Jobs among the Trees

Silviculture training boosts job search for new immigrants

IN HIS NATIVE NICARAGUA, lawyer Rodolfo Arguello worked in the courts to support himself and his family. Now living in B.C., he has traded his briefcase for a hardhat and turned to the province’s vast forests for his livelihood.

Arguello is one of 19 men, chosen from more than 100 applicants, enrolled in a 20-week MOSAIC Employment Program silviculture training course. The men are new Canadians; many are professionals like Arguello who are unable to enter their field here in Canada.

"It is very difficult for an immigrant to be a lawyer here. I would have to go back to school" for retraining, Arguello says.

But he is not discouraged by his forced career change.

He says he likes the outdoors and the mountains where silviculture work is done. And he prefers to describe the work as "healthy" rather than difficult.

"Mountains and lawyers are not opposite," he says with a smile.

(continued on page 5)
MOSAIC musings

MOSAIC launches newsletter

By Vera Radio

Welcome to MOSAIC’s first newsletter. We hope this quarterly publication will keep you informed of what’s going on at MOSAIC and about important issues in multiculturalism, ethnic communities, immigration and refugee law and much more.

About one half of the publication will be dedicated to in-house news, the other half will be relevant local, national and international news.

But we’ve bent those rules for our first issue. We’ve included more than one-half in-house news because we’re taking this opportunity to explain to our readers exactly what MOSAIC is all about. Read about how MOSAIC came to being more than 16 years ago. Find out how a lawyer from Nicaragua found himself working in B.C. forests, and how a MOSAIC staffer swapped her desk job to tour B.C. high schools with a play she wrote about refugees.

Newsletter editor Ellen Saenger will gladly take submission and suggestions on how to improve the Vancouver MOSAIC.

If you wish to be on our mailing list, give us a call. We will distribute the newsletter free of charge, and would appreciate any donations to help offset printing and production costs.

Vera Radio is executive director of MOSAIC

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Did you know?

(...or “cultural insights from MOSAIC staff”)

Mexicans do not speak Mexican, nor to Chileans speak Chilean.

Spanish is spoken in Latin America - from Mexico and Central America to the southern-most tip of South America, with the exception of Brazil, where the official language is Portuguese.

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Campaign shoots for $50,000

By Ita Margalit

Bent over a huge steaming wok and sporting a “MULTICULTURALISM MAKES LIFE MMMMMARVELOUS” T-shirt, MOSAIC president James Barber kicked off MOSAIC’s first-ever fundraising campaign.

“This dish represents Canada’s great mosaic,” said Barber as he stirred the wok. “You take people from different origins, mix them up, and get a result that’s better than the original.”

With his usual clarity, Barber summed up what we do at MOSAIC and why. We’ve been helping to build this province for the past 16 years by providing assistance to newcomers because we know that the end result is a strong and diverse province.

But this investment in people takes money. And since the demand for our services has grown over 85 percent in the past three years, our investment in people will take even more money than before.

So MOSAIC is undertaking its first-ever fund raising campaign this year, hoping to raise $50,000 from the general public.

Though our needs are serious, we plan to have fun raising the money.

A major campaign event, The Night of 100 Dinners, is planned for the fall when some of the city’s finest professional (and not so professional) gourmet cooks will prepare 100 meals in Vancouver restaurants. Perhaps you will find yourself sitting around a table, rubbing elbows with prominent celebrities and partaking of fine foods. More on that in our next issue.

We will also contact our supporters directly, and develop new supporters

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THANKS!

Special thanks to donors who have contributed more than $250 each.

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Benefactors - $500 and over

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James Barber

Canadian Polish Congress

Guardians - $250 and over

Valerie Lambert

Duncan Parquharson

Thanks also to Paulo Frau of Arriva Ristorante, Paco Rivas of El Patio Restaurant and the Vancouver Folk Music Festival for supplying prizes for our membership drive.

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Views expressed in The Vancouver MOSAIC are not necessarily those of MOSAIC.

