

Supporting Newcomer Women Through the Shifting World



Post Covid-19 Pandemic



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Territorial Acknowledgment

As a provincial umbrella association, AMSSA acknowledges that B.C. is on the unceded homelands of First Nations who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We recognize the privilege that we have as settlers on this land, and acknowledge that AMSSA's operations is on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As an organization, AMSSA is committed to creating a safe space for Indigenous voices.

Panelist Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the following panelists who participated in the AMSSATalk "Supporting newcomer women through the shifting world post COVID-19 Pandemic". We appreciate their time and contributions to the development of this event and handout.

- Fatima Al-Samak, Director of Professional Development, *Mother Matter Centre*
- Mariam Bouchoutrouch, Executive Director, *Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS)*
- Khatira Daryabi, Social activist and student at the *University of British Columbia (UBC)*
- Zahra Esmail, CEO, *Vantage Point*
- Sandhya Ghai, Manager Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, *MOSAIC*

About the Event

The AMSSATalk “Supporting newcomer women through the shifting world post COVID-19 Pandemic” was held on March 6, 2023, at the AMSSA office in acknowledgement of the ongoing global resistance for women’s rights and in celebration of the 2023 International women’s day. The AMSSATalk hosted a panel of expert speakers who reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the gender inequalities and their adverse impact on newcomer women, specifically those who settled in Canada within the past five years. The theme of the AMSSATalk was to capture women’s resistance in various forms as response to the changes and inequalities manifested by the COVID-19 pandemic. The following statement of solidarity was released by AMSSA as part of the outputs of this event and is followed by a list of resources to support newcomer women in Canada shared by content experts.

A recording on the event can be accessed on the [AMSSA website here](#).

STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

Acknowledgment of the Global Movements for Women’s Rights and in Solidarity with the Call to End Systematic Gender Inequality.

A solidarity statement by AMSSA in celebration and recognition of the International Women’s Day March 8th, 2023.

International Women’s Day is a reminder to “imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that’s diverse, equitable, and inclusive¹.” The ongoing global women’s rights movements tell us that we can only achieve this goal if we act collectively.

This past year, we have witnessed strong leadership from women who have held the frontiers in resisting patriarchy, sexism, and gender-based inequality from Columbia to Iran to Afghanistan to other countries. We continue to witness women who have raised their voices against autocratic governments who impose sexist laws against their women citizens and subject women to state brutality and various forms of violence. Women have raised their voice against state control over their bodies and in defence of some of the most basic human rights such as the rights to education. The United Nations names the theme for International Women’s Day, March 8, 2023 (IWD 2023) as “DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality²” to reflect the role change, education, and technology could play for achieving greater gender equality. The Government of Canada has named the theme for International Women’s Day (IWD) 2023 as “Every Woman Counts³” to appreciate and celebrate the success of every and all women.

Although Canada is privileged in many ways, we continue to see an over representation of women amongst those who are subject to intimate partner violence or being sexually assaulted⁴ with Indigenous women and girls being 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other woman in Canada, and 16 times more likely than white women⁵.

¹ International Women’s Day 2023 campaign theme: Embrace Equity. (n.d.). International Women’s Day. Retrieved February 14, 2023, from <https://www.internationalwomensday.com>

² In-Focus: International Women’s Day 2023 in Asia-Pacific. (2023, February 9). UN Women – Asia-Pacific. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/stories/in-focus/2023/02/international-womens-day-2023>

³ Canada, W. and G. E. (2023, February 6). 2023 International Women’s Day theme. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/international-womens-day/2023-theme.html?wbdisable=true>

⁴ Adam Cotter, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, S. C. (2021, April 26). Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00003-eng.htm>

⁵ Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). 1a. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

According to Canadian Women’s Foundation, more than 1.5 million women in Canada continue to live in poverty⁶ and women continue to earn 0.89 cents of every dollar men make when working full-time and part-time and “64% of management jobs are occupied by men, compared to the 35.6% occupied by women”⁷. This is while the same sources indicate that more women have lost their jobs since the COVID-19 pandemic compared to men.

