85%, or 151, 690, of the immigrants who settled in British Columbia from during this period (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Our cities are changing. The mixture of different ethnic groups not only shapes the architectural landscape but also creates new forms of social interaction over time, which alters the city’s cultural landscape (Hiebert, 2000). The large immigrant population living in Vancouver has contributed to making the city a beautiful mosaic of various vibrant cultures.

While Vancouverites welcome their new neighbors, the immigrants, however, don’t always find their adjustment into their new home an easy or pleasant process. Instead, settlement in a new country can be a life crisis (Shin & Shin, 1999). Settlement, as explained by Choudhry (1999), is much more than simply adapting to the new environment. There are significant challenges posed by maintaining one’s long-term beliefs and practices while accepting new ways of living, in order to be accepted by the receiving society and then establish a good life in the new country. Many researchers have examined the settlement issues of newcomers to Canada from different perspectives, e.g. resettlement experiences and issues of South Asian
immigrant women and their families (Choudhry, 2001; Naidoo, 2003; George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Shirwadkar, 2004), psychological adjustment of immigrants (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Lay & Nguyen, 1998), economic and employment status (Bauder, 2003, 2006; ), language barrier (Pendakur & Pendakur, 1998; Hou & Beiser, 2006), among many others. Yet, little research has focused on information, which is the immediate need of many newcomers lacking sufficient knowledge of the new country. As mentioned by Choudhry (2001) in his study of South Asian immigrant families in Canada, easy access to information on the labor market helps immigrant women gain economic and social independence. Abundant information leading to valuable resources contributes to a successful settlement experience, because immigrants have substantial information needs for adjustment to a new life.

This report examines the information needs of immigrants within the context of the South Asian community of Vancouver, as well as the ways to increase the access to critical information and resources through different strategies.

1.2 Research Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to study the information needs of the South Asian immigrant community in Vancouver. What are the barriers to accessing information that leads to resources? What kind of information is most needed and useful for South Asian immigrants? What is missing or not well presented from the currently available immigrant information and resource documents? What is their preferred format for an information and resources directory and what is the most effective mode of access?

In order to answer these questions, a needs assessment and analysis of South Asian immigrants was first conducted by investigating the major settlement issues faced by South Asian immigrants and their families, and the barriers South Asian newcomers encounter in accessing information. The existing information and resource documents available to newcomers were then evaluated. In addition to the content, I explored the best ways to present the information and communicate it to newcomers.
It is not my goal to address directly the settlement issues of immigrants but to find ways to provide information and resources that are most helpful for the newcomers during their settlement period. Rather than digging into each issue, I develop an overview of the settlement issues in the South Asian immigrant community in order to understand what information and resources are most needed and how service providers at different levels can help them by increasing newcomers’ access to information. It is also not my focus to examine the barriers of accessing immigrant services, but barriers of accessing information that can direct immigrants to those important services.

The ultimate goal of this research is to provide guidance to the development of a South Asian immigrant-oriented directory, effectively connecting South Asian newcomers to vital information and resources via their preferred communication channels.

Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004) suggested the assessment of an information program span “(a) the need for the program, (b) the design of the program, (c) the program implementation and service delivery, (d) the program impact or outcomes, and (e) program efficiency” (p.33). This project is focused mainly on the first three dimensions – the need for information, the design of the immigrant information directory and its delivery. Evaluation of the impact and efficiency of the project may be the subject of future studies.

1.3 Why the South-Asian community?

The term South Asian immigrants refers to immigrants originally from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, or who self-reported as South Asian origins, and who made Canada their new home.

It is a long history that South Asians immigrate to Canada. They have a fast growing number of immigrants to Canada during the past three decades (Choudhry, 2001). The 2006 census for Canada reported the South Asian population at 719,280, including people with origins in India (38%), Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, etc. South Asians comprise around 6.4% of the population in British Columbia. The city of Vancouver (Census Metropolitan Area, CMA) has a considerable size of South Asian populations, which is 9.8% of all population and second to the immigrants with Chinese origin (18%) (Statistics Canada, 2006).
Although the South Asian immigrant community shares a significant part of the overall immigrant population and has been a focus in many studies, there is little research that explored their needs for information and their access to the information. The current immigrant information and resource documents have not considered the South Asians in particular but immigrants in general as the target readers. It should be noticed that South Asians have very different cultural practices and needs from other ethnic groups during the settlement period. Developing a culturally-sensitive and accessible information and resources directory will benefit the South Asian immigrant community that includes both newcomers and even long-term immigrants.

1.4 Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS)

The professional project at the School of Community and Regional Planning is designed to enrich the student’s experience of client-consultant relationship. The relationship was formed through my summer internship at Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society, Vancouver Branch, as Immigrant Resource Developer. My assigned task was to develop an Information and Resources Directory for the South Asian immigrant community in Vancouver. I solicited feedbacks on the proposed research topics and methods, and made modifications to meet the clients’ needs. I was also able to network with the major immigrant service providers for the South Asian community in Vancouver, which expanded my information gathering and understanding of the issues and needs of South Asian immigrants.

PICS was founded in 1985 to meet the needs of the growing South Asian community in Surrey-Delta. Over the years, PICS has continued to “build on its strengths in partnership with the South Asian community”¹. A registered non-profit charity, PICS has its mission to “promote harmony and intercultural understanding for the purpose of building a more inclusive and mutually respectful society”². Funded mostly by the provincial government, PICS provides many free programs and services to assist new immigrants during the process of settling into a new community. Programs include employment assistance and counseling.

¹ http://www.pics.bc.ca/site/about_pics/what_is_pics.html, accessed on September 4th, 2011
² http://www.pics.bc.ca/, accessed on September, 4th, 2011
immigration and settlement information, language training, drug/alcohol counseling and seniors housing, etc (PICS, 2011).

PICS opened its Vancouver office on Main Street in south Vancouver, to address both the employment and settlement issues of the large South Asian immigrant community living in the neighborhood. PICS provides culturally-sensitive programs in many South Asian languages, including: Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, etc (PICS, 2011). At present, PICS is the only immigrant service organization in Vancouver that targets primarily South Asian immigrants.

Through my research on the information needs and favored modes of access to information of the South Asian immigrant community, PICS will be able to adapt their programs to better serve the newcomers’ community. The Immigrant Information and Resources Directory for the South Asian immigrant community will also be a reference for future development of similar documents for other ethnic groups.

1.5 Format

The specific methods used to approach the research questions, e.g. literature review, survey and interview are elaborated in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I conduct a study of South Asian immigration history in Canada, and in Vancouver more specifically, followed by a literature review of the issues and barriers affecting South Asian newcomer’s adjustment to their new home. Next is a case study of existing information and resource documents developed by different service providers for new immigrants to Canada in Chapter 4. I evaluate both the content and the distribution of those information directories to determine how they could be improved in the future. Chapter 5 shows the research findings drawn from the surveys of South Asian immigrants, and semi-structured interviews with immigrant service professionals whose clients are primarily South Asians. Research findings are discussed in Chapter 6, connecting them to the literature. Recommendations to service providers are also presented in regards to better ways to communicate and distribute information and resources to South Asian immigrants. The recommendations are summarized in a table at the end of Chapter 6 for convenience of readers. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this report with
suggestions for future studies in related areas. The survey sample, interview questions, consent form and contact letter are attached in the Appendices.
Chapter 2: Methodology

The research that went into this project builds upon my summer internship with PICS. I chose a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in my research. Fisher, Durrance and Hinton (2004) commented on current quantitative approaches and tools to evaluate information programs as failure to reflect the depth and breadth of the program. Similarly, Patton (2002) also emphasized using both quantitative and qualitative methods for the evaluation of information programs so that “the numbers can be understood as representing meaningful changes in the lives of real people” (p.152). In order to understand in-depth the information and access to information needs of South Asian immigrants, I used a mix of methods including literature review, survey and interview in my research, as well as a mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

2.1 Literature Review

An intensive review of the literature on immigration and settlement with regards to South Asian immigrants in Canada broadened my knowledge of the immigration history of Canada since the beginning of the last century. During the past one hundred years, South Asian immigrants have experienced a series of changing attitudes from the receiving community, from discrimination and fear at the beginning to tolerance, acceptance and finally respect and equality (Naidoo, 2003). Similar to many immigrant peers, South Asian immigrants struggle to make a living and establish a new and better life compared to the old one in their home country. Previous research has helped me gain a solid understanding of the barriers and conflicts that arise during the resettlement process from many angles, and thus develop awareness of where the needs exist and how we can support and promote South Asian immigrants’ access to information and resources.
2.2 Survey

A survey is an effective information gathering tool when there are time constraints. It provides me a quick access to South Asian immigrants’ needs and preferences, although at a relatively superficial level. The quantitative analysis of the survey results, together with in-depth qualitative research, such as interviews, largely shape my understanding of the research questions, and then contribute to final development of a culturally-sensitive and accessible Information and Resources Directory for South Asian immigrants.

I developed and administered a survey for the South Asian immigrant clients who came to PICS for programs and services, asking them directly about information and resources they are seeking how they want to access the information. The survey is attached as Appendix A. The inclusion criteria for survey participants were presented at the beginning of the survey with a couple of eligibility questions. Only South Asian immigrants living in Vancouver who have not resided in Canada for more than 5 years were eligible for the study. The survey was written in plain language and distributed through PICS Career Resource Center, where South Asian clients could fill out the survey voluntarily. A total of 37 respondents completed the survey resulting in 33 usable surveys. Upon request, the researcher and some Punjabi and Hindi-speaking staff from PICS were available to assist clients with understanding the survey questions, and any other inquiries regarding the research. Survey respondents were free to include their comments at the end of the survey. Due to time limitation, the survey was not translated into any South Asian languages, which was an unfortunate shortcoming of the study.