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Newsletter Editor: Ellen Saenger
Play makes refugee experience real

By Ellen Saenger

The four cast members of TRANSITIONS educational theatre group arrive at B.C. highschools carrying props, costumes and make-up in tattered suitcases. And in the few hours between unpacking and re-packing the suitcases, TRANSITIONS transforms students into refugees, policy makers, members of the press, apathetic citizens and Canadians concerned about immigration.

The theatre troupe is on a several month tour of schools, where students may feel untouched by immigration policy - untouched until TRANSITIONS arrives.

"People get all excited about refugees," says one Magee student who took on the persona of Mr. Lloyd Bell, an anti-refugee policy maker, in a role playing game that follows a 15 minute performance.

"If you hear one bad thing (about refugees), it doesn't take a lot (to get people angry about refugees), even if it's just one thing that effects you one little bit," he says.

Another student, playing the role of a refugee, decides to take the immigration officer and social worker hostage because, he says, no one will listen to his pleas to allow his family to join him in Canada. And one student, given the role of apathetic citizen, decides to support a pro-refugee policy, he says, because the anti-refugee lobby groups were lying to him. The details of the role playing game and discussion vary with each group. But by the end of the session, most students have a more positive attitude towards refugees and perhaps greater empathy for their plight, says Kathy McOuat, the MOSAIC worker who wrote the play. McOuat is also one of the four-member cast. She plays first a typical Canadian teenager concerned with clothes, weekends, and the latest rock group. Then the play moves to El Salvador, where her main concern is what to wear to a weekend party, until she witnesses her mother's kidnapping and has to flee for her own life to a safe haven in the north.

McOuat says the production gives Canadian students a chance to put themselves in refugees' shoes. "We're hoping to plant some seeds," and hoping students will begin to make connections with their own life and what is going on in the world, she says.

McOuat wrote the original play for refugee awareness week last October. At that time it was performed in three Vancouver schools by MOSAIC staff. "There just seemed to be a lot of response to it and urging by people to make it into a larger project," she says.

After several months of applying for funding, reworking the original play and rehearsing, McOuat and three new cast members, Victor Ruben Porter, Louise Bellemare, and Archer Mayling, have performed since April 13.

"We're hoping students will begin to make connections with their own life and what's going on in the world" —Kathy McOuat

Eric Wong, race relations and multicultural education consultant for the Vancouver school board, says he welcomes any program that deals with the issues of refugees and race relations.

TRANSITIONS "deals with the issues in such a way that is not propagandist but challenges students to make choices." TRANSITIONS puts students in situations in which they would usually not find themselves, Wong says.

He says an important part of the TRANSITIONS program is that it is more than just performance. There are pre- and post performance activities, and the students are involved in extensive role playing with the TRANSITIONS cast, during which they are forced to write immigration legislation, lobby for or against refugees, and justify their stance towards refugees.

Although Wong says he is very positive about TRANSITIONS, he warns that "no one program is a lifesaver. It will have no significant effect unless there are other programs."

TRANSITIONS is currently applying for funding to continue touring.

— Ellen Saenger is Vancouver MOSAIC editor
MOSAIC growth
(continued from page 8)

Aune says that the arrival of the Chilenans in the later 1970's changed the type of work she did with Spanish-speaking clients. The Chilenan new comers faced problems more like those of present-day refugees from war-torn Central America. Aune now devotes most of her time to Latin American clients.

Hemi Dhanoa, MOSAIC's Indo-Canadian worker, says that despite MOSAIC's constant changes, the basic goals of the early organizations are followed today.

"We were, and still are, a bridge for language and culture," Dhanoa says.

She was one of the original door knockers, studying the needs of the immigrant community and setting up the forerunner to the present-day MOSAIC.

"In those early days we had a very small office with no partitions or dividers. There was no privacy and the noise was like a little fish market," she says.

Since the fish market days, Dhanoa completed a social work degree while serving the large Punjabi and Hindi population. She has also produced award winning videos on multicultural issues.

Western Cable 4 recently received the prestigious national award for excellence in programming for "South Asian Mosaic," produced by Dhanoa.

