



AMSSA

# *Cultures* West

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC

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COVER ART BY TONY SAMSON

**AMSSA: Making a difference in your community**

# AMSSA:

## Making a difference in your community



Affiliation of Multicultural  
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of British Columbia

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AMSSA is an affiliation of member agencies providing immigrant settlement and multicultural programs in communities throughout BC.

### VISION:

AMSSA believes in a just and equitable society which values Canada's cultural diversity.

### MISSION:

AMSSA provides leadership in advocacy and education in British Columbia for anti-racism, human rights, and social justice. AMSSA supports its members in serving immigrants, refugees and culturally diverse communities.

### GOALS:

1. To build Member Agencies' capacity through effective communication, facilitation, and collaboration
2. To advocate for social justice and equity in immigration, multiculturalism, anti-racism, and human rights
3. To increase AMSSA's profile as a provincial organization

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# AMSSA: The Voice of Diversity in British Columbia

**A**MSSA is an affiliation of Member Agencies providing immigrant settlement and multicultural services in communities throughout British Columbia. Formed in 1977 as a collaboration of several

multicultural societies, AMSSA was incorporated in 1983 with an initial membership of 12 Member Agencies. Today, AMSSA consists of 85 Member Agencies in over 25 communities throughout BC and continues to at-

tract more Members. The organization is comparable to a 'trade association' in the business community, with a vision for a just and equitable society that values Canada's cultural diversity.

We act as a centralized resource for our Members working in both large urban areas and smaller centres. Our educational initiatives provide business, government, and the general public with professional, accurate, and detailed information about current issues in multiculturalism, immigration, and human rights. AMSSA creates networking opportunities, disseminates information, provides professional development, and builds organizational capacities for our Members.

In the last year, AMSSA's impact was seen in many of the communities where their member agencies operate. Some of the more notable initiatives are:

- AMSSA and our BC Multicultural Health Committee organized and delivered BC's first provincial Multicultural Health Fair, bringing health care providers and immigrant serving agencies together in a single forum to share information, identify barriers, and began discussions on the development of a strategic plan to improve healthcare access for a diverse population.
- AMSSA created the [www.RacismSucks.ca](http://www.RacismSucks.ca) anti-racism youth project. We consulted with youth from Member Agencies and developed resources such as guide books, rave cards, stickers, tattoos and iron-ons which youth in 25 communities around BC used to lead their peers in delivering anti-racism activities.

Continued on page 4 ►

## Message from the President ...



In March 2005, *The Vancouver Sun* reported that "The labour force and economy will have to change and adapt as employers move to recognize the accreditation and credentials of immigrants. ... The consumer market in the province will change as clothes, music and restaurants reflect the tastes of BC's cultural diversity."

AMSSA and our 85 not-for-profit member agencies know this only too well. For more than 30 years, AMSSA member agencies of all sizes and in all regions of BC have been at the forefront of developing and delivering immigrant settlement and multiculturalism services that are responsive to the needs of their communities. These not-for-profit organizations have been models of innovation and efficiency, providing hands-on front-line services to support BC communities as they adapt to increasing diversity.

Without a doubt our contributions to building an inclusive society in BC have been invaluable. Unfortunately, sometimes the incredible work that we do gets overlooked or undervalued, so we fail to receive the credit that we deserve.

This special edition of *Cultures West* gives credit where it is due. It is a celebration of the innovation, commitment, and community responsiveness of AMSSA's member agencies throughout BC. It focuses exclusively on how AMSSA members are working every day to improve the lives of new immigrants, and to build inclusive and prosperous communities for everyone. Whether it's the development of an effective new approach to ESL learning, or using digital technology to tell immigrant stories, or celebrating diversity in business, or delivering effective public education campaigns, you'll find all these programs and more on the following pages. Please keep reading!

Jean McRae  
President

◀ *Continued from page 3: DIVERSITY*

- AMSSA introduced 6,500 BC families and individuals to the range of spiritual diversity in BC communities through the distribution of its *Multifaith Calendar* to their homes and workplaces.
- AMSSA developed *Cultures West* magazine editions that integrated information from the international, national, provincial, and local levels about research into immigrant settlement, and about settlement challenges and successes for immigrant women.

**AMSSA responded to member agencies by:**

- developing BC's first on-line directory of community-based multiculturalism and anti-racism expertise – freely available for individuals and organizations to list their skills, and look for the expertise they need close-to-home.
- creating an interactive website with proceedings and information from BC's first Multicultural Health Fair.
- initiating the new *AMSSA Insider* as a fun and accessible way for our members and partners to learn about our activities and accomplishments supporting community settlement, anti-racism, multiculturalism and health access.
- playing a lead role on behalf of the Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee (IICC) Member Agencies at the executive level in the strategic Development of the EASI initiative. EASI, the BC Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants Initiative, is a newly established multi-stakeholder forum to promote integrated supports for skilled immigrants to access the labour market.

**AMSSA's leadership strengthened BC communities through:**

- providing coordination and communication for 35 agencies that serve the needs of 34,000 immigrants arriving in BC each year, 40 agencies that promote anti-racism and multiculturalism in BC communities, and a wide range of service providers and government bodies promoting multicultural health access.
- supporting the capacities of community-based, not-for-profit service agencies to adapt during a time of major changes in governmental approaches to contracting human and social services.
- operating a referral line and on-line website, providing resources and referral to community agencies, schools, businesses, government representatives and the general public regarding our mandated responsibilities.

After 28 years, there is strong evidence that we are making a difference in communities across BC. Government, business, and media have all identified diversity as an increasingly vital characteristic of Canadian society for the new millennium. As the only sector's only umbrella group in BC, AMSSA is already empowering agencies to meet this challenge. We provide linkage among service providers, policy makers, and community members in the settlement and multicultural fields. With the support of AMSSA, our Member Agencies assist communities to better integrate immigrants effectively into the labour force, counter hate and racist activities, and promote tolerance and cross-cultural understanding.

**AMSSA FAST FACTS**

AMSSA is the portal to the sector in BC and represents the collective vision of its Members.

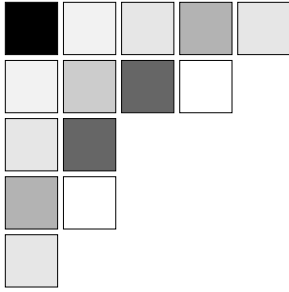
AMSSA Members are in touch with trends and are in contact with new immigrants every day.



Through AMSSA, Members can be convened to provide access to knowledge, ideas and innovation in this sector.

AMSSA Member agencies have the skills and experience to assist government and business reach their diversity goals.

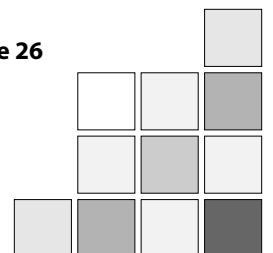
AMSSA provides access to Members, who in turn hold the key to knowledge and innovation in this sector.



# mind buster quiz

- This settlement agency is the oldest one serving the needs of BC's immigrant and refugee populations.
  - Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society (SDISS)
  - Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society
  - Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS)
  - Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)
- In Canada, approximately how many ethnic groups are there?
  - 50
  - 100
  - 150
  - 200
- In 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered the Singh decision. What is the significance of this decision?
  - It recognizes that under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, refugee claimants are entitled to fundamental justice.
  - It recognizes the right of Sikhs who are RCMP officers to wear traditional turbans with their uniform.
  - It grants reparations to members of Canada's South Asian communities for past discriminatory practices against them.
- Which of the following services are offered by agencies in BC's multicultural, immigrant and refugee sector?
  - Health care and education
  - ESL/Language training
  - Information and referral
  - All of the above
- Canada's Multicultural Policy was enacted in 1988. When did the province of BC pass its Multicultural Act (Bill 39)?
  - 1988
  - 1991
  - 1993
  - 1995
- In the 2001 census, which was the largest ethnic group in BC?
  - British
  - Canadian
  - Chinese
  - East Indian
- Which of the following is among the 12 top mother tongues in BC by population?
  - Vietnamese
  - (Persian) Farsi
  - Spanish
  - Tagalog
  - All of the above
- What is the percentage of the visible minority population in BC?
  - 18%
  - 22%
  - 30%
  - 45%
- BC's total population grew by 7% between 1996 and 2001. What is the corresponding growth rate of the province's immigrant population?
  - 7%
  - 16%
  - 22%
  - 30%
- Which of the following is a typical activity of refugee-serving agencies?
  - Helping refugees and Canadians get to know each other
  - Providing language training
  - Providing public education about refugees
  - All of the above

**For answers to Mind Buster quiz, see page 26**



## ANTI-RACISM

## Triumph Over Adversity

by Romy Ritter

Since 2000, *Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), Pacific Region* has organized several highly successful Anti-Racism Education Outreach programs throughout BC and the Yukon. The program, *Triumph Over Adversity*, features stories of survival from the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide and Residential Schools. This highly effective program has reached thousands of high school students, educators, teachers, and community members.