2.3 Interview (Case Study)

Case study as a research method requires an intensive and in-depth focus on contextual detail, which enriches researchers’ and readers’ understanding of a phenomenon (VanWynsbergh & Kahn, 2007). By conducting case studies, the “why” and “how” questions were answered to supplement the “what” questions asked in the survey.
I interviewed five immigrant service professionals, e.g. settlement workers, who had worked primarily with South Asian immigrants in Vancouver for years, and had a thorough knowledge of settlement issues and needs of new immigrants. Acting like bridges between immigrants and resources, they collect, manage and give out information to newcomers, connecting clients with vital resources according to the clients’ needs. Thus immigrant service professionals were valuable subjects for me to probe, in order to identify the gaps and limitations of existing documents which attempt to direct immigrant to useful information and resources.

**Outreach Strategy and Procedure**

I contacted immigrant service professionals either through their published email addresses on a website or directly in person (this was especially the case with the settlement workers from PICS), with descriptions of the study including purpose, procedure, benefit and confidentiality. Once they agreed to an interview, I provided them with a Consent Form and advised them to read it carefully and signed it prior to the interview to confirm their willingness to participate. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a public place agreed upon by both the interviewer and the participant. The duration was an average of 30 minutes and was tape-recorded upon permission of the interviewee. Transcriptions were sent back to the participants for review and feedbacks.

**2.4 Research Limitations**

The region of South Asia is comprised of distinct socio-political entities (George & Ramkissoon, 1998). As noted by many researchers, the South Asian community is very diverse with many religions, languages and cultural practices (Choudhry, 2001; Berry & Kalin, 1995; Ibrahim, Ohnishi & Sandhu, 1997). As there is even significant international competition for power and influence among those countries in the region (George & Ramkissoon, 1998), it seems practically impossible to find any shared experiences among immigrants from these diverse countries. Indeed, these sub-cultural differences could affect the cross-cultural adaptation process (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001), and thus the needs for different kinds of information and resources. However, Das Gupta (1994) in his study of
South Asian immigrant women argued that colonialism and “their commonalities as women coming from the same region in Asia far outweigh their differences” (p.59). Likewise, the South Asian immigrant community in Vancouver has much more in common with its South Asian peers than with people from other regions and cultures, regarding its settlement barriers and needs. In order to identify the most common issues arising during the settlement process of South Asian immigrants, I tried to secure as many survey responses from South Asian immigrants as possible, and to interview settlement workers with deep insights into the general barriers and information needs of the target group through their long-term relationship with them.

South Asian immigrants are not always willing or able to verbalize their issues, especially when the problems are sensitive and concerned with family conflicts, domestic violence, disability, illness, etc. (Choudhry, 2001). Also, survey as a research method is limited in its scope and depth. As I did not want to omit any important issue that might indicate a need for particular information and resources for the target group, I used both literature review and interviews with settlement workers to supplement my understanding of the settlement process, and thus better analyze the needs of the South Asian immigrant community.

Also for several reasons, there were not as many usable surveys returned as I had supposed – a total of 37 returned surveys out of 100 that were distributed. The very use of the survey method practically eliminated the possibility for illiterate and semi-literate members of the community to participate in the survey. Even those who might be literate but not comfortable with English or answering surveys were by default excluded from participation. Due to time constraint, the survey was not translated into South Asian languages, which may also have created some barriers in answering the survey questions. These two reasons above partly explained why the response rate was low.

The low response rate might influence the credibility of the survey results. In addition, one interviewee decided to withdraw from the research due to bureaucratic reasons so that I excluded his data from the final report.
Chapter 3: South Asian Immigration and Settlement

3.1 Setting the Context

The South Asian community comprises a rich variety of sub-cultural groups. People living in different South Asia regions use over 20 languages, including Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Urdu and Tamil, etc., and practice numerous religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity (George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Naidoo, 2003).

South Asians consider family as the center of all social organizations. They highly appreciate family and kinship ties that provide the root of individual’s identity. Through family ties, South Asians pass on the culture and religion to the next generations (Choudhry, 2001). In a traditional South Asian family, elders live with their children or sons in a majority of cases, in a joint household.

To conduct an ethno-specific research, it is essential to investigate the history and culture of the South Asian immigrant community in Canada. The background of the community is central to understanding the particular settlement issues that affect many members of this large immigrant community in different degrees. In this chapter, I will investigate the immigration history and current status of the South Asian community in Canada, and specifically in Vancouver.

The analysis of the needs for information and resources of South Asian immigrants are largely based on the most urgent and common issues faced by the newcomers. I will conduct firstly a literature review of previous researches that explore the barriers and difficulties that South Asian immigrants experience in a new country. It is then possible to identify the most needed information and resources.

3.2 South Asians in Canada

Canada has not always welcomed newcomers other than white (Naidoo, 1999). Before 1966, more than 80% of the newcomers to Canada were originally from United States and Europe.
Developing An Information and Resources Directory for the South Asian Immigrant Community in Vancouver

with the United Kingdom as the major immigrant source (Ley, 1999). The perceived racial threat of massive Asian immigrants resulted in legislative restrictions of their entry to Canada (Ralston, 1999). Discriminatory requirements had disappointed immigrants from the South Asia region until 1966 when the Immigration Regulations of Canada confirmed a non-discriminatory immigration policy. Immigrants were admitted to Canada regardless of race, color and nationality (Ralston, 1999). According to Naidoo (2003), the South Asians’ presence in Canada could be summarized in four major categories (Table 1).

Table 1 Four Key Categories of the South Asian Immigrant History in Canada (Naidoo, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Category Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1960</td>
<td>Broadly discriminatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Liberalization of immigration policy (because of the introduction of a “color-blind” point system of immigrant evaluation in 1966)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Tightening of immigration under the “independent” class and “refugee” and “family reunification” classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s – 1990s</td>
<td>A shift in the “family class” toward a preference for “entrepreneurs”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legislations that affected South Asian immigrants to Canada also include the introduction of a policy of multiculturalism in the 1970s and the adoption of the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which protected equal rights of all Canadians and promoted the diversity of cultures, religions, races and genders in Canada (Naidoo, 2003). Since then the number of immigrants from South Asia has been increasing dramatically (Ley, 1999). Figure 1 illustrates the increasing trend of South Asian immigrants arriving in Canada from before 1991 to 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). The number of South Asian immigrants is increasing dramatically during the given time period. Immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 were almost twice the number of those who came between 1991 and 1995, and even more than the total of the South Asian immigrants who had arrived in Canada before 1991.

In the past 30 years, the immigration movement has been heavily directed to metropolitan areas, and especially to Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. South Asian immigrants become one of the largest ethnic groups in Vancouver, shaping the city in many ways. Although most
of South Asians in Canada are no longer victims of violence, verbal abuse and hate literature, “assertions of convert and systemic racism continue to surface” (Naidoo, 2003, p.54). They are still somewhat marginalized from the mainstream society.

Figure 1 The Increasing South Asian Immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Asian immigrants in Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 The Vancouver South Asian Community

3.3.1 Congregation

British Columbia, especially Metro Vancouver, has been a major settlement location for South Asian immigrants for many decades. In the initial phase of Indo-Canadian settlement, many people chose to live close to sawmill around False Creek where they found jobs in the wood processing industry. As the wood processing business started to decline, the lands were no longer used for industrial but residential purposes during the 1960s. Later on, there were two obvious clusters of Indo-Canadians in Vancouver: the south Main Street corridor where located the Ross Street Sikh Gurdwara (Johnston, 1988), and near the agricultural lands around the New Westminster and Richmond border (Hiebert, 1999). Johnston (1988) noted that Punjabi immigrants mostly settled in Vancouver and spread to the suburban south.

While part of the South Asian community moved further to the distant suburbs of Delta and Surrey (Hiebert, 1999), the Main Street corridor in the Sunset Community remains until now a primary settlement location for South Asian immigrants. The Sunset Community has 26.1%
of its total residents as Punjabi-speaking (Statistics Canada, 2006). The neighborhood was largely recognized by its concentration of Indo-Canadian businesses (Ley, Hiebert & Pratt, 1992). Paranjpe (1986) noted that the completeness of the community allowed its members to remain inside the “mini-India”, which was geographically and socially enclosed.

3.3.2 Immigration Class

Although the current immigration system demonstrates preferences for skilled workers and entrepreneurs under the business investment class, most South Asians who settled in Vancouver landed in Canada as family-class immigrants, mentioned by Bauder (2003) in his study of the employment status of South Asian immigrants in Vancouver. He also noticed that skilled workers comprised less than 20% of all South Asian immigrants. As a result, South Asian immigrants were on average less educated with up to 44% of the immigrants who had only grade-nine education or even less (Bauder & Cameron, 2002). This is potentially a contributing factor to the unemployment rate of 8.6% of the community, which is the third highest rate among all visible minorities in Vancouver, after the Arab/West Asian (12.1%) being the highest, and Black (10.7%) being the second (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The above profile suggests that South Asian immigrants with distinct cultural expressions and economic positions have different needs during the settlement and transition process. The government and organizations that cater to immigrants should broaden their scope in identifying culture-specific issues and barriers, and in providing culturally-sensitive programs and services to the community accordingly (Hiebert, 1999).

3.4 Settlement Issues

According to George and Ramkissoon (1998), immigrant refers to people who were born in other countries and acquired permanent resident status in Canada through the process of immigration. Coming to a new country with a different socio-political environment, one has to adjust to a new way of life, learning new cultures and practices while maintaining their
original beliefs. This can be a very challenging and stressful experience (Choudhry, 2001; Shin & Shin, 1999).