Existing forms of gender inequality in Canada intersect with the gendered health outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic – as the government of Canada has shared “more women have been diagnosed with COVID-19 than men”⁸. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in gendered impacts which according to the Canadian Women’s Foundation includes “increased risk of gender-based violence, more economic stress, increased burden of caregiving and housework, and reduced access to support services”⁹. These impacts have been faced more harshly by women from communities who already experience barriers to health and safety including indigenous communities.

If there is one thing to take away from the courageous revolution and the resistance of women across the world, it is the call to act for achieving greater gender equality and diminishing sexism within systems of governance and control. The everyday resistance of women who stand at intersections of oppression and overcome day-to-day barriers, whether as service providers or those in need of support, are an inspiration to our work to continue to strive for a more equal and equitable society in B.C.

AMSSA stands in solidarity with women across Canada and the globe fighting against systematic gender inequality. We acknowledge the barriers that various forms of gender inequality, whether in B.C., Canada or globally, places on the journeys of women who wish to call Canada home.

“The key is to support feminist movements, as they are always at the forefront of the struggle and will be the ones to sustain the changes achieved”

Giselle Carino, CEO of Fòs Feminista¹⁰

⁶ Howard, J. (n.d.). The Facts. Canadian Women’s Foundation. Retrieved February 14, 2023, from <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/>

⁷ Government of Canada, S. C. (2022, March 23). Canada’s Official Poverty Dashboard of Indicators: Trends, March 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022011-eng.htm>

⁸ Canada, P. H. A. of. (2020, April 19). COVID-19 daily epidemiology update: Key updates [Datasets;statistics;education and awareness]. Aem. <https://www.canada.ca/en.html>

⁹ Howard, J. (n.d.). The Facts: Learn the Reality About A Pandemic’s Effect On Women. Canadian Women’s Foundation. Retrieved February 14, 2023, from <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/women-and-pandemics/>

¹⁰ Latin American feminists vow to continue fight for abortion rights in 2023. (n.d.). OpenDemocracy. Retrieved February 14, 2023, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/latin-america-caribbean-abortion-rights-feminists/>

Additional Resources

As a tribute to women, the panelists would like to offer a list of resources that can support women in Canada in their everyday resistance.

Disclaimer: This resource list is developed and shared by content experts who were part of the panel at the AMSSATalk and is not an inclusive list of all available resources in BC.

ARRIVAL ADVISOR, PEACEGEEKS

<https://arrivaladvisor.ca/>

The Arrival Advisor app developed by PeaceGeeks is a third party app that offers available resources to support newcomers settlement journey based on location. It is free, and available in many languages.

BC NEWCOMERS GUIDE, PROVINCE OF BC

<https://www.welcomebc.ca/Start-Your-Life-in-B-C/documents/BC-Newcomers-Guide-English.aspx>

A province wide resource guide that offers a variety of information for newcomers to get started in BC based on categories of settlement needs such as housing, employment, education, legal support, etc. Users can access Newcomers' Guide on an app for their mobile phone.

BUILDING BRIDGES, PACIFIC IMMIGRANT RESOURCES SOCIETY (PIRS)

<https://pirs.bc.ca/programs-services/womens-leadership-development/building-bridges-2/>

One of the earliest and signature women's leadership development programs at PIRS, Building Bridges is a FREE 20-week program that aims to help immigrant, refugee, and newcomer women regain confidence and fully participate in the community as facilitators, leaders, mentors, and entrepreneurs. This program is aimed at skilled immigrant and refugee women interested in developing professional, entrepreneurial leadership skills and increasing employability.

Open to all migrant women, no status requirements.

