



# The Informal English Language Learning Podcast

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## EPISODE #2: EMPLOYMENT RELATED SUPPORTS IN ELL PROGRAMMING

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### Podcast Show Notes

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For newcomers, English language skills are an important factor in settlement and integration. Through language, newcomers can build independence and participate more fully in BC society. That includes finding and retaining viable employment. Employment services, referrals and resources are an important component of BC Settlement and Integration Services. So is language instruction that supports job search, readiness, and safety.

In terms of employment services, newcomers need knowledge of the job market, interview competency, workplace communications, understanding of employer expectations, skills for interaction in a culturally diverse environment. They need knowledge of their rights and responsibilities for increased safety and reduced vulnerability on the job. Some newcomers, like those with temporary immigration status, are not eligible for the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or LINC program. Those who are not eligible still need language instruction and practice. It's great for service providers to hear about external programs and resources for client referrals.

This podcast features speakers from 2 organizations that offer specialized employment-related supports in language programming. They are knowledgeable about BCSIS clients and their needs in language learning and employment-related supports. The speakers explain the ways their programs, which include informal ELL instruction, can support employment readiness, improve access to employment programs, support workplace safety, and job retention. They share program information and helpful resources that can be accessed by anyone, anywhere across the province.

Each program uses a flexible approach to learning that's responsive to current circumstances as well as emerging needs, which is essential in times of constant change. Each program uses active learning that helps students build confidence and self-reliance. They accommodate multiple levels of learners and support learners' unique needs. These programs combine language learning with a sense of community and belonging that reduces isolation. They have adapted to new technology and online delivery methods, which helps participants develop their own digital literacy skills. Service providers and newcomers all around the province can benefit.

**This podcast is all about specialized informal language learning and resources for employment related purposes.**



## Gord Lechner

### Director of the BC Federation of Labour Health & Safety Centre

Gord Lechner is the Director of the BCFED Health and Safety Centre. It's the largest provider of Occupational Health and Safety Committee, Supervisor, and Young & New Worker education in British Columbia.



## Emily Hunter

### Instructor with the BC Federation of Labour Health & Safety Centre

Emily Hunter has been facilitating the EAL Occupational Health and Safety course for the last 7 years. Her background is in adult literacy, teaching community-based English classes and trauma-informed English classes. She is currently working full time for MOSAIC on a two-year research project, supporting women of colour to find a career in the Senior Health Care sector.

**The BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) Health & Safety Centre** is a Centre of excellence for Occupational Health and Safety training in British Columbia. They believe that all workplace injuries, illnesses, diseases, and deaths are preventable. Their mission is to provide the education and resources necessary to participate in health and safety at the workplace to prevent injury, illness, disease, and death. To address traditional barriers to Health and Safety education, they have developed programs for Occupational Health & Safety Committees, Young Workers, Immigrant Workers (ESL) and Migrant Workers. The Centre is administered by the BC Federation of Labour, which represents over 500,000 members from affiliated unions across the province, working in every aspect of the BC economy. It's funded by WorkSafeBC, which is dedicated to promoting workplace health and safety for the workers and employers of BC.

**Gord Lechner and Emily Hunter** speak from two different perspectives about the BCFED Health & Safety Centre programs. Gord is the Director of the Centre, and Emily is an instructor. They describe their programs and the ways they support vulnerable newcomers. They highlight the English as an Additional Language Courses (EAL), which educate participants about workplace health and safety using an ESL curriculum model. Participants improve their language skills while learning about workers' rights and health and safety topics. The program is open to participants regardless of their immigration status, and there is no charge for the course, just a refundable registration fee.

Newcomers including temporary foreign workers often work in risky, unprotected situations. The EAL curriculum covers workplace hazards, injury prevention, how to refuse unsafe work, workplace chemicals, personal protective equipment, bullying and harassment, workplace violence, and first aid. The content has been simplified for students who have English as an additional language. Learners follow a workbook that becomes an ongoing takeaway resource for the future. English learning is embedded in the curriculum, with particular focus on vocabulary, speaking and listening skills. Emily creates a safe, comfortable, fun learning environment. She focuses on building students' confidence through techniques like small groups to practice speaking. This enables learners to speak up in the workplace if they see something dangerous. There is also some reading and writing. While there's a specific curriculum, there is flexibility to adjust; training is responsive to the needs of the class, and the individuals. For example, they respond to many questions about COVID-19, which is essential right now.

The training material engages a wide range of ages and levels of learners who gain knowledge that helps them stay safe. It's one of the most valuable ways of supporting and equipping newcomers in the workplace. An additional benefit is that the program reduces isolation by building connections and a community of learners. The course has been the starting point for enduring relationships among participants.

