COMMUNITY SPACE NEEDS STUDY:

A STUDY ON CURRENT AVAILABILITY AND PERCEIVED NEED BY ETHNOCULTURAL MINORITY COMMUNITIES

30 APRIL 2003
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Report prepared by: Irene Policzer Consulting

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Canadian Heritage Patrimoine canadien
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The consultants are grateful to everyone who participated in this project.

We thank the Project Director and the Advisory Committee. Their contributions have been invaluable to the development of this report. We are grateful for their insight and guidance throughout the project.

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We thank the following MOSAIC staff who provided important information about the communities they each represent and generously invited the consultants to meet with the community groups with which they work:

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ATMAsphere Art Society & Abdul Jabar
Kurdish Parenting Group

Centre d’Intégration pour Immigrants Africains
C. J. Byun & Pastor Lee Young Chul

Turkish Canadian Society
Gökhan Karahan

Vancouver Burma Round Table
Zoë Hunter

Latin American Community
Council &
Roxana Aune

VietNet & Huong Trung (Surrey-Delta ISS)

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Irene Policzer
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Irene Policzer Consulting
30 April 2003
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</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1998 MOSAIC opened the Community Room, a facility that provides meeting space to a large number of community groups. Since the Community Room’s opening, MOSAIC has found that there are community activities that the Community Room cannot accommodate, and that there seems to be a need for appropriate meeting facilities for ethnocultural communities. Financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage made it possible to undertake a study of accessibility of community meeting spaces for ethnocultural communities.

This study was given two main areas of focus:

1) To produce an inventory of available community meeting spaces.
2) To consult with ethnocultural community groups to identify issues, concerns, experiences, and suggestions for improving accessibility to community facilities.

INVENTORY

The inventory was prepared to provide an overview of existing meeting spaces in Vancouver and Burnaby. The inventory is intended as a resource for MOSAIC and other organizations when making decisions on space related initiatives. It will also provide a useful tool to groups searching for an appropriate facility for their activities. It is presented as a separate document and as a database file.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Twelve ethnocultural communities were targeted for consultation. The consultation process included interviews with MOSAIC bilingual counsellors and key representatives from each community, as well as focus group discussions with a variety of community groups and organizations. The report includes a brief profile of each of the selected communities and describes the experiences and issues that each group faces in its use of existing community spaces.
While there is a great diversity of space-related needs and experiences among the various communities, several common themes can be identified. The major findings that emerged throughout the consultation can be summarized as follows:

Most of the activities reported by the ethnocultural groups reflect efforts to express, share, and preserve their cultural identity. An appropriate space is, primarily, a space that is conducive to the expression and assertion of each community’s identity.

The need for accessible and affordable space appears to be more critical for communities that have arrived more recently and face greater barriers to integration into Canadian society; conversely, communities that are more established appear to be more capable of providing for their own space requirements, either through facilities established by the community itself or through experience negotiating and obtaining space.

Limitations to space availability include high rental costs; overload of existing spaces; scheduling restrictions that result in reduced dependability; and complex criteria and procedures for booking spaces.

Barriers to accessing spaces include limited financial resources; language and communication problems; limited skills in negotiation of space arrangements; and limited resources for proper research of space availability.

General conditions for suitable spaces include central and easily found locations; dependability; appropriate capacity for a range of activities; and provision of amenities such as child-minding facilities, secure storage space, kitchen facilities, office and administration spaces, and office- and meeting-related equipment.

Space needs can be addressed by a variety of measures including improving access to existing spaces, improving existing spaces themselves, and building new spaces.

A useful organizational and spatial model that can help shape improvements made to existing or new space is the Cooperative Suite. It includes both a space use model consisting of a combination of shared and private spaces and facilities, and an organizational model based on active participation of each of the potential space users in the development, implementation, administration, and maintenance of the space.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are presented at the end of this report:

Establish mechanism for ongoing consultation and dialogue with ethnocultural community groups and organizations to facilitate a process of sharing space-related issues and develop strategies to address them.

Conduct information workshops to assist groups in developing skills to find, negotiate, and secure community space.

Produce guidelines to assist groups looking for community space.

Establish a mechanism for ongoing or periodic update of the Community Facilities Inventory.

Lobby funding agencies to create a grant program for ethnocultural community space rental.

Facilitate the development of partnerships between ethnocultural organizations and those who provide community space.

Create a Facility Advocate position—a “broker” to help groups find appropriate venues, make contacts, formulate requests, and negotiate contracts.

Lobby for the development and implementation of the Cooperative Suite model for the improvement of existing facilities or construction of new facilities to serve the spatial needs of ethnocultural communities. Apply the model to any new construction carried out by MOSAIC itself.

Provide and/or lobby for Seed Space—temporary, subsidized space—to help new groups in their process of becoming established.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 1998, MOSAIC opened the Community Room, a meeting facility that accommodates up to 30 people. Located on the main floor of the agency building at 1720 Grant Street, Vancouver (corner of Commercial Drive and Grant Street), the Community Room is made available to community groups at no charge on a first-come–first-serve basis.

The idea to open the space was generated after reflecting on feedback from ethnocultural minority community groups who identified lack of meeting space as one of the main barriers hindering their ability to settle, organize, build capacity, develop and integrate into Canadian society.

Since its opening, various groups have made consistent use of the Community Room. Users include women’s support groups, international solidarity and human rights organizations, self-help groups, local cooperatives, youth groups, arts groups (theatre, dance, music, poetry), addiction recovery groups, School Board-related parent groups, and local community agencies that use the space on occasion to deliver programs or specific activities.

While the room provides meeting space to a large number of community groups, MOSAIC staff members involved in referring groups to and booking the Community Room have realized that there are community activities that the Community Room cannot accommodate. Room capacity is limited to 25–30 people and, often, ethnocultural groups require a larger space for their functions.

In addition, the Community Room provides limited resources, making it inadequate for certain smaller groups. For instance, the lack of child-minding facilities, storage space, audiovisual equipment, and kitchen facilities, among others, limit the range of possible uses for the space.

Group representatives who request space for activities are usually invited to see if the Community Room is appropriate for their needs. Often the representatives realize that the room is too small and express dismay that they may need to cancel an event due to lack of an adequate venue.

Discussions between MOSAIC and the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department revealed that groups from ethnocultural communities also
often approach the latter to request assistance finding adequate space for their activities. It was determined that a systematic study of existing facilities would be of great benefit to both MOSAIC and the Social Planning Department, as well as to groups seeking space for their various activities—MOSAIC and the City would be able to provide better information about existing facilities, and groups would have better and more direct access to information about available facilities.

As an initial step in aiding MOSAIC to determine the best approach to addressing community space issues, this initial study has been given two main areas of focus:

1) To produce an inventory of community facilities available in Vancouver and Burnaby, including basic information (cost, accessibility, range of spaces and services available, etc.).

2) To interview a range of users and potential users of such facilities to identify issues, concerns, experiences, and suggestions for improving accessibility to community facilities.

While the study has been conducted for MOSAIC, at several stages throughout the process MOSAIC and the consultants have received input and feedback from an ad hoc Advisory Committee with representation from the Department of Canadian Heritage (the funding agency for this project), the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department, and the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation.

### 1.2 Community Consultation Process

The ethnocultural minority communities targeted for consultation reflect the communities that most often request services from MOSAIC and, based on MOSAIC’s experience, are in most need of affordable, accessible community space.

The original project proposal was submitted in April 2002. In the time between writing the proposal and obtaining approval, MOSAIC reevaluated the situation of various communities. Two recently arrived communities were identified that were in great need of space but were not reflected in the project proposal list. A decision was made to replace two
communities that are more established in the Lower Mainland with the two newer groups.

The communities that have been targeted for consultation in this study are:

1) African Francophone 7) Latin American
2) Arabic 8) Polish
3) Burmese 9) Russian
4) Farsi-speaking 10) Somali
5) Korean 11) Turkish
6) Kurdish 12) Vietnamese

The accelerated timeline required for the study did not allow for in-depth investigation, research, and consultation of each community. To obtain as much diversity as possible, the consultants selected a set of community groups that reflect a variety of functions and activities—parenting support groups, political organizations, groups providing service to a given ethnocultural community, artists’ groups, community schools—as well as a variety of organizational models ranging from formal organizations to informal groups. In addition to the ethno-specific groups, a multicultural group of artists was also targeted, as it includes representatives from some of the targeted groups, uses the MOSAIC Community Room, and widens the range of activities to be investigated.

Each consultation included:

An interview with the appropriate MOSAIC bilingual counsellor to obtain a general overview of each community and to identify possible groups to consult.

Interviews with key contact persons such as community leaders, group coordinators, and group facilitators to expand on overall community information and to discuss space-related issues.

Focus group sessions with community organizations to discuss experiences in using different venues, as well as space needs and aspirations.

The consultations were loosely based on a questionnaire designed for this purpose. During the discussions, however, the consultants decided to adopt a flexible format to allow a free flow of ideas.

By selecting groups that represent a wide range of activities, the consultants have been able to obtain much diversity in responses.
1.3 Report Structure

The body of this report has been organized into four distinct parts. Chapters 2 and 3 reflect the two components of the study, while Chapters 4 and 5 provide the analysis, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings from the first two parts. The following chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter 2: Community Facilities Inventory

Chapter 2 provides basic information about the methodology used in compiling the Community Facilities Inventory as well as findings from the Inventory consultation process that are relevant to the second part of the project, Community Consultation. The Inventory will be made available to the public in the form of a written document—submitted as a stand-alone document with this report—and a Web site that will be prepared by MOSAIC from the Inventory database.

Chapter 3: Community Consultation

Chapter 3 presents the summarized findings from the various community consultation sessions. Findings are based primarily on direct consultations (interviews and focus group sessions) conducted for each of the communities and groups listed in Section 1.2.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Findings

Chapter 4 identifies and analyzes findings from the Inventory and Community Consultations. It also presents an analysis of community space needs and identifies a possible operational model.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter includes conclusions about the need for community facilities and the implications for various communities, and presents recommendations for further action by MOSAIC and others.
2 COMMUNITY FACILITIES INVENTORY

2.1 PURPOSE OF INVENTORY

In order to determine why it is difficult for ethnocultural minority community groups to obtain accessible, affordable, and appropriate space, it was necessary to first investigate what kinds of facilities are in fact available for community use. To that end, a survey of a wide range of facilities was conducted, focusing on those facilities that were most likely to include available and accessible spaces. The survey results have been compiled in the Community Facilities Inventory, submitted as a stand-alone document with this report.