CANADIAN WESTERN BANK BUSINESS INCUBATOR FOR WOMEN MAKERS AND CREATORS, DIVERSECITY

<https://www.dcrs.ca/our-services/employment-programs/diverse-entrepreneurs/>

Immigrant and multicultural women explore and develop business opportunities for their creative talents; get one-to-one support from self-employment specialists; learn business basics and operations at informative workshops; test out product or idea in the marketplace; build a peer network with other women entrepreneurs; receive ongoing support as you launch your business, either independently or in a collective business model.

CARE PATHWAYS FOR NEWCOMER WOMEN IN SENIORS CARE JOBS, MOSAIC

<https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/immigrant-employment-services-seniors-care/>

FREE employment program for visible minority newcomer women. This program provides training and help so newcomer women can find an entry-level job in senior care.

COAST CAPITAL CREDENTIALING PROGRAM FOR NEWCOMER WOMEN, DIVERSECITY

<https://www.dcrs.ca/our-services/employment-programs/credentialing-program-for-newcomer-women/>

Offers grant money to newcomer women (up to \$2,000) to:

- Get educational credentials evaluated
- Register for a skills proficiency exam
- Pay licensing fees to practise in their field of choice
- Register for a preparatory or a challenge exam

Program eligibility:

- Women newcomers (less than five years in Canada)
- Must be 30 years or older
- Must be residents of BC who are Canadian citizens, permanent residents or protected persons

COMMUNITY ENGLISH CLASS FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN, PACIFIC IMMIGRANT RESOURCES SOCIETY (PIRS), <https://pirs.bc.ca/programs-services/english-language-learning/>

Free multi-level English program to practice and improve English language skills, make friends, gain self-confidence, and learn more about Canada.

The trauma-informed approach and curriculum emphasize well-being, connectedness, and personal growth while equipping participants with the language they need to function in Canadian society.

Classes offered at convenient locations in Vancouver, Burnaby, Surrey, New Westminster.

Open to all migrant women, no status requirements.

COMMUNITY SERVICE ASSETS, CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

<http://newwestassetmap.ca/>

A listing of community services and supports, with an emphasis on low-cost, free and affordable services.

DRESSING SERVICES FOR JOB INTERVIEW AND EMPLOYMENT, DRESS FOR SUCCESS VANCOUVER

<https://vancouver.dressforsuccess.org/programs/dressing-services/>

Dress for Success Vancouver empowers women to achieve financial independence and personal success through full and fulfilling employment. They offer career services and workshops, professional women's group, and professional attire to support women in their journeys of career development. They offer 1 full professional outfit for job interview and 2 outfits for work.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE, THE SHOE PROJECT

<https://theshoeproject.online/our-program>

Participants attend 10 weeks of workshops led by one of the writer-mentors. She will work with each woman to discover and craft a story of her journey to Canada, shaped around a pair of her shoes. This is a collaborative process and workshop participants are supported by their peers. Once she has completed her story and shared it with the group, each woman begins the one-on-one voice and performance coaching. She may then rehearse with the group and bring her story to the stage.

GENDER-BASED ENHANCED SETTLEMENT PROGRAM (GESP), MOSAIC

<https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/settlement-help-for-newcomers/>

GESP supports newcomer families settling in Canada. It is free, confidential, and available for both men and women.

Open to permanent residents living in Canada or conventional refugees living in Canada. Provides all the information you need to settle into your community. Also offers discussions on gender roles in Canada and how to promote healthy relationships.

H.E.A.L. FOR WORK PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, DIVERSECITY

<https://www.dcrs.ca/our-services/employment-programs/h-e-a-l-for-work-program/>

Empowering survivors of violence and trauma getting into the labour market. Gain new skills and work experience to build the life you want in Canada with our online training. Takes an empowerment approach to career services for women survivors of violence or trauma.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

<https://www.successiwep.com/>

Immigrant and visible minority women entrepreneurs are empowered to establish and grow their businesses in British Columbia through tailored, innovative, and specialized services.