With the transition to online delivery, the program supports digital literacy, including learners with low digital literacy skills and limited technology. The program experience feels 'live' even though it's online. Newcomers anywhere in BC can now benefit from the free English as an Additional Language classes. Online delivery has resulted in greater inclusivity, for example women with childcare responsibilities. The program is open to learners from all immigration groups, regardless of their status. The English as an Additional Language Courses are a valuable referral opportunity for BCSIS service providers.

The Centre also offers Migrant/Foreign Worker OH&S Educational Sessions. In addition to the workplace safety benefit, the training reduces isolation by building connections and a community of learners.

The Centre has revised their program delivery model during the pandemic to ensure the integrity of their training while protecting the safety of participants and instructors. Some courses are available in a virtual delivery format. It's important to check the website or contact the Centre directly for updates.

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## GORD & EMILY'S RESOURCES

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### BCFED Health & Safety Centre Program Overview:

Learn about all the programs including OH&S Committees, EAL, Migrant Workers, Return to Work, Supervisors, Young Workers. <https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/programs/>  
Download the program pamphlet at <https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01/2020HSC-Courses-web.pdf>

**Decoda Literacy Solutions Resources:** <https://www.decoda.ca/advanced-search/?q=health+and+Safety&searchsubmit.x=0&searchsubmit.y=0>. The Decoda website includes links to a range of Health and Safety resources including **Building Resilient Workers: Health and Safety at Work**. This workbook is a collaboration between BCFED Health & Safety Centre and Decoda Literacy Solutions. Learners follow the workbook during the Health and Safety Centre EAL course, and it becomes their takeaway resource for the future. <https://www.decoda.ca/literacy-in-bc/decoda-projects/health-and-safety-curriculum/>

**Resources for Workers During COVID-19:** The BCFED Health & Safety Centre monitors the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), WorkSafeBC, Provincial and Federal Government and to some extent local health authorities and the World Health Organization websites on a regular basis to share the most current COVID-19 information related to the workplace. <https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/covid-19-resources/covid-19-information/>

**English as an Additional Language (EAL or ESL):** Find details about the English as an Additional Language Part 1 program, including the course outline. <https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/programs/eal/>

**Rights and Responsibilities:** BCFED Health & Safety Centre website offers a recap of four basic Health & Safety Rights that all workers in British Columbia have, including:

- The Right to Know
- The Right to Participate
- The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work
- The Right to Worker Protection in Relation to Prohibited Action

<https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/resources/rights-and-responsibilities/>

BCFED Health & Safety Centre directory of **Occupational Health and Safety Related Links:**

- Regulatory & Enforcement Agencies
- Health and Safety Associations
- Provincial, Territorial and National Organizations
- Post-Secondary Health and Safety Education Programs
- Other Canadian and International Links

<https://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/resources/ohs-resources/>

### Contact the BC Federation of Labour Health & Safety Centre:

200-5118 Joyce Street, Vancouver BC V5R 4H1

604-433-1453 or 1-888-223-5669 (toll free)

[ohsadmin@bcfed.ca](mailto:ohsadmin@bcfed.ca)



## Mark MacKichan

### Vancouver Public Library Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre Coordinator

Mark is the Coordinator of Vancouver Public Library's Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre, an online and in-person resource hub that helps newcomers to Canada explore careers, find a job or start a business. As a librarian, Mark loves to discover and share information with others. He's passionate about building vibrant community relationships and connecting newcomers with resources and supports that can put them on the path to meaningful employment in Canada.

**According to Mark MacKichan**, the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is a surprising place. It offers much more than you may expect. The library meets diverse needs by providing reading materials, family programming, access to information about employment and English language practice. A library card is a gateway to many great resources that can help with finding a job, learning English and more. However, many VPL Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre programs and resources don't require a library card and are accessible regardless of geography or immigration status.

Within the VPL, the **Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre** is an online and in-person resource hub that provides services and resources that help newcomers to Canada find the information they need to get a job, explore careers or start a business. It's funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Province of British Columbia - Welcome BC. All services and resources are created by staff at Vancouver Public Library and are free of charge. As Coordinator of the VPL Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre, Mark speaks about the role of the library in supporting career exploration, job search, and for learning English.

The Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre offers resources, workshops and events. The **employment-related digital resources** are wide-ranging, covering many everyday topics related to job search and to assist skilled immigrants. They include over 150 job-specific Employment Guides, a great starting point for any job search. These explain where the jobs are in B.C., expected salary, and industry associations. There are industry profiles to learn about the fastest-growing industries in BC and careers within these industries. Some regulated professions have a high barrier to entry, and internationally trained newcomers encounter a lengthy process to obtain local accreditation. Through the Alternative Career Guides, they can explore related professions that use their transferrable skills in aligned, lower barrier positions.