In addition, This Chapter includes results from the survey that are relevant to the analysis of findings discussed in Chapter 4.

The Inventory is intended primarily to provide insight into the possible reasons for the difficulties perceived by many ethnocultural minority communities in attempting to obtain space. It is not intended as an exhaustive listing of all available facilities in Vancouver and Burnaby.

Nonetheless, it is expected that the Inventory will serve an additional role as an initial resource for MOSAIC and others to help groups find appropriate facilities. The Inventory provides:

- An overview of the range of facilities available (community centres, community halls, ethnocultural community organizations offering space, churches, neighbourhood houses, family places, etc.) in Vancouver and Burnaby.

- Detailed information about the facilities that are most commonly used by various communities.

- Detailed information about a number of lesser-known facilities that may be appropriate for many groups.

- Information about procedures for procuring space, conditions for use, and other information that may be useful to those attempting to find an appropriate venue.

In addition to providing important information that will allow MOSAIC and others to make more informed decisions about ways it can help groups obtain affordable and accessible space, this information will help community groups themselves by:
Providing MOSAIC with a tool to help direct groups in need of space to appropriate venues;
Providing groups with a useful tool to aid their own searches and increase their chances of finding adequate space;
Providing basic information about additional facilities, thus increasing user awareness of the number of potential venues available.

In its current form the Inventory provides the groundwork for a wider-reaching inventory of community facilities. The Inventory has been created as a database in Microsoft Access 2000 to allow it to be updated and expanded as necessary.

The Inventory is presented in two formats:

**INVENTORY OF COMMUNITY MEETING SPACES**

This document includes the most important and relevant information about the various facilities, including size and range of spaces available, cost, conditions for use, equipment available, etc. It is intended for public use and will be made available at the MOSAIC reception desk and by MOSAIC staff.

**COMMUNITY MEETING SPACES INTERNAL REPORT**

This document includes the same information as the Community Facilities Inventory, as well as information that various venues provided on condition that it not be made public. For example, the availability of free or reduced-rate spaces was information many institutions did not want publicized for fear of becoming overwhelmed by requests for space.

In addition, the Inventory will be submitted to MOSAIC as an Access 2000 file that MOSAIC will be able to incorporate into its Web site. Hyperlinks to the individual facilities can be created when possible, as well as hyperlinks to the Department of Canadian Heritage, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Board of Parks & Recreation.

### 2.2 FINDINGS FROM INVENTORY

At first glance there appears to be an ample supply of community meeting facilities in the two municipalities consulted. The venues identified provide a range of spaces of varied capacities that can support many different
activities, may have access to additional equipment, and may be available at various times. However, the study detected a number of issues that hinder the ability of many ethnocultural communities to ensure an appropriate space for their activities. Some of the issues encountered include:

2.2.1 **Cost**

Of the many venues identified, very few offer their facilities free of charge. Most neighbourhood houses and community centres offer reduced fees for non-profit societies; however, even the reduced rates may be beyond the budgets of many ethnocultural organizations.

2.2.2 **Overload**

From the information collected, it appears that community venues, particularly those offering spaces for free or at reduced rates, generally receive more requests for space than they are able to accommodate. As a result, institutions that offer free space often felt uncomfortable allowing this information to be included in the inventory. They did not object to being named, but specifically requested that the information not include the fact that they may offer free space, as they are already fully booked.

From the community consultation process (presented in Chapter 3), it seems that while some venues do offer free space in special cases, they did not disclose this information to the consultants, perhaps due to the same concern regarding overload.

The reported overload appears to indicate a need for spaces—particularly free-of-charge spaces—that exceeds the current capacity of existing venues.

2.2.3 **Internal Programs**

In most of the facilities identified, priority is given to internally generated programs and activities. While this is a perfectly legitimate policy, it also means that the actual availability of spaces for groups not directly related to any particular venue is significantly less than what the inventory list may indicate. Because internal programs and activities vary from term to term and may use any of the available spaces in a facility, it may be virtually impossible for facility space rental coordinators to provide precise information about exactly which spaces are available when.
2.2.4 **COMPLEXITY OF RULES AND POLICIES**

When asked if they provide space free of charge, rental coordinators described a great variety of selection criteria and application procedures. Free spaces may be granted, for example, to charitable organizations, organizations with registered non-profit status, groups willing to enter into a formal partnership with the institution, groups whose members live in a particular area, women only, or activities that meet particular kinds of requirements (such as being health-related). The procedures required to make a request for space may include submitting a letter or a written application, or making a presentation to state the group’s case. Approval may be granted by a manager or may require Board approval. For groups with limited English skills, this complexity of policies and procedures may pose a real barrier to gaining access to the spaces they may need.

2.2.5 **LACK OF INFORMATION**

There are a few facilities (such as the Avalon Women’s Centre and the Downtown East Side Women’s Centre) that offer free space and welcomed the opportunity to publicize this information, as they would gladly accept new users. They believe that lack of information about the resources they offer may be a factor that has limited their use by ethnocultural groups. Other factors, such as location (too far from potential users’ place of residence), may also be involved.

2.2.6 **USE BY ETHNOCULTURAL GROUPS**

It was very difficult to obtain specific information concerning the frequency of use by ethnocultural groups. Rental coordinators chose to give only very general responses (“it is used very much,” “we don’t ask that question,” “we welcome them”) rather than provide actual figures, often explaining that it would take too long to search their records for the information. Some were more explicit in suggesting that language barriers may limit accessibility to a specific venue.
3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Representatives from the ethnocultural minority communities listed in Section 1.2 were consulted.

The interview process generally began with the bilingual counsellors at MOSAIC (or, for those communities for which MOSAIC does not have a bilingual counsellor, with a representative of an umbrella organization for the given community). The counsellors provided an overview of the history and current situation of their community and directed the consultants to groups and/or individuals to contact for targeted interviews and focus group sessions. Depending on the information provided by each counsellor, further interviews were conducted with existing groups or with individuals strongly involved in the community. In some cases it was found that a particular community was already reasonably self-sufficient and that no further interviews were required within that community.

At least one interview was conducted for each of the targeted communities. The interviews provided a good overview of each community in the Lower Mainland and Canada.

The findings presented here are based primarily on information gathered at the interviews and focus group sessions. Therefore, they represent the various groups’ perceptions of their own communities rather than empirical information based on statistical sources.

A schedule of meetings conducted and the questionnaire used to guide the consultation sessions are included in Appendices 1 and 2. Complete summaries of the various interviews and focus group sessions are available upon request.
3.2 **Community Profiles**

1) **African Francophone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Throughout Lower Mainland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 60,000 total Francophones (African and non-African)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Varies by community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>25% University; 25% Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Numerous. Francophone Africans in Lower Mainland have four main regions of origin:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) Directly from original African Francophone nation (numerous countries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Via Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Via Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Via Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>The groups are very diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not much interaction among groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various, depending on country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wide variety of linguistic, religious, political, social, economic profiles among countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Congolese:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Burnaby, Vancouver, New Westminster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 500 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Mostly via Quebec and Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Political, economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic status:</td>
<td>90% of community on welfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two interviews were conducted: one with a MOSAIC bilingual counsellor and one with representatives of a recently formed African immigrant service organization, the Centre d’Intégration pour Immigrants Africains. The latter also provided information about the Congolese community, the largest African Francophone community in the Lower Mainland.

There is great diversity in the African Francophone community, which includes people from many countries. While French is the common language of the community, the linguistic and cultural diversity of many African nations is also reflected in the community.
2) Arab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Surrey, New Westminster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 7,000–7,500 families (28,000–30,000 people) in B. C., most in Lower Mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rough estimate: no statistical information available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Varies depending on country of origin: most arrived following Gulf War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic situation:</td>
<td>Still precarious for most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Generally high, but Canadian accreditation has been difficult for many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Largest groups from Iraq, Algeria, Morocco, Gulf nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Approx. half are refugees following Gulf War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very few Arabs here before</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about the Arab community was obtained from a journalist suggested by MOSAIC. He is also a member-at-large of the Canadian Arab Justice Committee (ADALA), an advocacy group for human rights, defense of Arab issues, and public education.

The Arab community is relatively new to the Lower Mainland. It was very small prior to the Gulf war and has grown in waves of immigration since. The largest groups are from Iraq and North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Gulf nations). Approximately half are refugees accepted as such by Canada and the United Nations.

The financial situation for many within the Arab community is precarious. In spite of a generally high level of education within the community, it has been difficult for professionals to find employment. Some reasons cited include language barriers, the difficulty in obtaining Canadian accreditation for their credentials, and cultural barriers: most have not been exposed to Western societies, and many are from remote rural villages.

While ADALA deals with political issues, the Arab Community Association organizes social events and celebrations.
3) **Burmese**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>A few thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Mainly since 1986 uprising in Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Most are refugees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information about the Burmese community was obtained from a member of the Vancouver Burma Round Table, an advocacy collective dealing with issues of human rights in Burma. The group organizes and presents forums, demonstrations, and other related activities.

The Vancouver Burma Round Table, an advocacy group for human rights in Burma, is an umbrella organization with representation from student groups, trade union-related groups, health-related organizations, and Burmese community groups. Members include both native Burmese and non-Burmese who are interested in working for human rights in Burma.

4) **Farsi-Speaking**

| Predominant Location: | Afghan: Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey, Coquitlam  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persian: North Shore, Coquitlam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Size of community in Lower Mainland: | Afghan: Approx. 5,000 (rough estimate)  
|                       | Persian: Approx. 20,000 |
| Time in Canada: | Immigration from Afghanistan increased significantly in the mid-1990s  
|                       | Immigration from Iran increased following wars |
| Provenance: | Afghan: Mostly through Pakistan, some via Calgary and Montreal  
|                       | Persian: 90% from Iran |
| Reasons for immigrating: | Afghan: Mostly refugees  
|                       | Persian: Approx. 30% refugees, 30% landed immigrants, remainder students and others |

The Afghan women’s group selected for a focus group session meets weekly at MOSAIC’s Community Room. The group has been using the Community Room since it opened. It was selected for this study because of its long-standing experience with the Community Room as well as the marginalized status of its members. The MOSAIC Family Worker who facilitates the women’s group also provided information about the Persian community.
There are two distinct groups within the Farsi-speaking community: Afghan and Persian.

