y boss recently asked me to write about the significant accomplishments I’d experienced in our employment program department during the last year. My mind spun when I contemplated my choices.

I responded to her request promptly. “No problem”, I answered in my usual hearty manner, doing the standard MOSAIC thing of answering the phone with my left toe, while simultaneously writing my monthly report with my left hand and photocopying a proposal with my right. “Have it in to you in a jiffy”.

My job over the past year has been to develop and negotiate employment programs. From that particular perspective, it’s reasonable for me to focus on our department’s exuberant growth from one program in March 1996 to 8 programs one year later. Or perhaps I could try describing the feeling I had recently when I glanced around the meeting table at my 21 talented colleagues, all quietly working miracles on a daily basis, one way or another. Maybe it was time to interview one of the 650 successful program participants. The quiet dignity exuded by so many while they go about the business of starting over can still bring a lump to my throat.

Given the chance, I could describe the thrill of walking into our beautifully designed new location at 2555 Commercial Drive for the first time. Or I could find words to recreate the moment of extreme bliss I experienced when I first used the new-to-us photocopier in our recently acquired third floor space at 1522 Commercial Drive. Heaven!

Amidst all these pleasant recollections, I still felt I was overlooking something. I put on my runners and took to the track to see if I could jar loose the memory of my most defining experience of the last 12 months.

On lap one, I recalled that we had not only survived enormous change during the past year, but we had initiated it as well. We lobbied hard, both with current (HRDC and MEST) and emerging funders (Multiculturalism & Immigration). At AMSSA (more specifically, through involvement in the IICC), we spoke at length about the need for a sectoral response to many issues of concern such as the variations in salary levels among agencies, frustrating funding criteria, client confidentiality issues and the persistent "hurry up and wait approach" that has unfortunately pervaded national funding initiatives for several years.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
Sleeping in Times of Turmoil
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

By the end of the third lap and now heavily regretting the brownie I'd wolfed down at lunch, I had clearly recalled the rewards of some of those lobbying efforts. From the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, came two powerful results: namely, a survey conducted by Spigleman and Associates that attested to the immediate need for facilitating the entry of immigrants into the labour force, and a follow-up discussion paper released by the Ministry that initiated discussion on the specific actions that will support such labour market integration.

Thanks to the HRDC and MEST, we were able to reinstate our Director of Employment Programs position and develop a new one, that of Assistant Manager. We currently members of the IICC-sponsored “Employment Program Advisory Committee”, a committee designed to provide sectoral responses to provincial and federal funding sources.

"Boss", I wheezed through my clenched teeth on lap seven, “you don’t know the story you’ve helped unleash!”

Still, I needed to make one final choice: if I could only pick one crucial accomplishment, what would it be? It came to me on the last lap.

It sounds so easy, but it took me eight years to get it right and as many laps around the track to put words to it: I’ve started sleeping straight through the night again.

Over the last year, I finally accepted the fact that we may always face more unknowns than knowns in employment programs. No matter what form the crisis may take next week, we will quietly and confidently do the work we are meant to do, whether it be lobbying for contract reform or for easier access for immigrants into the labour force.

I headed home, both lighter and fleeter of foot, with the article virtually written in my mind. Now, during tomorrow night’s walk, maybe I could start planning the long-awaited, much-anticipated all staff message I’d been meaning to leave dealing with innovative uses for plastic sheet protectors in the workplace. Let’s see......
ver the past year, MOSAIC has witnessed an alarming increase in poverty within the communities that we serve. Unemployment, underemployment, a lack of affordable housing, hunger and homelessness, are issues that our front-line workers are dealing with on a daily basis. Our clients not only suffer from income poverty, but also from a poverty of choices and opportunities.

In response to this alarming trend, MOSAIC put out a call to our community partners to begin a discussion about what we could do, as a collective, to address these issues. In February 1997, MOSAIC called the first meeting of the Working Group on Poverty, with wide representation from the community: twenty-five funders, banks, anti-poverty groups, mainstream organizations, immigrant and refugee agencies, Health, Provincal, Federal and City levels of Government, Education and Youth. We met and discussed how we might effect legislative change and have impact on policy. Our focus was immigrant and refugee groups with an emphasis on women and children.

