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**IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND  
ENGAGEMENT (ICCE) PROJECT**

**THE FARSI/PERSIAN COMMUNITIES IN LONDON**

A FORUM FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

PRESENTED BY:

JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF LONDON AND DISTRICT

# FARSI / PERSIAN

- **Three countries speak Persian:**
- **Western Persian** (Persian, Iranian Persian, or Farsi) is spoken in Iran
- **Dari** (Dari Persian, Afghan Persian, or Dari) is spoken in Afghanistan
- **Tajiki** (Tajik Persian) is spoken in Tajikistan





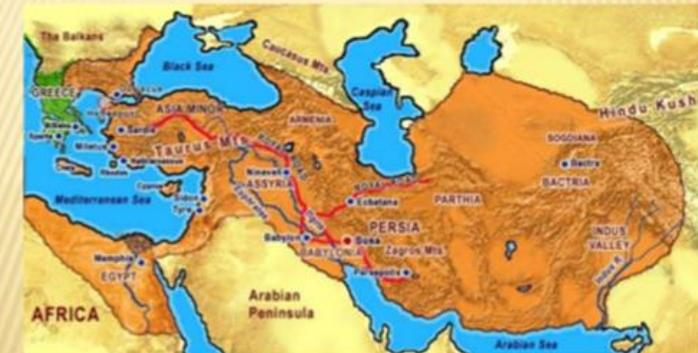
# IRAN

# HISTORY OF IRAN

- The official name of Iran is the “Islamic Republic of Iran”
- ‘Persia’ was historically the common name for Iran (it was called Persia until 1935)
- Iran is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations
- Iran means “the land of the Aryans”



How big was Persian Empire....well it was quite large!





# Politics

- The revolution of Iran was in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini
- Before the revolution, Iran was a constitutional monarchy. The country was ruled by the Royal Government of Reza Shah Pahlavi
- After the revolution, the Iranian government system became the Islamic Republic and its national day is the 12th Farvardin (1<sup>st</sup> of April)
- The Iranians choose their own president. The election is carried out once every four years. Each president serves a four-year term and cannot serve more than two consecutive terms
- The president uses the media to announce to the country the government's plans and programs
- The president has some say in the level of media freedom and political openness
- Iran was at war with Iraq (1980-1988) for 8 years. The roots of the war lay in a number of territorial and political disputes between Iraq and Iran
- The Iranian people started to come to Canada after the revolution in Iran in 1979



# ECONOMICS

- Iran is ranked as the second largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa
- The petroleum industry is Iran's economic mainstay; oil accounts for 80% of export revenues, and Iran is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
- Iran has a lot of natural resources which includes oil, natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead, manganese, zinc and sulphur
- Persian carpet or Iranian carpet is a heavy textile, made for a wide variety of utilitarian and symbolic purposes, produced in Iran, for home use, local sale and export
- The tourism industry also generates revenue for Iran's economy