Dhanoa's works out of MOSAIC's Grant Street office that now boasts 10,200 square metres of space. Community workers have separate offices, so they can discuss the personal problems of their clients in private.

Although the expanded MOSAIC now operates in spacious offices (compared with the partitioned cubby holes of past sites on Commercial Drive), workers still have a hard time meeting all the demand.

"When I go out of the office, I come back to so many phone messages that I just cannot answer them all," Dhanoa says. She says lack of money and steady sources of funding hinder expansion to fully meet the needs.

Dhanoa says there will always be a need for the services provided by MOSAIC, although immigration trends will determine how those needs will change.

MOSAIC's more than 30 full-time and part-time staff and more than 400 volunteers served 9,166 clients in the past fiscal year. More than 42,116 clients contacted MOSAIC that year.

By Ellen Saenger

Beyond the first step;
Task force to investigate problems facing Asian youth

Vancouver's Asian community has taken a step forward in its attempt to safeguard young people who are not protected by mainstream social programs in B.C.

A task force to deal with the needs and concerns of Asian youth was formed at a June conference on Asian youth. The Vancouver conference, "One Step Forward" came just days before B.C.'s Attorney General formally announced plans to spend more than $300,000 in a crack-down on youth gangs.

Asian community workers say they are pleased with Attorney General Brian Smith's so-called youth gang public education initiative. But they say the slick communications campaign will have little effect if Asian youth are not given alternatives.

"We appreciate the initiative, it's a positive first step," says Wendy Au, community recreation coordinator for Strathcona Community Centre.

"But our concern is that there is nothing at the other end," in terms of alternatives and preventative programs to integrate Asian youth into positive sectors of Canadian society, Au says.

She says there is a need for more bilingual counsellors, more home-school workers, peer counselling, pre-employment and job skills training and English as a second language (ESL) classes more suited to varying language levels.

At the Vancouver conference, the 150 participants from various social, community and government agencies outlined which issues the task force will address.

Those issues include lobbying governments for more funding of services and programs, training more bilingual and bicultural professionals to work with immigrant families and youth and to develop more comprehensive programs and services to meet the needs of immigrant families and youth.

Anyone interested in sitting on the task force should contact Wendy Au at 254-9496.

Take notice!

- MOSAIC needs volunteer interpreters. People with second language skills interested in doing volunteer interpretations for MOSAIC clients, please call Gosia or Kim at 254-9626.

- Korean Entertainers from Soeu, Korea, June 24, 7:30 p.m. at the Croatian Cultural Centre. Admission from $15 to $30. Sponsored by the Korean Society of B.C.

- MOSAIC Picnic for members, volunteers and staff, July 23 at John Hendry Park (Trout Lake) 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bring food, a blanket and musical instruments. We will supply barbecues and treats.

- Changes come to MOSAIC Translation Service. Our service is being reorganized to accommodate our client's needs for quality translations, with a faster turn around time when needed. We are also accepting all types of translation work - private, legal, public service or commercial. To ensure the best possible service, we now have a full-time staff for Translation Service alone. For more information call Megan, Guylaine or Paul on our direct line 254-2321.
(continued from front page)

Program coordinator Gordon Clay says the industry is growing and he sees a demand for well-rounded, well-trained silviculture workers.

Tree planting is perhaps the most high-profile job in silviculture, but can only provide employment for a maximum of six months a year.

The MOSAIC program graduates will be trained not only in tree planting, but also in juvenile spacing, brushing and weeding, fire suppression, cone collecting and pruning, Clay says. With a variety of skills, he says, the grads are more likely to find year-round employment.

"That’s part of what this program addresses; the changing industry and trying to overcome the seasonal nature of the work," Clay says.

The prospect of a full-time job was the main reason why Andrzej Kusiak, a 28-year-old Polish electronics and radio officer for fishing boats, applied to the program.

"I didn’t want to collect money from welfare. The program gives me a chance to work and to be more independent," the refugee claimant says.

Working in B.C. forests is similar to working as a seaman - it’s hard work and it means being away from home for long periods at a time, he says.