Afghan

Most of the Afghan community in the Lower Mainland arrived as refugees primarily through Pakistan, some after spending some time in Calgary or Montreal. They were sponsored while in Pakistan by families and churches; Ishmaeli groups were the main agents in sponsorship. There is a high proportion of large families (families often have six to eight children). There is a mix of people from both urban and rural communities, resulting in regional differences within the Afghan community itself. In addition, there are linguistic differences among the community, reflecting the linguistic diversity of Afghanistan. There are two official languages in Afghanistan: Dari (Farsi) is spoken by approximately 50 per cent of the population, Pashto (related to Dari) by about 35 per cent, with the remaining population speaking other tribal languages. Many are bilingual.

Persian

The vast majority of the Persian community in the Lower Mainland (approximately 90 per cent) arrived directly from Iran. The community is comprised of roughly equal proportions of landed immigrants (mostly independent professionals), refugees, and others (such as students). About 90 per cent of the community has advanced education. The community lives mostly in North and West Vancouver and in Coquitlam.

5) Korean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Surrey, North Burnaby, Tri-cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>N/A (large)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Largest immigration followed Korean War – Steady immigration since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Level:</td>
<td>Generally well-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three interviews were conducted in the Korean community. MOSAIC’s Korean bilingual counsellor provided an overview of the community and recommended possible contacts. The Korean Society of British Columbia provided additional insight into operational Korean language and culture schools. One of the schools was contacted to learn about its experiences setting up and operating a successful language and culture program for the community’s children and youth.

6) Kurdish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Vancouver, South Burnaby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 1,500 families in Lower Mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Began to arrive in Vancouver in 1993–94, after the Gulf War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Mostly from Iraq, some from other Kurdish areas (Turkey, Syria, Iran)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many spent months or years fleeing or hiding in mountain regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combination of very urban and very rural backgrounds, partly depending on region of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic situation:</td>
<td>Most on welfare or have occasional employment in farms or domestic work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Most are refugees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group interviewed is one of two CAPC (Community Action Program for Children, a parenting education and support group for targeted ethnocultural minorities) groups led by MOSAIC family workers that were selected for focus group sessions. The marginalized status of the Kurdish community, the relatively recent arrival of the Kurdish community to the Lower Mainland, and the level of isolation faced by many of the women in the group were reasons for selection.

Kurdish immigration began during the Iraq war. Most Kurds arrived as refugees. The community is not yet well established in the Lower Mainland. It faces a number of issues including family dislocation, cultural differences, and past trauma, which create strong barriers to their integration. Most Kurds live on welfare or obtain occasional employment in farms or doing domestic work.
7) **Latin American**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Throughout Lower Mainland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Varies, depending on country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Throughout Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Various, depending on country of origin; wide variety of political, social, and economic profiles among countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Latin American Community Council, an umbrella organization for those who work with the Latin American community, was selected for interview based on the group’s contact with various Latin American communities in need. Interviews were conducted with the Council itself, with the Board, and with the chairperson.

The Latin American community is very diverse and includes people from many countries and cultures. The predominant language is Spanish, but there are other languages as well, including Portuguese, French, and aboriginal languages.

8) **Polish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Surrey, Tri-Cities (younger generation); Vancouver, Burnaby (older generation); Fraser &amp; Kingsway (Vancouver): traditionally Polish neighbourhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 37,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Time in Canada: | Three major waves of immigration: 
  1) Early 20th Century 
  2) After WWII (1950s, ’60s) 
  3) After Solidarity movement (1980s) |
| Level of education: | First wave: mainly rural, farmers, labourers 
  Second, third waves: varied; many professionals |
| Reasons for immigrating: | More recent immigrants: economic, political reasons 
  Many professionals |

The MOSAIC bilingual counsellor for the Polish community was interviewed to obtain an overview of the community in the Lower Mainland. She informed the consultants that the Polish community is
relatively self-sufficient, and that existing Polish organizations adequately serve the community.

9) RUSSIAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Throughout Lower Mainland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Three major waves of immigration:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) Early 20th Century: after Russian Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Early 1950s, from China: expelled by Mao Tse Tung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Second wave from China (many born in China to Russian parents, raised in insular Russian community in China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Otherwise directly from Russia/USSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Earlier immigrants: political reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some immigrated to find work as labourers, farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More recent immigrants: economic, political reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many professionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mosaic bilingual counsellor for the Russian community was interviewed to obtain an overview of the community in the Lower Mainland. She informed the consultants that the Russian community is quite self-sufficient, and that existing Russian organizations adequately serve the community.

10) SOMALI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 5,000 in Lower Mainland (Somali Association statistic two to three years ago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very large families (six to eight children per family is not uncommon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Immigration began in 1991 during civil war in Somalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Varies; many professionals without Canadian accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance:</td>
<td>Somalia, many through Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Refugees from war</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Somali bilingual counsellor at Mosaic was interviewed to obtain an overview of the community. The group selected for a focus group session
is one of two CAPC (Community Action Program for Children, a parenting education and support group for targeted ethnocultural minorities) groups led by MOSAIC family workers that were targeted for this study.

Somali immigration to Canada began in 1991 when Somalia was ravaged by civil war. Many of those in the Lower Mainland spent time in Ontario before moving west. The community is very diverse. It includes a number of professionals who cannot find employment due to language problems and lack of Canadian accreditation. There are many single parents who lost family during the war or who did not succeed in immigrating together as a whole family.

Traditional family structure in the Somali community is extended and patriarchal, with strict division of male and female roles. Under Islamic law, men can marry up to four wives in order to have as many children as possible. Clan lineage remains the basic unit of Somali society. As a result, women can be very isolated at home. This is one of the reasons for including this group in this study.

Somalia is a diverse country with a variety of cultural and tribal groups. Rivalries among different tribes are sometimes carried over to life in Canada. However, it appears that the community has to some degree been able to bridge these differences.

11) TURKISH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Many in Richmond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Also throughout Lower Mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 1,800 Ethnic Turks; other ethnic groups from Turkey include Jewish, Armenian, Greek, and others (figures not available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turkish Society database counts 230 entries, representing approximately 500 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Varies: from long-term to recent immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education:</td>
<td>Generally well-educated, professional community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Vary: economic, education, quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally reasons of personal choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The president of the Turkish Society was interviewed to obtain an overview of the Turkish community in the Lower Mainland.
**12) VIETNAMESE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predominant Location:</th>
<th>Throughout Lower Mainland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of community in Lower Mainland:</td>
<td>Approx. 30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in Canada:</td>
<td>Most arrived in 1970s and '80s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for immigrating:</td>
<td>Most are refugees from the Vietnam War</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Vietnamese bilingual counsellor at MOSAIC was interviewed to obtain an overview of the community. VietNet, a network of people providing services to the Vietnamese community, was also targeted for a focus group session.

**3.3 EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY SPACES**

Each of the groups and individuals interviewed had unique experiences with space. The main findings for each community and focus group are presented here.

1) **AFRICAN FRANCOPHONE**

The community is very diverse. Some activities are held at Bonsor Community Centre. Others go to drop-in events at the Multicultural Services Society.

The Centre d’Intégration pour Immigrants Africains has recently begun to operate out of a small downtown office. It provides support and education services to any immigrant or refugee from Africa, not only to Francophone Africans. The Centre’s recent creation makes it a good model for the requirements of new communities and new organizations.

The Centre d’Intégration often tries to find spaces for numerous groups. It has found that for a variety of reasons it is difficult to secure space. The Centre d’Intégration has had great difficulty in obtaining funding, which makes most spaces of adequate size unaffordable. In addition, the Centre representatives report having experienced discrimination at many levels, including at organizations that provide services to immigrant communities. They feel under-represented in such organizations, and feel strongly that the best way to reach African communities is to have a dedicated “space of
our own” where “there is something that says ‘African,’ that shows our presence, gives us a sense of identity,” where “we can be seen.”

The idea of sharing facilities with other groups is cautiously acceptable. The primary concern in such an arrangement is the fear of being overshadowed by larger, more powerful organizations. (“We need a Centre so that people can find us, not space where other, stronger groups can swallow us.”)

As a primary representative of a large and diverse community representing many cultures and linguistic groups, the Centre d’Intégration believes that having a space that is recognizable to members of the African community will provide a much needed resource. In particular, a dedicated community venue would provide the opportunity to share experiences with others, to provide peer support, and to “talk about things that happen to African people so that we can develop ways to deal with them.”

2) Arab

The Arab community is still in the process of becoming organized. The few organizations that do exist generally operate in an informal fashion: meetings are held at members’ homes and files are kept by members at their homes. Events are financed through donations from the community or by charging admission to larger events.

The main problem for organizations is lack of permanent office space. A small office to keep files and to conduct basic business (telephone, Internet, fax machine, records storage, etc.) would be adequate for most. Commercial office rents are not affordable to these organizations.

A permanent address would greatly improve an organization’s ability to do advocacy work and to network with other organizations: not only would it have a permanent telephone and fax number, community members and others would also be able to find the organization more easily. In addition, a permanent space would allow for better continuity in the administration of each group, as all the group’s records would remain in one location. (At present, there is a risk of losing continuity or of losing material when a person leaves an organization.)

The Canadian Arab Justice Committee (ADALA), a human rights organization, has occasionally used the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House. However, because it is a political group, free meeting space is not generally available. ADALA’s small budget does not allow ongoing rental of the Mount Pleasant space.
The ADALA member interviewed expressed great support for the idea that organizations must contribute somehow to otherwise free spaces as a way to ensure a group’s accountability when using the space. Ways of contributing would include doing volunteer work, paying a marginal fee for use of a space, and other types of contribution.

3) Burmese

The Vancouver Burma Round Table uses the MOSAIC Community Room for special events such as presentations and workshops. The group feels very grateful for having access to a space free of charge, as their limited budget would not allow them to function otherwise.

