

BCLA Multicultural Services Interest Group Meeting Minutes

Date: May 16, 2023 from 9:30-11:08AM

Location: Hybrid (Zoom & In-person at Burnaby Public Library's McGill Branch)

Present: Jessica (Burnaby Public Library), Emily (Burnaby Public Library), Ravi (Surrey Libraries), Wendy (Richmond Public Library), Maria Yang (Surrey Libraries), Reign (UBC iSchool student who also works at University Canada West and New Westminster Public Library), Jan (Fraser Valley Regional Library-Maple Ridge), Margarita (Fraser Valley Regional Library-Maple Ridge), Ann (Coquitlam Public Library), and Andrea (West Vancouver Memorial Library)

Agenda:

1. Attendees of February Spotlight Speaker event share their impressions
2. Roundtable
3. Committee work & action items over the summer hiatus
4. Next Meeting
5. Other

MEETING

Land Acknowledgement

We started the meeting with a land acknowledgment.

1. Attendees of February's Spotlight Speaker event share their impressions

Emily – Enjoyed the format and was impressed with the spotlight speakers. Toyin Kayo-Ajayi, one of the spotlight speakers, explained the importance of having a year-round dedicated space for the African Canadian community.

Jessica – David Gill kindly shared his journey of having grown up not knowing what libraries had to offer.

Wendy – She was impressed with all of the amazing work that the *Kara-Kata Afrobeat Society of Canada* is doing. Their work includes but is not limited to the following: planning cultural events, food festivals and getting young African Canadian youth involved in farming and agriculture. Spotlight speaker Toyin Kayo-Ajayi explained that the Society is focused on building social connections.

2. Roundtable

The Roundtable is when we share information about multicultural programming, services and collections that we are offering or would like to offer at our library systems.

Margarita – Maple Ridge Public Library will be hosting [a Capoeira & Maracatu event on Friday, July 14, 2023](#), the event will be “a fusion of martial arts and dance performed by Vancouver’s Brazilian Swag Dance Group” and include storytelling “that combines a mixture of African, Portuguese and Indigenous cultures” (www.fvrl.ca). This event is being co-funded by the library and a Local Immigration Partnership.

Ravi – Following the Spotlight Speaker Event, David Gill emailed Ravi to ask if any Surrey residents or students had been to the library at Alexander College. For context, most of the international students at Alexander College live in Surrey even though the college is in Burnaby. In April 2023, Ravi and two of her colleagues from Surrey Libraries went to Alexander College and made over 100 new library cards.

Many of the international students, who speak Punjabi, told Ravi that they are being exploited and that many, as many as 700 students, face deportation. These international students are being underserved in our communities in part because settlement agencies are not funded to help international students. Most international students here in Canada are on student visas – they are not permanent residents.

Ravi mentioned that [One Voice Canada](#), an organization created by members of the South Asian community in Surrey, offers rights education sessions for international students. There was general agreement that public libraries are well-positioned to offer similar rights sessions.

Emily – She is going to see how Burnaby Public Library can help international students including the possibility of offering information sessions.

Ravi – Staff from Surrey Libraries are going to return to Alexander College in June 2023 to do outreach to students attending a job fair.

Reign – Reign shared that University Canada West offers some information sessions for international students. The sessions are run by student services and provide information on different topics including Canada’s health care system.

Ravi – Prepared a report on the 2021 Census data that showed that Surrey is 67% racialized. She created the report to help guide the development of library outreach, programs and services.

Wendy – She and Ravi mentioned an intercultural communication workshop that they helped develop many years ago and have adapted over the years to include anti-racism material. Attendees expressed interest in this training opportunity and discussed the possibility of offering the training at a future MSIG meeting in a train-the-trainer style session. The goal? MSIG members could then deliver the training at their respective library systems. Ravi hopes to make the most recent, updated training materials available in advance of our meeting in September 2023 (date to be determined).

Ann – Coquitlam Public Library is trying to offer storytimes in additional languages including Mandarin and Korean to better serve their diverse communities. Unfortunately, the library system has experienced some difficulty recruiting native-Mandarin speakers who are able and willing to offer storytimes in Mandarin. Attendees encouraged Ann to post job information at local colleges and

universities in an attempt to recruit students, and to use non-traditional channels (many of which are articulated in the [EDI Strategies in Recruitment Toolkit](#) available on BCLA's website – a project led by Jessica Whu Lee).

Attendees discussed an exciting upcoming anti-oppression training opportunity. Beginning at the end of August 2023, the Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership is offering [Anti-Oppression Capacity Building Training](#) (as part of the Anti-Oppression Capacity Building Project). The three-month training program is free. Tri-Cities is currently accepting registrations for its fourth cohort which starts August 24, 2023 and ends November 2, 2023. To find out more, visit the Eventbrite page here: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/anti-oppression-capacity-building-project-tickets-603773812727>

Margarita – FVRL is partnering with New to BC to offer a Community Settlement Dialogue at the Maple Ridge Branch on June 6th. The Maple Ridge Branch will also be hosting Indigenous speakers in October 2023 and a Memoir Panel featuring BIPOC authors in fall 2023.

Andrea – She shared that Squamish Language and Culture Teacher Tsitsáyxemaat Rebecca Duncan and her students were the first to use West Van Library's new Recording Studio. Together, they recorded the Squamish names of the Indigenous plants that are growing in the Library's demonstration garden, Tsitsáyxemaat. The library is also expanding its youth collection to include YA books in Farsi.

Emily – She shared that Fraser Health has an all Punjabi-speaking team who is available to offer harm reduction training at public libraries.

Wendy – She shared that there has been a lot of anti-Asian racism and anti-Chinese sentiment in Richmond both during the Pandemic and currently.

Wendy and two of her colleagues organized and hosted a Chinese New Year Celebration at Richmond this year, the first in many years. The celebration had 1000 attendees.

3. Committee work & action items over the summer hiatus

Jessica is going to try to move the intercultural communication workshop materials that Wendy and Ravi helped develop, from their old home on DropBox into a Google Drive file to make them accessible for Interest Group members to review over the summer.

4. Next meeting dates (Fall 2023 – Spring 2024)

We had a lively conversation so we ran out of time to discuss these meeting dates but a Rally poll will be included in an upcoming online forum post with proposed dates and times. Stay tuned!

5. Other

No other items were raised.

Meeting adjourned at 11:08am.