Tom Chavez, director of the Pacific Reforestation Workers Association, says crews working in the relatively young silviculture industry have in the past learned solely on the job. "That (way of training) has not proven too successful," Chavez says. Without training, workers get "no overall view of the industry and can be victimized by situations planters can fall into."

"We (the association) consider training important," Chavez says, although he admits there is a "wide range" of opinion on the importance of training in the industry.

The association frowns on on-the-job training paid for by workers. "We’ve been lobbying for more training," through CEIC or from other adequate educational instructors at no cost to trainees, Chavez says.

Linh Nguyen doesn’t have to be told that it is important to be a well-rounded silviculture worker. Originally for Vietnam, Nguyen came to B.C. after seven months in a refugee camp in Singapore and seven years in Ontario, where he worked as a tree planter. But, he says, he only worked for about three months a year in the Ontario forests.

"I hope for a permanent job in silviculture," he says.

Nguyen and his wife and two children came to B.C. in November, and Nguyen enrolled in the MOSAIC program.

He says that even though he has experience working in the Ontario forests, the training he gets from the program is about "70 percent information I didn’t know before."

Funding for the $208,182 program comes from a Canada Employment and Immigration Commission grant. The funding covers the operating costs of the program and a $250 weekly wage for each trainee.

The program includes 9 weeks of classroom training, taught by Todd Chamberlain of Surrey’s Lorax Forestry Ltd., and 11 weeks of work experience in the Coquitlam and Seymour watersheds.

In the field, the men get hands-on experience and a lot of one-on-one training from Clay and Chamberlain.

Clay praises the hard work of the trainees, who come from Nicaragua, Poland, Chile, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Vietnam.

"They appreciate how important forestry is to our economy," he says, himself a "woodchuck" who grew up in forestry towns and has worked in the industry all his life, just like his father and brother.

Clay says he wants to provide each trainee with the skills and understanding of how the industry works, to give them the best possible chance at the best possible job in the industry. And if there are future programs, he says, he would like to see women participating.

"It’s definitely a job women can do," he says.

Marios Paizakis, project manager for the four-year-old MOSAIC Employment Programs, says Canada Employment and Immigration approached MOSAIC Employment Programs with the idea for the silviculture program last December.

Paizakis worked through her Christmas holidays setting the ground work for the program, finding out whether it was viable for new Canadians and for MOSAIC. "We’re an inner city organization and this is in the forests," she says.

She had to get approval for the program from MOSAIC’s board of directors. She had to use reaction to the idea from potential trainees. The Ministry of Social Services and Housing had to be consulted since the trainees are welfare recipients.

Paizakis, who also oversees the numerous other employment programs offered by MOSAIC, says she will consider preparing a proposal for another silviculture program, depending on the first program’s success rate.

MOSAIC Employment Programs’ success rates are measured by placements - participants finding jobs. And if the success of other MOSAIC programs is any hint as to what the silviculture program participants can look forward to, more than 90 percent of the workers will find jobs after the program.

By Ellen Saenger
Refugee Council sees gap between needs and services

By Karen McKellin

Nearly 200 people gathered in Vancouver this Spring for the Vancouver Refugee Council’s first public symposium, an update on refugee needs and settlement services available in Greater Vancouver. And judging from a panel of three refugees talking about their own resettlement experience, council members have much work ahead of them. One refugee client on the panel said he was frustrated at not having access to vital settlement services, such as medical care and language classes. Others said they experienced fear, anxieties, anger and a sense of loss at having to adjust to a lower station in life.

Sharon Rusu, of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said that “the core of the refugee experience is trauma and loss - unlike immigrants they (refugees) have not had a chance to prepare for a new life elsewhere....Even after they reach safety, many refugees still experience a sense of extreme vulnerability,” she said, listing four stages in a 10-year period of a refugee’s adjustment to his or her new life.

“The refugee experience is a series of transitions ... and workers need to ask when is a refugee truly settled,” Rusu said.

The March symposium brought together community workers, volunteers, non-government organizations, interested public and representatives from the UNHCR and from all three levels of government, including then-Minister of State for Immigration, Gerry Weiner.