Ferdowsi Monument, Mashad



Ali Qapu, Esfahan



Alisadr Cave, Hamedan



Eel Goli, Tabriz

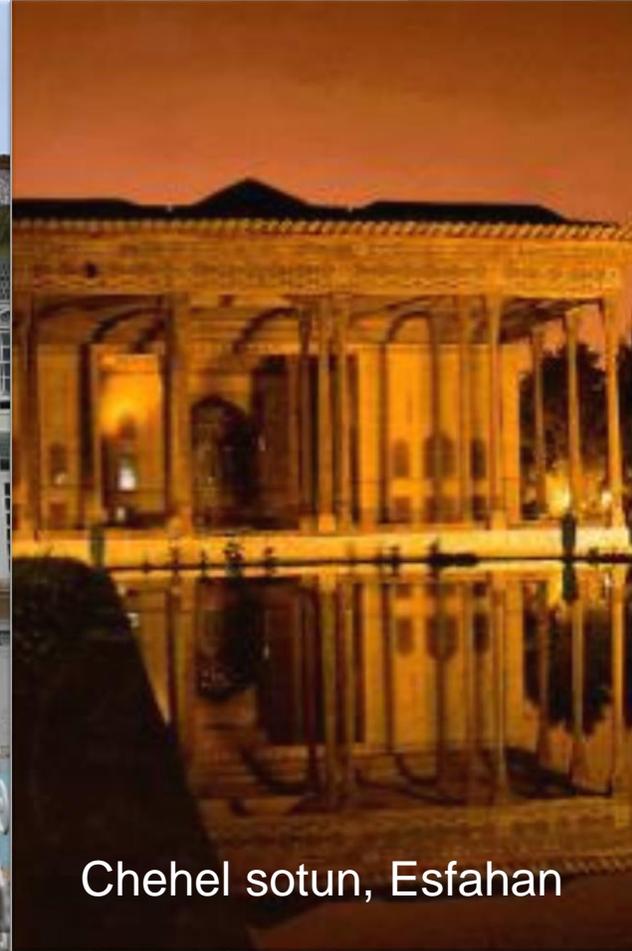
## TOURISM ATTRACTIONS



An Ancient Church, Isfahan



Eram Garden, Shiraz



Chehel sotun, Esfahan



Milad Tower Tehran

## TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

# IRANIAN CULTURE



# FAMILY



- Traditionally Iranian culture has been patriarchal. The man is the head of the family and household
- Women play an important role in raising children and looking after the family
- The family is the most important social institution and children are the focal point of this institution; they are loved and adored
- For many families, the relationship between parents and their children is the most important
- Many Iranian parents simply live for their children. Families stay together and are expected to be the priority for all members even long after they have left the home
- Both women and men have important roles in the family. Both women and men can work or study; however, there is no gender equality in Iran
- There is still discrimination between men and women who are seeking employment opportunities or higher achievements in education. Sometimes, women are not allowed to work outside of the house
- Women cannot be involved in all the social activities in Iran such as going to the stadiums

# MARRIAGE

- Iranian marriage is a cultural event which goes back to the Zoroastrian era. It is traditional; however, it has been changed over years under the influence of different cultures
- The ceremony takes place in a specially decorated room with flowers and a beautiful and elaborately decorated spread on the floor called "Sofreh-ye Aghd"





# RELIGION

- Iranians (formerly Persians) were of the Zoroastrian faith and converted to Islam following the 7th century Arab-Islamic conquest
- Iranians predominantly follow Islam, with the majority being Shi'i Muslims but there are a minority of Iranians that follow different religious faiths including Sunni Islam; Judaism; and Christianity (of various denominations, particularly Armenian, Zoroastrian and Baha'i)
- The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. Its central message is that humanity is one single race and that the day has come for its unification in a global society, characterized by both spiritual and material prosperity
- The Bahá'í faith was founded in Iran in 1844

# IRANIAN FOOD

- Iranian food or Persian cuisine refers to the traditional and modern styles of cooking originating in Iran
- Situated between the Mediterranean Sea, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Indian subcontinent and Anatolia, Iranian cuisine has a shared history and ingredients with Mesopotamian cuisine and Mediterranean cuisine
- Fresh green herbs are frequently used along with fruits such as plums, pomegranates, quince, prunes, apricots and raisins

## Iranian food:

- Chelo Kabab in Tehran
- Ashe reshte
- Dizi



## TRADITIONS & CELEBRATION

- Iranians celebrate the longest and darkest night of the year or winter solstice
- Yalda (meaning “birth”) Night is the last evening of the autumn day or “the night opening the initial forty-day period of the three-month winter”
- Ancient Persians believed that evil forces were dominant on the longest night of the year and that the next day belonged to the Lord of Wisdom, Ahura Mazda
- Yalda is a time when friends and family gather together to eat and read poetry (especially Hafez) until well after midnight. Fruits and nuts are eaten and pomegranates and watermelons are particularly significant. Old texts say the red color in these fruits symbolizes the crimson hues of dawn and glow of life, invoking the splendor of Mithra