The Jewish community is particularly sensitive to discrimination affecting all groups, and believes that education is essential in the fight to prevent the spread of intolerance. The Holocaust, experiences of residential schools survivors in Canada, and Rwandan genocide provide a powerful basis for education around morality, social justice and human behaviour. In addition, *Triumph Over Adversity* provides first-hand eyewitness accounts of extreme racism and antisemitism. These interactive forums assist students and educators to understand the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in society. In addition, they help to deepen an awareness of the value of pluralism, tolerance, and diversity in a multicultural society.



## Getting Business On Side

by Terre Flower

Getting businesses involved in anti-racism is a challenge. Yet, there are 30 *Safe Harbour* locations in Nanaimo's downtown core, of which 20 are businesses.

At Central Vancouver Island Immigrant and Multicultural Services (CVIMS), businesses told us that there is no racism in Nanaimo. To challenge that, we shared stories of incidents of racism and hate in our community – stories about Aboriginal people, Sikhs and others. They said that such a program would put our community in a negative light. In response, we said that we had a lot to gain by showing we are prepared to take a proactive stand against racism; that if an incident occurred to treat it seriously and to offer support to the victims. They told us that this is already happening, that they would never refuse a person access to a phone. We pointed out that people who experience racism and hate as part of their everyday lives have learned that they cannot depend on anonymous good will.

With the *Safe Harbour* logo in the window of a business, potential customers know that they receive fair treatment. If they are being harassed on the street and need a place of refuge, they know they will be safe. The logo is a positive and visible symbol of inclusion, not only for racialized minorities and Aboriginal people, but all peo-

Responses from the students are overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate a deeper understanding of the issues discussed. They describe the programs as "extremely powerful, motivational, and valuable."

They also say that the programs "should be mandatory for all high school students". In turn, some students became inspired to take action against all forms of hate and to speak up and out whenever they witness or experience racism. Teachers were equally affected. One teacher wrote that her students were so moved that it was difficult to describe on paper. The first hand eyewitness accounts had a profound and long-lasting effect on her, and gave her an opportunity to explore the racism that exists in her own community.

For more information, please contact CJCP Community Relations Coordinator Romy Ritter by phone at 604-257-5101 or by e-mail at romyr@cjcc.ca.



Triumph Over Adversity presenters Robbie Waisman and Bosco Sebujiho at a workshop in Cranbrook.

ple. Rack cards which explain the symbol are distributed throughout the downtown and also support this message of inclusion. Just like the rainbow flag, the *Safe Harbour* logo also marks a commitment of the community and its businesses to being places where differences are respected and celebrated.

The manager of the Royal Bank has this to say: "The *Safe Harbour* training which our staff received only made even clearer how important it is to have Safe Harbours available to the community, especially in the downtown. This training also increased our staff's awareness and appreciation for diversity."

This program not only allows us to give practical support to people who have experienced racism or hate, but also gives us the opportunity to say that we as a business in this community will not accept racism or hate activity in our community."

As consumers, we can make our dollars count by patronizing businesses that share our values.

To find out more about CVIMS check out [www.cvims.org](http://www.cvims.org). You can also find out more about CVIMS' Action for Diversity Team by calling 250-753-6911 or visiting [www.diversityteam.org](http://www.diversityteam.org).

## IMPACS Teaches Muslim Leaders About Canadian Media

by Helesia Luke

In early 2005, the Immigrant Services Society presented workshops for Muslim leaders from Kurdish, Somali and Afghani communities in the lower mainland to help develop their skills in advocacy, facilitation and media relations. The *Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS)* worked with ISS to provide the media relations component of the training. For IMPACS, it was an excellent opportunity to build on previous work training members of under-represented groups on how to better access media services and to frame their own stories.

The main goal behind the media training was to teach all participants the skills needed to work more effectively with journalists as well as promote more accurate reporting about Canada's diverse Muslim community. For their part, IMPACS trainers led participants through a range of material such as reviewing media relations tools, looking at the Canadian media environment and developing strategies to diversify media coverage of issues related to the Muslim community. For participants, it was a hands-on experience. They practiced identifying key messages, created a mock press conference, wrote media releases and practiced their public speaking skills – complete with on-camera interviews!

The workshops were very well received and described as "a huge eye opener" for the Muslim leaders. This was especially so for those who lived in societies where the press functions differently from Canadian media. For example, some participants were not even aware that they could write and place opinion editorial pieces. The leaders are already making use of their learning. Several participants have had a chance to appear in the media as advocates for their communities and issues.

For more information on IMPACS raining workshops, please visit [www.impacs.org](http://www.impacs.org) or email [training@impacs.org](mailto:training@impacs.org).



Muslim community leaders who successfully completed their media relations training.

## Richmond Advisory Committee Promotes Intercultural Harmony

by Balwant Sanghera

Richmond is one of the most culturally diverse communities in Canada. Nearly 60% of its 175,000 residents are visible minorities. The city along with various public, private and community organizations is proud of the intercultural harmony its citizens enjoy.

In view of such a high level of cultural diversity, the City Council created the *Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee (RIAC)* in 2002. RIAC's mandate is to "enhance intercultural harmony and strengthen intercultural co-operation in Richmond". It is charged with responding to intercultural issues referred to it by the City Council or the community.



To identify community concerns and aspirations, RIAC embarked on a three-phase consultation process that involved conducting a Stakeholder Consultation, a Public Consultation, and focus groups with Richmond residents. These discussions raised a number of issues including communication, awareness and attitude, administrative service as well as community conflict issues. These consultations will eventually lead to a vision, ideas, opportunities, issues and partnerships necessary for enhancing intercultural harmony.

RIAC then developed an Intercultural Strategic Plan which has become a guide and blueprint both for the City and RIAC in making Richmond a better place to live. The Intercultural Strategic Plan includes a vision for interculturalism in Richmond, that of making Richmond "the most welcoming, inclusive and harmonious community in Canada", along with guiding principles for action. It presents twelve strategic directions accompanied by suggested actions for implementation. It also proposes roles for the City and various stakeholders in promoting intercultural harmony in the community. As a result of this work, RIAC is in the process of exploring a number of initiatives designed to make Richmond even a better community.

Since its inception, the Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee has done a commendable job of acting as the eyes and ears of the community. It recognizes that the success of initiatives for promoting intercultural harmony depends on various stakeholders, including the City, working together.

To learn more about RIAC, please contact Lesley Sherlock @ City of Richmond, tel: 604-276-4220 or fax: 604-276-4052.

## SETTLEMENT

## Digital Ethnography Project Celebrates Immigrant Experiences

by Leslyn V. Johnson with Val Cavers & Leonie Sandercock

**C**ollingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH) has been working with Professor Leonie Sandercock of the University of British Columbia (UBC) to showcase its success in meeting the needs of the Collingwood community by providing a range of innovative and practical services. Recently, CNH collaborated with UBC's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) in an Urban Digital Ethnographies initiative. Digital ethnography involves using video as a research tool. In an urban context, it collects narrations, moving cartographies, "influential" maps, street noises, theatrical performances, voices, texts, animations, films and images.

The Collingwood project is modeled on the work of Dr. Giovanni Attili of the University of Rome who studied immigrants in his neighbourhood and the impact these immigrants had on those communities. Professor Sandercock thought that the Collingwood community was an ideal and along with Dr. Attili, designed a similar course at UBC. CNH provided access to individuals in the community who shared their immigration stories and SCARP students worked pairs to film the stories and produce short interactive videos. The women who participated in the project are originally from Chile, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The videos recount their settlement experiences and the way their lives have intersected with the Collingwood community.

The students completed their work in April 2005 and their videos were showcased at the CNH Annual General Meeting in June.

Professors Sandercock and Dr. Attili continued to film and are compiling this with some of the students' work into a 30-40 minute documentary film entitled 'When Strangers become Neighbors: the story of the CNH'. They are aiming to have this finished in time for the CNH's 20th Anniversary in November.

The Digital Urban Ethnography project is another fine example of CNH's ability to attract community partnerships. It also validates how immigrants impact their community and the work that community organizations do to ensure that immigrants are able to make this positive contribution. Speaking on behalf of CNH, Val Cavers says, "We're very pleased to showcase what we can do. The videos really hit home and we hope that funding agencies will take note of neighbourhood services and the magnitude of their impact on the community."

For more information about CNH, call 604-435-0323, email [info@cnh.bc.ca](mailto:info@cnh.bc.ca) or visit [www.cnh.bc.ca](http://www.cnh.bc.ca)



A family from Collingwood's immigrant community.

## Giving Hope to Refugees

courtesy of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

**I**magine coming home to find your husband and mother killed and your children gone. It is too much...you faint and when you regain consciousness you are in jail where you are subsequently raped and tortured. Your health becomes so precarious that you are taken to a hospital where someone pities you and manages to get you to Canada. Upon arrival you make a refugee claim, are recognized as a convention refugee and can stay. But what about your children?