Based on Berry (1997)’s acculturation strategy, Abouguendia and Noels (2001) summarized the settlement behaviors of immigrants into four categories: Individuals who have **Assimilation** attitude value the new culture more than their original one and thus interact much with the new culture; **Separation** is the opposite attitude that values the original cultural identity and avoid interaction with the new cultural group; **Integration** attitude makes immigrants maintain their original culture and interact with other cultural groups at the same time; Immigrants who possess a **Marginalization** attitude do not have interest in either maintaining their original cultural characteristics or interacting with other cultural groups. The researchers believed that the Integration is the ideal attitude that benefits the new immigrants the most. However, many newly-arrived immigrants possess a negative separation and even marginalization attitude when encountering a series of problems and barriers, such as language barrier, intergroup hostility and prejudice, denial of foreign educational qualifications, etc. Those problems can all happen at once and are interrelated with each other (Hirschman, 1994).

### 3.4.1 Language Barrier

Language is one of the most serious challenges created by immigration and settlement activities. Not being able to communicate easily with the surrounding people has already made some newcomers very stressful, not to mention the compromised employment opportunity and poor participation in community life caused by a lack of capacity to speak the new language. Language capacity can also affect immigrants’ access to social resources (Hou & Beiser, 2006; Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003). Choudhry (2001) revealed in his interviews with South Asian women that the lack of proficiency in English even reduced their ability to use public transportation and led to a distance, or even gap, between different generations.
3.4.2 Economic & Employment Issue

A report composed for the Working Group on Poverty (Martin Spigelman Research Associates 1998) noted that among immigrants in BC, 25% of immigrant/refugee families live in poverty. Among those who had arrived just before the report was produced - between 1991 and 1996, 51% were in poverty, compared to 11.2% of non-immigrant families in BC. Bauder (2003) explained that one reason for the poverty was the large number of family-class immigrants and refugees, whose human capital was not sufficient enough to secure a job, and thus earn a steady income. However, the average level of education among immigrants has steadily increased since the 1950s (Akbari, 1999), which indicated that even skilled immigrants have failed to benefit from their educational achievements in making money in Canada (Reitz, 2001). The non-recognition of foreign degrees and professional credentials has been discovered by many researchers to constitute a barrier for many immigrants (Bauder, 2003; Basran & Zong, 1998). In addition, denied opportunities based on ethnic and gender stereotypes may affect the employment status as well (Pendakur & Pendakur, 1998). Neither South-Asian men nor women ever earn as much as their Canadian-born colleagues (Nanavati, 1998).

As a consequence, many immigrant men and women have to enter occupations that offer little money and few changes for any career advancement (Hiebert, 1999). Thompson (2000) showed similar results in his research that immigrants from South Asia have particularly restricted access to high-skill occupations in Canada. Those skilled workers lose access to the occupations that they previously held, which is as an effect of de-skilling (Bauder, 2003).

3.4.3 Family Issues

South Asian immigrants usually have strong desire to preserve and continue their elders-oriented family core values (Choudhry, 2001). Many elders, coming to Canada under the “family reunification” category, live with their children and grandchildren in a common household. Ames and Inglis (1973) in their study of the Sikh patriarchal system found that different settlement attitudes towards assimilation into the mainstream society created tensions, conflict and disappointment between generations. Many elders considered the
acceptance of Canadian social norms of their grandchildren as erosion of traditions (Choudhry et al., 2002). The elders have a harder adjustment experience because of language barrier, poverty in the absence of pensions or supplementary benefits (Boneham, 1989; Choudhry, 2001), the feeling of loneliness, hopelessness, desperation and even depression (Bindra, 1994) as a result of the loss of independence and traditional authority within the family (City of Toronto, 1990).

South Asian women are another vulnerable demographic group that faces oppressive gender roles in family and marriage relationships (Abraham, 2000). Indian immigrant women often stay in abusive relationships because few economic resources, language barriers (Status of Women Canada, 2002), unawareness of laws, lack of close-knit kin support and community resources (Banerjee, 2000), cultural barrier and isolation as a result of husband control (Shirwadkar, 2004).

South Asian adolescents who were born or grow up in the new country encounter conflicts between their unfamiliar traditional cultures and the contrasting cultures of the host society (Talbani & Hasanli, 2000; Lay & Nguyen, 1998), which possibly led to mental illness.

3.4.4 Health Problems

The process of acculturation is full of struggles and transformative experiences of people who have to build a new self in a new environment (Talbani & Hasanli, 2000). “Acculturative Stress” (Berry & Sam, 1997, p.289) arises from a combination of daily hassles and hassles specific to the acculturation process (Lay & Nguyen, 1998). Perceived prejudice and discrimination, language barrier, family problems and conflicts all contribute to the accumulative stress that exacerbates the acculturation experience of newcomers.

Studies have linked the problems of acculturation with negative physical and psychological health consequences (Aroian & Patsdaughter, 1989; Choudhry, 2001). Anderson (1992) criticized the lack of treatment and therapy available to immigrant women as a reflection of insensitivity of the health-care system towards cultural diversity. The control over South Asian adolescent females’ socialization seemed to become family hassles that added to the
stress of everyday life (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Various studies have indicated that many adolescent girls in South Asian communities face mental problems (Bhatnagar, 1984).

It is true that a South Asian woman will become less dependent on her husband if she is better informed of financial and employment matters, such as jobs and taxes (Shirwadkar, 2004), and that the elders will be less isolated if they know where to look for peer support. However, we should not wish to tackle these challenging settlement issues by simply increasing immigrants’ access to information and resources. What we could do instead is to create a useful, tailor-made, culturally-sensitive and accessible Information and Resources Directory, a platform where immigrants can access the provided information and resources to make a change in their lives.
Chapter 4: Immigrant Resources

4.1 Definition

A resource is something that brings benefits to people (Lin 1999). Benefits may include economic or social capital, information, a credential, a material good, or a service, among other things (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Portes 1998). Immigrant resource is primarily concerned with access to two types of resources: information and services that assist new immigrants with their settlement in Canada. Several researchers have discovered that a limited or lack of access to information resulted in mainly unemployment or underemployment (Kasinitz & Rosenberg, 1996; Rankin & Quane, 2000; Smith 2000). Similarly, it may influence new immigrant mothers’ participation in community and government programs (Currie 2004).

4.2 Case Study of Vancouver

Vancouver absorbs a large number of newcomers from various cultures every year. There are many guidebooks that provide new immigrants with useful information in one particular or many aspects of life, and also direct them to resources at community, city, provincial and national level. Authors of these guidebooks vary from different levels of government or government agencies, non-government organizations, businesses and peer immigrants. New immigrants can access those information and resource directories through different means.

4.2.1 Government Immigrant Resource Materials

Two major guidebooks for new immigrants are British Columbia Newcomers’ Guide to Resources and Services, developed by WelcomeBC, the provincial government, and A newcomer’s Guide to the City of Vancouver, developed by the City of Vancouver. Table 2 describes the content, format, language, mode(s) of access, etc. of these two guidebooks.
# Table 2 Description of Two Major Government Immigrant Guidebooks in Vancouver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>WelcomeBC, BC government</th>
<th>City of Vancouver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>Newcomers to BC</td>
<td>Newcomers to Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>• Introduction of BC</td>
<td>• Introduction of life in Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A guide to resources and services</td>
<td>• A guide to resources and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
<td>• Print copy: 110-page handbook</td>
<td>• Print copy: 50-page handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Electronic form</td>
<td>• Electronic form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>English, French, Punjabi, Arabic, Chinese,</td>
<td>English, Punjabi, Chinese, Spanish,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish, etc.</td>
<td>Vietnamese, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of Access</strong></td>
<td>Online, Mail-out, Self-pick-up in government</td>
<td>Online, Mail-out, Self-pick-up in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offices, airport, community centres, immigrant</td>
<td>government offices, airport,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>service organizations, libraries, etc.</td>
<td>community centres, immigrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>service organizations, libraries,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These two guidebooks share many attributes in common. They both have newcomers as the target audience with printed and electronic copies available in different languages. The resources and services cover almost every aspect of daily life of new immigrants. People may get these copies from the government offices, entrances to the country, and other places in the communities that are frequently visited by newcomers.
4.2.2 Non-government Immigrant Resource Materials

Some non-government organizations also created documents to serve the immigrant community. Formats of those materials include brochure or directory for specific category (e.g. Sponsorship Breakdown by Legal Services Society; Multilingual Legal Publications by MOSAIC), resource directory tailored to a particular group (e.g. Youth Resource Directory by PICS; Legal Publications [for Women] by YWCA), periodicals with featured topics (e.g. Canadian Immigrant), website postings and blogs, and online search engines (e.g. Map of Free Legal Services around BC; Directory of ESL Courses & Employment Programs for Immigrants in BC by WelcomeBC), etc.

Figure 2 Sample Websites of Immigrant Service Organizations PICS, ISSofBC, MOSAIC and SUCCESS

Most of these documents are only available online, which require newcomers to be equipped with some computer literacy and have access to the Internet in order to obtain the information. It is important to notice that peer immigrants are also the authors of some website postings and blogs, which provide unofficial but still useful information to the newcomers. Many literature has focused on social ties between the poor who use social
networks for social support services (De Souza Briggs 1998; Small & Newman 2001). This is also true for many newcomers who benefit from the social ties with other peer immigrants to seek help with living in the new community.

4.3 Major Limitations

Out-of-Date

The biggest challenge for all publications is to keep the information up-to-date. Many materials, once created, are not timely updated and thus keep disseminating out-of-date information. For example, I ordered a printed version of A Newcomer’s Guide from the City of Vancouver and received it in July 2011. However, the guidebook was in its 2006 edition and missed many important updates on newly-started services and resources.

Difficulty of Searching

It is obvious that many materials are scattered in different places and websites, in contrast to the idea of establishing a one-stop shop for all information that is essential for new immigrants. Unfamiliar with the new community, newcomers have troubles of finding necessary information in a short period of time, if they are not informed of where and how to look for certain information and resources.

