



NEWS LOCAL

LGBTQ immigrants 'minority within a minority'



By Stefania Seccia, 24 hours
Monday, January 26, 2015 5:49:13 PST PM



This poster was used for an activity to brainstorm ways to provide support for LGBTQ immigrant newcomers at a Community Dialogue on Jan. 26 at Trout Lake Community Centre. (Stefania Seccia, 24 HOURS)

Part of this project is to be able to see the person as a whole and all of the intersections in their life. — Roja Bagheri, MOSAIC Settlement and Family Services program coordinator

The myriad of issues facing immigrants who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans or Questioning (LGBTQ) is precisely what a six-month pilot project is trying to get to the bottom of.

I Belong is a pilot project launched in Burnaby and New Westminster last October that's aiming to support LGBTQ immigrant newcomers by addressing the intersecting effects of sexuality, gender, race, cultural diversity, class, criminalization and colonialism.

On Monday, a community dialogue event drew more than 65 people, from LGBTQ immigrants to service providers, together at Trout Lake Community Centre to gather ideas on how to support the "minority within the minority," according to Roja Bagheri, program coordinator with MOSAIC Settlement and Family Services.

"We wanted to get an idea of what are the needs, what are the gaps for LGBTQ newcomers," she said. "What are the challenges and what will support the rest of the projects."

Bagheri said the dialogue is meant to create a safe place for participants to share personal stories of discrimination, hardship and in some cases, violence.

"What are the discriminations one person holds and are faced with?" she said. "It could be language barriers, citizen immigration status, employment, housing, economic status.

"We found many service providers only see one aspect of a person and provide service for that one part of the person."

Bagheri said there aren't any service providers out there for LGBTQ immigrant newcomers as a whole.

"There's a lot of places that are not inclusive, not friendly to the LGBTQ community," she said.

Since the beginning of the project, the group has worked with 25 LGBTQ newcomers and a host of service providers.

The recommendations from the dialogue, surveys and research will be compiled into a public report after the culmination of the pilot project in March, Bagheri said.

Although the group hopes to continue funding, without it, MOSAIC is launching one-on-one support for LGBTQ immigrant newcomers starting next week, according to Bagheri.

The project received six months of funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