Now, six months later, the Working Group meets regularly on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing issues and to coordinate the two Special Events coming up in the Fall 1997: October 17, 1997 has been designated the International Day to Eliminate Poverty; and, on October 18, 1997 we will hold a March to focus attention on the "Social Costs of Poverty." In addition, on November 21, 1997, we will host a One Day Forum at the

People's Summit with the theme: "People vs Poverty Who Will Win?"

Despite the fact that the battle against poverty seems daunting at times, we are able to look back over the past few months and see the tangible results of our advocacy efforts. In July, on behalf of the Working Group and with representatives from the Coalition of Somali Counselors, we met with the Honorable Dennis Streifel, Minister of Human Resources, to plead the case of Convention Refugees and their inability to access Regular Income Assistance and employment training programs. This policy is now under review. In July, we were one of many groups who wrote to the Vancouver School Board to protest the recent cuts to inner city schools. We were also able to obtain funding from the Vancouver Foundation and B.C. Multiculturalism and Immigration to hire a Coordinator to assist the Working Group in the development of an Action Plan and to coordinate the Special Events. In addition, we are working with the Immigration and Policy Branch to conduct research on income poverty and immigrants.

Over the next several months we will continue our work to develop a network for the Lower Mainland and ask Governments to consider the long term cost of not providing for those most in need.

To find out more about the Working Group on Poverty, please call John Argue, Coordinator for the WGOP at 254-0244 (local 254).
MOSAIC's FAMILY PROGRAMS

Lesley Anderson,
Coordinator, Family Programs

Family programs at MOSAIC enhance the ability of families to provide for healthy development, well-being and safety. Our activities sustain the protection of children and decrease the effect of challenging circumstances. We work in 4 different ethnic communities - Latin American, Somali, Vietnamese and Kurdish.

The goal of these programs is to offer support to women and children - the most vulnerable members of the community. Our aim is to enable women to bear and raise healthy, capable children while meeting their own needs for emotional and community connections, information, resources and income.

The challenges the women face who participate in our programs are enormous. They may struggle with poverty, unemployment, isolation, inadequate housing, large families, little or no English, a new culture and social system, abusive partners, and single parenting, but they display great courage, resilience and above all a tremendous capacity to survive and succeed.

Family Programs provides skilled intake and referral services, interpretation and family support work, and facilitated peer support groups with childcare and transportation costs provided. Groups focus on parenting, health and safety, pre-natal and post-partum care.

Our programs are run in partnership with other support services in Vancouver East: East and North Health Units, BC Women's Hospital, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, Cedar Cottage, Collingwood, Mount Pleasant, and Little Mountain Neighbourhood Houses, East Side Family Place, Strathcona and Britannia Community Centres. These partnerships help to provide an essential support network in an environment of diminishing resources.

...partnerships help to provide an essential support network in an environment of diminishing resources.

The Somali program, staffed by one part-time worker, serves an average of 20 families / month with referral and support services, and 14 women as participants in ongoing group programs. This year the program will focus on women’s reproductive health with a pre-natal and post-partum drop-in group, and a community development project to assess women’s needs and begin to build a culturally sensitive health care network for the community.

The Latin American program employs one full-time and one half-time staff person to work with over 66 program participants per month, and an average of 77 women who require intake and referral services. The program focuses on peer support groups and community development. Groups focus on prenatal and post partum health, parenting, women's lifskills, and community economic development. This year a group of women will learn all the necessary skills to begin their own food buying club.

Two Vietnamese programs serve an average of 57 families per month and provide referral services to 75 others. Our Family counselor works with women and their families in the Strathcona - Mount Pleasant area by providing counseling and group programs. In Grandview Woodlands groups focus on settlement issues, parenting, pre and post-natal care. Volunteers help to facilitate groups, organize activities and fundraise for new projects.