# CHARSHANBE SOORI

- Prelude to Nowruz, Charshanbeh Souri is celebrated on the last Tuesday evening (eve of Wednesday) of the year
- Charshanbeh means “Wednesday”
- Soor means “celebration or feast around fire”
- People make bonfires and jump over them, saying: “my sickly yellow paleness is yours, your fiery red color is mine!” It means you want the fire to take your paleness, sickness and problems and give you its redness, warmth, and energy
- Food, such as nuts and pastries (ajill) and refreshments are served



# AFGHANISTAN



# History of Afghanistan

- **Afghanistan was created in April 1709**
- **Afghanistan shares a relatively long history with Iran (called Persia in the West before 1935). When the Safavid dynasty was founded in Persia, part of what is now Afghanistan was ruled by the Khanate of Bukhara and Babur from Kabulistan**
- **Afghanistan regained full independence from British influence in 1919**



# POLITICS

- Afghanistan's government system is Islamic Republic
- The nation is currently led by President Ashraf Ghani. A president can only serve up to two five-year terms
- In the last decade, the politics of Afghanistan have been influenced by NATO countries, particularly the United States, in an effort to stabilize and democratize the country



# The War of Afghanistan

International conflict and war in Afghanistan beginning in 2001. This consisted of three phases:

- The first phase—toppling the Taliban (the ultraconservative political and religious faction that ruled Afghanistan and that was brief, lasting just two months)
- The second phase — from 2002 until 2008, was marked by a U.S. strategy of defeating the Taliban militarily and rebuilding core institutions of the Afghan State
- The third phase — a turn to classic counterinsurgency doctrine (military or political action taken against the activities of guerrillas or revolutionaries) began in 2008 and accelerated with U.S. President Barack Obama's 2009 decision to temporarily increase the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan



## THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON THE AFGHAN PEOPLE

- Many Afghans dealing with ill health and war wounds find it difficult to get to hospitals and clinics because the violence makes the roads unsafe
- The war has exacerbated the effects of poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to health care and environmental degradation on Afghans' health
- Some of the Afghan refugees are going to refugee camps in nearby countries such as Pakistan and Iran
- More than one million people within Afghanistan have been internally displaced because of violence and ongoing war in their communities
- The war has left many Afghans with unresolved mental health issues



# AFGHANISTAN CULTURE





# FAMILY

- Family is the most important institution in Afghan society. Within families there is a tendency toward respect for age, reverence for motherhood, eagerness for children and avoidance of divorce
- The Afghan family is a patriarchal entity. A male family member has control over a woman's life, whether it is her father, brother, husband or brother-in-law
- The head of the household will make all major decisions regarding a woman's life: whether she gets to go to school as a girl, whom she marries and even whether or not a pregnant woman is allowed to seek professional medical help
- Many women in Afghanistan never leave the house without a burqa. Although the dress code in the cities is more liberal, a head scarf is a minimum

# MARRIAGE

- Marriages are arranged by the family in Afghanistan. The marriage is typically the first contact the bride and groom have with anyone of the opposite sex who is not related to them
- Weddings are a time for great celebration and can last for three days in the rural areas, with the expense borne by the groom's family. By contrast, in the cities weddings are usually just one day, with the feasting and marriage ritual taking place at a restaurant





# RELIGION

- Afghanistan is an Islamic republic where Islam is practiced by 99.7% of its population
- Roughly 90% of the Afghans follow Sunni Islam and the remaining are Shias
- There are also small minorities of Sikhs and Hindus

# ECONOMIC

- Afghanistan's economic freedom was graded for the first time in the 2017 Index, reflecting the improved availability of key economic data
- Over the past decade, the country has achieved rapid yet volatile economic growth. Construction and agriculture have been the key contributors to economic expansion. Afghanistan became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2016
- With Afghanistan's population growth rate at nearly 3 percent, an economic growth rate of 2.2 percent implies a decline in per capita income





## FOOD

- The flagship dish of Afghan cuisine is the Qabili Palau. Qaibli or Kabuli palau is a northern Afghan dish, a variety of pilaf, consisting of steamed rice mixed with raisins, carrots, and lamb. It is one of the most popular dishes in Afghanistan and is considered to be the Afghan national dish
- Aushak, is an Afghan dish made of pasta dumplings filled with scallion, with a tomato sauce and topped with yogurt and dried mint
- Bolani, or Perakai/Poraki, is a flat-bread from Afghanistan, baked or fried with a vegetable filling. It has a thin crust and can be stuffed with a variety of ingredients, such as potatoes, lentils, pumpkin, chives, or leeks

# Holidays and Festivals

## Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the most sacred traditions of the Islamic faith. During the month-long observance, Afghans don't eat or drink anything during the day and almost all restaurants and businesses are closed.