After more than a year, you receive word that your children are alive! They have fled to a neighbouring country but are not secure. You contact the Vancouver MCC Refugee Office where staff help you to fill out the application forms to bring your children to Canada. They also contact the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure the safety of the children in their asylum country. Still you have no money for processing fees, pass-

ports for the children, medical examinations and travel expenses. Finally Citizen and Immigration Canada grants you a loan to cover these costs. Others provide the funds for you to visit them before the processing is completed.

This story illustrates the typical refugee experience: families being separated, children separated from their parents, spouses separated from each other, loss of family members, fleeing. Those that make it here are "safe" but also worry desperately about what is happening to the rest of their family. It is one story out of almost 1000 stories that MCC Refugee staff hear each year.

To learn more about MCC's work or how to sponsor a refugee family, contact the MCC office at 604-850-6639, 1-888-622-6337 from outside the Lower Mainland or visit [www.mcc.org/bc/refugeeconcerns](http://www.mcc.org/bc/refugeeconcerns).

## SETTLEMENT

# Providing Settlement Services in Campbell River

by Kathie Landry

The population of Campbell River is approximately 34,000 with a foreign born population of 4000. Recent immigrants come from a variety of backgrounds but predominately Vietnam, India, Philippines, and Central and South America. Providing settlement services in a small community is an extremely rewarding experience, although not without some challenges.

Immigrants often come to Campbell River because they have family or close friends here. Therefore, they don't always come to *Campbell River Multicultural and Immigrant Services Agency (MISA)* for immediate assistance. However, most newcomers eventually reach a hurdle that leads them to our door. In this small community we are able to establish trusting relationships with most cultural communities and close relationships with many of our clients. We are able to observe their integration progress over a long period of time, and continue to contact them about new programs or activities as we see they are ready to participate.

We have one part-time bi-lingual (Vietnamese / English) settlement worker and our Program Coordinator also provides settlement services part time. We employ language interpreters as needed to assist in providing services. Aside from assisting newcomers with numerous needs from filling in forms, making appointments, contacting immigration, Revenue Canada, and other government services, a big part of our work is connecting with other service providers and helping them to better serve people from diverse cultural backgrounds. This includes providing an interpreter dispatch service with 16 available languages. We participate in a number of community inter-agency committees to network with other organizations and promote understanding of the barriers and needs of newcomers. We work closely with teachers, public health nurses, daycare workers, employment counsellors and others to respond to the needs of the whole family.

For me, one of the advantages of living and working in a small community is that we know the other service providers, such as the ESL teachers, personally and are able to work collaboratively to assist a particular individual or family. Most government agencies provide services by telephone or on-line. Many of our clients need help accessing these services and understanding correspondence.

As a small agency, we are also very flexible and can respond quickly when we identify new needs or trends. On the other hand, with such limited staff time, it is difficult to spend the time necessary to develop stronger collaborations and partnerships with other community organizations.

As our name indicates, we are also the Multicultural Centre, delivering anti-racism programs and multicultural events. In so doing, we are truly a 'community organization' involving people from all backgrounds who are interested in multiculturalism, anti-racism and meeting people from diverse backgrounds. It is a bridge to helping the larger community understand the needs and barriers for many newcomers.

For more on MISA, its programs and services, you can call them at 250-830-0171, email [crmisa@crn.net](mailto:crmisa@crn.net) or go to <http://www.misa.crcn.net>.



MISA helps American seniors with their settlement needs.



Dad and kids often stop by during the Women's group.



At MISA the whole family is welcome!

## MULTICULTURAL HEALTH

# Meeting Multicultural Health Needs

courtesy of the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC

There is increasing concern that the health care system is less responsive to the health and health care needs of our increasingly diverse patient population. It is also a fact that immigrants and ethnocultural communities have different experiences in the health services system than other Canadians, even when they have similar medical problems.



Panelist discuss health issues relevant to a multicultural patient population.

With this in mind, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA's) Multicultural Health Committee along with many community partners, presented *Partnering in Health: A Multicultural Health Fair* during Multiculturalism Week 2005. The morning provided an opportunity for over 150 representatives from health care institutions, community agencies and immigrant settlement organizations to network, share ideas and resources and address critical concerns about the experiences that immigrants and ethnocultural communities have with Canadian health services.

Of particular interest were the panel presentations. These looked at relevant issues, challenges, and ways to address the access challenge in order to offer a future vision for culturally competent health care. The presentation topics were chosen for their content and focus and the presenters for their expertise on those topics. Presenters were:

- Chris Friesen, the Director of Settlement Services at the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS) for 12 years, who spoke about the immigrant experience in accessing healthcare.
- Dr. Soma Ganesan, a psychiatrist who came from Vietnam. He is a Clinical Professor at UBC Medical School Department of Psychiatry and Director of the Cross-Cultural Program UBC/VGH and spoke of his many experiences in practice and in the field.
- Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, an internationally recognized Health Services Researcher who is a professor in the Department of Health Care and Epidemiology in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC. She gave an overview of a national project on immigrant health and health care utilization in Canada: "Rethinking Disparities in Health Services Utilization by Immigrants".
- Dr. Sarah Bowen, Research Coordinator Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences, University of Manitoba covered the issue of addressing language barriers.

The afternoon was a well-attended public festival, with multi-lingual dialogue sessions on topics such as heart disease and diabetes as well as a range of interactive health related tests and activities. The Health Fair was a starting point. Further work toward a formal partnership framework among government, health and community organizations is underway, with the goal of accessible, culturally competent health care.

For more information on the Multicultural Health Fair and related projects, please visit <http://www.amssa.org/multiculturalhealthyliving/>

## MULTICULTURAL HEALTH

# Symposium Highlights Mental Health Care & Cross Cultural Challenges

by Stephanie Campbell

Immigrant & Multicultural Services Society (IMSS) has been working on AMSSA's Multicultural Health Project and experiencing a great deal of success. What we learned more about health issues in cross-cultural communities enabled us to organize a "Health Care and Cross Cultural Challenges" information session in Prince George. The idea was born when I attended a Health Fair organized by AMSSA in Vancouver. I was very inspired and began to think of the great need for a similar kind of health fair geared towards Northern communities.

We hosted our first Cross Cultural Information symposium in April 2005 with support from the Solicitor General Gaming Commission, The Canadian Mental Health Association, the Northern Cariboo Health Unit and AMSSA. The response from the community was so overwhelming that we unfortunately had to turn many people away.

The symposium addressed cross-cultural issues in health care with a focus on mental health. It was an opportunity to gather both service providers and the immigrant community together to voice their questions, concerns and expertise. Those who attended had the opportunity to participate for the full day. The morning focused on healthcare providers and industry, while the afternoon engaged the immigrant/refugee groups and the community at large in roundtable discussions. The discussion topics reflected typical challenges for immigrants and refugees in the settlement process that may contribute to stress, anxiety and mental illness. They included Job Search and Volunteering; Accessing Community Health Services; Intercultural/Intergenerational Conflicts; Communication within the Family and Healthy Lifestyles. Audience members posed many questions and were eager to participate so this created dialogue between the immigrant/refugee community and service providers in an intimate setting.

This symposium only scratched the surface of cross-cultural services. The information gathered helped us to identify the many gaps and increase awareness of the mental health issues within a multicultural society. Most participants felt this is a start and that more sessions of this kind are needed. Therefore, the idea of holding a health fair in the fall for the region is perhaps one of the best ideas that we could consider.

To find out more about IMSS and their work, you can reach them at tel: 250-562-2900, email: [imss.pg@shawcable.com](mailto:imss.pg@shawcable.com) or visit them on line at [www.imss.ca](http://www.imss.ca).



Participants at the Cross Cultural Symposium.

*“The discussion topics reflected typical challenges for immigrants and refugees in the settlement process that may contribute to stress, anxiety and mental illness.”*

## Story Time Meets Needs of ESL Mothers

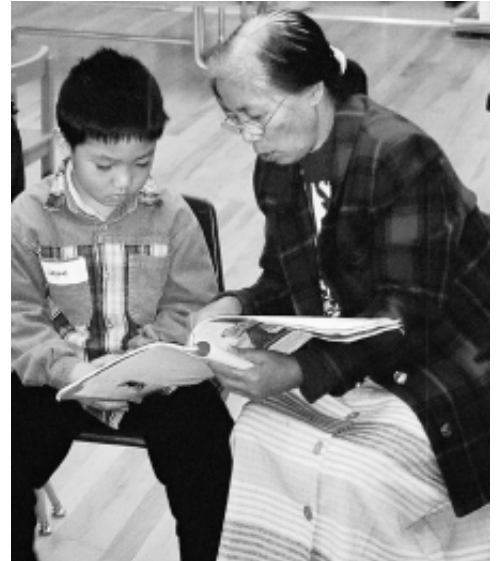
by Jean Maloney

If you were to drop in to the community room at Trudeau Elementary School in south-east Vancouver on a Monday or Wednesday morning, you would see a large group of ESL mothers and their young children having fun and learning together. Depending on the time of your visit, you might observe the children and their mothers looking at books together, or singing the words and doing the actions to a lively preschool song. You might see the children engaged in supervised free play or arts and crafts activities while their mothers socialize with one another or consult with the program staff. Or your visit might coincide with a guest speaker from the health department who is giving a talk on nutrition or child development or dental care.