Limited Formats

Printed handbooks and electronic copies available online are the two most popular formats of immigrant information and resource materials. However, as people have different preferences of accessing information, there is a strong need of converting the documents into different formats in order to facilitate immigrants’ access to the information. Different formats also encourage the use of different communication channels.

Lack of ethno-specific focus

Many documents indeed have versions in different languages. However, a guidebook that is available in immigrants’ mother languages is different from a culturally-sensitive and tailor-made resource directory that satisfies the specific needs of a cultural group who has similar
in-group demands and vast differences from other cultural groups. Shirwadkar (2004) indicated that the programs and policies in developed countries do not fully accommodate the diversity of cultures within developing countries. Immigrants who have very different cultural practices and family circumstances should not be seen as a homogeneous community. There is no South Asian immigrant-specific information and resources directory available in Vancouver at the time of conducting the report. Most of existing immigrant information and resources guidebooks target at immigrants in general and may probably omit some information that is particularly useful for a certain cultural group. For instance, there is no current immigrant resource directory that provides information regarding places of worship in Vancouver, which, however, play a very important role in South Asians’ life.

Literature reviews of the settlement issues faced by South Asian immigrants in Canada provided an overview from the “demand” side for immigrant resource documents, while the brief examination of current immigrant resource documents created a picture of the “supply” side. In the next chapter, I am going to present research findings drawn from surveys of South Asian immigrants and semi-structured interviews with immigrant service professionals. These findings together will be able to guide the development and distribution of a culturally-sensitive and accessible Information and Resources Directory for South Asian immigrants.
Chapter 5: Research Findings

The first part of the research findings shows the statistical results of the survey, which was designed to collect opinions directly from South Asian immigrants regarding their needs for information. The second part of the findings presents the summary of the interviews with immigrant service professionals who provide services, including referrals, primarily to South Asian immigrants in Vancouver. Both parts of the research findings will be discussed and analyzed in Chapter 6.

5.1 Surveys

During survey collection period, about 100 surveys were distributed to the South Asian immigrant clients who came to the Career Resource Centre of PICS to use the free computer and Internet service. A total of 37 surveys were filled out and returned to the researcher. After screening the eligibility questions, 33 survey respondents met the inclusion criteria while 3 respondents were excluded as they were not South-Asian origins and one was excluded because he/she has lived in Canada for more than 5 years. A total of 30 respondents are between 20 and 40 years old with one under 20 and one between age 40 and 60. They are relatively well-educated with 30 of them who have been to post-secondary or even graduate schools. There are 3 people who only have secondary education level. A total of 28 people have resided in Canada for 1 to 3 years, while 5 others arrived in Canada less than one year ago. English, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu are the most popular spoken languages. Also, there are 2 people who speak Malayalam (a dialect of people living in the south-west coast of India) and one who speaks Tamil (a dialect in some regions of south India and Sri Lanka) in addition to English.

Figure 2 shows the results of the first question, which asked newcomers what information was most needed and critical for their settlement. A total of 30 people demonstrated great needs for employment information. The other popular information categories include skill training information, government benefits and assistance, and credentials and evaluation. It should be noted that skill training and credential assessment and evaluation are closely related to employment. Government benefits and assistance could also be considered relevant to employment, because income assistance, wage subsidy and other benefits are largely
connected with under-employment or unemployment status of many newcomers. Only 6 people thought of recreation information as important category of an immigrant resources directory.

Figure 3 shows the most convenient formats of information for South Asian immigrants. 17 people preferred the information and resources documents in the formats of website postings and blogs, and 13 people preferred similar format – online tools e.g. maps, data search engine. There was almost the same number of people who voted for comprehensive manuals that cover information of every aspects of life as those who preferred a handbook with one particular category of information. In general, printed formats, such as handbooks, and electronic formats such as website postings, attracted similar amount of people.

Figure 4 presents the most popular modes of access to information for the survey participants. A total of 21 respondents preferred accessing information through immigrant service professionals who had frequent contact with immigrants and provided information referrals, whereas 20 people reported that they preferred to access information online via website postings, BBS, blogs and tools, etc. Informational events and workshops for immigrants, and word-of-mouth through friends, relatives and peer immigrants received similar votes, which were 15 and 14 respectively. Traditional media classifieds and advertisements were chosen by 10 people. Community information board also received 7 votes. The results show that South Asian immigrants as a heterogeneous group are not limited to a single channel for information.

In addition to the survey questions, 15 respondents left comments on the limitations of existing immigrant information and resources documents. A total of 5 respondents found it difficult to find the needed information or to combine the fragmented information pieces together. Five people were not happy with the absence of information and resources in the electronic formats available online; 3 people was not satisfied with the fact that some documents were not designed and compiled for new immigrants, but for a general public; two respondents thought that the information presented in the documents was not up-to-date; and 4 people would like to have the information in their own languages.
Developing An Information and Resources Directory for the South Asian Immigrant Community in Vancouver

**Figure 3 Most Needed Information for South Asian Newcomers**

![Bar chart showing the most needed information for South Asian newcomers.](chart1)

**Figure 4 Most Convenient Formats of Information for South Asian Newcomers**

![Bar chart showing the most convenient formats of information.](chart2)
5.2 Interview

Seven immigrant service professionals whose clients are primarily South Asians were contacted for interview. One settlement worker didn’t reply to initial email, and another one withdrew from the study. I finally scheduled interviews with five immigrant service professionals who provided services and referrals to South Asian immigrants in Vancouver. Interviews were semi-structured and went from 20 minutes to 40 minutes. Three interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed while two others were recorded by notes.

Questions were asked regarding the barriers for South Asian immigrants in accessing information and resources, the most needed information and resources for newcomers, comments on limitations of existing immigrant resources documents and suggestions for future development of a culturally-sensitive and accessible resources directory. An interview guide is attached in the Appendices as Appendix B.

Interview transcriptions and notes were summarized in Table 3 South Asian Newcomers’ Barriers of Accessing Information and Resources, Table 4 Suggestions for Content and Format of the Immigrant Resources Directory and Table 5 Channels for Distributions and Promotions of the South Asian Immigrant Resources Directory.
Table 3 shows the major barriers identified by immigrant service professionals to affect negatively South Asian newcomers’ access to information and resources. Internal barriers, which come from the immigrants themselves, including language barrier, computer illiteracy and lack of knowledge regarding where to look for information, were mentioned by many professionals during the interviews. Identified external barriers included the fragmentation and inaccuracy of information. The fact that the information is not available in one place has brought a lot of troubles to newcomers who have to navigate different places and agencies to put the information together by themselves. A lack of continuous updating of the information constitutes another external barrier that hinders newcomers’ access to accurate information and resources.

The suggested content and format for the South Asian Immigrant Information and Resources Directory were summarized in Table 4. Interviewees didn’t reach any agreement on how much information should be included in the Directory. Similarly, people had different understandings of the Directory being “user-friendly”. Some strongly recommended clear descriptions of services plus different means of contact, while others worried about the volumes of the Directory by suggesting a “narrowed-down” and selected collection of information. However, most people did agree to have the Directory in the dominant South Asian languages, particularly Punjabi. Creating a variety of Directory formats e.g. printed and electronic, as a response to various learning styles and capacities of the target readers, is also a common suggestion.

Table 5 categorized interviewees’ suggestions of strategies of distribution and promotion of the Directory with South Asian immigrant community. Immigrant servicing organizations and social places such as community centers and especially religious temples were believed to be places where information could be spread out effectively. The use of South Asian language-speaking TV and radio programs has been mentioned by many professionals to be preferable for people who have challenges of reading in English.

When giving suggestions on what category of information should be included in the Directory, these interviewees started with their understandings of major issues that arose during the settlement period. These settlement issues generated great needs for information and resources under specific categories. All of the interviewees discovered that employment
was the biggest issue for newcomers. It is essential to include in the Directory any important employment-related information, such as “where to look for job, how to get the foreign credential evaluated, what trainings can I get, how can I find and secure a job, how can I apply for Employment Insurance”, etc. Financial barriers, mentioned as a “possible result of unemployment or under-employment”, often pushed people to look for information on employment and government subsidies and assistance. The changing family dynamics as a source of stress for newcomers was indicated by some interviewees as the reason behind the need for information and resources on family services. For example, one interviewee said “most of the seniors come to us, and yes they do feel alone, and feel that they are neglected at home.” Thus information on where to get a South Asian language-speaking family counseling service became a huge need for some families.

