



# The Informal English Language Learning Podcast

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## EPISODE #3 VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTING SPECIALIZED LEARNER NEEDS 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. They reduce isolation, contribute to community connections and a sense of belonging. English skills are needed to find and retain viable employment, and for workplace communication and safety. Through language, newcomers can build independence in accessing services. English skills increase newcomers' ability to fully participate in BC society. These are objectives of the BC Settlement and Integration Services program, and why English language training is such an important service.

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 training. That's where informal language training comes in. It's why almost all BCSIS service providers offer Informal Language training like conversation groups and tutoring for English practice.

The flexibility of informal English training programs can be ideal for newcomers who are experiencing change and uncertainty. Training methods that are not as structured as LINC still help meet their needs. Almost all BCSIS clients are eligible for, and benefit from, Informal language practice. Supplementary resources and fiscal efficiency are vital to service providers as they serve many clients from a wide range of language levels, each with unique needs. Volunteers contribute immensely to organizational capacity with their skills, knowledge, capability, and dedication.

In this podcast, language instruction service providers who are experts in working with volunteers explain how volunteers are integral to their programs. They described how they recruit volunteers and provide orientation and training to make sure they get a strong start. They speak about the ways they retain volunteers through ongoing support, professional development, recognition and appreciation, and building a sense of community among the team.

Volunteers as well as service providers support literacy learners, newcomers with multiple barriers, and learners with low digital literacy skills. The podcast touches on improvisations made to program delivery during the pandemic, a post-COVID future that will likely include blended learning (in-person and online), in the context of the specialized needs of multi-barriered individuals.



## Janet Les

### ESL Coordinator at Chilliwack Learning Society

Janet Les has been coordinating the ESL Volunteer Tutor Program for the Chilliwack Learning Society since 2012. She also works as an on-call instructor for the Chilliwack LINC program and CLBPT assessment service. Janet is passionate about making Chilliwack a welcoming and inclusive community.

**Janet** speaks about the informal English Language Learning programming at Chilliwack Learning Society, and the diverse learners they serve. Chilliwack Learning Society promotes literacy for all groups and individuals in the community. They serve a wide range of clients who may be ineligible for other programs. Volunteers are essential to their “learner centered” approach. The Volunteer Tutor Program is a volunteer-based literacy outreach program. It’s informal with no curriculum, which allows for flexibility and responsiveness to client’s unique needs. Trained volunteers tutor and mentor adults and support their learning goals as decided upon by the learner. They work together in one-on-one pairs, in small groups, or when possible, in classrooms.

Effective volunteer coordination through recruitment, training, guidance, and support is essential. Matching learners with tutors, and tutors with programs is key to positive outcomes.

Janet shares her top resources for training volunteers, and for tutoring learners.

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## JANET’S RESOURCES

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### Resources for Training Volunteers

**Be a Bridge in Your Community:** The ESLSAP program was discontinued in 2009 but we still use it to introduce new volunteers to ESL tutoring. <https://mytrainingbc.ca/ESLSAP/>

**Creating Learning Partners** (Literacy Alberta)  
<http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/crlepa/creating.pdf>

**ESLSAP Tutor Handbook:** [https://mytrainingbc.ca/ESLSAP/pdf/ESLSAP\\_Tutor\\_Handbook.pdf](https://mytrainingbc.ca/ESLSAP/pdf/ESLSAP_Tutor_Handbook.pdf)

**Learning Together (Literacy BC)** is a guide to Community-Based Adult ESL & Literacy in British Columbia.  
[http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/lbc/learning\\_together/learning\\_together.pdf](http://en.copian.ca/library/learning/lbc/learning_together/learning_together.pdf)

**Track It Forward:** Used for recording volunteer time.  
<https://www.trackitforward.com/>

### Resources for Tutoring Learners

**ESL Library:** A subscription-based resource site for English language teachers, ESL Library has a wealth of well-planned and engaging materials for all levels of English learning.  
<https://esllibrary.com/>

**EngVid:** Video English lessons and quizzes for all skills & levels.  
<https://www.engvid.com/>

**ESL Games:** Used for Conversation Circles and tutoring.  
<https://eslgames.com/webapps/conversation/conversationQ.html>

**Fraser Valley Regional Library:** Digital Context section is wonderful for learners to access audiobooks, eBooks, Mango Language and more. <https://www.fvrl.bc.ca/>

**Learning Chocolate** is an excellent online tool for vocabulary development and review. <https://www.learningchocolate.com/>

**Scribd:** A large digital library of resources including ESL reading and resources. <https://www.scribd.com/>

**Side by Side:** All-skills program that builds students’ general language proficiency. Available to borrow from the Fraser Valley Regional Library and we have a good selection for volunteers to utilize.