The program is called *Story Time* and it is run by *Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS)*. It was developed in 2002 to meet the needs of immigrant women with very young children who are unable to access other programs and services due to the lack of programs that can accommodate families with children under the age of 18 months. Here is what one mom has to say about the program (translated from Cantonese):

*"My son and I enjoy the program very much. The most distinctive part of this program is that it satisfies the needs of both mothers and children. Before story telling, the teacher would hand out some picture books to the children and they would quickly become quiet. Then she would use lively and interesting methods to teach songs and tell stories."*

*This Story Time program is different from other story time programs because the teacher designs different situations to get the children actively involved instead of just listening passively. They are happy learning some stories. On the other hand, this program satisfies the ESL mothers' needs too. The teacher also arranges time to teach the mothers how to tell stories to their children. Because of that, our English improves and we learn so much about story telling techniques."*



Granparents also benefit from the Storytime program.

More than 85% of Trudeau school's incoming kindergarten children are ESL and many come from homes where little or no English is spoken. The school provides space for this program because they see many benefits to the school community: young children and their families become familiar with the school setting; the children learn important socialization skills as well as the foundations of language and literacy; parents and caregivers learn to use language and play to more effectively interact with their children and support their growth and development; families network and support each other as mothers, aunties, and grandparents share a common learning experience where all cultural groups feel at home. Ultimately, the program helps to ease the transition to public school for children, parents and caregivers and to prepare children for school success.

*For more information about this and other PIRS programs, contact them at 604-298-5888, or visit their website at [www.pirs.bc.ca](http://www.pirs.bc.ca).*

Mothers and their young children really get into this Storytime session.

# Kamloops ELSA Classes Teach More Than Just English Skills

by Trudy Dirk

**M**oving to another country is hard enough. But when you throw in moving to a small community and not speaking the language it's even harder. But immigrants who chose Kamloops as their new home in Canada are finding unexpected benefits. The ELSA classes available through *Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS)*

provide more than just English language skills.

Most classes consist of a mixed group of students - for example it is not unusual to have 15 students in a class from 11 different countries. These students often become good friends and meet outside of class. Some stu-

dents from Japan, Korea and Latin America have a developed strong friendship and often meet at each other's homes to share recipes.

However, the most interesting friendships are those that develop with students from various cultural, religious and language groups where the only common link is English. They often socialize together, and this leads to their English language skills improving greatly because they must speak English when they get together. Not so long ago two female ELSA students were leaving the agency and chatting, in English, about going to Tim Hortons for coffee. How Canadian is that!

The students also become very supportive of each other and this encourages a healthy community. One Costa Rican student started teaching dance lessons for a fee and her friend from the ELSA class who is originally from the Czech Republic, started taking lessons. Not that she could afford it, but she did so help out her friend as she started her business.

Students report that KIS is a place where they feel comfortable, and welcome by all staff and other students. At KIS they are able to access to many services such as settlement, employment, anti-racism and diversity, mental health, computer classes and ELSA all under one roof.

At Kamloops Immigrant Services, ELSA students learn much more than English language skills. Students learn a lot about themselves and each other. They share culture, food, information and what it means to live in Canada.

To learn more about KIS contact them by tel: 250-372-0855, email: [kis@telus.net](mailto:kis@telus.net) or [www.immigrantservices.ca](http://www.immigrantservices.ca).

## ESL for Refugee Claimants

by Darina Milovanovich

**O**ne of the unique aspects of the services provided by *Inland Refugee Society (Inland)* is the ESL program. Classes are held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and are available to all refugee claimants free of charge. The classes are for Literacy through to Level Three speakers, and are taught by a group of volunteer teachers. Most of these volunteers are well trained in ESL instruction and also have several years of teaching experience.

Many of the students attending the program do so for extended periods of time and are very consistent in their attendance, despite other pressures such as work schedules and childcare issues. They claim that the classes are invaluable to them because it gives them the opportunity to practice English for everyday life, and they are more than satisfied by the instruction and level of attention they receive from teachers. Some students who devote themselves to the program quickly move through the levels and find themselves volunteering with the program as classroom assistants or take on other roles. Abbas Roshan is one such volunteer. Not long ago, Abbas began studying in a Level One class with only a moderate command of English. With diligence and hard work, he not only advanced to Level Three in a relatively short time, but felt comfortable in his level of English to become a volunteer himself. He is now the assistant to the program coordinator.

The program at Inland is a great opportunity for teachers as well, who always claim to feel uplifted after teaching a class and get great of personal satisfaction in helping the refugee students. Many have been volunteering with the ESL program for several terms and some for years. The program has also opened up valuable job opportunities for many new teachers.

For students and volunteers alike, the ESL Program at Inland Refugee Society is a very special place.

You can learn more about Inland by contacting them at tel: 604-873-6660 or , email: [irsbc@telus.net](mailto:irsbc@telus.net).

## MULTICULTURALISM

# Celebrating a Multicultural Canada



by Marlies Greulich

**T**he *Multicultural Heritage Society (MHS)* was formed in 1974 as an umbrella organization for various cultural groups in Prince George in order to organize a new multicultural event to celebrate Canada's birthday on July 1. It was called "Folkfest," but in the early 1990 the government changed the name of the event to "Celebrate Canada".

During the past 30 years this festival has become a popular and well known community attraction in Prince George and surrounding area and an estimated 12,000 adults and children attend this one-day festival annually. Over 300 dedicated volunteers contribute their skills, talent and time.

One of the key factors that sets this festival apart from other events in our community is that there is no admission. Everyone is invited to this outdoor birthday party that is held in beautiful historical Fort George Park which spans some 74 acres and overlooks the banks of the Fraser River.

The festivities start with the official opening ceremonies and the serving of a huge 4' x 8' birthday cake. The main stage offers 12 hours of non-stop entertainment from a wide variety of culturally diverse entertainers. Kids of all ages are able to participate at the children's activity centre that offers hands-on craft making and face painting. There are additional attractions such as a craft fair, dunk tank and kid's merry-go-round

This festival offers great exposure and fundraising opportunities for a wide variety of community groups and service clubs. These groups provide information about their services and many sell raffle tickets. Ethnic groups operate concessions in the international food court and raise funds to cover the ongoing operating expenses for their own club activities.

The day ends with a sparkling fireworks display that people often compare to blowing out the candles on a birthday cake.

This community has gone through many changes over the past 30 years. The 1970s brought new pulpmills, sawmills, shopping centres that created employment. During the next decade there was a recession and consequently high unemployment. The new University, and economic recovery in the nineties helped things to improve, but the unemployment rate remained high. That is one reason why it is vital that admission to the festival remain free of charge so that all the families are able to attend.

Thousands the residents of PG and surrounding areas continue with the long established tradition of celebrating Canada Day, our country's birthday in Fort George Park.

*If you would like to know more about the MHS, you may do so by tel: 250-563-8525, email: [mhs.pg@shawcable.com](mailto:mhs.pg@shawcable.com) or [www.multiculturalheritage.com](http://www.multiculturalheritage.com)*

## MULTICULTURALISM

# Cultural Diversity Awards for Business

by Lenore Rattray

The Cultural Diversity Awards for Business strives to cultivate an environment that allows all businesses and organizations the opportunity to maximize the cultural diversity advantage in achieving business success. The awards were established by the *Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society (SDISS)* to recognize businesses in Surrey, Delta and White Rock. The 10th annual awards presented a world tour of cultural diversity.

"Embracing cultural diversity within the workplace is critical in today's global economy," says Lesley Woodman, Executive Director for the Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society. "Our organization initiated the Cultural Diversity Awards for Business ten years ago to give diversity-focused, forward-thinking businesses the exposure they deserve for pioneering excellent practices. There is no other event like it in British Columbia."

The evening featured:

- Master of Ceremonies: Rena Heer, Community Relations Manager – Channel M Multivision Television.
- Keynote Presenter Daniel Igali, Olympic Gold Medalist -2000 Summer Games
- High-energy entertainment spanning various countries including: Germany, Ireland, Punjab and Japan.
- A culturally-inspired gourmet menu.
- And, a captivating awards presentation recognizing businesses, operating within Surrey, Delta and White Rock that embrace cultural diversity as part of their daily business practices.

The winners this year represent the 'best of the best' in terms of innovative business practices. The 2005 winners are:

*Business 1-25 Employees:* **Sigma Logic Inc.**  
(**CulturalWeddings.com & IndianWedding.ca**)

*Business 26+ Employees:* **Boston Pizza - Fleetwood**

*Not-for-profit – General & Public Institution:* **SEEDS**  
(**Self Employment & Entrepreneur Development Society**)

*Youth Entrepreneur:* **Nisha Photography**

*Corporate:* **Westminster Savings Credit Union**

For further information, call SDISS at 604-597-0205 or visit their website at [www.sdiss.org](http://www.sdiss.org)



Left to right: representatives from Boston Pizza, SEEDS, Nisha Photography, Westminster Savings Credit Union and Sigma Logic Inc.