This program is for Immigrant women (landed in Canada for less than 10 years) or visible minority women, Permanent residents, Canadian citizens, or those in possession of an open work permit.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM, ISSOFBC

<https://issbc.org/our-services/immigrant-women-peer-support-program>

Peer support and leadership training programs for women.

LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (LEAD) PROGRAM, PACIFIC IMMIGRANT RESOURCES SOCIETY

(PIRS), <https://pirs.bc.ca/programs-services/womens-leadership-development/lead-2/>

LEAD program offers newcomer, immigrant and refugee women a space to focus on self-development, build leadership skills, re/gain confidence in creating connections and support network, and become active participants as well as leaders in their community. The usually 15/16 weeklong LEAD program starts in fall and continues through winter.

Open to all migrant women, no status requirements.

MULTICULTURAL WOMEN PEER MENTORING GROUP, SOUTH VANCOUVER NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE

https://www.southvan.org/program_category/community-programs/

Adult women and seniors looking for peer support through a positive support network and English-speaking practice.

MULTICULTURAL WOMEN SUPPORT GROUP, RICHMOND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

<https://www.rmcs.bc.ca/women/>

Multicultural Women Support Group meets once a month is focused on helping newcomer women:

- Gain self-confidence
- Learn more about Canadian society
- Become more involved in the community
- Discuss common concerns
- Make new friends
- Explore and celebrate their different cultures
- Improve their English

OUTREACH PROGRAM, PACIFIC IMMIGRANT RESOURCES SOCIETY (PIRS)

<https://pirs.bc.ca/programs-services/outreach-support/>

The Outreach Program offers ongoing one-to-one outreach support via chat groups or one-on-one messaging, phone calls and home visiting for new immigrant and refugee women in our programs, who are experiencing multiple barriers and require support to positively adjust to their new life in Canada (and the new social context due to the pandemic).

Open to all migrant women, no status requirements.

PATHWAYS TO CHILDCARE CAREERS, PACIFIC IMMIGRANT RESOURCES SOCIETY (PIRS)

<https://pirs.bc.ca/childcare-training/>

Free occupation-specific English training is ideal for newcomer women interested in entering the early learning and childcare field. Through the 14-week program, participants with intermediate level English (CLB 5) practice and develop their English language skills, gain childcare training with a trauma-informed approach, and develop pre-employment skills (e.g., interview preparedness and resume writing). The program includes 4 weeks of paid work experience.

Eligibility:

- Permanent residents, convention refugees or protected persons
- CUAET (to be confirmed)
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination required
- Criminal Record Check clearance

PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP, FROG HOLLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

<https://www.froghollow.bc.ca/programs-services/settlement/>

A 16-week empowering program for newcomer women with permanent residence status & newly naturalized immigrant women.

PREPARING WOMEN AND WORKPLACES FOR SUCCESS, MOSAIC

<https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/career-support-for-racialized-women/>

FREE employment program for racialized women. Provides women with paid employment readiness training, certifications, and financial supports to succeed in different sectors.

REPORT: ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR IMMIGRANT AND RACIALIZED WOMEN AND YOUTH

<https://achev.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/What-We-Heard-report-Advancing-Equity-for-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

A study conducted in the Greater Toronto Area on the employment barriers immigrant and racialized women encountered whilst pursuing entry to Canadian workforce, including the additional challenges of the global pandemic.

REPORT: SKILLED IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S CAREER TRAJECTORIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN

CANADA, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/bc-criminal-justice-system/if-victim/victim-of-crime/staying-safe/stv-directory.pdf>

A study that explores how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic impacted skilled newcomer women's labour market outcomes and work experiences.

STOPPING THE VIOLENCE, MULTIPLE PROVIDERS, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/bc-criminal-justice-system/if-victim/victim-of-crime/staying-safe/stv-directory.pdf>

Individual and group counselling for women (cis and trans) and people of all marginalized genders who have experienced violence. (Offered in Vancouver, Richmond, New Westminster).

