MOSAIC Awarded 1997 Citation for Citizenship

By Jeana Wiginton, Executive Assistant

MOSAIC received the good news in a phone call from ice-covered Ottawa in early January 1998. Of 120 individuals and organizations nominated in British Columbia, MOSAIC was awarded the Citation for Citizenship for 1997.

This award was instituted to honor Canadians for their outstanding contributions in assisting newcomers to make a successful transition and integration into Canadian society. Lucienne Robillard, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, explained in a letter that “Your organization’s active involvement in the life of its community exemplifies Canadian ideals and enhances the meaning of Canadian citizenship for us all.”

MOSAIC’s name was widely publicized as the winner of the award in a press release by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and on their website.

The award ceremony was held February 6, 1998 at Canada Place. Directors and several board members as well as many dignitaries, friends and colleagues were in attendance at the luncheon. Holly Whittleton, Executive Director of MOSAIC, shared the head table with George Varnai, Acting Regional Director General Citizenship and Immigration, Orest Kruhlak, Regional Executive Director for the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of National Revenue, Vera Radyo, Executive Director of AMSSA as well as several citizenship judges. Herb Dhaliwal made a speech praising the work of MOSAIC and presented Holly with a certificate, a gold pin and a beautiful bouquet of flowers. After a brief photo session, Holly made the acceptance speech on behalf of MOSAIC. She expressed MOSAIC’s pride and appreciation in being nominated and awarded the Citation for Citizenship and thanked Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage for sponsoring the award. Then, underlining the importance of the work and accomplishments of MOSAIC, she indicated that it “would not be possible without our dedicated Board of Directors, the committed and caring employees who make a difference with every life they touch and the volunteers who commit themselves to assisting MOSAIC on a daily basis.” She also thanked all of the funders whose support makes the work of MOSAIC possible.

Drop by to see the award now hanging proudly at reception at 1522 Commercial Drive.
Vietnamese Forum

By Victor Porter, Coordinator of the Community Outreach/Development Program

For more than a decade, a variety of services have been provided to assist the Vietnamese community in their settlement and integration process. Currently, there are more than forty workers providing direct services to the community through immigrant serving agencies, community centres, neighborhood houses, schools, health units, and other social services agencies. As the community grows and settles, new challenges appear and new issues emerge.

Since late 1996 a small group of community workers has been discussing the need for a forum where the workers who provide direct services for the Vietnamese community, managers and directors of the agencies that provide the services, funders, representatives of the three levels of government, community members, and other people committed to the well-being of the Vietnamese community would have the opportunity to participate.

The objectives for the forum would be:

1. To review the existing settlement/integration and other social services available for the Vietnamese speaking people

2. To look at the new challenges that the community is facing

3. To generate a process towards better coordination of services for the community.

In March 1997 a team was formed to undertake the task. During the initial planning stage we realized that we needed a fresh snapshot of how the Vietnamese community and its community workers perceived the services that were available, what were the issues that worried them, and where they needed and wanted some assistance. The team decided that a written questionnaire would be the best tool to obtain the snapshot needed.

Two questionnaires were designed, one for the Vietnamese community in general and one for the workers providing services to the community. The questionnaire was translated and proofread by 2 Vietnamese workers; then printed in different colors according to the way they were going to be distributed, i.e., green for the general public, blue for participants in support groups and other programs, white as inserts in community newspapers, pink for the version designed for service providers, etc. The questionnaires were answered individually and also through group sessions. The team hoped to receive 300 responses, but the community went beyond our expectation and we received 431 responses. The responses were collated, organized, and prepared to be presented to the community.

The Forum took place on December 4th, 1997, at the Roundhouse Community Centre. There were 82 participants including community members, service providers, representatives from the federal, provincial and municipal governments, school counselors, etc.

During the Forum the results from the survey were presented, and a question and answer feedback session followed. In the afternoon, participants directed themselves to small group discussions focusing on the areas identified by the respondents as the most critical: language, family/parenting, youth and school dropout, family counseling and crisis intervention. Each group came up with recommendations for the short term and long term as well as ideas for the next step of this process.

Participants left with a comprehensive perspective of the challenges facing the Vietnamese community, the resources that are currently available and a renewed commitment to serve the community in a more coordinated and responsive fashion.

Projects like this require an enormous amount of creativity, imagination and plain hard work. Ours was a success thanks to our team: Lam Dang from Britannia Community Services Centre and Michelle Nguyen and Loan Ly from MOSAIC, and the support received from the Social Planning Department, City of Vancouver through Wendy Au and from the Community Liaison Branch, Province of British Columbia, through Ita Margalit. Their involvement, expertise and guidance, as well as facilitating access to resources, made our task less overwhelming. Thanks to the whole team for this productive and enjoyable partnership.

Copies of the report are available now. For more information on the project and copies of the report please contact the Community Outreach Program at MOSAIC.
What Makes Board Members Run?