Monthly VBRT meetings are held at the Unitarian Church at Oak Street and 49th Avenue in Vancouver, a space the group feels is adequate for its needs. The community room of an apartment building has also been used for meetings, but has not been adequate.

The main criterion for a meeting space for this group is that it be available consistently and reliably: members of the VBRT come from a variety of areas and fields, and the best way to ensure regular participation is to be able to establish an ongoing schedule for group meetings.

The group does not collect fees from its members and has an extremely limited budget. It cannot afford to rent meeting or office space. A small office with a desk, Internet access, telephone, fax, and records storage would help the group organize and administer its affairs.

4) Farsi-speaking

The Afghan women’s group interviewed has always used MOSAIC’s Community Room. Occasionally it uses other facilities as well, for activities that are not possible in the Community Room (e.g. cooking sessions).

They find the space is not ideal for a variety of reasons:

- When they have left things locked in their assigned cabinet, material has been stolen.
- They cannot put up items that remind them of their homeland for fear of theft.
- Other users do not always leave the room clean and tidy.
There are many items left in the room that do not belong there: i.e. it tends to be used as temporary storage (for high chairs, appliances, etc.).

There is no child-minding facility.

Nonetheless, the group would rather continue to use the Community Room than move from place to place. Group members would be happier with the room if maintenance and cleanliness issues were addressed.

For most of the group, an important condition for a space is that it be easy to reach and in a clearly identifiable and stable location, as many can find it challenging to find their way through Vancouver streets. The Community Room meets these criteria.

There are activities the group would like to be able to do if the space were better equipped, such as sewing, cooking, and exercise. The group would also be happier with the space if it had more natural light. However, the group has never had problems with scheduling, being bumped for other users, or other such problems with use of the Community Room. After years of meeting at the same location, it has become a recognizable venue to women in the Afghan community.

There are three Iranian Seniors’ groups, with a total of approximately 50 members. The groups meet at the Seniors’ Centre at 411 Seymour Street in Vancouver.

5) KOREAN

The Korean community is quite reserved and inward looking. It is uncommon for community members to go outside the community to look for space for regular activities. Rather, Korean churches and temples are the centre of social activities for a large part of the Korean community.

Koreans who are not religious often attend services simply for social contact. None of the community representatives interviewed could identify any non-religious groups that had difficulty finding space; all assumed that such groups would function in churches or temples.

The Korean community is well established in the Lower Mainland and provides support to new arrivals. Many in the community are financially well off. It is not unusual for groups to hold events at venues not generally considered affordable to other ethnocultural minorities.
Members of the community who are not financially well off generally participate in church events or hold events at private homes. In addition, some establishments that are Korean-owned offer space for rent to the Korean community. For example, Sharon’s Credit Union on Kingsway has a meeting room used by various community groups, and a Korean dance group rehearses in a hall in the Korean-owned Uncle Willy’s Restaurant in Coquitlam.

There are two Korean language schools in the Lower Mainland. The 30-year-old Korean Language Centre teaches Korean to children. The Korean Christian Language School teaches language, culture, and history within a Christian framework. It also offers recreational activities such as soccer, singing, tae kwon do, and dancing. It began operating in 2001.

Both schools rent space from local high schools (the first from Vancouver Technical Secondary, the second from Cariboo Hill Secondary). The Christian School pays $16,000 per year in rent for 15 classrooms on Saturdays. In addition, it pays its teachers $50,000 per year (total for all teachers). The school’s own Board raises approximately $10,000, and students pay tuition of $200 to attend classes for one academic year.

One of the organizers of the school was involved in operating a similar school in Toronto that received funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage. Government funding has not been sought for the Vancouver-based school.

There appears to be support for a secular school that provides culture and language programs for children and teens, particularly if it includes after-school programs.

6) KURDISH

The Kurdish parenting group meets weekly at MOSAIC’s Language Centre at Commercial Drive and 7th Avenue. While some members are happy with the space, there is uncertainty about the future of the group. It was forced to move from its original meeting space at Collingwood Neighbourhood House three years ago as it no longer had the budget to pay the required rent. The group moved to Evergreen Health Centre where a partnership was established through MOSAIC. In December 2002 the group was informed that the space would not be available as of January 2003 in spite of a contract that had been signed three months earlier. Through a MOSAIC worker the group found the current location, which is available only until August or September of this year when new Language Centre programs begin.
For many of the women in the group, this is the only time in the week they can meet others from their homeland. They share experiences, learn from each other and from a variety of outside resources such as public health nurses, parenting courses, first aid, language, etc. The group has been moved so many times it has lost members (some can no longer afford the public transit fare as they are required to cross transit zones; others have to pick up their children from school and cannot attend at the scheduled time). In addition, the current location makes parking difficult for those who drive—the two-hour street-parking limit means there is no room for extended activities or meetings.

Members were passionate and adamant in expressing their need for this weekly group. Messages repeated throughout the session included: “Please look after us, we don’t want to lose this group,” “We have lost people because this location is too far for them,” and “We fear that the group may die if no space is found after this one.”

One of the group members is also actively involved in the Kurdish Advisory Committee, a recently formed group focusing on Kurdish women’s issues, particularly those faced by mothers adjusting to their new environment in Canada. It is not a political group. Members sometimes meet at each other’s homes, but mostly organize through telephone contact.

The group so far consists of about a dozen people. They have tried unsuccessfully to find an affordable and permanent meeting space.

7) Latin American

The Latin American Community Council previously held lunchtime meetings at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. The group had to move when the meeting space was no longer available. It now meets regularly in one of MOSAIC’s two classrooms where meetings take place from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

In recent years, LACC has had diminished attendance. There are about 70 members, 30 to 40 of whom would regularly attend meetings in the past. Currently attendance is much lower. The reasons are unclear: although the Board has sent out questionnaires in an attempt to shed some light on the issue, it has had very little response.

For many members, participation in LACC is not a required part of their regular employment (as it is for other groups such as Viet Net). As a result, many have difficulty obtaining permission to leave work early to attend the afternoon meetings. The classrooms are large enough for many of the
group’s current needs but would be small if meeting attendance increased to previous levels.

The LACC Board meets monthly at Britannia Community Centre, in a meeting space obtained through a LACC member who works there.

The group used MOSAIC’s Community Room once for an immigration workshop. The room was full with only 14 people. The table and projector took up much of the space, leaving little room for chairs. The LACC chairperson suggested the space might function better as an office.

A solution suggested for the office and meeting space problems shared by many groups is to set up a cooperative of various organizations in a venue such as a heritage house (possibly in a more commercial area) where bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, etc. could be easily converted to the basic needs of many small, start-up organizations. For such an arrangement to work, it is essential that participants have a sense of ownership of the place. “We want to be ‘part of,’ feel that we belong, have a place to set our roots.” One way to achieve a sense of ownership is through contribution to the overall operation of the community facility—for example, through volunteer work.

8) **Multicultural Artists**

The ATMAsphere Art Society, a recently formed non-profit society composed of a collective of artists from a range of cultures (including members from some of the targeted groups) meets regularly in the MOSAIC Community Room. The group aims to bridge cultural gaps among various ethnic and cultural groups.

The group currently has approximately 20 members, seven to 10 of whom regularly attend meetings. Attendance is open to anyone who wants to improvise art. The group organizes a yearly event, ANU, where group members perform music, dance, theatre, visual arts, and other forms of artistic expression. In addition, the group helps individual members stage their own performances throughout the year.

The main purpose of the meetings is to coordinate and organize the group’s activities and provide support to members in their particular needs such as finding rehearsal space, developing funding strategies, etc. The group has set up a Web site administered by one of its members. The group is satisfied with the Community Room for this purpose.
Group members regularly require affordable rehearsal space where they “can make noise”: dance, make music, etc. Spaces such as classrooms, music rooms, gymnasiums, etc. are ideal. Dancers generally require smooth wooden floors that are not on a concrete base. Mirrored walls are also desirable. Because of the sound levels usually generated, sound mitigation is an issue in many spaces. Adequate spaces are usually either booked too far in advance or too expensive. The artists often meet in each other’s homes for rehearsals.

A rehearsal space in the Commercial Drive area would be ideal.

The group does not currently require a permanent office space, but would find access to a common area (for example, to sort mail, for Internet access) beneficial. It would consider exchanging time and service for use of space.

9) Polish

The community has been established in the Lower Mainland since the early 20th Century. People arriving in the first and second waves of immigration established facilities to serve the community’s needs. The two main facilities are the Polish Friendship Association (Zgoda) built before WWII, and the Polish Veterans’ Hall, built after WWII. There are also Catholic churches that provide services to the Polish Catholic community. The St. Kasimir Parish is the main church in Vancouver for the Polish community.

Originally, Zgoda and the Veterans’ Hall represented very different parts of the community. Zgoda was considered more left wing and the Veterans’ Organization more right wing. As the number of original members of the two organizations has diminished, the two organizations have been taken over by the younger generation of immigrants who arrived in the 1980s and ‘90s. As a result, the original political divisions have become blurred and there is no longer political hostility between the two organizations.

New arrivals to Vancouver are generally well served by the two organizations. Each organization hosts a number of events and activities for the Polish community. For example, a regular Saturday discotheque is held at Zgoda, and a traditional Polish dance group (Polonez) uses the space regularly for rehearsals.

One of the Polish churches, in Surrey, hosts a Polish-speaking Alcoholics Anonymous group. The MOSAIC counsellor interviewed felt that a similar group in Vancouver would likely have significant attendance. In addition, she felt there is a need for programs directed at the Polish community that address issues such as family violence and anger management.
Overall, the spatial needs of the Polish community seem to be adequately met by the existing organizations.

10) Russian

There are two main organizations that serve the Russian community: the Russian Centre and the Russian Hall. In addition, there is a language school in Richmond for recent immigrants, and the Holy Resurrection Church (Orthodox) in Vancouver offers a number of programs including Sunday school, Russian language and culture programs, and children’s activities.

The Russian Hall and Russian Centre were established by the first two waves of Russian immigrants. As children grew up and integrated into Canadian society, the two facilities were required less and less by the Russian community. They began to make their spaces available to the outside community as a way of staying viable. With the recent wave of immigration, there has been increased demand for programs for the Russian community, and the new arrivals have reactivated Russian-centred activities. Currently, the Russian Centre does not rent space to outside groups as it is now booked with programs for the Russian community.