## MULTICULTURALISM



## Remembering Lilian To

BC's immigrant serving sector suffered a great loss on July 2, 2005 with the sudden passing of Lilian To. Lilian was the Executive Director at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and the organization grew by leaps and bounds during her 17 years at the helm.

Lilian's personal experience as an immigrant showed her the need for social service agencies that could help new immigrants navigate the process of settling in Canada and become integrated into society here. She joined S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in 1974 as a community worker/researcher and was elected to the board 3 years later. After a stint at the Langley Mental Health Centre, in 1988 she returned to the agency as the executive director and recently was the CEO.

Lilian was well respected by all who knew her, both in her personal and professional lives. Known for her boundless energy, she was a pioneer in the BC's immigrant sector, a tireless advocate for multiculturalism and social justice and remained active in various community organizations until her death. Lilian was passionate about her work and those who knew her appreciated her dedication and her ability to balance that with her responsibilities as wife and mother.

Lilian will be sadly missed by family, friends and colleagues. She is survived by her husband Chi-Tat To and sons Daniel and Nathan.

## Partnering for Multicultural Public Education

by Dr. Godwin Eni

In 2004, the *Vancouver Multicultural Society (VMS)* began a new partnership initiative aimed at improving its core mission of promoting diversity multiculturalism through public education. Although the Society collaborates with member organizations to undertake educational activities in the Lower mainland, it became clear that there are other interests and opportunities outside of the catchment area for creating public awareness in schools and communities. The "passages to Canada" program of the Dominion Institute of Canada provided such an opportunity.

The Passages to Canada Speakers' Bureau is a diverse group of immigrants and refugees who have been selected to share their stories about coming to Canada with groups all across the country. Educators and community group leaders can request in-person visits from Speakers' Bureau members to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of immigrant and refugee experiences.

VMS collaborated with the Dominion Institute of Canada in public presentations on Remembrances Day at Richmond High School. About 600 people attended the new immigrants to Canada event and all students at Richmond High School took part in organizing and carrying out several events associated with the Remembrance Day.

Although the Vancouver Multicultural Society is a non-immigrant settlement agency, the Society is nevertheless concerned with immigrant settlement as a value added service through public dialogue and seminars. More importantly, we partner with other organizations to provide a public forum for policy discussion and review. As an umbrella organization, VMS is committed to working with any group, agency or organization whose objective is to foster cultural harmony, promote anti-racism and equality within our communities.

To find out more about VMS, you can reach them at tel: 604-791-4648, email: [info@urbancultures.ca](mailto:info@urbancultures.ca) or through their website at [www.urbancultures.ca](http://www.urbancultures.ca)

*“Educators and community group leaders can request in-person visits from Speakers' Bureau members to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of immigrant and refugee experiences.”*

## YOUTH

## Arts and Social Awareness Workshop for Immigrant Youth

by JR Guerrero

From November 2004 to April 2005, the *Multicultural Helping House Society (MHHS)* mounted the *Strengthening Identity Through Creativity Workshop Series* in East Vancouver. It was in large part a response to discussions of racially motivated violence among East Vancouver youth, resulting from the 2003 tragic beating death of Jomar Lanot.



Scene from *Colourblind* performance, courtesy of Phillipine News Today.

The project's mandate was to empower immigrant and refugee youth by providing a safe space to explore and address issues and experiences of violence and discrimination. These workshops were based upon participatory learning models otherwise inaccessible through the Vancouver School Board (VSB).

The youth facilitators used the arts as their tool to facilitate discussion. Artforms included creative urban arts, such as spoken word, hip-hop, break dancing, and visual art integrated with traditional indigenous practices such as tribal drumming, martial arts and ritual dance.

One of the project's aims was to explore each participant's cultural identity so that they could openly share their cultures with each other. We found that arts-based programs provide for a unique and safe space to discuss sensitive subject matters in a non-confrontational, thought provoking manner. Arts-based dialogues also allowed for creative thinking that empowered participants and gave them to freedom to develop solutions.

The project ended with a youth-directed and youth-written performance that integrated the learning developed during the project. This performance entitled *Colourblind Youth Confronting Racism* was mounted at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It received enthusiastic feedback from the VSB, First Nations community, and many individuals who are interested in engaging youth. The project met its goals of expanding relationships and increasing engagements with different social service organizations, cultural communities, as well as arts and culture organizations. It also promotes increased social change and community empowerment by using arts and culture to nurture active citizenship.

We hope that the VSB will understand the importance of diversity in alternative arts-based education, and will adopt the model in the long term as part of a system-wide education plan.

More information on the MHHS is available by contacting them at tel: 604-879-3277, email: [info@helpinghouse.org](mailto:info@helpinghouse.org) or through [www.helpinghouse.org](http://www.helpinghouse.org).

## Closing the Generation Gap in Vietnamese Families

by Rosalee Vo

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH) has been working with Vietnamese newcomers for the past 10 years. In that time, we learned of the many strengths within Vietnamese families and also the many challenges they face in adjusting to life in Canada. One of the challenges that we hear about is intergenerational conflict. The children's Vietnamese language program was created as part of our Vietnamese settlement program, to help parents maintain a positive connection with their children.

The Vietnamese language program gives children formal language training and gives parents (and grandparents) a means to share Vietnamese cultural heritage with their children. Parents pay a small fee to send their children to the program; the fee is used to pay a Vietnamese teacher. While the children are in the class, the parents attend a mutual aid group where they can make connections in the community and help each other with any adjustment challenges they face.

Parents talk about how lack of Vietnamese language skills causes miscommunication and conflict among family members. Children are taught English throughout their school years, and quickly lose their ability to communicate with Vietnamese speaking parents and other relatives, mostly their grandparents. This causes a feeling of isolation among family members. It is important to the family well being that children maintain their mother tongue. Parents are better able to understand their children's emotions and feelings when they are expressed in Vietnamese.

Parents are very pleased with the results of our three Vietnamese classes that are offered in three different levels. They believe that it is extremely valuable for their children and families to reclaim their language and cultural roots in today's society. Parents also find that the program time is convenient because they can drop off their children for language class and at the same time they have a comfortable and friendly support group to talk about the challenges and rewards of parenting in today's society.

For more about SVNH, call 604-324-6212 or email [svnh@southvan.org](mailto:svnh@southvan.org).

## Ethnic Seniors and Volunteering

by Carol Lloyd

**A**lthough many seniors of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds donate their time and skills in various ways, most do not understand the concept of formal volunteer work as understood by the mainstream community. The 411 Seniors Centre Society, in partnership with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Multicultural Health Education Program, researched volunteer job design and strategies to involve and support ethnically diverse volunteers. Phase I of the Multicultural Volunteer Project looked at how ethnically diverse communities understand and practice volunteerism, then designed a program that uses the strengths of both mainstream and culture-specific models. The target populations were Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish-speaking, and Vietnamese seniors.

A total of 25 focus groups were held with seniors from each of the target populations in their own language. Three hundred sixteen seniors discussed their volunteer traditions, experiences, barriers, and insight into how volunteer programs could be structured to better serve their needs. We also gathered information from key informants and over 100 organizations serving immigrant populations, seniors and volunteers. A comprehensive literature review rounded out the research.

The results suggest mainstream organizations need to change their thinking and procedures to better support and attract ethnic volunteers. Current models are seen as “rigid, organization-driven” systems that create barriers for ethnic seniors who wish to volunteer. Ethnic senior volunteers value relationships and trust. Organizational changes must include cross-cultural training, a safe welcoming environment, and acceptance and appreciation of diversity. *Ethnic Seniors and Volunteering: Supporting and Celebrating their Valuable Contributions*, a comprehensive report of Phase I of the Multicultural Volunteer Project, is available for download at [http://www.411seniors.bc.ca/Contentpages/Multicultural\\_Volunteer\\_Project.htm](http://www.411seniors.bc.ca/Contentpages/Multicultural_Volunteer_Project.htm).

Phase 2 of the Multicultural Volunteer Project is a peer-outreach health information program that trains ethnic senior volunteers to deliver health related information and programs, then sends them out within their respective communities. The results Phase 1 were used to create a culturally appropriate volunteer recruitment and management model that we are piloting in the second phase. The target populations are Chinese, Punjabi, and Spanish-speaking senior volunteers.

The training material and workshops were developed in partnership with the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and other health agencies. All materials were translated into, and training was conducted in, the languages of the three target populations. To date, nine participants completed the full week of training, and six of them began their volunteer work as lay health promotion facilitators in



Spanish speaking volunteer facilitators conduct culturally specific health promotion workshops with their peers.

January 2005. Since then, they have remained enthusiastically committed to their work of disseminating health promotion messages amongst their peers.