TECHWOMEN, ISSOFCBC

<https://issbc.org/our-services/techwomen>

9-month, part-time pre-employment program that provides you with technical and job readiness training.

THE READY ENGLISH ACCESSIBLE FOR CAREGIVERS AT HOME (REACH), MOSAIC

<https://mosaicbc.org/our-programs/online-english-classes-for-mothers/>

Free Online English Classes for Mothers who want to better their English skills. These English classes for caregivers are targeted at mothers who can't attend in-person or live LINC English classes due to caring for their kids.

THRESHOLD MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH, OPTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES

<https://www.options.bc.ca/program/threshold-multicultural-outreach>

Provides support and empowerment if you have experienced threats, abuse and/or violence including sexual assault and historical sexual abuse.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS, MOSAIC

<https://mosaicbc.org/our-services/violence-prevention-and-support/>

Dedicated to providing multicultural support, counselling, and guidance for anyone at risk of or who are experiencing violence or abuse. Our confidential one-on-one programs and support groups help you build healthy relationships, get the support you need, and aid in your recovery.

WOMEN SURVIVORS RESOURCE NETWORK, VANCOUVER ASSOCIATION OF SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/6056345a650af1649fad654e/61bfc5795662f7055992d41c_woman-survivors.jpeg

Support group and speaker series.

A community of refugee and immigrant women from regions of armed conflict who came together in sisterhood to be resource to each other and to share the resource with other who are starting to call Canada home.

WOMEN'S GROUPS, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

<https://successbc.ca/community-groups/services/womens-groups/>

Social groups promote the inclusion and integration of women through activities that foster their active participation in the community. Each group, which is participant-led, organizes activities that are aligned to the unique interests of its membership.

WOW-WORKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN, FROG HOLLOW NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

<https://www.froghollow.bc.ca/programs-services/settlement/wow/>

Employment Readiness Program that provides newcomer women with training to pursue a career in childcare.

YWCA

<https://ywcavan.org/>

Programs for single mothers, and domestic abuse survivors, homelessness prevention and housing, employment programs/projects for immigrant women.

About AMSSA

AMSSA is a unique province-wide association that strengthens over 80 member agencies as well as hundreds of community stakeholder agencies who serve immigrants and newcomers, and build culturally inclusive communities, with the knowledge, resources and support they need to fulfill their mandates.

OUR VISION

A just and equitable society in which everyone benefits from social and economic inclusion.

OUR MISSION

AMSSA facilitates collaborative leadership, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder engagement to support member agencies that serve immigrants and build culturally inclusive communities.

OUR PURPOSE

AMSSA's purpose is to co-create the conditions of success for our members to build better lives for immigrants and newcomers to BC.

AMSSA's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan is an impact-driven strategy focusing on four pillars:

- 1 SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS**
- 2 STRENGTHEN THE SECTOR**
- 3 DISRUPT SYSTEMS**
- 4 EXCEL AS AN ORGANIZATION**

WE VALUE

EQUITY and strive to be the catalyst for change which disrupts systems promoting racial and social injustice.

INCLUSIVENESS and work with our members and stakeholders to place voices that have been marginalized in positions of influence, creating space for all perspectives.

INTEGRITY, striving to always work to the highest standards, encouraging innovation, risk taking and leadership; we are always open to new thoughts and maintain accountability in our work.

DIVERSITY, recognizing our own individual biases and engaging members and stakeholders in meaningful ways that promotes inclusion of all voices and perspectives.

MUTUAL RESPECT by respecting what everyone has to offer within their own context of life experiences, opening our hearts and minds to always listening and learning.

COLLABORATION, engaging in equitable partnerships, mindfully exploring old and new ideas to advance the work of AMSSA and our members.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION, engaging in continuous individual and organizational reflection and collaboration.

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