In the next chapter, surveys from South Asian immigrants and interviews with the immigrant service professionals are going to be discussed together, since many identified barriers, major issues, information needs and preferences for particular formats and modes of access are interrelated with each other. Looking at the whole picture from both immigrants and the service providers’ perspectives will help develop a clear idea of what a culturally-sensitive and accessible immigrant resources directory should look like. Recommendations that address the issues and information needs will also be provided at the end of the chapter.
### Table 3: South Asian Newcomers’ Barriers of Accessing Information and Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers of Accessing Information and Resources</th>
<th>Nature of Barriers</th>
<th>Participants’ Insights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Language Barrier**                          | Internal           | “Language is the biggest thing for them [South Asian immigrant clients], that’s why they come to us [Punjabi-speaking settlement workers]. If they don’t have a language barrier, I don’t think they’ll come to us, because they can access everything on their own.”  
|                                                |                    | “They are having language barrier problems there [in English-only service providers]…sometimes we have to get them interpreters, which is also costly and not always available.”  
|                                                |                    | “They [South Asian clients]’ve got barriers. Language is the biggest one.”  
|                                                |                    | “For those who come under the sponsorship, they may have troubles with English. They may not know how to fill out a form.”  
|                                                |                    | “The South Asian languages …if it is available, I think that will be very helpful for people to access [resources].” |
| **Computer Illiteracy**                       | Internal           | “The clientele who comes to us are clientele who don’t know how to use the computer.”  
|                                                |                    | “The clients are unable to make a use of those services like the ones who are computer-able.” |
| **Lack of Local Knowledge**                   | Internal           | “The only people with these skills [language & computer skills] who come to us are newcomers because they need adjustment support, and they need help to find resources… at a struggling stage at the beginning.”  
|                                                |                    | “They [new immigrants] have no knowledge of local labor market…they don’t know where to upgrade their education…where to get that information.” |
| **Fragmentation of Information**              | External           | “There is too much information…they prefer to come to us, even if we probably open the same book…they feel more comfortable to have someone [to collect the information for them].”  
|                                                |                    | “Information is all out there, but it’s scattered, people don’t know where to get them all.” |
| **Inaccuracy of Information**                 | External           | “I found that some directories are from long long time ago, the call numbers are not even existing. That’s frustrating.” |
### Table 4 Suggestions for Content and Format of the South Asian Immigrant Resources Directory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions for South Asian Immigrant Resources Directory</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Participants’ Insights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Amount of Information</strong></td>
<td>“It would be better to narrow it down, if you are gearing towards South Asian, it should be geared towards South Asian.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Put an emphasis on those agencies that already exist but under-utilized.” (paraphrased)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The directory should contain all aspects of life that affect newcomers…one-stop shop for all…It will be good to have something that combines everything together.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If you only cover a few and leave everything else, I don’t know if that would be helpful. I think it is good to have quite a bit of information…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Nobody will take a dictionary around. It should be handy, portable and as small as a magazine.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>“Address and telephone number would be better [than website URL].”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“And the person…who deals with this service would be good to [be listed in order to] call.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Simple, central places to go, or to call, but then, telephone and language.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Description, specific information of what it’s about.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Description is not necessary, it adds to the volume.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The directory has to be user-friendly. User-friendly means…the directory shows clear paths to obtain information and resources…clear description, address, telephone number, email, etc.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Real address, telephone number and contact person together with URL is very important, because we should consider people’s different capabilities and ways to approach the services.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>“Make sure that they can find things properly on the resource list.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I know things change, but the directory should be updated regularly.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>“Those people [who have language barrier]. specifically, it is needed to be on their own language.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It would be much better [to be in South Asian languages], rather than English, because people that are coming to”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
us have a language barrier, most of them cannot speak or read English. So they would prefer something in their own language.”
“If it clearly indicates that this language is available, that’s the first thing they are gonna look at if they open up the directory, ok where is that language, where can I get that help. And they will call that specific language.”

“The clientele…who don’t know how to use the computer… they definitely want something on paper.”
“Something tangible like a booklet, that would be preferred material.”

“If you do want to do resource online, which is great, for us people, who can use the computer.”
“Online is good for literate people but certainly not for all.” (paraphrased)
“Online would be good. Other websites can link to our website for the directory. For example, in the bank’s website page: new to the country, people can find this directory.”

“When developing the directory, one should remember that there are different needs from the community…so different formats for different people.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Participants’ Insights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>“They [South Asian clients] depend on us for the things that we do for them, and trust built, and they of course ask us everything. And that’s where the resource list comes in. we can guide them if we can’t help them.” “When they [South Asian clients] don’t know something, they’ll call us and ask us.” “I think you should first target at all the non-profit organizations out there that mainly deal with the target community.” “Go to immigrant service organizations where case managers can help distribute the Directory on a regular basis.” (paraphrased)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>“We go to different businesses to drop them [flyers and pamphlets] off…in different festivals in South Asian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Channels for Distributions and Promotions of the South Asian Immigrant Resources Directory
### Information and Settlement

**Developing An Information and Resources Directory for the South Asian Immigrant Community in Vancouver**

| Informational Events | “There is also information session [in South Asian Women’s Group’s monthly workshop]…every department, director or manager, introduce their programs, and give information. So they are more aware.”
| | “[in a community gathering]…so some words from service providers, some words from the experienced immigrants… in addition to contact information of that agency.”
| Media Campaign | “TV, that’s for sure, is a good one [to raise awareness of the Directory]. Radio, we use a lot the radio…[there are] a lot of ways that can impact somebody…”
| | “The main resource that illiterate South Asian immigrants get information is through radio or TV.” (paraphrased)
| | “Radio station…for those reading and writing is not [good enough], people normally talk and listen for services.”
| | “Newspapers and magazines, if we use them as promotional channels, it would be effective [to reach people regarding the Directory].”

communities…”

“So any festival that comes along, in the Gurdwara (Sikh temple), or any other places, we go there, we distribute flyers and talk to the community.”

“If a person comes having no idea of Canada…that would be at the gurdwara…where I am gonna start getting information.”

“Go to the different cultural groups, cultural centre, religious places…just have that information spread in word-of-mouth”

“Go to community centers or other places for people to gather together and socialize.”

“Universities, because there are international students who can bring flyer back home for their parents.”
Chapter 6: Discussions and Recommendations

The chapter begins with elaborations on the connections between the findings of surveys and those of interviews, followed by discussions of the findings based on the literature. Some barriers are discussed in group with other themes such as content, format and modes of access, because they are inter-related with each other. After thorough discussion of the findings, recommendations will be given to guide the development of a culturally-sensitive and accessible Immigrant Information and Resources Directory for South Asian newcomers. All recommendations are summarized without discussion at the end of this chapter for convenience of readers.

6.1 Language Barrier

Language barrier in this study is defined as a low literacy level of English language that impedes new immigrants’ access to information and resources. An interview participant commented on the English language barrier of her South Asian clients, “If they don’t have a language barrier, I don’t think they’ll come to us, because they can access everything on their own…language is the biggest thing.” Although widely mentioned as a major barrier of accessing information and resources, the issue of language does not affect everyone equally (Hou & Beiser, 2006). Like two interviewee said, “it depends on what background, educational and professional background they have back home…if people are under sponsorship, language is an issue.” “Language barrier is not for everybody. It depends on immigration category. For someone who has a good educational background, he is very literate. But for those who come under the sponsorship, they may have troubles with English. They may not know how to fill out a form.”

In addition to the immigration class, age is another factor that influences the information-searching experience of many immigrants. According to the interviewee whose clients were mostly South Asian seniors, even though some elder people sponsored by their children to come to Canada could read in English, most of them had problems with understanding the Canadian accent. They were less willing to approach service providers who didn’t have someone able to speak South Asian languages than to contact organizations such as PICS that specifically promoted services in South Asian languages. Isolated in some cases
illiteracy, many immigrant seniors don’t have their integration process as successful as their grandchildren (Boneham, 1989; Hou & Beiser, 2006).

It is true that family class immigrants are usually less educated and have lower English level than skilled immigrants (Hou & Baiser, 2006). However, even for skilled immigrants who have passed all the English examinations to get their immigrant status, English can still constitute a problem. An interviewee explained a linguistic phenomenon that different English terms were used to describe the same concept in South Asian countries and in Canada. Similarly, a certain term could be understood in different ways for different cultures. It was suggested to define the terms clearly so that immigrants could understand what situation and what kind of services it referred to. “[The directory should contain] description, specific information of what it’s about.” Another interviewee was unsatisfied with the bad translation of the resource document, because several terms, though correct in Punjabi, were not the ones people commonly used in India.

The preference for information and resources in South Asian languages has been indicated by 4 survey respondents who commented on their preferred directory to be in both English and South Asian languages e.g. Hindi, Punjabi, etc. A directory in South Asian languages is always the best option as one interviewee also insisted that “it would be much better [to be in South Asian languages], rather than English.”

Yeo (2004) in his research about language barriers and access to health care indicated that language barriers are associated with a massive amount of negative outcomes, including a lower frequency in clinic visits, a lower understanding of doctors, and lower satisfaction with health services. In this regard, it was recommended by one interviewee to notify the Directory users if this resource or service was available in South Asian languages. “If it clearly indicates that this language [South Asian language] is available, that’s the first thing they [South Asian immigrants] are gonna look at if they open up the directory... And they will call that specific language.” South Asians feel comfortable talking to a person from their own community who speak the same language, because “they [service providers] know where we [South Asian immigrants] are coming from, where our roots are and what kind of problems we South Asians face and what our expectations are.”

The recommendations regarding language barrier of new immigrants are as follows:
The Immigrant Information and Resource Directory should be available in both English and major South Asian languages, e.g. Hindi and Punjabi. The translation should be conducted by professional translators in order to ensure the correctness of the terms and descriptions of each service.

In both English and South Asian language versions, there should be a description of what this information or resource is, who needs it, and in what circumstances, so that immigrants, no matter whether or not they are familiar with the terms, will be able to understand how and where they can look for help in certain situations.

In consideration of the language proficiency as a barrier to South Asian newcomers accessing services and resources, the Directory should indicate clearly for each resource entry that whether or not the service or resource is provided in South Asian languages and how clients can access the service in those specific languages if necessary.

6.2 Computer Literacy & Directory Formats

Computer literacy is defined in this study as the capacity of using computer and the Internet to conduct productive actions, e.g. look for information and resources, access services, create documents, etc. In Canada, computer and the Internet is not a “financially disadvantageous method for information access for many people in poverty” (Kenny, 2002, p. 149) as it is in some other countries. It is not the question of affordability but that of capacity that affect the access to information. Kenny (2002) explained that the Internet required a “fairly high level of education and computer literacy” (p.149) to use it constructively. South Asian seniors once again become the most vulnerable demographic group because they usually don’t have the minimum computer literacy. One interviewee mentioned that the senior clients “don’t know how to use computer...they want something on paper.” Another interviewee also revealed that “the level of ability to use computer, and to use the internet [is so low that]... the clients are unable to make a use of that services like the ones who are computer-able.”