**University of Victoria ELC Study Zone:** Excellent grammar, reading and vocabulary resources. <https://continuingstudies.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone>

**Westcoast Reader:** A newspaper and online resource for English learners. <https://thewestcoastreader.com/>

**Archives:** <http://www.bestofthereader.ca/>



## Paulette Corkum

### Access2English Coordinator, Archway Community Services

Paulette coordinates a community-based, adult literacy program which provides language instruction for newcomers in both formal EAL classes and informal English practice (ELL) sessions led by volunteer tutors. Paulette has embraced the role of an educator for most of her adult life and was formerly an ELSA/ LINC instructor in various community-based programs. Since 2007, Paulette has supported refugees both in her local community and in the camps along the Thai/Myanmar (Burma) border. She derives immense personal satisfaction from building successful connections between newcomers and tutors while providing resources and support to the many dedicated volunteers whose participation makes this program possible.

**Paulette** speaks about Archway Community Services' Access2English program. It matches trained community volunteers with adults who want to improve their reading, writing, speaking, digital or other skills, but are unable to access literacy or ESL classes or programs. Volunteer tutors are essential to the Access2English program, which is flexible and tailored to each learner. Paulette describes the ways volunteer tutors support the unique needs and learning goals of individuals such as upgrading their language skills to enter employment training, preparing for English proficiency testing, or meeting eligibility requirements for permanent residency. She shares successful approaches to recruiting, orienting, training and retaining volunteers.

Paulette shares the volunteer tutors' Top 10 favourite resources in descending order as ranked by the tutors.

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## PAULETTE'S RESOURCES

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### The Volunteer Tutors' Top 10

**1) ESL Library:** This website serves as a convenient learning platform for learners, who can complete and store assignments in their student account on the website. There are excellent ready-made lessons and assessments from pre-literacy to advanced. Search by topic or literacy level.

<https://esllibrary.com/>

**2) "Live" Worksheets:** Great grammar exercises for ESL learners from beginner to Intermediate. Learners are directed straight to the worksheet on the website from a link that tutors send to their email. Learners email the completed worksheet to the tutor already marked. Tutors set up a free account.

[www.liveworksheets.com](http://www.liveworksheets.com)

**3) ESL Fast:** There are many ready-made dialogues for conversation practice on a wide range of topics for late beginner, intermediate level learners. Also has hundreds of essays on a broad expanse of cultural topics for advanced learners. <https://www.eslfast.com/>

**4) Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab:** Learners learn common idioms in the pre-listening exercises, listen to short monologues and dialogues and answer comprehension questions in the form of "quizzes." Discussion questions are a common theme in the post-listening exercises. Transcripts can be downloaded for role play. <https://www.esl-lab.com>

**5) Bow River Valley Adult Literacy Books:** Short stories made for adult beginner learners using everyday language themes. Tutors can play audio to accompany the reading online or download the pdfs. <https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/esl-literacy-readers>

**6) Tutela:** Broad range of lesson plans, modules and activities based on Canadian settlement language themes. Search by CLB level or topic. Some units have H5P and SCORM activities ready to download. <https://tutela.ca/resources>

**7) West Coast Reader Online:** Current news stories, non-fiction reading for beginner readers, CLB 1-3. Teacher's Notes include excellent activities and answer keys. \$10.50/year digital membership fee. <https://thewestcoastreader.com>

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## PAULETTE'S RESOURCES CONTINUED

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8) **Read Theory:** Expansive, ready-made reading lessons, worksheets, and tests for intermediate, advanced literacy learners, with a broad range of fiction and non-fiction topics. <https://readtheory.org/reading-comprehension-worksheets/esl/>

9) **The Teacher's Corner:** There are free lesson plans and worksheets: search by theme or concept. Tutors can make their own crossword puzzles/games to download in pdf form. <https://www.theteacherscorner.net>

10) **Learning Chocolate:** Vocabulary games are scaffolded with a variety of different exercises to cover all four skills. Computer-generated assessments. <https://www.learningchocolate.com>

### Canadiana

**Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia:** This site has useful videos for newcomers to BC and many fact sheets related to health, COVID-19. CLB-aligned lesson plans for BC elections. <https://issbc.org/resources>