Each of the two venues has long-standing relationships with a number of Russian groups. For example, the Balalaika Orchestra has rehearsed at the Russian Centre for many years.

The MOSAIC Russian bilingual counsellor interviewed felt that the Russian community’s need for space is adequately met by the existing facilities.

11) Somali

The Somali community is still struggling to organize. There were previously five organizations representing various sectors of the Somali community. To improve their possibilities of obtaining funding, the five have merged to become the Somali Services Society.

The biggest community event is Eid, a major celebration at the end of Ramadan. While technically a religious celebration, it is seen by the community more as a cultural event where families can socialize and children can learn about their heritage. Those interviewed likened Eid to Christmas as it is generally celebrated here in terms of religious connotation.
The community has had mixed success in finding adequate space for Eid celebrations. In 1995, funding from MOSAIC and PIRS allowed the community to rent the Chinese Cultural Centre. Since then, the Croatian Centre has been used when possible. However, this year the Croatian Centre did not offer a discount in rent as it defined the event as “religious” rather than “cultural.” No other affordable space was found for the event, which had to be cancelled.

There is strong competition for spaces for Eid celebrations among Muslim communities (Indian, Arab, etc.), making it difficult to find adequate space.

The community has also celebrated with other larger Muslim communities. While grateful to be included and have an opportunity to celebrate, this is not an ideal option for the Somali community. As a very small part of the Lower Mainland Muslim community, it has no real possibility of celebrating according to Somali traditions in such events. The dominant cultures at the larger events are very different from Somali culture and the community feels somewhat out of place at such events.

The CAPC parenting support group has been at its current location (Evergreen Community Health Centre) for over four years. The space was negotiated through MOSAIC and the group feels reasonably secure in the space. The weekday meetings are preferable as Community Health nurses are not available on Saturdays (the group has regular sessions with a community nurse). However, there are women who are unable to attend at the regular scheduled time.

There is space for children, the Centre is close to the Skytrain, and there is adequate parking. When the group needs additional amenities, such as the use of a community kitchen for cooking sessions, it has used other facilities (Little Mountain Neighbourhood House and a community kitchen in Richmond). Regular access to a communal cooking space would be beneficial to the group.

The group would also like an appropriate space to exercise. Muslim modesty rules require that women’s bodies not be visible from outside: in order to exercise comfortably, they must be able to shade windows and lock doors. Their current space is adequate for basic activities such as mat exercises and calisthenics, but not for other activities. For example, facilities that meet the modesty requirements and where women can swim or use gymnasium space are not currently available.
The group expressed a need for activities for children and teens, particularly programs emphasizing language and culture. Also, sports activities would greatly benefit the community’s youth.

The group expressed concern for the community’s youth. They would like to find key role models, both within and outside the Somali community, to work with children and teens. They suggested that such a mentoring or education program could be combined with other cultural groups as a way of helping youth in their struggles to adjust to Canadian life.

12) TURKISH

The Turkish Canadian Society was established in 1963 to promote Turkish culture and friendship between Turks and Canadians. Over the years its mandate has changed. The Society now serves the Lower Mainland’s Turkish community. It organizes a variety of events, including national days, religious holidays, picnics, film nights, and short trips outside of Vancouver.

Film nights are regularly held at the Polish Community Centre ballroom. DVDs from Turkey are presented to audiences of up to 150 people. The Polish Community Centre is also used for other events such as Children’s Day in April.

The Society used to organize events at the Trout Lake Community Centre. There was a long-standing drop-in centre on Sundays for the Turkish community for which the Community Centre charged $20. The drop-in centre was discontinued for lack of interest. Movie nights had also been regularly held at Trout Lake for a number of years. This year the event moved to the Polish Centre after Trout Lake reassigned the room to a different group.

Republic Day (late October) is usually a catered event at a hotel.

The Society has joined multicultural activities organized by others. For example, in July it participates in the Richmond Rotary Sunrise Club celebrations.

The Society has a telephone number in Richmond where people can leave messages. It does not have a physical office space. Meetings are held in members’ homes, which has proved to be an adequate arrangement. The group would benefit from a permanent office, primarily for records storage and basic operations. Renting office space is currently beyond the reach of the Society, for is financially self-sufficient only by relying on volunteer
work from members and by avoiding office rental costs. The idea of sharing common space and amenities with other similar groups is supported, as is the idea of contributing back through volunteer work of some kind.

Other groups that use community spaces include a children’s dance group that rehearses in the community room of a member’s housing complex.

Access to community space is not really an issue for the Turkish community. Costs of events are generally financed by charging admission and through sales of wares. Enough funds are raised to subsidize religious celebrations, where no fees are charged.

13) V I E T N A M E S E

The VietNet group has about 50 members, 10 to 20 of whom regularly attend meetings. Monthly meetings are held at the Family Services Society of Vancouver, where a Vietnamese employee ensures the space is available for the organization. The group is satisfied with the space in terms of location, size, availability, and parking. The group has never been bumped from its scheduled meeting time.

The group would benefit from a permanent space to store files. Currently, filing and record keeping are the responsibility of the chairperson, while the treasurer keeps the group’s books. Documents are transferred from one chairperson or treasurer to the next at the end of a term, and are kept at the person’s home or office. This frequent moving of records increases the risk of loss of important organizational documentation.

In addition, the group would benefit from regular access to the Internet as much of the group’s work involves networking and lobbying. Members suggested the possibility of sharing computer facilities with other similar groups in a computer bank, much like computer laboratories common in universities and colleges.

The Vietnamese Family Programs coordinator at MOSAIC has a great deal of experience finding space for various community functions. In her experience, the best way to secure a space is to have the appropriate contacts. She has had experience with a variety of spaces: “School facilities are great but not accessible. Rooms are difficult to find for [people] who have limited English skills. I use schools anyway because options are so limited. In the initial sessions we must organize volunteers to orient people so they don’t get lost.”
On finding space: “First I look at my connections. I don’t waste time just looking around. I establish contact with the connection, try to negotiate a partnership.”

Mothers with young children are often participants in many groups. Child-minding facilities and access to Skytrain are both important requirements for spaces. Groups that meet regularly often need storage space for a variety of materials, including toys for children. “There are things we don’t like to be carrying back and forth . . . . We have no control over the storage issue, I have to rely on my contact to obtain some storage space for me. We know it is very difficult. If we find a space with no storage we take it anyway, it’s better than nothing.” The safety of the storage space is not always ensured.

Often children from a facility’s internal program have priority for use of the children’s area. “Cedar Cottage is the only appropriate place with a good area for children. In other places we use whatever is available.” The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre has been used for large events with many children. “The daycare was thought to be available to the group, but we were informed upon arrival that extra fees were required for use of the otherwise empty space.”

Cooking facilities are often required for various functions. Access to a kitchen is not always possible.

The Family Programs coordinator suggested that MOSAIC should provide clear guidelines outlining how to go about obtaining space. These guidelines should include such information as how to present a group’s case; how to find the appropriate person with whom to negotiate use of the space; what kinds of issues to discuss (terms of rental, requirements, expectations, etc.); whether and when to sign a contract; and how to ask for a price plan. In addition, she observed that newcomers are often not familiar with local fire safety procedures and should be educated on this issue.
4 Analysis of Findings

4.1 Common Themes

From the community profiles and descriptions of experiences with space described in the previous two chapters, it becomes clear that there is as much diversity in experiences with and requirements for space as there is among the groups and communities themselves. Nonetheless, several common themes arise that have different implications for each community.

Some of the themes listed below relate directly to space use while others provide an example of the types of issues many communities address when given the opportunity to meet with others in similar situations.

4.1.1 Cultural Identity and Sense of Ownership

Each group interviewed identified a unique set of specific space needs for their particular functions. What emerged as the common thread throughout the consultation process was that groups participate in diverse activities as a way to express, assert, maintain, and learn about their cultural identities.

Provision of an appropriate space is an essential factor in this regard, not only because it allows activities to happen. It was often expressed that it is important that the space itself reflect in some way the identity of the group, for example, by incorporating elements related to the group’s heritage or by making it possible for groups to arrange and decorate according to their own preferences.

The key issue was the need for a sense of ownership, the importance for many groups to feel that they

belong in the space,
see themselves reflected in the space, and
have some influence over what happens in the space.

4.1.2 Need for Space

Some groups fear they may not survive as a group if they cannot find space; some groups feel secure in the spaces they currently use and have no need for more; others are content with what they have but could do more if
they had access to other resources. Some need a space to meet regularly while others require a more permanent dedicated space.

Those who meet regularly may already have a space or may use each other’s homes as an intermediate meeting space until they find something more appropriate. One group meets in members’ homes and is happy with the situation while another considers it an imposition on group members.

Of those needing permanent space, some would be content with a mailing address and telephone number while others need to be able to physically work in and operate out of the space on a daily basis.

Space for larger community events can also be problematic for many communities, particularly those with limited financial resources. Adequate spaces are often unaffordable. Affordable spaces fill up quickly and commonly have waiting lists of several months.

Those groups that use each other’s homes for a variety of activities—rehearsals, meetings, support groups, etc.—generally consist of people who are relatively secure and adjusted to Canadian life. Groups that are more marginalized, on the other hand, tend to have a much greater need for access to neutral community space for a variety of reasons.

Groups that meet in community spaces benefit not only from having the opportunity to carry out their activities, but are also exposed to community services such as neighbourhood houses, community centres, etc. These offer programs and resources to the community of which group members may otherwise not be aware. This gradual process of acclimatization to the various resources available to them can result in group members becoming more comfortable and familiar with, and more knowledgeable about, the community around them and, ultimately, in greater integration and participation in the community at large.

4.1.3 FACILITY INFORMATION

Groups don’t always have the resources to conduct thorough research of possible venues. Each group relies on individuals to research potential facilities and negotiate terms of use. Often, one person in a group will be assigned this task. It is impossible for the individual to investigate more than a few venues. This can result in a group settling for a venue that is less than adequate simply because it was the only one of the venues contacted that was available or affordable. For example, when the facilitator of the Kurdish mothers’ group tried to find an alternate location for the group, time constraints resulted in the group accepting a short-term location with
fewer amenities than they previously had. The facilitator is now once again attempting to find a location for the group for September.