The Kurdish community is relatively new in Vancouver and still working on settlement issues. Many women from this group are illiterate and have identified their need to learn to read and write English as crucial. Language classes that combine parenting and community resources have been developed to meet these women’s needs. One part-time community worker enables an average of 12 women to participate in one of three 10 week sessions per year. Per month 35 families call for referral and support services.

All these programs provide crucial links for women and families within their own communities and to the wider network of resources and systems.

By enabling women to come together to identify their needs, learn new skills and develop ways to manage their many challenges, Family Programs plays a key role in building healthy and successful families and communities.

We would like to thank our funders: Health Canada - CAPC; Ministry of Human Resources; B.C. Settlement and Multiculturalism; the Vancouver Foundation; and, CIDA for their generous support of these programs.
PARALEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

Nasser Amiri
Paralegal Advocate

Picture this: a mother of three young children is unfamiliar with the law governing landed immigrants in Canada. Leaving them, she visits her native country. But then she isn’t able to regain access to Canada—or to her family.

While she reapplies for her status, the father struggles to both work and raise the children. Add to this that the family’s eight-year-old son is admitted into surgery at Children’s Hospital. This family contacted MOSAIC’s Paralegal Advocate, who began a lengthy correspondence with both the High Commission and Immigration Canada on their behalf, and expedited their reunification.

Welfare assistance gets denied to a mother of a ten-day old child because of a report at the Ministry that she is living with her boyfriend. The fuller story? For over a month she had no assured place to live and so had been forced into moving from one friend’s home to another. She and her baby only could survive with the help of these friends. Her case got resolved when, through the intercession of the Paralegal, it was shown that the earlier report was not true.

Employment Insurance benefits are denied a client who speaks little English and who cannot make his case understood. He won an appeal presented to the Umpire through the Paralegal Advocate, and received his Employment Insurance.

In these and scores of other instances, individuals have found that they have become “cases” before Immigration, WCB, MHR, EI, Landlord and Tenancy Branch, and a wide variety of other public or private institutions. For all of them, the legal component and its demands affect their physical or mental state, their personal health, safety, and their continued livelihood. In these situations, which all touch on areas of poverty and immigration law, immigrants and refugees get summary advice, legal representation, and referrals through MOSAIC’s Paralegal Advocacy Project. These individuals would have been unable to pursue their cases alone, either because of a lack of knowledge of the Canadian Legal System, limited English, or an educational level limiting their ability to understand legal proceedings.

Situated as it is— in-house at MOSAIC and dovetailing with its wide range of services—the Paralegal Advocacy Project provides an advocacy service in a linguistically and culturally sensitive environment. None of this would be possible but for the Law Foundation of BC and its funding of the project since 1994.

MEET MEMBERS of the MOSAIC TEAM

INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION DEPARTMENT
THE PEOPLE’S SUMMIT on APEC:
An Invitation to join in solidarity

Terre Flower
Coordinator, Canadian Organizing Network

In November 1997, the leaders of the 18-member Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) will gather in Vancouver for an APEC world summit. We would like your support for the alternative forum to the official process, the 1997 People’s Summit on APEC.

The People’s Summit, the fourth of its kind, is a gathering of civil society organizations from the Asia Pacific region. It will be held November 17-24 in Vancouver. The aim of the 1997 People’s Summit is to bring together delegates from the Asia Pacific who are most affected by increased trade liberalization in the region. These include women, migrant workers, union members, as well as those who struggle to protect human and workers’ rights, the environment, and freedom of the media.