### Useful Videos

**Bob the Canadian YouTube Channel:** Offers a vast range of video topics, including grammar idioms and almost every aspect of Canadian culture. Subscriptions are free but not required. (Search by topic) <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZJTxA36ZPNTJ1WFIByaeA>

**Citizenship and Immigration Canada's YouTube:** Helpful videos for and by Canadian immigrants cover a variety of important topics related to settling in Canada. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC50bi5fNoYQk1lIWhfi3l4w>

**VOA Learning English:** This site has many comedic style videos for everyday English conversation practice, from beginner to advanced level. Search by topic. <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/>



## Karen Alvarez Torres

**Manager Language Training & Literacy Programs,  
DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society**

Karen has worked for over 15 years teaching ESL to International students, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) in Vancouver and Surrey, as well as managing LINC programs in Coquitlam and Surrey. As Manager of Language Programs for DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, she is focussed on ensuring that vulnerable newcomers facing multiple barriers to learning have the access and support they need to be successful in LINC classes.

**Karen** speaks about supporting literacy learners and multi-barriered clients, improvisations made to program delivery during the pandemic, and the necessity as well as difficulties of attaining digital literacy. The conversation touches on the impact of life circumstances on learning for different immigration groups, for example refugees. Karen notes the challenges that lower-level learners and multi-barriered learners experience in normal times, and during the pandemic. Technical competency is essential in so many facets of life. As a result of the pandemic as well as the times, that now includes learning, as we look toward a future that will undoubtedly include program delivery through blended learning. This presents challenges for low-level and multi-barriered learners. It highlights the need for digital access and equity, so everyone has an equal opportunity to learn and progress.

Karen's recommended resources include innovative, practical materials created by the DiverseCity team. Karen acknowledges the contributions of instructors Luyi Wu and Wendy Thompson.

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### KAREN'S RESOURCES

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**Needs Assessment for Literacy Learners**  
Needs Assessment - Sample 1

#### Foundation L/CLB 1 Links

**Teacher Tom:** The Alphabet  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgzHCuzVKb8>

**Phonics A-Z Mouth Shape** (sounds of the alphabet)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbO6vGBkx48>

**Mousercise:** Practice using a mouse.  
<http://www.pbclibrary.org/mousing/mousercise.htm>

**MonicaZesl:** Authentic ESL <https://monicazesl.com/>

**Club English: Sounds of the Alphabet**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b08tyfNfL7M>

**Jolly Phonics: Initial Sounds with Words**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LD7m3luv0Y>

**Kelly's Literacy Place** <http://abckelly.blogspot.com/>  
Study at Home <http://abckelly.blogspot.com/p/fatimas-page.html>

**Teacher Tom:** Pronouns  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcqPN727NZA>

**Bow Valley College ESL Literacy Readers** <https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/esl-literacy-readers#section-1318>

**Eye On Literacy:** Wordless picture books for adult ESL learners  
<http://www.eyeonliteracy.com/>

**Ms. Lana's Literacy:** <http://literacyesl.blogspot.com/>

**Starfall/Learn to Read:** <https://www.starfall.com/h/ltr-classic/>

**Liveworksheets:** Liveworksheets allows one to transform traditional printable worksheets into interactive online exercises with self-correction.  
<https://www.liveworksheets.com/>

**Learning Chocolate:** <http://www.learningchocolate.com/>

**REEPworld: Online Learning** <http://www.reepworld.org>

#### DIVERSEcity

DIVERSEcity "The Alphabet" access on dropbox here

DIVERSEcity Literacy Links access on dropbox here



HOST

## Alice Poudel

### AMSSA Program Coordinator

Alice is AMSSA's Program Coordinator. Alice supports the development and implementation of AMSSA's Settlement and Integration programs. In addition, Alice assists the development of resources, events, and tools to support capacity-building for BC's settlement and integration sector.



GUEST INTERVIEWER

## Bahar Taheri

### Settlement and Integration Project Consultant

Bahar has been working in the Settlement and Integration sector for over 10 years in a variety of roles. Bahar is community connector, a passionate advocate for newcomer refugees, and aims to make sure refugee voices are heard and included in program design and delivery. She is currently the Project Lead for the BC Refugee Hub, along with Newcomer.info, an innovative text message services specifically designed to reach newcomer refugees populations in Canada. Bahar collaborates with AMSSA as a consultant on a variety of projects.