In his opening address, Weiner avoided his government’s controversial refugee determinations bills. Instead, he focussed on the partnership of community agencies and government and on praising immigrant/refugee serving groups working to settle new Canadians.

The Vancouver Refugee Council is a coalition of 30 Greater Vancouver immigrant and refugee serving groups. Its mandate is to improve communication between the groups, review and respond to government policy and develop public education programs.

Karen McKellin is secretary for the Vancouver Refugee Council.

New minister follows old steps

By Kathryn Ferriss

When Toronto-area MP Barbara McDougall was sworn in as Minister of Employment and Immigration in March, many immigration lawyers and refugee-aiding agencies said they felt McDougall to be more flexible and open-minded than her predecessors Benoit Bouchard and junior minister Gerry Weiner.

But highly publicized events since her appointment have shown that although McDougall may approach the refugee issue with more understanding and diplomacy than Bouchard and Weiner, she will not change the net results of the government’s refugee policies.

On March 31 McDougall took over one of the most difficult portfolios - and one of which Canadians are most critical.

The former minister responsible for privatization, who continues to be minister responsible for the status of women, now has the job of dealing with the 47,000 refugee claimants living here and waiting for a hearing to determine their status.

One of McDougall’s first jobs as minister was to deal with Turkish refugee claimants - part of the 47,000-strong backlog - who arrived in Canada in 1986 after being tricked by Turkish travel agents.

The Turks were inspired by rumors that Canada desperately needed laborers and that immigration would be no problem. Many sold everything they owned in Turkey to buy an airline ticket to Canada.

Most of the Turks had found jobs and established themselves in Canada, while their claims were caught up for two years in the refugee determination system.

The Turks were finally refused refugee status and faced deportation orders. On April 4, 1988, 125 of those Turks began a protest march from Montreal to Ottawa to draw McDougall’s attention to their plight.

McDougall, who represents a multi-ethnic riding in Toronto, visited the Turkish protesters while they were bedding down at a school gymnasium in Masson, Quebec, but was unwilling to cancel any deportation orders made against them. She told the Turks that she must be fair to all refugee claimants, not just those in the country, but also those in refugee camps outside the country.

Six of the Turks were arrested and given deportation orders during their return march from Ottawa to Montreal’s Mirabel Airport.

McDougall had initially indicated that if the Turks applied from their homeland for landed immigrant status in Canada, she would not stand in their way. But since the six deported Turks refused to report immediately for their expulsion, McDougall has said they should not be allowed into the country again.

Since the deportation of the six Turks, McDougall has continued to maintain that all fairness to refugees still outside Canada, the rule of law must be followed for those refugee claimants already here.

The new minister has also been handed the problems surrounding passing Bill C-55, the amendments to the Immigration Act concerning the refugee processing system, and Bill C-84, the bill to deter and punish those persons aiding bogus refugees to come into the country.

She has indicated a willingness to listen to the changes the Senate wants made to C-55 and C-84, and recently announced changes to the bills in response to Senate recommendations. But the amendments are cosmetic changes only, and do not calm the fears of those who say the safe third country clause will endanger refugees.

She has said that until the two bills are passed, she will not consider giving amnesty to claimants in the backlog.

The minister maintains that the bills are fair and just in their present form, and if doing so, she gives a signal that immigration policy under her leadership will not stray from the course under Bouchard.

Kathryn Ferriss is a Vancouver lawyer, and a member of MOSAIC’s volunteer board of directors.
When orientations are not enough

The story of Dr. Maria Daszkiewicz-Recizac and others like her gives new life to the overworked phrase, "catch-22." Recizac, a Polish psychiatrist who practiced for 16 years in Poland and Africa, spent nearly three years fighting to get the Canadian government to recognize her Polish training.

While she continued her frustrating struggle for permission to practice in Canada, a federal government task force recently completed two years of researching mental health issues affecting immigrants and refugees.

The task force found, among other problems, that practitioners unfamiliar with their patients' cultural background had difficulty treating mental health problems of immigrants and refugees.

"It seems like a terrible waste of resources," not to take advantage of foreign professionals in Canada, says Dr. Morton Beiser, professor and head of the University of B.C.'s Division of Social and Cultural Psychiatry.