4.1.4 LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION ISSUES

Language barriers can make obtaining space more difficult. For instance, there may be misunderstandings about scheduled times, conditions for use, etc. at a given venue.

The renting institution may not understand the nature of the event and therefore may impose inappropriate restrictions or prohibitive prices, as was the experience of the Somali community with this year’s Eid celebration.

Many renting institutions have complex rental policies that can be daunting for those not fluent in English. Groups can easily become discouraged, feel inadequate in their abilities, and may avoid seeking out facilities simply because of the sheer complexity involved in obtaining many spaces.

4.1.5 NEGOTIATING SPACE

In order to secure an appropriate space for its needs, a group must have the ability to establish contacts and develop the appropriate negotiating skills. Members of some communities have long-standing experience in this area. For many others, the learning process can be long and frustrating. The success of a group with a limited budget in finding adequate space for its activities often depends on luck (contacting the right place at the right time), existing connections within a given venue, and the members’ negotiating skills, often developed through experience in other areas (for example, in a person’s employment experience).

4.1.6 ABILITY TO FINANCE ACTIVITIES

Different communities have vastly different abilities to finance activities. Generally, those communities that are more established or whose members tend to be more financially secure have fewer problems finding funding for various activities. Participants are usually able to pay admission to events, pay yearly fees for their children to participate in programs, contribute grant-writing skills, and donate money toward the rental of a space or the operation of an organization. Some groups may have an active Board that is successful in raising funds for a variety of functions.
Conversely, newer communities that are not yet well established or whose members are in difficult financial situations cannot easily afford what other groups might consider “nominal” costs. Some groups have applied for government funding unsuccessfully. Others have not applied at all. Some receive occasional contributions from sympathetic organizations to help fund specific events but cannot count on such support consistently. One organization interviewed raises funds for its operating budget by collecting empty soft drink cans. The same organization operates out of a downtown office that is provided by a sympathetic supporter of the organization free of charge. Without that support the organization would simply not survive.

4.1.7 MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

It is often marginalized, low-income communities that are most in need of consistently reliable and affordable meeting space. Groups where people can share experiences and learn from each other, spend time with members of their own community, speak their native language, and otherwise mitigate the isolation typical in many such groups, are an essential support for marginalized communities as they learn to adjust to their new environment in Canada. Women in particular tend to experience isolation, especially those from cultures where male and female roles are divided among strictly traditional lines that require them to stay at home. Parenting support groups such as those established by CAPC are extremely valuable to the various participating communities.

4.1.8 SUPPORT NETWORKS: ESTABLISHED COMMUNITIES

Established communities are better able to provide support to recent arrivals. Some communities have their own series of facilities or programs that can benefit recent immigrants. In addition, individual community members with long-term experience in Canada can provide support and guidance to newer arrivals.

Communities where immigrants are largely in Canada by choice (and not as refugees) also tend to have better support structures. New arrivals often have contacts already set up prior to arriving or quickly build networks once in Canada. For example, people choosing Canada for study or for work have access to existing networks through their school or place of employment.

These contacts, as well as the existing services within the ethnocultural community, can all be helpful in aiding newcomers find support groups and networks as necessary, and to obtain space for such groups to meet.
The support networks also tend to have more experience in negotiating space use as needed for various activities.

4.1.9 SUPPORT NETWORKS: RECENTLY FORMED COMMUNITIES

Communities comprised predominantly of refugees often arrive *en masse* following a situation of conflict in their country of origin, without the benefit of a pre-established support network. They do not generally have the knowledge of the Canadian system that would allow them to adjust easily to their new surroundings. In addition, many are still suffering severe trauma from experiences in their homeland. Some communities arrive after spending years fleeing and surviving by any means possible. Many arrive with very little, not having had the luxury to prepare economically or emotionally for immigrating to Canada. They often rely on government assistance until they become more established and self-sufficient. They may face discrimination at many levels: economic, ethnic, etc. In many cases, community members were highly trained professionals in their country of origin but for various reasons have been unable to gain accreditation for their profession in Canada. It is these groups that are most in need of strong support networks to help them adjust to life in Canada.

These groups are also those who find it most difficult to articulate their needs in a manner that allows them to obtain financial support from government or other funding agencies, due to the complexity of criteria and procedures required to file an application form. The possibility of having access to a space where they can meet and share their experiences with others from their community can make a tremendous difference in their ability to learn to adjust to their new situation. Access to adequate community space is essential for these kinds of interactions to take place.

4.1.10 SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Organizations that provide services to their own communities may do so in various ways. Some provide counselling and peer support while others provide training in skills to increase people’s chances of finding employment. These organizations need a permanent space that is easily identifiable by community members. Such spaces have different requirements based on a particular community’s needs: for example, some need computer laboratories to provide computer training while others need a resource centre where people can easily find information about services and resources available to the community.
More important than the specific need of each organization is the idea that in order for marginalized communities to attain a level of self-sufficiency, it is important that there be services that help community members learn the types of skills required to overcome their particular situations. Services targeted to a specific ethnocultural community allow community members to learn in a safe and recognizable environment among their peers. For example, the work culture in Canada is very different from that of many countries around the world and can be difficult for newcomers to understand. While MOSAIC and other agencies do provide culturally sensitive services, the responses received suggest that there may also be a need to facilitate a process whereby the communities themselves feel empowered to provide for their own needs and promote their own resources.

4.1.11 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Almost all of the communities consulted stressed the importance of educating their children in their traditions and culture as a way of instilling in children a sense of identity and belonging. There was a strong sense that children need to learn with others with similar backgrounds, from dedicated teachers and mentors; relying on cultural education within the family may not always be enough, particularly in small communities that may feel isolated and disconnected from their culture.

The consultants found three general levels of education programs for children and youth among the various communities:

One group interviewed has an established full-day Saturday school program that teaches language, culture, and other activities intended to foster a sense of identity and community in children. The school employs professional teachers, has an organized Board, rents space from a public school, and collects tuition from students.

Some groups have limited programs for children, including occasional children’s activities organized within the community, dance groups, Saturday or Sunday schools taught by volunteers, etc.

Some groups aspire to have programs for their children, but do not have the resources.

Cost is a big issue for most programs for children and youth (as it is for other community programs). The organized school requires a considerable budget to finance the operation of the school, including rental fees and teachers’ salaries. The school’s Board is successful in raising funds. The
tuition fees, level of organization required, and fundraising needs may be reasonable for an established community whose members have reached a certain level of financial independence. They are out of the reach of newer or more marginalized communities.

In general, it seems that established communities are more likely to have programs for children while newer groups are still struggling to be able to support such programs. The provision of space can make a difference to the latter, as rental fees for appropriate spaces for children can be restrictive.

The youth of ethnocultural minority communities face a number of issues that are beyond the scope of this study to investigate. Parents in the consultation sessions often expressed concern that their children were not adjusting well and feared they may become involved in destructive behaviour. They felt that programs targeted to the youth of their community could help mitigate this risk.

The provision of space is an essential, but not the only, element needed to address this complex issue. Other elements, such as having teachers and mentors with the appropriate skills, developing education curricula and activities, providing guidance, etc., would also need to be developed.

4.1.12 Untapped Resources

There are numerous activities in which groups feel they could engage if they had access to space. Many spoke of organizing activities for children and youth ranging from cultural education to sports. Others spoke of the importance for their communities’ seniors to be able to meet each other for support. The activities mentioned were numerous and varied: exercise, dancing, support groups, performance rehearsals, community outreach, and many others.

While numerous other factors can affect a group’s ability to organize and carry out activities, having access to affordable space is an essential requirement. Without it, the activities cannot take place.
4.2 Suitability and Availability of Spaces

There are a wide variety of facilities in Vancouver and Burnaby, from community centres to churches to privately owned spaces. However, for a variety of reasons, many groups have difficulty obtaining appropriate space for their activities at existing facilities. Barriers encountered by groups include the following:

4.2.1 Advance Booking

Affordable venues are often booked far in advance, particularly for larger community events, making it difficult to book activities in the short term. For instance, it can be next to impossible to find adequate space for fundraising events following a recent crisis in a community’s country of origin.

4.2.2 Scheduling Restrictions

Many groups meet regularly at a scheduled time every week or month. Many facilities with meeting rooms do not always have flexible schedules. Spaces are often booked by long-term users or for a facility’s own activities. Scheduling constraints can prevent group members from attending. For example, the women’s group and the two parenting groups consulted all mentioned the need to schedule meetings around their obligation to pick up children from school; the meeting facilities available to them are not always free at the best times, resulting in group members being unable to attend meetings.

4.2.3 Dependability of Spaces and Bumping

Community institutions such as community centres, neighbourhood houses, health centres, etc., often offer their own internal programs in addition to making space available for community use. The institution’s programs generally take precedence over outside programs. Occasionally this results in outside users of an institution’s spaces being bumped for the new program.

Bumping is not restricted to community institutions, but can occur at any institution. Groups may have reserved space for an activity and find at the last moment that it is not available. A group may be bumped as a result of communication problems with the institution (the person in charge of scheduling may not realize there is a scheduling conflict or the terms of use
may not be clear to the user group—a group may believe the arrangement to be long-term, while the renting institution considers it temporary).

Different institutions have different perceptions of the role of an outside group within its operations. For some, any function that is not directly organized by or otherwise linked to the institution is not given the same importance as functions that the institution creates and operates itself. For others, the outside groups are seen as an integral part of the institution’s service to the community and are given equal importance when scheduling the institution’s programs. Determining the prevalence of one perception over the other is beyond the scope of this study. What is clear from the general survey of institutions and users is that the activities of groups that use community facilities fit somewhere within an institution’s hierarchy of importance of programs, and placement within that hierarchy will differ depending on the institution.

4.2.4 PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION

Many of the institutions contacted when creating the Facilities Inventory, particularly those whose mandate is to serve the community, do whatever possible to make spaces available and accessible to groups in need. In fact, many institutions’ mandates and policies reflect the requirement for non-discriminatory, just, and equal treatment of all members of the community.