Computer and the Internet is certainly the most economical, fastest and easiest way to communicate the information to a wide public, but it is not always a preferred format for
everyone. Like one interviewee said, “if you do want to do resource online, which is great, for us people, who can use the computer”, but for people who lack the capacity to make use of the Internet, “it would better to have something tangible – on paper.”

Similarly in surveys, printed format e.g. manuals, handbook, etc. and electronic format e.g. website postings, online tools, etc. received almost the same votes (30 vs. 29). Both formats have their attracted audience who possess different levels of computer and Internet skills.

Formats other than printed and electronic ones were also recommended by interviewees as accommodations to different learning styles. Although it is not realistic to provide “different formats for different people” as one interviewee imagined, we could still transform the written content into audio or visual programs to be played or broadcasted on TV, radio, DVD player, etc. Many barriers and issues are inter-related with each other. Converting the written format into audio or visual ones as a solution also tackles the problem of language barrier, as for people whose “reading and writing is not [good enough]…people normally talk and listen for services.” An interviewee confirmed that “the main resource that illiterate South Asian immigrants get information is through radio or TV.” Once they are aware of the available services, they could approach their families, relatives and communities for the next steps to take to access that service when needed.

Recommendations regarding computer literacy and formats of the Directory are as follows:

- Both printed and electronic formats of information in the dominant languages should be provided to South Asian immigrants with different computer levels and different needs. Printed format refers to a manual, handbook, brochure or other tangible formats that people could keep with them physically. Electronic format refers to anything from an electronic document downloadable from website to website postings, blogs and resource search engines.

- The information and resources directory can be converted to audio and visual programs accessible in TV programs, radio, DVD player, etc in order to reach out a population for whom listening is the primary source of getting information. In this regard, programs in South Asian languages are a better option than English ones.
6.3 Lack of Local Knowledge, Information Fragmentation and Information Needs

6.3.1 Lack of Local Knowledge & Information Fragmentation

There are two barriers identified by interviewees to decrease newcomers’ access to adequate information and resources: lack of local knowledge and information fragmentation. Lack of local knowledge as a barrier refers to new immigrants’ lack of familiarity with the receiving country’s norms and cultures, particularly with regards to where and how they can do certain kind of things, where they can find that information and whom they can approach for help. Information fragmentation in this study refers to the fact that nowadays information is not usually combined in one place but “scattered around…people don’t know where to get them all,” as an interviewee noticed. When it comes to the era of Internet where information is bombing freely everywhere, even for computer-literate people it is still a time-consuming and frustrating process to get all the information, not to mention newcomers who even have no idea of where to start in some cases. Low awareness of local resources plus a lack of portal where people can go for all the needed information become a huge problem in the process of settlement.

An interviewee admitted that he had spent a lot of time collecting useful information for his clients who didn’t do it by themselves because they either didn’t have time for it or didn’t know where they could get those scattered resources. He thus recommended a directory that “should contain all aspects of life that affect newcomers…one-stop shop for all...It will be good to have something that combines everything together.” Similar comment came from another interviewee, saying that it would be good to have quite an amount of information as it might not be very helpful if only a few resources were covered. However, opponents of this idea are mainly concerned about the volume of the printed directory being too huge. As one interviewee mentioned, “nobody will take a dictionary around. It should be handy, portable and as small as a magazine [for the printed version].” One compromised suggestion was given by an interviewee to create a selected collection for immigrants with only their most needed information and resources.

The criteria for selecting the information were suggested as being “geared towards South Asian.” Questions to be asked could be: is this category of information of interest to South
Asian immigrants? Is this service culturally-sensitive and available in South Asian languages? Also as one interviewee suggested, “[the Directory should] put an emphasis on those agencies that already exist but under-utilized.” In other words, the emerging criteria for information inclusion are as follows: (1) South-Asian immigrants-oriented; (2) under-utilized but very important for newcomers’ settlement.

6.3.2 Information Needs

Based on the above inclusion criteria for what information should be included primarily into the Directory for South Asian immigrants, I am going to discuss the information needs for employment as the most needed category, and for family services as an under-utilized resource identified by many interviewees.

Employment Information

The survey results showed that South Asian immigrants were mostly interested in getting information related to employment, which included finding a job, skill trainings, foreign credentials and evaluations, government benefits and income assistance and so on.

It was mentioned by many interviewees that finding a job was the biggest thing for newcomers. The interviewees also confirmed the key finding in the literature that one challenge associated with finding a job was getting the skilled workers’ foreign credentials evaluated and accepted by the local labor market, which “takes a long long time and a long process...a lot of procedures...that’s where the frustration comes.” Language barrier and lack of Canadian working experience were two significant obstacles of finding a job, as previously discussed. If the attempt to find a job is unsuccessful, immigrants might have to “consider some short-term retraining, to get some more qualifications” and “get Canadian experience before finding a non-survival job.” Certainly the systematic exclusion or discrimination of immigrant workers is not a problem that can be resolved by simply increasing their access to information. However, as I mentioned previously, it was not the goal of this project to address general settlement issues, but to identify what information would be useful to help new immigrants get prepared for and maybe finally solve the problems with the resources provided.
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A report produced for the Working Group on Poverty (Martin Spigelman Research Associates 1998) urges that immigrants be better informed of potential barriers of getting recognition of their foreign credentials, and the difficulties in finding a job even before their arrival to Canada. But *A Newcomer’s Guide to the City of Vancouver*, which is the most popular guidebook for new immigrants, provides no information on how to find a job, where to get their foreign credential evaluated and where to look for help if newcomers are stuck in the labor market. In addition, the guide is never customized to be South Asian-oriented, because most of the information and resources in the guidebook are intended for everyone, assuming that the immigrant community is homogenous and shares the same needs among different ethno-cultural populations.

Employment-related information, which includes where and how to find a job, where to get training, how to get their foreign credentials evaluated, how to apply for government benefits and income assistance and so on, is definitely the most important element of an information directory for South Asian newcomers.

*Family Services*

Family services are defined in this study as services at the family level that help family members build strong and positive relationships with each other through counseling, training, interactive activities and so on. All of the interviewees mentioned about the different but yet difficult adjustment experiences for each family member. The elders experience isolation, loneliness and desperation because of language barriers even with their grand-children, intergenerational conflict, lost of traditional power at home and frustration with mobility issues, etc. (Boneham, 1989; Bindra, 1994; City of Toronto, 1999; Choudhry, 2001). The youth undergo conflicts and contradiction between their South Asian heritage and the Canadian cultures (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). South Asian women are very isolated as they lost family network, neighborhood support and community resources in the new country (Banerjee, 2000). They are reluctant to voice their problems, particularly in case of serious domestic violence (Choudhry, 2001; Shirwadkar, 2004). The persistence of health problems among immigrants has indicated that family coherence influences the physical and psychological health of family members, and thus affects the adjustment process in the new
country (Choudhry, 2001). Family services can help with newcomers’ settlement at the family level.

Both the literature and interview results show that there are serious issues inside many new immigrants’ homes, but no proper actions are often taken due to what is considered culturally acceptable or appropriate practices, lack of awareness of available services, concern about family and individual privacy, and many other socio-cultural reasons. As an interviewee admitted, many South Asian families do not reach out for help if there were problems within the family, because “it’s their own family issue…they don’t usually feel comfortable with talking about this [kind of issue].” Another interviewee, though confident about the close relationship that she had built with her clients, was still worried about the fact that settlement workers were not specialized in all family service areas, particularly counseling and mental health issues, and sometimes she has to send people to other places, but “they are having language barrier problems there…they also feel comfortable talking to a person from their own community.” Although not being voted as a wanted category of information by survey respondents, family services definitely play an important role in helping families get through the difficult transition period. In addition, survey respondents did show their concern about health, which was voted by 20 people. Health service, especially mental health service through family counseling, constitutes a big part of family services. Services that are culturally-sensitive and available in South Asian languages should be included and promoted in the Directory.

In conclusion, employment-related information as the most needed and useful information, and family services as an under-utilized but very important category of resources, are two primary categories of information to be included in the Directory for South Asian newcomers who face challenges of finding a job and maintaining the family cohesion during a difficult time.

Recommendations to address the lack of local knowledge, fragmentation of information as well as primary information for settlement are as follows:

- The information and resources directory should be a one-stop shop that guides newcomers to a wide variety of information and resources. New immigrants can refer to the Directory for help in many different areas rather than navigating
through tens of hundreds of websites and offices to combine the scattered pieces of information together.

- The Directory should be parcelled out in theme-specific volumes, and not be designed like a dictionary that has very detailed introduction for every piece of resource. In order to be convenient for use and culturally-sensitive, the Directory should be able to select and combine information and resources that are most helpful and needed for South Asian newcomers. According to the survey results, interviews and the literature review, the most important information and resource is employment, which includes places to look for job, evaluation of foreign credentials, education upgrading, skill training, job-search skills and government benefits and income assistance.

- The under-utilized but important resources, such as family services, should be taken into consideration in the development of the Directory. The Directory should be able to not only inform the readers of the services and resources available for them, but also encourage them to voice their concerns and actively seek help from service providers that are professional and culturally-sensitive.

- The developer of the Directory should conduct surveys and/or interview with South Asian immigrants and immigrant service providers on a regular basis in order to capture their changing information needs and identify the under-utilized resources that should be promoted to the newcomers.

6.4 Information Inaccuracy

A big limitation of existing information and resources documents mentioned by many interviewees is the inaccuracy of listed information and resources, which either give the wrong phone number or keep the old address without updating. An interviewee was frustrated after using many resources directories. “I found that some directories are from long, long time ago; the call numbers are not even existing. That’s frustrating. What are these for? Why are they out if they are not there?” Reasons for the inaccuracy of information may come from the fact that everything is changing fast these days. There is also the lack of
funding for regular updates. Another reason is due to the nature of particular directory formats, because electronic format is more easily to be updated than printed format. The accuracy of information and resources given to newcomers should be guaranteed as much as possible because immigrants rely on them during the critical struggling period of settlement.