Of particular concern to those organizing the People’s Summit is the invisible and undemocratic nature of the APEC process. APEC describes itself as an organization of “economies”, not countries. This conveniently separates economic issues from their national and social context, leaving matters such as environmental protection, social justice, and human rights off the agenda. Furthermore, under the guise of bringing in the “private sector”, APEC has established a formal APEC Business Council in which Chief Executive Officers of giant transnational corporations are welcome, but migrant workers, women, workers, indigenous people, the people most affected by trade liberalization, are not. Increasingly, non-governmental organizations have become key agents for civil society to organize around a popular agenda for development. The People’s Summit will bring together representatives of civil society in the South and the North to build networks of solidarity, share strategies for change, and create action plans for alternatives which respond to people’s needs. The 1997 People’s Summit is working toward an open, transparent and accountable APEC dialogue in which the concerns of the people most affected can be voiced.

Alternative APEC summits have been organized by non-governmental organizations since the 1994 Bogor Summit. In 1995, representatives of more than 100 NGO’s met in Kyoto, and issued the Kyoto Declaration, calling for socially responsible and ecologically sustainable trade and development. In Manila, in November 1996, the range of non-governmental activities increased dramatically, involving close to 1,000 individuals representing several sectors of society.

Given that there have been attempts by other APEC governments to limit and curtail full participation at such events, 1997 offers participants the opportunity to express in concrete terms the high value we place on freedom of expression and the significance of citizen participation in a democratic society.

This event is organized by a broad-based coalition of women’s groups, churches, Canadian labour, First Nations, anti-poverty, environment, human rights, international development, peace, and student organizations. Many of these organizations have partners in the South.

If you or your organization would like to become a member of this international coalition, we would love to hear from you. The network for a popular summit was created to make the People’s Summit happen and to make sure that the voices for sustainable development, for democracy, for human rights, and for social justice are heard during the 1997 APEC Summit. Make it happen! Join our international network.

To join the international network, please contact:
E-Mail: popsurn97@bc.sympatico.ca or
Fax: (604) 682-1931.


Reprinted with permission.
MEET MEMBERS of the MOSAIC TEAM

Members of MOSAIC's Bilingual Counselors

Members of MOSAIC's Employment Programs at 2555 Commercial Drive

Members of MOSAIC's Language Centre Daycare Staff

Members of MOSAIC's Family Programs

Members of MOSAIC's Operations Department
HUMAN RESOURCES SHARING LEADS to BETTER SERVICE for CLIENTS

Ninu Kang
Coordinator, Family Violence Initiative

Bilingual Counselors are challenged daily with a variety of clients needs varying from information about housing to support in dealing with issues of family violence. The Counselors have to be creative and resourceful to give information and follow through with an appropriate referral in order for the client’s needs to be met.

MOSAIC serves clients through numerous programs in effort to meet the diverse needs of various communities. The Bilingual Counseling Department consists of Bilingual Counselors, Family Programs, Volunteer Program, Community Outreach Program and the Family Violence Initiative Program. In a continuous effort to provide better service to MOSAIC’s clients, the department has taken the initiative to pool internal human resources to enhance Staff Training. Through monthly meetings, the Counselors and Program Coordinators have isolated training needs addressing the issues of family violence with immigrant and refugee clients.

The focus this year has been to pull together a variety of “skill sets” from staff so they may provide in-house training. This in-house training has allowed the staff to become more familiar with the specific needs of our individual communities and clients, and learn from each other's experiences and knowledge. This continues to add to better understanding of the differences which may exist in different communities and the variety of counseling approaches which need to be considered.

YES, I’LL SUPPORT MOSAIC

Here is my donation of:  
☐ $25  ☐ $50  ☐ $100  ☐ $250  ☐ Other  
☐ My cheque to MOSAIC is enclosed  
☐ I wish to pay by VISA: Card # ________________________ Expiry Date ________________________ Signature ________________________

Note: You must be a member 30 days prior to the AGM to be eligible to vote.

Please fill in the following information:

Name: ________________________ Address: ________________________

City/Province: _________________ P.Code: _________________ Tel: ________________________

Make Cheque Payable to:  
MOSAIC  1720 Grant Street, 2nd Floor, Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2Y7  Tel: (604) 254-9626

All donations of $10 or more will receive a receipt for income tax purposes. Other donations will receive a receipt upon request.

Charitable Reg. No. 13017-8130-RR0017