Beiser, who chaired the task force, says "we should have a serious look at this issue (of wasting the talent of foreign professionals). There must be some way to facilitate re-licensing."

Recizac says before arriving here, she was told by immigration officials that psychiatrists were badly needed in Canada.

In Canada, "I tried to offer my experience working in the addiction field," she says. "But in drug and alcohol services, immigrants aren't seen as clients often because they simply can't communicate in the (local) language."

After more than two years in Canada Recizac went to MOSAIC as a client - a doctor who couldn't find work. But Polish community worker Maria Miodzik realized Recizac was a valuable resource to Polish immigrants with mental health problems.

So for 10 months Recizac worked part-time at MOSAIC as a Polish community worker. But she was unable to practice her profession; a profession that according to the federal task force needs workers with the cultural understanding she has.

The task force completed its report in May, but Beiser cannot disclose the recommendations until the Ministries of Multiculturalism and Health make public the report, perhaps in mid-July.

Federal task force finds mental health resources lacking for immigrants and refugees

But in a recent interview, Beiser discussed some of his concerns about the lack of mental health resources for immigrants and refugees in Canada.

The most common causes of treatment failure are language barriers separating practitioners and clients, practitioners lacking cultural sensitivity and a shortage of ethnic practitioners, Beiser says.

He says although interpreters are necessary, interpretation must go beyond bridging language gaps to include an understanding of cultural nuances and some background training in mental health.

"We have lots of stories of (patients) coming into emergency wards of hospitals and if they are lucky, (medical staff) can find somebody on the cleaning staff who can come in and interpret."

"Clearly we have to rely on interpreters, but we have to make some provisions so that training (in mental health and cultural awareness) is more appropriate," he says.

Beiser says immigrant and refugee receiving nations like Canada struggle with the question of how to provide services that are culturally relevant and sensitive without breaking the country financially.

"We're not calling for a whole new parallel system of care, which is what people are worried about...we're talking about retraining," for a mental health care system with built-in cultural sensitivity.

Although he doesn't have a dollar figure, Beiser says building cross-cultural awareness into the mental health care system would not be costly.

As Canada's birthrate drops and economic forecasters say the country should double its population, immigration has become a national priority, Beiser says.

"It's not just humanitarianism that dictates our letting people in; it's because we need them."

"We're very selective about who we let into this country," weeding out those with physical or emotional handicaps and allowing only those "who seem to be a good bet as far as being able to contribute to Canadian society," he says.

Starting a new life in a new country can put mental health at risk. But risk is not destiny, says Beiser. Circumstances surrounding integration determines whether one becomes a mental health statistic or a healthy contributing member of the new society..

Maria Recizac's story ends on a promising note. She has just been accepted into the UBC residency training in psychiatry, starting the long process of retraining in Canada. Once she is qualified to practice in Canada, she can officially help other immigrants and refugees to avoid becoming mental health statistics.

By Ellen Saenger

Latin American teens act their way to cultural integration

Participants of a support group for Latin American teens will use a role-play to demonstrate their new problem solving skills to a workshop for their parents.

The presentation by the 16 teens marks the end of 19 group support sessions with Esther Frid, family counselor at Family Services, and Roxana Aune, MOSAIC Latin American worker and registered social worker.

The teens suggested the role play, using experiences from their families, for the workshop to demonstrate skills and information they learned in the sessions.

At the June 29 workshop, they will present two plays; the first to show the way past situations were "solved," and the second to show the way those same problems can be solved by utilizing their new information and conflict-solving methods.

During the group sessions, the teens learned to understand life cycle changes, different social and cultural behavior, differences between Canadian and Latin American culture, peer pressure, the diffusion of responsibility and consequences. They learned about coping with conflict and stress, coming to terms with parents by cooperation, how to change attitudes by persuasion and how to understand communication barriers, sexuality, attraction and intimacy.
Profile

President Barber: Never on the backburner

Other people may read his newspaper and magazine columns, short stories and books, listen to him on the radio, see him on television or learn how to cook from him. But at MOSAIC, it is boasted, the man with an energy source that seems constantly turned on high is president of the 17-member volunteer board of directors.