The InfoCentre hosts **workshops and networking events**, which now take place online. The weekly Career and Job Search Tour workshop introduces participants to employment-related resources and strategies, including networking skills that will help newcomers access the "hidden" job market. The monthly Career Explorer workshop is for individuals trying figure out what career is right for them. This workshop provides individuals with hands-on practice using tools and resources that guide them toward employment.

Geography is not a barrier. Anyone throughout BC can access job search resources on the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website that help newcomers find and retain employment, covering topics such as job search preparation, understanding workplace culture, and safeguarding from scams and exploitation.

Mark explains that the VPL offers a wealth of **supports that help newcomers develop English language skills** in conversation, listening, reading, writing and even business English. Their informal English Language Learning tools support learners through comfortable self-paced formats.

VPL has a comprehensive **digital library of online language learning resources**; these are free but most require a library card to access. Clarity English has interactive activities, grammar resources and practice tests to help prepare for English language tests like IELTS or TOEFL. Mango Languages is another great resource for self-paced learning of English or more than 70 world languages.

For many years, VPL has offered in-person **conversation circles** as informal gatherings where learners with intermediate English proficiency connect with other language learners for practice. Conversation circles that usually take place in person and are now online under the name **ESL Conversation Practice Online**. They are popular, and registration fills up quickly. Participants practice conversational English in a friendly, supportive environment from the comfort of their own home. VPL recently launched a new **Teen ESL Conversation Circle**. Teens aged 13 – 18 can connect with peers and practice conversational English together.

The Library offers an excellent **ESL and literacy resources information guide**, created and maintained by library staff, and available on the VPL website. The guide provides an overview of helpful resources for learning English, at the library, and in the greater community. It includes testing resources, books for English language learners, English Language learning kits, ESL schools and more.

VPL supports learners in the development of **digital literacy** and adapting to new skills. The library is a go-to destination for go for acquiring digital skills, from the basics, accessing e-books, email to advanced topics like web design and audio editing. As service providers move to virtual platforms, the library supports community members including newcomers with their digital skills. The library has virtual **workshops on how to use Zoom**. They offer access to Lynda.com for VPL cardholders. Learners can take online courses about a variety of digital skills useful in daily life and to build in-demand labour market competencies. The approachable, knowledgeable information staff at VPL provide individualized help with technology, both in person and remotely, and answer digital literacy questions. Some in-person services are currently limited to support safe social distancing in the library during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mark reminds listeners that in addition to VPL's resources, they can check with their local library, which can be a great resource.

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## MARK'S RESOURCES

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**The Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre** website provides free information to help newcomers to explore careers, find a job or start a business. The resources are available to everyone and include Employment Guides with detailed information about more than 150 career paths. <https://www.vpl.ca/siic>

Programs include workshops about job search strategies, small business resources, LinkedIn tips, and more. They also include events about a breadth of job search or small business topics while networking. These programs are free and currently take place on Zoom. <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/search/q=skilled%20immigrant%20infocentre>

**How to get a Vancouver Public Library card**  
[www.vpl.ca/librarycard](http://www.vpl.ca/librarycard)

**VPL's Digital Library** provides digital access to thousands of ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers, resources to support English language learning and more. <https://www.vpl.ca/digitallibrary>

**Clarity English** is an English language learning resource available through VPL's Digital Library. It provides interactive activities, practice tests and grammar resources that support the development of English language skills. <https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/clarity-english-language-learning>

**Mango Languages** is a language learning resource available through VPL's Digital Library. It provides more than 70 self-paced language learning courses, including courses for learning English available in more than 20 languages. <https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/mango-languages>

**VPL's ESL and Literacy Resources** guide brings together numerous resources to support English language learning, including websites, literacy resources, ESL schools, adult literacy learning centres and more. <https://www.vpl.ca/guide/esl-and-literacy-resources>

**VPL ESL Conversation Practice Online and Teen ESL Conversation Circles** provide informal opportunities for intermediate-level English speakers to meet others in a friendly environment while practicing English. <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/search/q=esl%20conversation>

**Books for English Language Learners** is an online book recommendation service. Users answer questions about their English reading level, past books they enjoyed, the kinds of stories they like to read and more, then VPL staff email them a tailored list of reading recommendations. <https://www.vpl.ca/survey/index.php/98427?lang=en>



**HOST & PRODUCER**

## Lori Cameron

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### **AMSSA Provincial Integration Program Manager**

Lori Cameron is Provincial Integration Program Manager at AMSSA, responsible for sector supports for BC Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS). Lori is passionate about sharing knowledge that will support and improve settlement outcomes for newcomers.