Nonetheless, when groups using reduced-rate or free spaces lose the space, they may perceive this as a form of discrimination; many belong to communities that battle ongoing discrimination and may develop a lack of trust in the facilities and organizations geared to provide service and support.

4.2.5 AFFORDABILITY

The research revealed that while there are in fact a large number of spaces available, there is a prevalent perception among communities of a general lack of space. This project did not include an empirical study of frequency of use of available spaces. The general impression, gained primarily from information provided by rental coordinators at the various facilities, is that free spaces tend to be overloaded, while more expensive spaces tend to be less utilized. While it is reasonable to expect that fees must be charged for the organization to remain viable, the costs pose an additional barrier to those who cannot afford it. It would appear that a large part of the problem could be addressed by finding a way to help groups that cannot currently afford existing spaces. Some form of subsidy to the venues
would allow a more effective use of otherwise underutilized spaces and would increase accessibility for marginalized groups.

### 4.3 Spatial Needs

Several criteria were identified as important when defining an ideal space for the various groups’ activities. The following list provides an overview of the major criteria identified.

#### 4.3.1 Location

People from communities that are new to the Lower Mainland, particularly those for whom English is a struggle, can find it difficult to orient themselves to the local street system. Generally, facilities that are located along major public transit routes (preferably close to a Skytrain station), with an address on a major, recognizable street, are preferred.

#### 4.3.2 Reliability

It is important that users be secure in the use of a space. The need to change locations or reschedule activities can and does result in the loss of participants.

#### 4.3.3 Capacity

The ethnocultural minority communities interviewed generally have a range of activities for which space is required.

- **Very large scale (approx. 250 to 1,000 people):**
  - Occasional activities (e.g. religious celebrations, celebration of national holidays)

- **Large scale (approx. 100 to 250 people):**
  - Ongoing cultural activities (e.g. film nights)
  - Occasional activities (e.g. lectures, guest speakers)

- **Medium scale (approx. 30 to 100 people):**
  - Organizational meetings (e.g. AGM-type meetings for umbrella organizations)
  - Workshops (e.g. skill building)
Small scale (approx. 5 to 30 people):
- Organizational meetings (e.g. Board meetings, planning meetings)
- Support groups (e.g. parenting groups, women’s groups)

4.3.4 AMENITIES

Many of the groups interviewed expressed a need for some type of additional amenity in the spaces used for their activities. The specific requirements for each group can be put into the following general categories:

Amenities for children:
- Child-minding facilities
- Secure storage space for toys and books

Communal activities for sharing and learning from each other:
- Communal kitchen
- Secure storage space for food, dishes, etc.
- Access to facilities for craftwork such as sewing, weaving, etc.
- Exercise space and equipment

Organizational amenities
- Secure file storage area
- Secure office/administration space
- Computer/Internet access
- Mailing address

While the detailed requirements differ for each group, they all enhance a group’s ability to express and assert its cultural identity.

4.4 MEETING THE NEEDS

There are various ways MOSAIC and other agencies can help ethnocultural communities meet their needs for space. The options range from small-scale measures, such as advocacy work and establishing partnerships with venues, to large-scale measures, such as construction of spaces that meet the needs outlined in the previous sections. The options can all be effective individually, and also would greatly complement each other if several are
implemented. They can be implemented simultaneously or in stages, where each subsequent stage takes into account the relative success of prior stages to develop the best approach to implementation. The different options generally allow for ongoing monitoring and adaptation to suit changes in demographics, accommodation of new requirements, and other issues as they arise. As such, they are relevant not only to the communities consulted for this study, but to the changing needs and realities of ethnocultural minority communities in general.

4.4.1 IMPROVED ACCESS TO EXISTING SPACES

There are numerous spaces that would be available and appropriate for many groups. For reasons stated previously, there are suitable spaces that are not used with great frequency by ethnocultural communities. There are a number of measures that can address this issue.

1) WORKSHOPS
MOSAIC and others could organize and host periodic or ongoing workshops aimed at teaching group representatives the best methods for obtaining space: finding spaces, negotiating techniques, signing agreements, networking, etc. The workshops could also be an opportunity for groups from various communities to interact and network with each other. In addition, there is an opportunity for representatives from more experienced groups to mentor newer groups.

2) GUIDELINES
MOSAIC and others could develop written guidelines in several languages to provide essential information about the process of finding space. The guidelines could complement material included in the workshops or could be a separate, stand-alone document.

3) PARTNERSHIPS
Several of the facilities contacted for the Inventory expressed interest in establishing a partnership with MOSAIC as a way to enhance accessibility to spaces by groups in need. In such partnerships, MOSAIC would vouch for a particular group, giving the facility a greater level of security when granting use of space to an unknown user and giving groups access to spaces that would otherwise be unavailable.

4) GRANTS
The facilities in question cannot usually afford to offer free space to users in need, and users in need cannot afford to pay the rates required for these spaces. To make these spaces financially accessible, some kind of financial aid would be needed. A grant program where facilities themselves are
provided with a subsidy to allow groups in need to use their spaces would help bridge this financial gap. MOSAIC and others could lobby various levels of government to establish such a grant program. As an example, the City of Vancouver currently offers a similar grant program for performance groups: the Baxter Grants for Civic Theatre Rental. Information about the Baxter Grants can be found at:

http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/oca/grants/baxter.htm

5) SPACE USE ADVOCATE
With the Inventory as a starting point, MOSAIC (or another organization, such as the City of Vancouver) could offer a finder service to groups requiring spaces. A single person whose job is to contact venues, make contacts, and generally know about the spaces available would be an invaluable resource to MOSAIC and to groups needing assistance finding space. This person would essentially broker negotiations for space use.

Other activities that a Space Use Advocate could be engaged in include:

- Ensuring that the Community Facilities Inventory is kept up to date.
- Negotiating partnerships with various facilities for use of space.
- Administering, negotiating, or otherwise being involved in a grant program.
- Writing and updating written guidelines to assist groups in finding space.
- Designing and offering workshops to groups to help them acquire the necessary skills to negotiate their own space use.
- Helping groups write letters or make presentations to potential facilities.
- Maintaining contact with rental coordinators and managers of venues across the city.
- Seeking out and making contact with new facilities.

4.4.2 IMPROVED SPACES

In many cases, the space needs outlined earlier are not always present at existing facilities. Some necessities can be met at these facilities without great capital investment. Some possible low-cost improvements include:

- Creating safe, permanent storage cabinets and lockers.
Allowing groups to use a venue for a permanent mailing address and offering basic mail service such as reserving a mail box for the group.

Providing computer and Internet access to groups (where computers and Internet access are already present in a facility).

Improvements that would require a greater capital investment include:

- Providing child-minding facilities and services.
- Providing equipment as required (where equipment does not currently exist in a particular facility).
- Providing groups with permanent office space to allow them to carry out their daily work.

4.4.3 **SPACE USE MODEL**

As this study has progressed, the framework for an operational model for spaces has gradually emerged. The model, which can be defined as a *Cooperative Suite*, is different from the multicultural centre or the community centre as commonly perceived in existing venues and organizations. The model addresses the most important aspirations expressed by the different groups in several ways:

- It recognizes communities’ need to express their own unique identity, and at the same time encourages interaction among different communities.
- It empowers marginalized communities in their efforts to address their own needs and develop their own organizations.
- It promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility in the groups that participate.
- It facilitates interaction among various communities and allows for the creation of mentoring relationships.

The Cooperative Suite can be both an *operational model* and a *spatial model*. In essence, it is a combination of common spaces and facilities to be shared by different groups, and “private” spaces and facilities allocated to each community group on a more permanent basis. Common spaces could include meeting rooms of various sizes; equipment for meetings (flipcharts, overhead projector, etc.); office support services (fax, photocopier, etc.); and spaces for cooking and for child-minding. Private spaces and facilities could range from providing a mailing address and secure storage space to a small office and related equipment for a group’s daily work.
In terms of administration, the Cooperative Suite can be organized in many ways:

The groups themselves can organize and administer the suite, including all aspects of facility operations, rental fees, general administrative work, maintenance, etc. All members would be expected to contribute to the operation of the facility through volunteer work, financial contribution, etc. A Board or comparable organization would oversee the functioning of the facility.

MOSAIC or other agencies can administer the physical facility while the user groups administer the operation of the cooperative model. Groups would contribute to the operation of the facility through volunteer work, financial contribution, etc. A Board or comparable organization would oversee the functioning of the organization, and would include representation from the facility administrator (MOSAIC).

MOSAIC or other agencies can administer the entire facility, including such elements as use of spaces and organizational structure. Users would follow the terms outlined by the administrating agency, including requirements for contribution to the operation of the facility.

The model has similarities with several existing organizations. Participants in the consultation mentioned examples such as the Scandinavian Centre in Burnaby, Hudson Manor (formerly used by AMSSA) on West 7th Avenue in Vancouver, as well as cooperatives and packaged offices. All have a combination of shared spaces and spaces used by one single group or individual.

The Cooperative Suite model suggests a smaller-scale operation—a group of users, possibly with common goals and/or experiences, ideally matched to complement each other’s abilities—sharing a modestly sized group of spaces. Alternatively, it could be one single integrated facility used by a large number of community groups. The latter arrangement would require significantly more organization and coordination for the “cooperative” aspect of the model to work. The model could also be adapted as a series of smaller venues integrated to a compatible facility such as a community centre.

Benefits of the Cooperative Suite model include:

- It provides the tools for groups to build important skills for working and adjusting to life in Canada.

- It allows the development of a sense of responsibility and ownership.
It depends on the participants themselves to contribute to the operation of the arrangement.

It provides an opportunity for ethnocultural groups to network with each other and to experience coexistence and collaboration with groups from other cultures.

It encourages more experienced groups to mentor less experienced ones.

It provides an excellent opportunity to apply the principles of community development—principles that have been applied throughout the world to a wide range of situations and have helped communities to succeed and move forward.

The suggested model appears to reflect the needs and aspirations of the groups consulted in this study. However, it is presented here in very preliminary terms. It would be advisable to conduct a feasibility study to explore the model’s possibilities, to identify potential users, to analyze possible challenges and strategies to address them, and to develop an implementation mechanism. An analysis of comparable projects around the world could provide useful insights into possible challenges and may uncover innovative ideas for implementation.