For more information about the 411 Seniors Centre's Multicultural Volunteer Project, please contact Marta Gloria De la Vega, at 604-684-8171, or by email at [mgloria@411seniors.bc.ca](mailto:mgloria@411seniors.bc.ca).

*“Ethnic senior volunteers value relationships and trust.*

*Organizational changes must include cross-cultural training, a safe welcoming environment, and acceptance and appreciation of diversity.”*

## SENIORS

# Keeping Kiwassa Seniors Healthy

by Kathleen Leahy

Located in East Vancouver, *Kiwassa Neighbourhood House* serves a low-income community with a higher than average number of older adults and immigrants. The Seniors Health Healthy Community program facilitates activities 6 days a week for over 250 neighbourhood seniors, many of whom are Chinese and Spanish speaking. The multi-lingual staff coordinates on-site activities as well as outreach services that offer medical referral services as well as social programs.

For newcomer and immigrant seniors, adapting and settling into a new society can sometimes seriously affect their mental and physical health. Immigrant seniors also have extra barriers in overcoming social isolation. Although many of the program activities are designed to help seniors be well (chair exercise, swimming, sing-a-long, bingo, computer class, weekly lunch, cards and crafts) the focus is on seniors getting together to share friendship and support across cultures.

Many participants also choose to volunteer: a committed group makes Teddy bears and blankets as part of the "Adopt a Teddy" Program to send to children in war torn countries. Having faced their own struggles in their home countries and in the immigration process, these proud seniors are reaching out to offer children some comfort and distraction from the horrors of war.

Trained peer support volunteers distribute health information and referrals on a weekly basis at the local Community Policing Office, and regularly at neighbourhood health fairs and locations where seniors may live/gather. This work not only benefits those they help, but also greatly benefits the seniors themselves by keeping them active as a way to stop the isolation and loneliness that often causes poor health.

Ongoing workshops, and a monthly newsletter provide the latest news such as Handy Dart changes, community safety, housing subsidies or legal advice. There is an outreach health promotion to the most vulnerable seniors who cannot come in for programs, but who still subscribe to the monthly newsletter. One woman recently reminded staff to keep the newsletter coming although she no longer attends the programs due to extreme fragility. She feels less isolated knowing that someone takes the time to keep in touch.

Preventative health promotions include a regular visit from the local health nurse to provide blood glucose and pressure checks, with seasonal flu shot clinics. On many occasions a participant is referred to their family doctor and/or medical staff because of an identified concern. This early detection often results in prompt medical attention, and avoids medical crises. This preventative approach also reduces the costs of emergency services.

The community surrounding Kiwassa is fortunate to have these seniors setting the pace for what we all want: a caring community where no one is excluded because of age, and fun and learning is not only for the young.

To learn more about Kiwassa and its programs, contact them at 604-254-5401 or check out their website at [www.kiwassa.bc.ca](http://www.kiwassa.bc.ca).



Seniors attending the Gala Luncheon in Spring 2005.

# TOEFL and Occupational Coaching Workshops

by Carol Wutzke

For internationally trained immigrants, proving their education and experience in Canada and securing a job in their field can be extremely challenging. Many immigrants are uncertain how to convince Canadian employers that their experience is valid. Some internationally trained professionals have the additional obstacle of dealing with a regulatory body. The longer they remain unemployed in their field the more they lack confidence about their skills. This results in a loss of valuable skills to our local economy and labour market.

Vernon and District Immigrant Services (VDISS) provides an Employment Assistance Service to unemployed immigrants. We work with members one-on-one or in groups to develop a job action plan based on their goals. Landed immigrants and new Canadians can improve their employability by taking computer or job search workshops or an information session on Self Employment. We also help with resumes, cover letters, interview preparation, information on education and training opportunities, support with credential assessment/recognition, as well as an open computer lab and resource centre.

It is apparent, however, that many immigrants need more than a resume and job search skills to achieve meaningful employment. Based on the identified needs of members, we developed additional workshops such as Occupational Coaching and TOEFL.

Some immigrants may need to write the TOEFL test before applying to their regulatory body or to a university for upgrading their

skills. In the TOEFL workshop, the facilitator breaks down the components of the test, gives information on study resources, ensures participants are aware of registration deadlines and test locations, and encourages mutual support. The workshops are designed to help participants better focus and prepare to achieve a passing grade. We can also adapt this workshop for other English language exams (such as LPI) if needed.

Occupational Coaching provides professional terminology and information on cultural workplace norms. The workshop is for immigrants who are applying for positions in administration and management or have plans to set up their own business. The facilitator reviews business style language in correspondence and communication. Participants also discuss values, customs and taboos in Canadian workplace culture. The workshops help participants to feel more confident about their skills to communicate in a professional setting.

It is important that government funding supports immigrant serving agencies to develop programs that are relevant to members' needs. Internationally trained immigrants face complex barriers. Immigrants require programs that address these barriers so that Canada can benefit from their education and experience.

To find out more about this and other services at VDISS, tel: 250-542-4177, email: [vdiss@home.com](mailto:vdiss@home.com) or see them online at [www.futuresbc.com/CAP/IMMIGRANTSERVICES](http://www.futuresbc.com/CAP/IMMIGRANTSERVICES).



## PROGRESSIVE INTERCULTURAL

### Colony Farm Project

Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) is leasing a 20-acre parcel of land from GVRD at the old Colony Farm Park in Coquitlam for organic farming training purposes. This novel initiative is called the PICS Organic Training Centre. The objective is to set up a self-sustaining and fully operational organic farm where those interested in organic farming can receive hands on training.

Anyone interested in volunteering or being associated with this project can contact PICS at 604-501-3824.

## EMPLOYMENT

## Communication and Life Skills for Domestic Workers

by Carla Gillis

At the beginning of 2005, the West Coast Domestic Workers' Association (WCDWA) began a new program called Communication and Life Skills for Caregivers. The program runs four times throughout the year and is designed for live-in caregivers new to Canada who hope to improve their English-speaking skills, while also learning about Canadian immigration issues, self-advocacy, and employment and human rights.

Each 12-week course offers in-depth English language instruction and teaches them vocabulary particularly relevant to live-in caregivers. The class schedule is customized to assist live-in caregivers who are unable to attend traditional ESL classes throughout the weekdays—classes are offered on Sunday afternoons and Tuesday evenings. As well, the classes are multi-level so the course content is adapted to fit the needs and skills of all participants.

Aside from language, the program's unique focus is on Life Skills training. One of the program's objectives is to facilitate communication between live-in caregivers and their employers. Therefore, participants learn assertiveness and confidence building, negotiation, and job search skills. We hope to help make live-in caregivers more self-reliant.



By improving English language skills and learning about rights and self-advocacy, live-in caregivers become better prepared for future citizenship opportunities. They are also better able to assert their rights as employees and to broaden their employment opportunities beyond the Live-In Caregiver Program (i.e. the program through which live-in caregivers immigrate to Canada).

There can be no doubt that participants are receiving valuable tools, skills, and resources that will improve their working and personal lives. In particular, one student was finally able to negotiate with her employer and this has made a huge difference in her working conditions and emotional well-being. Some participants are simply happy to have a support network where they can discuss the multitude of issues that arise from moving to a new country, working with a new employer, and speaking a new language.

*More information on the WCDWA is available by tel: 604-669-4482, email:wcdwa@vcn.bc.ca or at www.vcn.bc.ca/wcdwa.*

## COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY

### Agricultural Workers Employment Project (AWEP)

Over seven years, more than 2,000 seasonal farm workers have completed the AWEP Program. The vast majority of these multi barrier clients have been Indo-Canadian seniors working in Lower Mainland agricultural farms. Numerous media headline reports highlighting the issues of exploitation, abuse and deplorable working conditions finally resulted in PICS launching this unique program with funding from HRSDC, in 1998. The clients benefit tremendously from the services provided by this program and it has resulted in better working conditions for them and a heightened awareness of their rights and obligations as seasonal farm workers. The AWEP Program provides services to 275 clients per contract and has met and surpassed all its contractual targets and obligations every year.

*For detailed information about the program, please contact PICS at 604-501-3824 or 604-596-7980.*

# Multilingual Case Management Services

by Lily Lim



Immigrant job seeker discusses his strategy with an employment counsellor.

For the last 14 years, *Immigrant Services Society (ISS)* has pioneered and continues to hold the unique distinction of providing specialized needs assessment services (now more commonly referred to as case management services) and employment counselling (i.e. career planning and job search assistance) for immigrant jobseekers in major first languages. This unique service is offered in various locations in the Lower Mainland.

What makes this service unique is that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) contracts ISS specifically to provide these services and requires that these be delivered by fully-trained, fully-qualified employment counsellors with the appropriate language skills. In addition, ISS is bound by quality standards or accountability measurements and is required to track and report outcomes for clients served in the designated languages of service delivery.