## Eid al Fitr

Eid al Fitr marks the end of Ramadan. During this celebration, people pray collectively in mosques and then gather with relatives and friends to enjoy a hearty feast.

## Eid Al-Adha

Eid Al-Adha falls between December and February on the Afghan calendar, during which animals like goats, camels, or sheep are sacrificed to mark the commencement of the Muslim pilgrimage (Haj).



Bamiyan



National Museum of Afghanistan



Kabul



# AFGHANISTAN TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

# HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

## **Ashura:**

During the month of Muharram, Afghans commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed. Ashura marks the 10th day of the month-long mourning.

## **Nowruz:**

Held between January and March (whichever date the New Year falls according to the Islamic calendar), Nowruz is the most popular of all the festivals in Afghanistan. Farmers express gratitude and joy for abundant produce and people celebrate with music and dance. It is also during the Nowruz or New Year festival that buzkashi matches or tournaments are held.

## **Jeshyn-Afghan Day:**

The independence day of Afghanistan falls on August 19th, commemorating the end of British control over the foreign affairs of the country.





# **IMMIGRATION OF IRANIAN AND AFGHAN PEOPLE**

# IRANIAN

After the 1979 Iranian revolution which overthrew the monarchy and brought the Islamic government to power, immigration increased significantly.

People immigrate for different reasons such as political, cultural or religious beliefs. They come to Canada in the following categories:

Skilled Worker/  
Professional  
Category

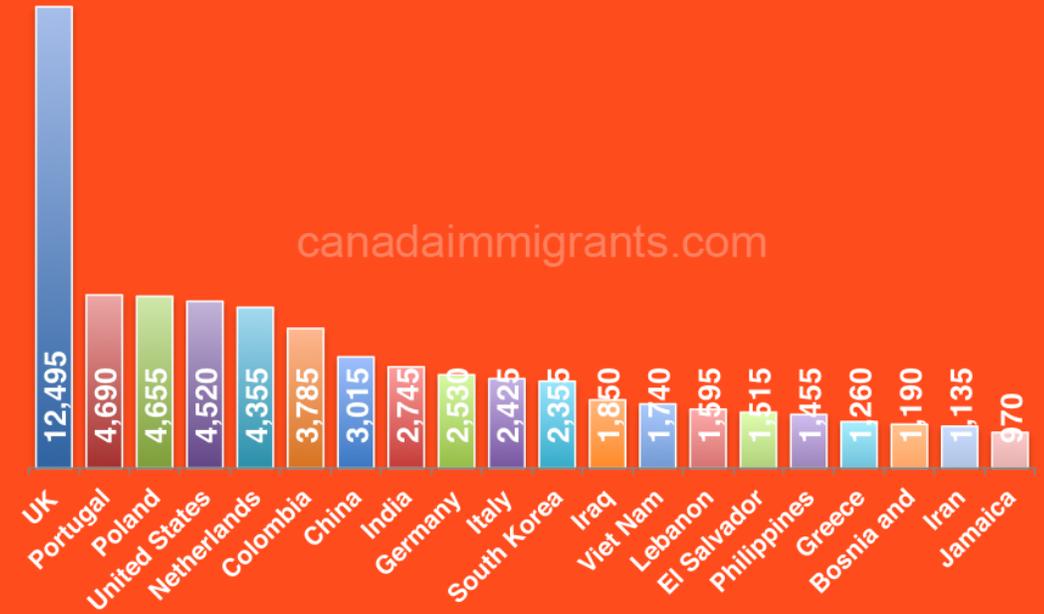
Business  
immigration  
status

Education

Refugees  
(Politics and  
religion issues)