Recommendations regarding the inaccuracy of information are as follows:

- The Directory should be updated on a regular basis for the printed format and on an ongoing process for the electronic, audio and visual formats. It is important to ensure the correctness of descriptions of the resources, addresses, phone numbers, website links, email addresses and contact persons.

- The Directory developer should take off the out-of-date services and resources from the Directory and make sure that the new services and resources are included in a most timely manner in the Directory.

- There should be a notice system e.g. email listserv, through which the Developer could communicate with major service providers regarding the changes and updates to the Directory.

6.5 Strategies of Promotion and Increasing Access to Information and Resources

Survey respondents reported their preferred mode of access to the Information and Resources Directory, whereas the interviewed immigrant service professionals suggested effective ways to promote and communicate the Directory with different sub-groups of South Asian immigrants. Those strategies all contribute to increasing accessibility of the Directory with immigrants who have different habits and preferences.

6.5.1 Immigrant Service Organizations

Most survey respondents prefer immigrant service organizations as the place where they receive critical information and resources. Many interviewees working in immigrant service organizations commented on their role as professionals who provided information and referrals to other resources and services to their immigrant clients. Those professionals assess
clients’ needs and then recommend services accordingly. Very often they refer people to outside services and resources that are identified to be necessary. An interviewee who is dedicated to serving the Punjabi-speaking community in Metro Vancouver described her work as helping Punjabi-speaking newcomers with everything “from their surroundings...anything from telephone, how to get service, how to rent a place, where they can find these things, doctor offices, grocery stores, bus stops...anything.”, which was “beyond our jobs...mandates.” They are familiar with both the settlement issues, background cultures and expectations of their clients and the available resources from different organizations, governments, businesses, etc. that can satisfy the needs of clientele in many areas of life. They perform like a human “yellow-page”, dictionary and bridge that connects new immigrants with important information and resources.

Because of its immigrant-oriented services that are also culturally-sensitive, immigrant services organizations attract many newcomers to look for help at different stages of their settlement. Those immigrant service professionals have repeat clients because of the tailor-made services and information that they give out. An interviewee introduced the information and resources directory made by herself. “The most used numbers...we have in our system a list that we created on our own, which is what we feel are more towards our clientele.” She said that she also used other directories developed by the City of Vancouver (e.g. A Newcomer’s Guide to the City of Vancouver), but she didn’t see anything that was South Asian targeted and had to dig for the South Asian elements from the numerous available materials.

The idea of creating an information and resources directory specifically for South Asian newcomers was commended by all the interviewees. Many of them suggested promoting and distributing the Directory to their clients – mostly South Asian new immigrants, because “the trust [between immigrant service professionals and clients] has been built [through previous services]”, and professionals are able to “distribute the Directory on a regular basis”, explained by interviewees.

Immigrant service organizations that have new immigrant clients from South Asia are certainly the major distribution channels for the Directory as well as one of the most effective ways to promote the Directory to a wider South Asian immigrant community.
6.5.2 Social Places

Social places in this study refer to neighborhood institutions that include community centers, barbershops, childcare centers, places of worship, gyms, and credit unions (Small 2006, 2004). Many interviewees mentioned the neighborhood institutions as ideal locations to communicate information with the community and raise awareness of the available services.

Neighborhood institutions perform the role of resource brokers, which possess ties to non-profit organizations, government agencies and businesses that are rich in resources. They provide neighborhood institutions’ users with access to these resources (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh & Vidal, 2001). Like immigrant service organizations, the neighborhood institutions, or resource brokers, connect individuals to information and resources, and transfer resources to the individual (Small, 2006). A good example could be found from Fisher, Durrance and Hinton (2004)’s evaluation of the public library of New York city that the computer and internet services helped them not only gain information literacy, but also become aware of resources that could benefit them in daily life.

Religious Places

McRoberts (2003) in his study of black churches identified that church members shared a great deal of information on issues such as “immigration and legalization services” and “help with children experiencing adjustment problems in school” (p.106) in the process of social interactions.

According to many interviewees, religious places, rather than libraries, play an important role in communicating information to the South Asian community, especially for newcomers who have no knowledge of any local resources.

Ames and Inglis (1973) in their research of the history of the Sikh immigrant settlement in British Columbia noticed the transformation of the Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) from religious to social centers, where information on jobs, medical care, educational opportunities, immigration applications, etc. are provided to prayers.

Some of the interviewees also highlighted the importance of temples in South Asian community as “the first area where any [South Asian] newcomers or seniors know they can
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go there and guide them from there”. Thus we should acknowledge the religious temples’ role as an information and resource broker in order to solicit the temples’ support in reaching out the community for the South Asian Immigrant Information and Resources Directory.

Community Events

Neighborhood institutions frequently organize events for residents, creating an information ground where people join the event and engage in formal and informal information sharing, and benefit in physical, social, affective and cognitive dimensions (Fisher, Durrance & Hinton, 2004).

Fisher, Durrance and Hinton (2004) explained that when people interact socially with each other in community events, their conversations about life and specific fields lead to the spontaneous sharing of information on a range of topics in different directions. They also suggested finding out where information grounds are located for different populations and how they emerge and exist so that it is possible to facilitate a better information flow therein.

For example, Shirwadkar (2004) in the study of South Asian women suffering from domestic violence identified community cultural activities as one of the existing accepted channels to communicate the helpful information and resources with women in an abusive relationship, and also to advocate for community support.

The regular marketing initiatives of the interviewees of this study correspond to the literature as they frequently visit South Asian neighborhood institutions such as community centers, libraries and temples, and especially go to various kinds of community events in order to meet with the community and “get the words spread-out.” A total of 15 survey respondents reported that informational events and workshops for immigrants was a preferred mode of accessing information and resources, and that immigrant service professionals usually hold such information sessions in workshops. The South Asian Information and Resources Directory could be promoted through those immigrant events in addition to general community events for everyone.
6.5.3 Peer Support

For 14 South Asian survey respondents, friends, families and peer immigrants from their own community are able to give them good advice in regards to information and resources that can help them in certain situations. An interviewee thought of PICS being deeply-rooted in South Asian community as a significant strength in building trust between immigrant service professionals and South Asian immigrants. The fact that she speaks a variety of South Asian languages helps grow the number of South Asian clients who visit for help. Adult immigrants have strong social and emotional ties with their original group which provides the social support necessary to buffer the acculturating newcomers from psychological distress. (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). And more importantly, like an interviewee said, people from the same background know where the newcomers come from, what troubles they have and what their needs are.

However, there are certain limitations on peer support as a way to access information and resources. Fernandez and Harris (1992) indicated that a network that included people with similar barriers and issues maybe be limited in their information sources to share among members. Interviewees in this study worried about the accuracy of the information given by a peer immigrant who didn’t have adequate qualifications, as well as the ability of non-professionals to assess other people’s needs and make referrals accordingly.

6.5.4 Media Campaign

A few survey respondents voted for traditional media such as classifieds, advertisements, newsletter and periodicals as their desired ways to receive information, while interviewees also recommended the use of different media to increase people’s awareness of the Directory and thus encourage its usage. As discussed before, a combination of channels should be acknowledged to reach different sub-populations who have different education levels, language proficiency, computer literacy and preferences for modes of access to information.
Recommendations regarding strategies of promoting and increasing South Asian immigrants’ access to the Directory are as follows:

- The South Asian information and resources directory should be distributed and promoted mainly through the immigrant service organizations, especially those who have strong ties with South Asian immigrant community. Promotions of the Directory could be conducted through communications with the clients (face-to-face, phone call, email and mail), website postings, and flyer in the organization. South Asian clients could be encouraged to spread the word to their family, friends and community about the Directory and where they can get one.

- Immigrant service organizations should incorporate an information session in events, activities and workshops that they organize independently or in collaboration with other service providers. Service providers who are included in the Directory can take turns to introduce their service and resources to South Asian immigrants, which also builds a network opportunity for service providers.

- Promotions should go out to social places that South Asian immigrants usually go for social activities. A partnership should be established with religious places and community centers as two major neighborhood institutions that facilitate information flow in the community. Immigrant service professionals should take the flyer, poster or the Directory itself to different community events in order to raise awareness of the new resource and advise the community members to possess one for their references. In addition, the neighborhood institutions could become a hub that help raise awareness of information and resources through distribution of promotional documents and resources directory to their patrons.

- A media campaign through a variety of channels should be used as part of the promotion strategy. Effective communication channels for South Asian community include but not limited to TVs (OMNI-TV Punjabi Channel), Radio station (RJ 1200), major newspapers (The South Asian Post, The Asian Star), flyers and posters.
Summary: List of Recommendations

To make it easier for the reader, this section is a collection of all of the recommendations listed above.

