Immigrant Women’s Peer Support Program (IWPSP)

Presented by Ajlin Mehmedi, Women’s Facilitator
E-Symposium: Settlement Issues for Newcomer Women
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The IWPSP has been providing mental, physical and social support to immigrant and refugee women since 2001. The program is an initiative of ISSofBC and is funded by the VCH – SMART Fund
Program objectives

- Empower women by creating safe and supportive environments
- Provide a place where newcomer women come to break their isolation and forge new friendships
Program objectives

- Facilitate opportunities to exchange coping strategies and celebrate their strength and resilience
- Provide mental, physical and social support to immigrant and refugee women who are facing challenges integrating and adjusting to Canadian society
Challenges in the first 3 years in Canada

- Not knowing how to get started
  - Language barriers
  - Understanding directions and addresses in Vancouver
  - Public transit / Traffic / Driving
  - Finding housing and schools
  - Accessing information on services and resources
Challenges in the first 3 years in Canada

- **Feeling isolated**
  - Making new friends / Networking
  - Lacking cultural knowledge stops them from attending various events
  - Overwhelmed with child care needs and household chores
  - Being away from family, traditions and professions
Challenges in the first 3 years in Canada

- Settlement and adaptation
  - Culture shock
  - Career Planning and Job Readiness
  - Parenting and discipline in Canada
  - Sex education in school
  - Changing attitudes of men towards sharing childcare responsibilities

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Challenges in the first 3 years in Canada

- **Staying Healthy**
  - Finding time and motivation to care for themselves, specially singles mother’s
  - Learning more about health topics
  - Mental health and social stigma
  - Where to buy locally grown fruits and vegetables for affordable price