What made James Barber, an engineerturned-writer, decide to devote more hours than he can spare each week to an immigrant-serving organization?

"I got involved through a chance meeting with Vera (Radio, MOSAIC executive director). She came to lunch at a restaurant that I was operating. I said I was interested in MOSAIC, and then I was working there. That's the way things go," Barber says with a chuckle.

That chance meeting in Barber's restaurant, where MOSAIC staff was meeting with representatives from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, was in early 1984. By June of that year, Barber had joined the board and quickly rose to the top positions. He served as vice president for the 1984-85 term and was elected president in September 1985. He has held that position ever since.

He has sat on several MOSAIC committees, including the one that oversaw the significant move from the former cramped offices to the current location in 1986.

And he continues to devote countless hours to ensure that MOSAIC will continue to function.

A self-described romantic, Barber came to Canada as an immigrant from England some 30 years ago. He gave up a career in engineering to become a writer.

Barber has always been active in community affairs, but he says joining MOSAIC marked his first involvement with a social agency.

"I guess I realize how absolutely necessary it is for Canada to somehow get people to be a part of Canada."

Strong growth doesn't over shadow grassroots

Each weekday morning on Commercial Drive the grocer on the Gravely Street corner displays fresh fruits and vegetables in cases on the sidewalk. The guitar and harmonica players gather outside the liquor store. And the second floor MOSAIC offices on the corner of Grant Street fill up quickly.

In becoming a virtual landmark on Commercial Drive in the last decade, MOSAIC has grown into a multi-faceted immigrant serving organization that is the largest of its type in Vancouver.

Thousands of Lower Mainland new Canadians each year find their way to MOSAIC. At MOSAIC they may learn job-finding skills, get counseling for legal or personal problems, get important documents translated, meet others in their age group who speak their language, learn English or learn how to complete their income tax form.

The new residents may be searching for tips on how to survive in their new country with its often bizarre customs, or how to live with the memory of past torture and repression from which they fled.

MOSAIC was born in April 1976, the result of a stormy amalgamation of two separate organizations.

The then-department of Manpower and Immigration demanded that Multilingual Social Services (earlier called Multilingual Information Service) and Language Aid for Ethnic Groups join to receive funding for what the department saw as complementary work.

The forerunners of MOSAIC started with a few workers, some paid through government grants. The workers knocked on many doors in the community, trying to establish, and then meet, the needs of the immigrant community and non-English speaking residents.

The agencies struggled from grant to grant. When there were no funds, staff worked for free.

Roxana Aune, a Latin American community worker at MOSAIC, started as a volunteer with the fledgling Multilingual Information Services. She survived the turbulent days of the amalgamation of the two groups that she said had different ideas.

The newly-formed MOSAIC was rocked with political wranglings as the two groups tried to shape the organization. Several coordinators, now called executive director, came and went, as did struggles between staff members, staff and boards and boards and coordinators.

When yet another coordinator resigned in 1982, board member Stan Knight took over as acting director. Aune praises Knight, who still sits on the MOSAIC board, for boosting staff morale and consulting with all concerned during a several-month search for a new director. That search ended when Vera Radio, MOSAIC's current director, was hired.

The newly-formed MOSAIC was rocked with political wranglings as the two groups tried to shape the organization.

Aune's job, like the organization, has jumped through many hoops of change.

The University of Rome, she served the Italian community for her first five years at the job. The Costa Rican native says her clientele at that time was mainly mothers with young children, and working men. The mothers needed basic orientation and parenting information. The men needed help with unemployment insurance claims, workers compensation etc.

For the next two years Aune juggled Italian, Portuguese (she taught herself at night), and Spanish-speaking clients before concentrating solely on Spanish in 1975.

Before the 1974 bloody coup by Chilean dictator Agosto Pinochet, Spanish-speaking clients were from Spain. Much of Aune's work involved transferring pensions to Spain, as clients went home to retire.

(continued on page 4)