Most of the Iranian refugees are from the Baha'i faith. In Iran, they are not allowed to have higher education, work for the government or talk about their religion

### London Immigrants Top Source Countries (2011)

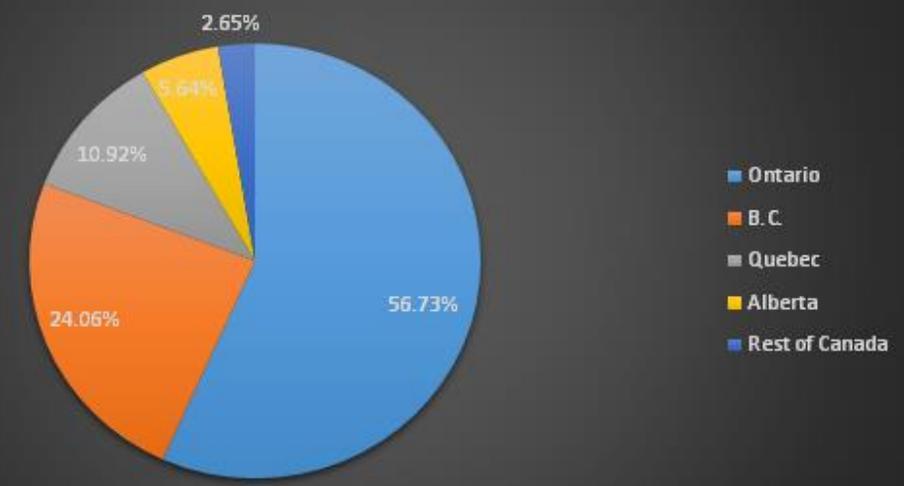


canadaimmigrants.com

Source: Statistics Canada. NHS



### Province of Residence Iranian-Canadians



# IMMIGRATION FROM IRAN TO CANADA

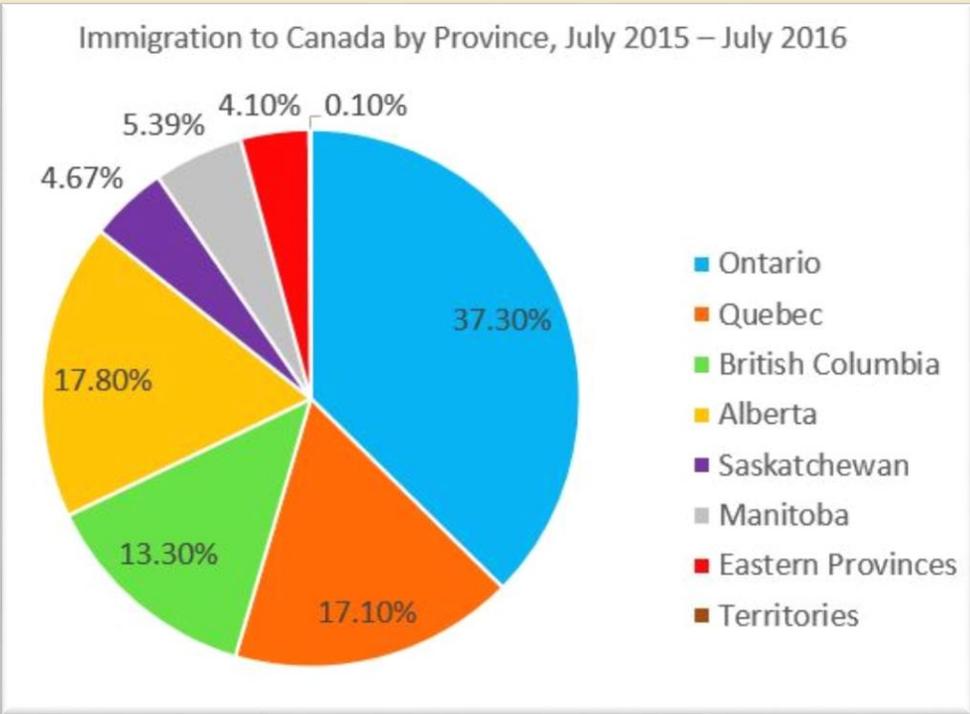
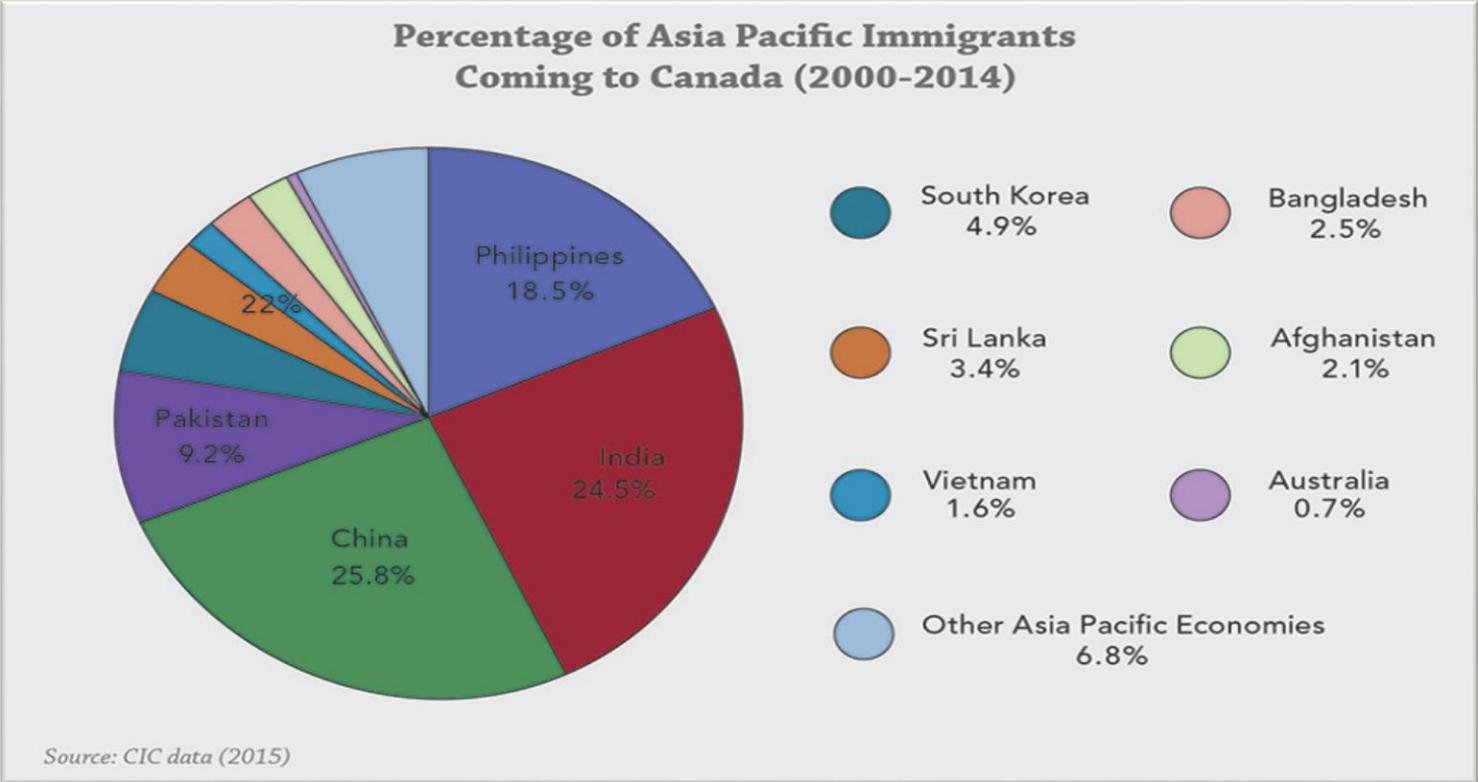
# AFGHANISTAN

The Afghans  
immigrating to Canada  
come through:

Family sponsors

Education

Refugees  
(Government assisted  
refugees)



## Immigration from Afghanistan to Canada

A group of people of various ages, including children and adults, are standing outdoors at what appears to be a community event or festival. In the background, there is a large white pop-up tent. The scene is set on a paved area with a wooden fence on the left and buildings in the distance. The overall atmosphere is bright and social.