By Vera Rosenbluth, President of the MOSAIC Board of Directors

When Holly invited me, in her inimitable style, to “write something for the newsletter”, it was a bit of a daunting task to decide exactly what to write about. After some reflection, it seemed to me that the Board of Directors, which generally meets after working hours at MOSAIC and yet has a great deal of influence on the overall direction of the organization, might appear to be a very mysterious group of people. So I thought it would be interesting to tell you a little about who we are, what we do and why we do it!

The Board is at present composed of 15 members of the community. We represent a diversity of professions, ethnic backgrounds, ages and points of view, although we are fully united in supporting the mission and values of MOSAIC.

Our function is to “ensure that the agency fulfils its mission and realizes its opportunities and obligations for services and programs.” In concrete terms this means meeting monthly, participating in committee work, being aware in as much detail as possible of the numerous programs and services that MOSAIC offers, keeping up to date with the changes that seem to occur on a daily basis, reviewing the financial accounts, and developing and approving the major policies which guide the agency.

For some of us, MOSAIC has been a focus for our volunteer work over many years. Tissa Fernando, professor of sociology at UBC, was a Board member in the very early years of MOSAIC’s existence, contributing both his academic and personal experience as an immigrant. He has always believed in justice and equity and working on behalf of people without power in our society. Several years ago he rejoined the Board and finds it exciting to see what a major player MOSAIC has become from the small organisation he knew in the ‘70’s.

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Employment Assistance Services at MOSAIC

By Brad Hornick, Coordinator of the Access and Career Connections programs

In 1996 a partnership was formed amongst the three largest immigrant serving organizations in Vancouver - SUCCESS, Immigrant Services Society and MOSAIC - and the Employment Access Program was born.

As funding sources changed and after an extremely successful period, in early 1997 the program split up and reorganized itself into “EAS” models at each individual location. Enriched by incorporating the best program elements of the three, MOSAIC took on a very demanding new mandate - assisting 30 participants every six weeks in two new programs - Employment Access and Career Connections.

44% of our participants come to MOSAIC’s doors within 6 months of their arrival in Canada. Another 19% arrive between 6 months and a year prior to coming to MOSAIC.

Participant Recruiting

In a matter of days, our intake targets jumped from 8 to 30 per intake (every 5 to 6 weeks) and we needed to get marketing our program in a hurry. A marketing strategy of one-to-one contacts and presentations to the community changed to a less labour-intensive approach. We developed a database of over 300 community organizations, created a highly effective flyer, and began a regular monthly mail-out. (This has also spawned another MOSAIC Employment Programs tradition - regular pizza lunch envelope stuffing sessions.) Consequently the numbers in our weekly information sessions have increased substantially. We have made our intake target in every one of our 17 intakes even after increasing our targets from 30 to 36.

In 97/98, Access and Connections served 295 participants from 60 countries. Countries most represented are: Philippines, Iran, India and Hong Kong.

Employer Marketing

With so many new incoming participants, assisting in finding employers became a high priority. In the summer of 1997, we produced a detailed “marketing plan” for our department which mapped out a strategy for creating “employer partnerships.” It included establishing a new employer database, a marketing package, and a system for developing loyalty programs and managing long-term contacts with employers. New and exciting employer relationships have already blossomed. We are now regularly downloading and mail-merging business contacts from Vancouver corporate databases and sending out participant resumes in large numbers.

Participants represent a broad range of career categories with a majority professionally trained. 91% of our participants have post-secondary education.

Curriculum

We have worked hard to establish a “curriculum binder” complete with weekly teaching schedules, detailed daily lesson plans and handouts. In this way, when training new staff, we ensure a consistent and predictable content and style that defines our classroom approach.

Principles that guide the curriculum include: participative and interactive - participants learn when they are involved; fun - most exercises are in a “game” format to deliver messages in a symbolic and enjoyable way; integrated - each program component leads to another to form a rational whole; relevant - in-class exercises should give immediate practical tools, experience and where possible be combined with “in the field” practice; balanced between “teaching”, group discussions, individual writing; use of a range of mediums - flip-charts, overheads, videos, etc.

Participant placement targets have consistently been met with at least 80% in employment, training or volunteering within 6 months of completion.

Action Plans

By far the greatest challenge staff face is at the level of working individually with each participant to negotiate their realistic road to self-sufficiency. The four weeks they spend with us in class are often the prelude to an intensive one-to-one counselling experience that in many cases is when the real hard work starts.

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After the Poverty Forum: what now?