4.4.4 CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SPACES

In addition to improving access to existing spaces by the various methods described in the preceding sections, the construction of new space designed especially for the needs of ethnocultural communities would be of great benefit. New construction would provide the opportunity to create a facility planned for and by the various communities to meet their particular requirements. The newly built or renovated spaces would offer an ideal opportunity to implement the Cooperative Suite model.

Construction could entail renovation of existing spaces, addition to existing facilities, or construction of a new building or buildings.
5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

This study set out to identify the types of issues that were faced by ethnocultural minority groups when using or attempting to obtain spaces for their functions. The two main research tools used were the creation of an inventory of facilities in order to learn about the types and range of facilities available and the consultation of a range of ethnocultural minority communities. The information gathered in both stages was provided through telephone and in-person interviews—in the first case, with program coordinators at various facilities, in the second case, with key individuals and targeted groups within the ethnocultural communities.

The information was provided voluntarily by those interviewed. There was no additional independent research to verify the information provided. The findings reflect the perceptions of those interviewed about their particular experiences, their understanding of the barriers they may face, and, in the case of institutions surveyed for the Inventory, their understanding of how the rental policies of their institutions affect accessibility for ethnocultural minority groups.

The groups targeted for consultation represent a wide range of communities: recently arrived, well-established, refugees, immigrants by choice, visible minorities, speakers of other languages, native English speakers, political groups, cultural groups, support groups, and artistic groups. Taken together they represent a wide range of experiences. The experiences represented can be applied to other groups in similar situations and provide an overview of typical experiences of ethnocultural minority communities as they adjust to life in Canada.
5.2 **CONCLUSIONS: SUMMARY OF THEMES AND EXPERIENCES**

The analysis of the findings revealed that, while there is a great deal of diversity of space-related needs and experiences among the various communities, several common themes can be identified. The major findings that emerged throughout the consultation can be summarized as follows:

Most of the activities reported by the ethnocultural groups reflect efforts to express, share, and preserve their **cultural identity**. An appropriate space is, primarily, a space that is conducive to the expression and assertion of each community’s identity.

The **need for accessible and affordable space** appears to be more critical for communities that have arrived more recently and face greater barriers to integration into Canadian society; conversely, communities that are more established appear to be more capable of providing for their own space requirements, either through facilities established by the community itself or through experience negotiating and obtaining space.

**Limitations to space availability** include high rental costs; overload of existing spaces; scheduling restrictions that result in reduced dependability; and complex criteria and procedures for booking spaces.

**Barriers to accessing spaces** include limited financial resources; language and communication problems; limited skills in negotiation of space arrangements; and limited resources for proper research of space availability.

**General conditions for suitable spaces** include central and easily found locations; dependability; appropriate capacity for a range of activities; and provision of amenities such as child-minding facilities, secure storage space, kitchen facilities, office and administration spaces, and office- and meeting-related equipment.

**Space needs can be addressed** by a variety of measures including improving access to existing spaces, improving existing spaces themselves, and building new spaces.

A useful **organizational and spatial model** that can help shape improvements made to existing or new space is the **Cooperative Suite**. It includes both a space use model consisting of a combination of shared and private spaces and facilities, and an organizational model based on active participation of each of the potential space users in the development, implementation, administration, and maintenance of the space.
There are numerous ways the space needs of ethnocultural communities can be addressed. The following recommendations range from small-scale, which could be implemented by MOSAIC, to larger-scale, which would require support from larger agencies such as the Department of Canadian Heritage, the City of Vancouver, or the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

**Establish a mechanism for ongoing consultation and dialogue with ethnocultural community groups and organizations to facilitate a process of sharing space-related issues and develop strategies to address them.**

As the consultants met with the various groups, ideas about space use—ways various groups have dealt with certain issues, strategies for finding space, strategies for disseminating information about the groups, etc.—began to emerge that could then be transmitted to other groups. The consultation process itself turned out to be a way for groups to verbalize issues they may not have considered before, and the consultants were in some cases able to offer suggestions based on what they had learned from the experiences of others.

It became apparent as the consultation process progressed that this opportunity for groups to share their experiences was not only helpful to the consultants, but also to many of the groups themselves. It would be of great benefit to the various groups to have a mechanism whereby they can continue to discuss issues as they arise.

MOSAIC or the City of Vancouver could play a role as facilitator for this dialogue, which could take many forms: periodic sessions involving several groups at once, which would also provide an opportunity for networking among different groups; consultations with individual groups, much as the consultants have done for this study; and others to be developed.
RECOMMENDATION 2:

Conduct information workshops to assist groups in developing skills to find, negotiate, and secure community spaces.

To obtain space successfully, groups must know what to look for, how to ask the right questions, and how to negotiate terms. MOSAIC could offer periodic workshops to teach the specific skills required. (This could be combined with the ongoing consultation described in Recommendation 1.)

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Produce guidelines to assist groups looking for community space.

The guidelines would complement the information workshops and would be available at MOSAIC and in the facilities that provide space for community activities.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Establish a mechanism for ongoing or periodic update of the Community Facilities Inventory.

As the Inventory becomes known throughout the community, there will likely be facilities that will want to be added or will want to modify their information as changes occur. In order to remain a useful tool for finding suitable space, the inventory must be kept up to date.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Lobby funding agencies to create a grant program for ethnocultural community space rental.

A grant program similar to the City of Vancouver’s Baxter Grants for Civic Theatre Rental would allow facilities to offer space free of charge to ethnocultural groups that cannot afford the cost of renting a facility.
RECOMMENDATION 6:

Facilitate the development of partnerships between ethnocultural organizations and those who provide community space.

Space providers often look for partnerships that allow a group’s activities to become an integral part of the facility’s internal programs. MOSAIC could be part of the partnership and act as a mentor for newer and more vulnerable groups. A Facility Use Advocate would have contact with various key facilities and could be instrumental in setting up such partnerships.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Create a Facility Advocate position—a “broker” to help groups find appropriate venues, make contacts, formulate requests, and negotiate contracts.

The Advocate could be responsible for direct contact with facilities and groups, and could also be involved in a number of other space-related activities, from designing and offering workshops to negotiating partnerships to lobbying for a grant program.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Lobby for the development and implementation of the Cooperative Suite model for the improvement of existing facilities or construction of new facilities to serve the spatial needs of ethnocultural communities. Apply the model to any new construction carried out by MOSAIC itself.

The Cooperative Suite model described in Section 4.4.3 emphasizes the importance of groups developing a sense of ownership and pride in the spaces they use. The model can be adapted to a wide variety of situations, from creating new space to adapting existing unused space to partnering with existing organizations to including new ethnocultural groups, as well as many others.
**RECOMMENDATION 9:**

Provide and/or lobby for Seed Space—temporary, subsidized space—to help new groups in their process of becoming established.

The need for free or low-cost space is often the highest for a community organization when it is first becoming established. The need can be even greater for groups or organizations from ethnocultural communities that are recent arrivals to Canada. Once the community and its organizations become established, they become better able to support themselves.

A Seed Space—subsidized space for an organization to use while it becomes settled and established, to be passed on to a new organization at the end of a certain term—could provide greatly needed support that could make the difference in an organization’s survival. Modelling this seed space on the Cooperative Suite model would also provide the opportunity for organizations from newer communities to network with each other, share experiences, share resources, and together develop the skills to move on a more permanent situation.

The Seed Space could be developed jointly with the Feasibility Study as an equal part of the Space Use Model, in order to address issues such as mechanisms for selecting groups to participate; establishing adequate occupancy timelines; determining types of contribution by each group; and other issues as they arise.
## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of Meeting</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<td>Interview</td>
<td>Mambo Masinda</td>
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<td>African Francophone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Haerim Lee</td>
<td>MOSAIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Michelle Nguyen</td>
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<td>Vietnamese</td>
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<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Kiseop Lee</td>
<td>Korean Society of BC</td>
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<td>Feb 20</td>
<td>Joint interview</td>
<td>Paul Mulangu Kamilu Tshimanga</td>
<td>Centre d'Intégration pour Immigrants Africains Congolese Community Association</td>
<td>African Francophone</td>
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<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Lida Amiri Serwas</td>
<td>MOSAIC Kurdish Mothers’ Group Kurdish Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>Interview</td>
<td>Fahma Ali</td>
<td>MOSAIC</td>
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<td>Feb 21</td>
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<td>Irene Holmes</td>
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<td>Feb 21</td>
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<td>Roxana Aune</td>
<td>LACC</td>
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<td>Phone interview</td>
<td>Riad Muslah</td>
<td>Canadian Arab Justice Committee (ADALA)</td>
<td>Arab</td>
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<td>Barbara Nodsykowski</td>
<td>MOSAIC</td>
<td>Polish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>Phone interview</td>
<td>Roxana Aune</td>
<td>LACC</td>
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<td>Feb 27</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Kim Ton</td>
<td>MOSAIC Vietnamese Mothers’ Group</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
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<td>Sedi Hendizadeh</td>
<td>MOSAIC</td>
<td>Persian/Afghan</td>
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<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Roxana Aune</td>
<td>LACC Board</td>
<td>Latin American</td>
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<td>Vancouver Burma Round Table</td>
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<td>Mercedes Mande</td>
<td>MOSAIC Latin American Mothers’ Group</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

1. Group identification:
   Name
   Address
   Phone, fax, e-mail
   Contact person

2. What is the mandate/purpose, main work of your group?

3. How many people are regular members of your group?

4. Can you give us an approximate profile of your members? (e.g. adults, children, youth, seniors, women, families, type of work, English proficiency, etc.)

5. How often do you meet?

6. Where do you normally meet?

7. How many people normally attend your meetings?

8. What is your experience when trying to obtain a space to meet? What has been positive? What have been the challenges?

9. Have you ever used any of the spaces listed in the inventory? What has been your experience?

10. Can you describe an ideal meeting space for your group?
    Size?
    Location?
    Equipment?
    Facilities available?
    Price?
    Booking policies?
    Staff attitude?
    Other?

11. Can you name an existing space that meets all or most of your needs?

12. Do you have a special message for those who coordinate the use of meeting facilities?