# PERSIAN COMMUNITIES IN LONDON

- Most of the Iranian population in London, Ontario are students at Western University and Fanshawe College
- There are two Facebook pages for the Iranian community in London (779 members): Westerns Iranian's Student Association and Iranian Professionals in London, Ontario
- There is the Baha'i Community in London, Ontario with 240 community members

## **IRANIAN COMMUNITY IN LONDON**

## ISSUES/GAPS/ CHALLENGES

- Language barriers
- Cultural shock
- Parents continuing to support adult children
- Frustration with life circumstances, i.e. lack of employment opportunities in their own field
- Some of their credentials not being recognized in Canada
- Lack of knowledge about citizenship rules and their rights
- Involvement in the criminal justice system
- Lack of understanding of the Canadian criminal justice system
- Family issues and personal problems stay at home
- Depending on Family or community members to solve issues within the family
- Discrimination issues
- Community members are loud talkers which could be misinterpreted

## AFGHAN COMMUNITY IN LONDON

- Most of the Afghan people have large families in London, Ontario
- There is no Afghan association in London. Instead Afghan families gather together in their houses
- The Intercommunity Health Center has a program for Afghan Women that is run once a month to talk about physical health, social activity, community recourses, etc.
- The majority of the Afghan families are recipients of government financial assistance

## ISSUES/GAPS/ CHALLENGES

- Language barriers
- Members of 1<sup>st</sup> generation reluctant to go outside of their own community
- Because education is not accessible to everyone in Afghanistan – influences how education is viewed here
- Low literacy and not being exposed to a different lifestyle impacts understanding of the system
- Intergenerational issues
- Gender roles and family size can make it difficult for some women to access education, programs and services
- Difficulty gaining employment
- Low income families
- Involvement with CAS/Domestic violence issues
- Lack of interest in learning about the Canadian justice system
- Lack of parenting skills
- Lack of community programs for Afghan seniors in their own language
- The newcomers need assistance for general needs such as going to doctor, shopping etc.
- Need for life skills training in their own language

## WORKING WITH THE FARSI/PERSIAN COMMUNITIES

- Use interpreters to communicate effectively. Using family or community members for interpretation raises issues with confidentiality, accuracy, objectivity and professionalism
- Parents need help to better understand their children's situation. Support and encourage parents to attend parenting classes and provide resources that can build trust with their children
- Persian speaking settlement workers at schools will benefit the communities
- Given the many challenges that the community is facing, please work with your client to identify the challenges/needs that should be addressed first
- Work with other agencies who are serving newcomers/refugees to develop collaboration methods to better serve your clients
- Attend cultural sensitivity training to increase your awareness of newcomers needs
- The workshop materials of the Immigrant Community Capacity and Engagement (ICCE) Project are translated and delivered in Farsi/Persian language which allow the community to gain a better understanding of how to access the services available to them in the city of London. The ICCE project has been a good program model for the Persian community

# RESOURCES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- <https://www.immigroup.com/news/iranian-immigration-canada>
- <https://www.immigroup.com/news/iranian-immigration-canada-history-and-numbers>
- [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/fire\\_festival.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/fire_festival.htm)
- <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1546559>
- <https://www.gecf.org/countries/iran>
- <http://www.manoushcuisine.com/iranian-cuisine-history.html>
- <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/countries/afghanistan>
- <http://uwf.edu/atcdev/afghanistan/index.html>
- <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/afghanistan>
- <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan>

## RESOURCES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- For information on Cultural Competency Training, please contact Cross Cultural Learner Centre at 519-432-1133 or visit: <http://www.ccclc.org/>
- For more information on the ICCE Project, please visit: London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership - London Immigration Portal – City of London at <http://immigration.london.ca/LMLIP/>

**QUESTIONS?**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION

با تشکر از توجه شما