The scale at which ISS delivers multilingual case management services remains unmatched. In the last 14 years the program has served nearly 30,000 immigrant jobseekers. The three locations that currently provide this service are:

- Vancouver – 10 languages (Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi, French and English);
- Richmond – 5 languages (Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Hindi and English); and
- Surrey – 5 languages (Punjabi, Hindi, Cantonese, Mandarin and Korean).

Collectively, these programs serve over 6,700 clients a year.

Multilingual employment counselling is particularly beneficial for clients with limited or no English language skills who need to access employment, who want to achieve meaningful employment, and/or who want to maintain employment.

Seeking and retaining meaningful employment is a luxury for immigrant jobseekers with limited English skills. But through ISS' multilingual case management services, this minor miracle happens repeatedly.

To learn more about ISS, contact them at tel: 604- 684-2561, email: [info@issbc.org](mailto:info@issbc.org) or [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org).

## EMPLOYMENT



Enthusiastic new entrepreneurs on a visit to the Mission Hill Winery in the Okanagan.

## New Programs Help Immigrant Entrepreneurs

by Thomas Tam

**M**oving to a new country is never easy and, for new Canadians, establishing a business can be especially challenging. This is the main reason why S.U.C.C.E.S.S. started its Business and Economic Development Centre Vancouver in 1995. The Centre's mandate is to foster economic integration among new immigrants and local Canadians through the provision of Entrepreneurship programs, Market development and Social Enterprising.

Supported by both federal and provincial governments, in 2000 the Centre opened the province's only One Stop Business Registration for Asian businesses in the province. In 2001, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. launched a pilot project called Gateway to Asia with Western Economic Diversification Canada to promote BC exports to China. The project provides its 900 immigrant members with an import/export training course, networking opportunities with Canadian manufacturers and one-on-one counseling. In the first two years of operation, the project has recorded over \$16 million export sales to China from 26 individual members.

In response to the increasing demand for new immigrants for regional economic development information, our Regional Immigration Initiative has developed strong partnership with economic

development agencies and manufacturers in northern BC, the Okanagan and Vancouver Island. New Canadians can now explore business and career opportunities in smaller communities outside the Lower Mainland through our information sessions, FAM tours and one-one-on counseling.

The Centre has recently launched the new Business Links for New Immigrants Program to address the difficulty that the new immigrants face in obtaining bank financing because they lack a credit history. The program links new entrepreneurs with experienced business advisors and mentors to provide advice on preparing a business plan and applying for a loan. A loan of \$400,000 has helped start 26 -six new businesses during the first six months of this new program.

With an annual budget of \$1.4 million, the Centre serves over 7,000 clients through 20 professional staff and instructors, and over a hundred volunteers and mentors.

*Additional information on S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Business & Economic Development, is available by contacting Thomas Tam at tel: 604-639-5588, email: [ftam@success.bc.ca](mailto:ftam@success.bc.ca) or at [www.success.bc.ca/business](http://www.success.bc.ca/business).*

## Educating the Public about Human Trafficking

by Jenny Moss

**T**rafficking in human persons is a modern form of human slavery. The United Nations describes international human trafficking as the fastest growing, and one of the most profitable forms of transnational organized crime: many victims are subjected to force, deception or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Victims may be children, teenagers, women or



An image taken from the poster promoting the public education workshops.

men. Trafficking in persons involves several forms of exploitation: sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. All forms of trafficking involve serious human rights abuses.

The *Canadian Red Cross* is collaborating with the Canadian Council for Refugees to provide the public with accurate information on the phenomenon of human trafficking, and to build response.

On April 4th, Refugee Rights Day, a packed crowd gathered at the main branch of the Vancouver Public Library to hear the stories of trafficked persons as well as in-depth analysis from a panel of experts in the field. The panelists included Victor Porter (CCR), Naomi Minwalla, lawyer and active member of the Anti-Trafficking Coalition of Vancouver; two representatives from the RCMP "E" Division, Pari Ruengvisesh, founder of SWAN (Sex Workers Action Network) that partners with various organizations in her native Thailand, University of Victoria Professor Dr. Annalee Lepp, a co-founder of the Global Alliance Against Trafficking In Women Canada, and an expert on the issue here in Canada. Together they addressed the root causes of human trafficking as well as issues of enforcement, human rights and the legal barriers to the protection of victims here in Canada.

Subsequently the Canadian Red Cross hosted another session in early June to screen Gayle Ferraro's documentary film "Anonymously Yours" depicting the trafficking of women from Myanmar (Burma) to Thailand, and to discuss it in relation to the growing issue of trafficking in British Columbia. We agreed to continue the grassroots awareness campaign by holding workshops to build more knowledge, as well as discuss a public response to local needs. Workshops will be held in the fall and publicised widely.

For more information on upcoming workshops please contact: Jenny Moss at [jenny.moss@redcross.ca](mailto:jenny.moss@redcross.ca).

## Culturally Sensitive Media

by Shashi Assanand

**T**he *Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society (VLMFSS)* provides culturally sensitive services to immigrant, refugee and visible minority women and their families who are facing family violence. Services provided include individual and/or group counselling to women in situations of family violence and advocacy and support in their interactions with the legal and social systems.

Since 1998 we have been collaborating with organizations in Montreal and Toronto in an innovative national media project to develop and broadcast television and radio shows in eleven languages on the topic of family violence (child abuse, wife abuse and senior

abuse). The languages are Italian, Farsi (Persian), Punjabi, Cantonese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Polish, Tagalog (Filipino), Hindi and Japanese. Eight of these languages were done in partnership with People's Law School.

Community representatives including doctors, psychologist, lawyers and representatives of relevant government Ministries were invited to be on the discussion panels. The purpose was to ensure that members of minority communities have access to accurate information about what is considered family violence under the Canadian law and the implications for families when family violence occurs. Our focus has been to keep families healthy by preventing violence. With

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

## Public Education Workshops Promote Inclusion

by Leslyn V. Johnson with Alvaro Moreno

During the 1980s, the *Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)* identified a need to increase awareness around diversity issues in their community. In response, ICA developed a series of introductory diversity awareness workshops. As the needs of the community evolved, ICA continued to address them by creating additional workshops. Today, the workshops provide participants them with awareness and strategies that enable them to interact effectively with diverse people in their organizations and in the community. Topics for workshop or training programs include:

Self-Awareness /Diversity Awareness; Cross-Cultural Communication; Conflict and Culture; Anti-Racism Human Rights and Discrimination in the Workplace and Refugee and Immigrant Issues.

ICA's diversity awareness and anti-racism workshops bring together the personal and collective experiences of participants, and guide them as they explore diversity, discrimination and integration issues within their workplace of community. Workshops address the specific needs of groups and can be customized to suit any age, managerial or front-line staff, or any school class from elementary school to university. The sessions are experiential, interactive and fun. Highly skilled facilitators encourage participants to analyze their experiences and knowledge, and to share their ideas on how to promote mutual understanding and respect. Group activities help participants address issues relevant to their own interests, and encourage them to create their own alternatives for change. They also receive reading materials and handouts as part of their reference material.

Groups who book diversity awareness and anti-racism workshops generally integrate the material they learn in order to make their



Participants proudly display certificates upon completing their diversity awareness training.

workplaces and communities more inclusive. E.g. one agency updated its policy manuals to include cultural competencies. The feedback is also quite positive. The human resource coordinator of one community agency recently expressed great appreciation on behalf of her staff. She wrote "Some of the comments regarding the workshop were very interactive, very interesting and loved it, the presenter was excellent and good group participation. Thank you for your interest and the enthusiasm you brought to the workshop."

You can find out more about the ICA programs by calling 250-388-4728, emailing [admin@icavictoria.org](mailto:admin@icavictoria.org) or visiting them at [www.icavictoria.org](http://www.icavictoria.org).

## Project on Family Violence

the courtesy of Rogers Cable TV and Shaw Cable TV, the television programs were aired several times for about two years. These shows were broadcast over ethnic radio and television, allowing us to reach large audiences of these communities including those in isolated areas of BC.

Currently, we are working on the second stage of this project. We will be producing three videos depicting scenarios on wife abuse, child abuse and senior abuse. The videos will be produced in Chinese, Punjabi and Spanish languages with English subtitles. Once the videos are ready we will work with other multicultural agencies and service providers to hold workshops in various parts of the

province. Our goal is to start similar dialogues in other regions of BC. We want to ensure that immigrant communities throughout the province discuss family violence and develop alternatives to prevent violence in a manner that incorporates cultural and linguistic sensitivities. We hope to build capacity within these communities throughout the province and to inform them about the resources that are available, thereby, promoting healthy families and communities.

For more information on VLMFSS, tel: 604-436-1025, email: [againstviolence@vlmfss.ca](mailto:againstviolence@vlmfss.ca) or visit [www.vlmfss.ca](http://www.vlmfss.ca).

## Legal Aid LawLINE Offers Multilingual Scripts

*courtesy of Legal Services Society*

**R**ecorded messages for people who phone the *Legal Services Society's (LSS) Call Centre* and *LawLINE* are now available in eight languages in addition to English. Most callers who speak no English are given descriptions of legal aid services in their own language as soon as they call the toll-free line. The translated scripts are expected to open up LSS services to people in the multicultural community who might not otherwise call the society for assistance.

