**Mission Statement**

Reduction of inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes for the improved social, economic, and political inclusion of all has been identified as one of the United Nations’ main target goals in the promotion of global sustainable development1. Among the most vulnerable are migrants and refugees who often face poorer health and socioeconomic conditions, making them more susceptible to crises in their host country1. Immigrants and refugees often have to overcome negative attitudes and prejudice in their present country as they are sometimes seen as competing for resources and cultural dominance2.

Canada has long been a preferred destination for immigrants and refugees due to the numerous favourable cultural, social, political, and economic milieu it offers. In 2019, Canada was the highest ranked nation in facilitating effective refugee resettlemet3; based on statistics on long-term socio-economic outcomes and cultural engagement. However, substantial disparities in income, employment, housing opportunities, access to health, and other socio-economic conditions still exist, particularly in the short term when refugees first arrive in Canada with limited social connections, resources, or knowledge of their new home environment. Unemployment rates for example are 3% higher for refugees than Canadian-born citizens, while the average income for first-year refugees is a low $20000, with middle-class incomes typically not achieved until at least the fifth year of residence4. Refugees, particularly stay-at-home women, may also experience the exacerbated negative impacts of social and cultural isolation, which can worsen existing mental health and social issues such as depression, low self-esteem, and marginalization5.

The goal of our app; Ekoalaty is to help reduce the different variegated inequalities faced by newly arrived refugees and migrants in Metro Vancouver by providing fundamental resources and information necessary to build a solid foundation in Canada, thereby closing the gaps in conditions and resources that exist between newcomers and Canadian-born citizens. Our app connects users to a network of facilities offering affordable access to educational materials, computers and internet, recreational opportunities and attractions, public transit stops, etc. Ekoalaty also seeks to improve the economic conditions of migrants by showing and directing the user to nearby employment offices and recent job postings in order to secure early employment opportunities. The app further supports users in identifying neighbourhoods with populations of similar or shared ethnicity, enabling users to find locations where they can feel a sense of community and also overcome significant language barriers.

**References**

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2. Esses, V. M., Dietz, J., & Bhardwaj, A. (2006). The role of prejudice in the discounting of immigrant skills. In *Cultural psychology of immigrants.* (pp. 113-130). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

3. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *Refugee statistics*. UNHCR Canada. Retrieved March 24, 2021, from https://www.unhcr.ca/in-canada/refugee-statistics/

4. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *Refugees in Canada*. UNHCR Canada. Retrieved March 24, 2021,

from https://www.unhcr.ca/in-canada/refugees-in-canada/

5. Banulescu-Bogdan, N. (2020). *Beyond work: Reducing social isolation for refugee women and other marginalized newcomers.*

Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/TCM-Social-Isolation\_FINALWEB.pdf

**Description of App Features**

**Find Amenities that Meet your Criteria**

Use the **Filter** function to find amenities that suit your needs, whether it’s a park with enough space for recreational activities, a library branch from a specific system, or a civic facility with a pool, arena, or other features of interest. This function also allows users to determine which rapid transit stations they can travel to, based on the desired zone number.

**Locate Nearby Services**

The **Near Me** function allows you to find the nearest services within a given radius of your specified location. It also gives the user the option to explore available services and resources in a neighbourhood. The user can for example search for employment service offices or food bank locations within their neighbourhood, or find job postings for work locations within a given distance from home.

**Compare Different Maps Easily**

The **Swipe** tool allows the user to visually compare multiple map features.This helps the user to understand and gain insight into multiple spatial factors represented with the layers in the app as well as compare information in different datasets. The horizontal swipe bar in the middle of the map can be dragged left or right to visualize two maps side by side.

**Explore Neighbourhood Characteristics**

The **Charts** feature enables users to gain insight into neighbourhood characteristics, including: immigrant populations from selected continents; immigrant populations from selected countries; and typical commute time. The data can be viewed for designated areas on the map determined by the user, allowing the user to find neighbourhoods with populations of compatriots.

**Find the most suitable neighbourhood to settle in**

The **Suitability** **modeler** helps the user identify the best locations for an activity or the most suitable neighbourhood to live in based on a combination of multiple factors which are represented by the spatial layers in the map. The suitability model is a dynamic app which allows users to select different spatial variables and vary the weight or criteria of every factor, reflecting the relative importance of each layer in the analysis. Weights can be varied to explore multiple scenarios and different options.The model consists of 19 feature layers to choose from including demographic, economic, transportation, education, and housing.