Table 6 Recommendations for Development of An Information and Resources Directory for South Asian Immigrants

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Categories</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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| Language Barrier            | ● The Immigrant Information and Resource Directory should be available in both English and major South Asian languages, e.g. Hindi and Punjabi. The translation should be conducted by professional translators in order to ensure the correctness of the terms and descriptions being translated.  
                               ● In both English and South Asian language versions, there should be a description of what this information or resource is, who needs it, and in what circumstances, so that immigrants, no matter whether or not they are familiar with the terms, will be able to get an idea of how and where they can look for help in certain situations.  
                               ● In consideration of the language proficiency as a barrier of South Asian newcomers accessing services and resources, the Directory should indicate clearly for each resource entry whether or not the service or resource is provided in South Asian languages and how clients can access the service in those specific languages if necessary. |
| Computer Literacy & Formats | ● Both printed and electronic formats should be provided to South Asian immigrants who have different computer levels and different needs. Printed format refers to a manual, handbook, brochure or other tangible formats that people could keep with them physically. Electronic format refers to anything from an electronic document downloadable from website to website postings, blogs and resource search engines.  
                               ● The information and resources directory can be converted to audio and visual programs accessible in TV programs, radio, DVD player, etc in order to reach out a population for whom listening is the primary source of getting information. In this regard, programs in South Asian languages are a better choice than English ones. |
| Lack of Local Knowledge, Information Fragmentation | ● The information and resources directory should be a one-stop shop that guides newcomers to a wide variety of information and resources. New immigrants can refer to the Directory for help in many different areas rather than navigating through tens of hundreds of websites and offices to combine the scattered pieces of information.  
                               ● The Directory should not be designed towards a dictionary that has the most detailed introduction for every piece of resource. In order to be culturally-sensitive, the Directory should be able to select and combine information and resources that are most helpful and needed for South Asian newcomers. According to the survey, interview and the literature review, the most important information and resource is relating to employment, including places to look for job, foreign credential evaluation, education upgrading, skill training, job-search skills and government benefits and income assistance. |
### Information and Settlement

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| & Information Needs | The under-utilized but important resources, such as family services, should be taken into consideration in the development of the Directory. The Directory should be able to not only inform the readers of the services and resources available for them, but also encourage them to voice their concerns and actively look for help from service providers that are professional and culturally-sensitive.  
- The developer of the Directory should conduct survey or interview with South Asian immigrants and immigrant service providers on a regular basis in order to capture their changing information needs and identify the under-utilized resources that should be promoted to the newcomers. |
|---|---|
| & Inaccuracy of Information | The Directory should be updated in a regular basis for the printed format and in an ongoing process for the electronic format and audio format. It is important to ensure that the description of the resource, address, phone number, website link, email address and contact people are correct and up-to-date.  
- The Directory developer should take off the out-of-date services and resources from the Directory and make sure that the new services and resources are included timely in the Directory.  
- There should be a notice system e.g. email listserv, through which the Developer could communicate with major service providers regarding the changes and updates to the Directory. |
| & Promotions | The South Asian information and resources directory should be distributed and promoted mainly through the immigrant service organizations, especially those who have strong ties with South Asian immigrant community. Promotions of the Directory could be conducted through communications with the clients (face-to-face, phone call, email and mail), website postings, and flyer in the organization. South Asian clients should be encouraged to spread the word to their family, friends and community about the Directory and where they can get one.  
- Immigrant service organizations should incorporate an information session in events, activities and workshops that they organize independently or in collaboration with other service providers. Service providers that are included in the Directory can take turns to introduce their service and resources for South Asian immigrants, which is also a network opportunity for service providers.  
- Promotions should go out to social places that South Asian immigrants usually go for social activities. A partnership should be established with religious places and community centers as two major neighborhood institutions that facilitate information flow in the community. Immigrant service professionals should take the flyer, poster or the Directory itself to different community events in order to raise awareness of the new resource and advise the community members to possess one for their references. In addition, the neighborhood institutions could become a hub that help raise awareness of information and resources through distribution of promotion documents and resources directory to their patrons.  
- A media campaign through a variety of channels should be used as part of the promotion strategy. Effective communication channels for South Asian community include but not limited to TVs (OMNI-TV Punjabi Channel), Radio station (RJ 1200), major newspapers (South Asian Post, The Asian Star), flyers and posters. |
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The rationale behind this project is the need to clearly address the lack of appropriate information packaging, with regards to cultural sensitivity, family circumstances and accessibility. Existing information directories and guidebooks target the immigrant group as a whole without paying attention to the specific demands of different ethno-groups. This study fills the gap through the development of a directory geared towards South Asian immigrants, one of the biggest ethnic groups in Vancouver.

Through surveys of South Asian newcomers, interviews with immigrant service professionals, examination of existing information and resources directory and literature review, this study has identified new South Asian immigrants’ barriers in accessing information, their needs for particular categories of information, their preferred formats and modes of access, and effective ways to increase access to information. The result of the study informs the development of a directory that will guide South Asian newcomers to critical information and resources. The directory should be culturally-sensitive and accessible. It also should respond to the needs of South Asian newcomers by including services and resources that are South Asian-oriented in terms of language and practice. A variety of formats may be developed based on language proficiency, computer literacy, learning styles and other preferences of South Asian immigrants, who can easily access the directory through their preferred channels. Strategies for promotion and increasing accessibility should also take into account these same factors.

It should be noted that some of the barriers and needs identified in the study are not unique to South Asian immigrants. Actually several of them are common to immigrants of many ethno-groups, e.g. language barrier, need for employment-related information, etc. Immigrants from other cultures may have similar preferences for formats and mode of access to information. Recommended promotion strategies may be just as effective in other ethno-cultural communities as well. However, this particular project focused on the development of a Directory based on research into South Asian immigrants and the immigrant professionals who cater to them, and was geared towards connecting the target group to their most needed
information and resources via their preferred channels. This study can serve as a model for future parallel research with other ethno-cultural populations.

Informed by Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004)’s theory of program assessment, this study centers mainly on the need for the program and recommendations for the design of the program, as well as suggestions for implementation and service delivery. In order to better accommodate the target community, future studies are needed to evaluate the content and formats of the Directory with feedback from service providers and end users, actual delivery of the Directory in a variety of formats through different channels, its impact, and the effectiveness and efficiency of the Directory in connecting South Asian newcomers to important information and resources. These could be done via surveys and interviews with more South Asian immigrants and service providers in different organizations, as the survey and interview sample size was somewhat limited in this study. Regular comments from more stakeholders will surely be beneficial to better assess the evolving needs of immigrants and design better programs to increase the access to information and resources. Geographic criteria could be expanded to include South Asian immigrants living in other municipalities of Metro Vancouver, and information and resources in a broader context.
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Developing An Information and Resources Directory for the South Asian Immigrant Community in Vancouver


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*Status of women Canada* (1998). (Report by the Government of Canada to the UN Commission of Human Rights Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. Ottawa, Canada:


Appendices

Appendix A  Survey for South Asian new immigrants

PICS Vancouver
#200-8161 Main Street
Vancouver, BC V5X 3L2

Survey
Immigrant Resource Materials

Please take a moment to help us understand your preferences regarding immigrant resource materials in Metro Vancouver, Canada. Your answers are for research purposes only, and your participation is anonymous. If you have questions or comments, please contact Yu Wang, Immigrant Resource Developer, at yue.wang@picks.bc.ca, or call 604-324-7733, Ext. 31.

Personal Information (Optional).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence in Canada</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Language(s) Spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
<td>&lt; 20</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>Graduate school or higher</td>
<td>Punjabi/Hindi/Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preferred immigrant resource materials (Choose all that apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Mode of Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Information</td>
<td>Manuals with resources of all categories (e.g. Newcomer’s Guide)</td>
<td>Friends, relatives and peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Training (Language &amp; Computer, etc.)</td>
<td>Brochure/flyer/handbook for specific category (e.g. Sponsorship Breakdown by Legal Services Society)</td>
<td>Immigrant organizations or professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Resource directory for a particular group (e.g. Youth Resource Directory)</td>
<td>Government officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>Media classified ads</td>
<td>Case manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Policy</td>
<td>Periodicals with featured topics (e.g. Canadian Immigrant)</td>
<td>Settlement/Community worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Website postings and blogs</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Online tools (e.g. Map of Free Legal Service around BC)</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td>Community information board and newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-care</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Online (e.g. website postings, blogs and tools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Informational events for immigrants (e.g. PICS Mega Job Fair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credentials &amp; Evaluations</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits, Subsidies and Financial Assistance</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional suggestions (content, format, language, distribution, etc.)

Thank you for your participation!
Appendix B  Interview Guide

About the Subject

1) How long have you been working with immigrants? How do you feel about working with immigrants?

2) What do you do specifically for your job? (Please describe your work with immigrants.)

About the clients

3) Are your clients mainly from South Asia? If not, what is the percentage of South Asian clients?

4) Are they mainly new immigrants (<5 years of residence in Canada)? If not, what is the percentage of new immigrants?

5) For what reason/For what kind of help do South Asian new immigrants approach you? Are you always able to help them? If not, what do you do?

About the settlement issues

6) What do you think are major issues for South Asian immigrants during the settlement period? (e.g. lack of information, language barrier, employment, etc.) Is this unique for South Asians or is it common among all immigrants in Canada? Why is it an issue? What are the results of the issue? Is this issue inter-related with other issues?

7) How do South Asian immigrants usually tackle with it?

About the information needs of the immigrants

8) What are the barriers of South Asian immigrants in accessing information? Why is it a barrier?

9) What category of information do South Asian immigrants need the most? (e.g. employment, health, financial assistance, etc.) According to your experience of working with South Asian immigrants, what kinds of information are most useful for them?

10) As a settlement professional, what kind of resources and information do you usually refer to your clients?
11) Where do South Asian immigrants look for information? If they don’t actively look for information, how and from whom do they receive information?

12) What resources/information do they need but are not easy to access or not available?

13) Do South Asian immigrants have any preference for specific format of an information and resources document?

14) How do you think they prefer to access information and resources documents? Through the Internet, printed materials in the government office, religious place, school, etc.?

15) What do you think are the limitations of existing immigrant information and resources documents? (in terms of content, mode of access, format, language, etc.)

**About future**

16) Do you have any suggestions for development of an information and resources directory for South Asian immigrants? How would you like to see the future design and delivery of an information and resources directory for South Asian immigrants? (in terms of content, mode of access, format, language, etc.)

17) What is the most effective way to promote the Directory? What is the best way to communicate the information with South Asian immigrants? How can we increase their access to information?