The greeting offers callers options for service in Arabic, Cantonese, Farsi, French, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, and Vietnamese as well as in English. Callers are also advised that, when a staff member answers the phone, they should respond by saying what language they speak. Staff will then set up a three-way conference call so they can continue conversing with the caller through an interpreter. LSS received strong support from multicultural agencies for translating the scripts.

• The **LSS Call Centre** ensures access to legal aid, particularly for people who live in rural communities where there is no legal aid

office, or who live with disabilities or face other circumstances that prevent them from traveling to an office. Staff at the call centre process applications for legal representation, refer eligible clients to lawyers, and re-direct calls to legal information and/or advice services, including online and print materials, community agencies, LawLINE, and family duty counsel.

• **LawLINE** staff provide low income people with legal information, referrals to other agencies, and brief legal services in the areas of poverty, family, criminal, and immigration law that are not covered by legal representation services. Brief legal services are those that can be delivered during or shortly after a telephone conversation. They range from legal advice or help with correspondence and documents, to phone calls or letters to third parties on a client's behalf. This assistance is available to people who cannot access alternative legal services and who meet the LSS income test for legal advice.

*To access the LSS Call Centre and LawLINE, dial: 604-408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free)*

### AMSSA's 2006 Multifaith Calendars

**Order your copy today!**

For more information or to place an order, visit [www.amssa.org](http://www.amssa.org) or phone **604-718-2784** or **1-888-355-5560**.



### mind buster answers

1. c. Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS)
2. d. 200
3. a. It recognizes that under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, refugee claimants are entitled to fundamental justice.
4. d. all of the above
5. c. 1993
6. a. British
7. e. all of the above
8. b. 22%
9. b. 16%
10. d. all of the above

## **Cecilia Chong** *Recipient of the Inaugural AMSSA Service Recognition Award 2005*



The annual AMSSA Service Recognition Award was established to recognize a staff member of an AMSSA Member Agency who has made significant contributions to the vision and goals of the organization and immigrant settlement/multiculturalism sector. AMSSA Member Agencies are invited to nominate deserving members of staff for the award.

Cecilia Chong is the recipient of the inaugural AMSSA Service Recognition Award. Cecilia was born in China and immigrated to Canada in 1973. By the early 1980s, she was volunteering in the office of the Chinese Cultural Society, and the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS). By 1983 she was a part-time Immigrant Settlement Worker at CVIMS, a position that eventually became her full time job.

Cecilia is an energetic and innovative networker, who believes in collaborating with other agencies and organization to create programs for newcomers. One of her first programs was a Sunday recreation one developed with Nanaimo Parks and Recreation. Now well established, the Sports and Games Bridging Evening program gives new and longer-term immigrants, as well as Canadians, an opportunity to socialize and have fun together. Cecilia designed the evening to be very inclusive, with activities from every one from preschoolers to seniors.

Cecilia also developed a Multicultural Women's Group, now in its 15th year, and Newcomers Clubs for men, women and youth. Her partnerships include Tillicum Haus, Nanaimo Museum and Haven Society. She is active in the British Columbia Settlement & Integration Workers Association, and known across Vancouver Island for her strong ability to connect people, programs, organizations and communities.

In recognition of her tireless service to the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society and to her community, we honour Cecilia Chong with the AMSSA Service Recognition Award 2005.

## **Mary Hill** *receives AMSSA Riasat Ali Khan Diversity Award 2005*



The annual Riasat Ali Khan Diversity Award was established by AMSSA soon after Khan's death in 2003 to honour his many years of dedicated service to multiculturalism, anti-racism and inclusion in British Columbia. Every year, AMSSA invites Member Agencies to nominate deserving British Columbians who have devoted themselves to diversity in their communities.

This year's award goes to Mary Hill – retired professor of social work at the University of British Columbia, pioneer in the field of social gerontology in Canada, and a founding member of the Canadian Association on Gerontology.

For the past 20 years, Mary has worked with seniors from ethnic backgrounds. While serving on the Board of the Harry Lin Chin Foundation - Home for Elderly Chinese, she became the Chair of the City of Vancouver's committee to Review Availability and Accessibility of Health and Social services to Diverse Ethnic Groups in Vancouver. In this role, she looked at whether ethnic seniors knew about or used community centres, health units and seniors' groups. The report, Access to Social and Health Services by Ethnic Seniors in Vancouver gave birth to the Vancouver Cross-Cultural Seniors Network Society (VCCSNS).

Mary has been involved with VCCSNS from the outset, served on the Board and, was recently President of the Society. VCCSNS is of pivotal importance to Vancouver's multicultural seniors, providing an arena where their voices are heard, and advocating strongly to government and service providers for culturally competent care.

Mary continues to build links among seniors of different cultures and to promote cultural inclusion. She participated in both Seniors Summits in Vancouver, organizing panels on diversity issues and encouraging the inclusion of seniors from diverse cultures. She was very involved in the recent Seniors Quality of Life Project, a national initiative to first research seniors' perspectives on factors that influence their quality of life, and then take action to address these factors. Mary ensured that Vietnamese-, Chinese- and Indo-Canadian seniors were included in the research, a major contribution to a balanced, representative study of the Canadian reality.

Mary Hill is honoured with the AMSSA Riasat Ali Khan Diversity Award for 2005 in recognition of these long-standing, extraordinary contributions to diversity and multiculturalism in BC.

# AMSSA Member Organizations

## North

Association des Francophones et Francophiles du Nord-Ouest (AFFNO)  
 Immigrant & Multicultural Services Society (IMSS)  
 Kitimat Multicultural Society  
 Multicultural Heritage Society (MHS) - Prince George  
 Quesnel Multicultural Society  
 Terrace & District Multicultural Association (TDMA)

## Interior

Boundary Multicultural Society (BMS)  
 Kamloops Cariboo Regional Immigrant Society (KIS)  
 Kamloops Multicultural Society  
 Kelowna Community Resources Society  
 Penticton & District Multicultural Society (PDMS)  
 Social Planning Council - North Okanagan  
 Trail & District Multicultural Society (TDMS)  
 Vernon & District Immigrant Services Society (VDISS)

## Vancouver Island

Campbell River & Area Multicultural and Immigrant Services Association (CRMISA)  
 Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS)  
 Cowichan Valley Intercultural & Immigrant Aid Society (CVIIAS)  
 Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)

Comox Valley Family Services Association (CVFSA)

## Fraser Valley

Abbotsford Community Services (ACS)  
 Chilliwack Community Services  
 Langley Family Services Association (LFS)  
 Mennonite Central Committee of BC - Refugee Assistance Program (MCC - RAP)  
 Surrey - Delta Immigrant Services Society (SDISS)

## Lower Mainland

Adult Learning Development Association (ALDA)  
 Association of Neighbourhood Houses of Greater Vancouver (ANH)  
 Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland  
 Burnaby Multicultural Society (BMS)  
 Chimo Crisis Services - Richmond  
 Collingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH)  
 Community Legal Assistance Society (CLAS)  
 Crisis Centre - Vancouver  
 Family Education and Support Centre  
 Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV)  
 Immigrant & Visible Minority Women of BC (IVMW)  
 Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS)  
 Inland Refugee Society of BC (IRS)  
 Jewish Family Service Agency (JFSA)

Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services Association  
 Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society (LMNHS)  
 Mission Community Services Society (MCSS)  
 Multicultural Helping House Society (MHHS)  
 Multifaith Action Society of BC  
 North Shore Multicultural Society (NSMS)  
 OPTIONS: Services to Communities Society - Surrey  
 Pacific Community Resources  
 Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS)  
 Progressive Inter-cultural Community Services Society (PICSS)  
 Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee  
 Richmond Multicultural Concerns Society  
 Society for Community Development (SCD)  
 South Vancouver Neighborhood House  
 Storefront Orientation Services (SOS)  
 SUCCESS (United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society)  
 Taiwanese Canadian Cultural Society (TCCS)  
 Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services (VLMMFSS)  
 Vancouver Association for Survivor of Torture (VAST)

## Provincial

Association of BC TEAL (Teachers of English as an Additional Language)  
 BC Association of Social Workers (BCASW) - Multiculturalism & Anti-Racism Committee  
 BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)  
 BC Heritage Language Association (BCHLA)  
 BC Human Rights Coalition (BCHRC)  
 BC Settlement and Integration Workers Association (BCSIWA)  
 BC Teachers Federation - Social Justice Program (BCTF - SJP)  
 Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland  
 Canadian Cancer Society - BC & Yukon Division  
 Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) - Pacific Region  
 Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - BC Division  
 Canadian Red Cross  
 ELSA Net  
 Gay & Lesbian Educators of BC (GALE BC)  
 Institute for Media, Policy & Civil Society (IMPACS)  
 Legal Services Society of BC (LSS)  
 SCOUTS Canada - BC/Yukon Provincial Council  
 Social Planning & Research Council of BC (SPARC)