By John Argue, Coordinator of the Working Group on Poverty

The Working Group on Poverty is still in its first year, but the commitment of its member organizations has enabled it to achieve specific successes already. The Poverty Forum was a particular satisfaction, because it was the best attended forum at the People’s Summit on APEC in November. Not only was it well attended, we had excellent and stimulating talks from a number of knowledgeable people who gave us all ideas about how to pursue changes to current income assistance legislation. We have met with Dennis Streifel, the past provincial Minister of Human Resources and with Jan Pulinger, the current Minister of Human Resources, to discuss concrete improvements in legislation for people with low incomes, and in particular, immigrants and refugees who need temporary assistance.

Two “worlds” in one city co-existed for about five days last November. The 18 APEC leaders discussed financial packages to assist the ailing economies of the former “tiger” competitors in Eastern Asia. More importantly for many people here, in our “world”, the Poverty Forum at the People’s Summit focused upon three broad topics: i) key barriers to end poverty, ii) programs or policies which have worked to reduce poverty, and iii) strategies for action on ending poverty.

The Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of B.C. were particularly active in encouraging staff and clients who work in their organization in many communities in B.C. to attend the Forum. Canada Heritage offered financial assistance to low-income immigrant and refugee women to travel to the Forum. The International Council on Social Welfare and the Working Group on Poverty (WGOP) were the sponsors.

Where did the idea of having a forum arise? The background started with the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, where nations from around the world committed themselves to eliminate absolute poverty. National governments agreed to prepare national Plans for Action, and also to set target dates to fulfil the commitments to which they agreed in Copenhagen. The People’s Summit on APEC offered an attractive possibility of raising the issue of poverty in our own country to discuss how far Canada has lived up to its commitment in Copenhagen, and also to network with anti-poverty organizations in B.C. to decide how we may cooperate to attack poverty in this province.

“Think globally, act locally.” This slogan, associated with international development, arose from the realization that political, economic, and social structures at a world-wide level influence people in their villages or neighbourhoods.

Libby Davies, M.P. Vancouver East, Speaking on poverty and human rights. Photo: Amnesty International

Poverty exists, not just in Prince George, in Nelson, and in Vancouver, but also clearly, in Jakarta, in Mexico City, and in Tokyo. It exists in all the APEC countries or “economies” in the South, and also in the richer North.

The Poverty Forum attracted 50 persons of the overseas delegates to the People’s Summit, in addition to the Forum’s 200 participants from Canada, most of whom came from B.C. This international participation allowed elaboration of the common themes that affect people in all the APEC countries: an increasing polarization between the rich and the poor; the social exclusion of the world’s poor; the need for corporate responsibility; fair taxation; a people-centred approach to economic development; and more public education on the causes of poverty.

Delegates proposed a concrete Priority Plan internationally to:
• reduce malnutrition by the year 2000 to half the levels in 1990, in every country where it is significant;
• provide all people with access to safe drinking water and sanitation by the year 2000;
• provide all people with basic education by the year 2000, with a halving of illiteracy from 1990 levels, and an emphasis on female literacy; and
• eradicate absolute poverty by the year 2010.

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Poverty Forum  
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Delegates urged specific action in Canada, and in particular, in B.C., to complement the international plan:  

- to prioritize public education about poverty issues in order that myths which encourage poor-bashing will not be tolerated;  
- to urge that the Canadian Government live up to its commitment to eradicate absolute poverty in this country, and especially, to eradicate child poverty; and  
- to urge that the B.C. Government change its legislation and policies which make it more difficult for people to escape from poverty.  

The WGOP has clear tasks now:  

- organize, and then publish and distribute, a report of the poverty forum’s proceedings to stimulate further discussion about the ideas raised there  
- follow up the B.C. Human Rights Commission’s agreement with the WGOP submission, and others, in protecting poor people from discrimination by adding “social condition” as a protected ground to the B.C. Human Rights Code. The WGOP will build some wider community support to urge the provincial government to act on this recommendation.  
- meet with Jan Pulinger to urge strongly that changes be made to B.C. Benefits to improve the possibilities of poor people escaping from poverty.  

For further information on the Working Group on Poverty, or if you would like a copy of the report “People vs. Poverty: who will win?” please contact John Argue at 254-0244 local 254.  

The Working Group on Poverty is funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration and the Vancouver Foundation.  

ANOTHER AWARD!  

On Saturday, February 21, 1998, MOSAIC was awarded the William Black Human Rights Award at the Vancouver Multicultural Society Distinguished Service Awards Dinner. The Honourable Hedy Fry, Member of Parliament for Vancouver Centre, presented the award to Brenda Muliner, Secretary of the Board of Directors of MOSAIC, who accepted on behalf of MOSAIC.  

The dinner, held to commemorate Multiculturalism Week 1998 and to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals and organizations in the promotion of cross cultural relations and human rights, was attended by 150-200 people and included a keynote address by Mary-Woo Sims, Chief Commissioner of the B.C. Human Rights Commission.  

MOSAIC won this award for our advocacy work: our ability to identify and act on issues on behalf of immigrants and refugees. Thanks to the hard work of all we can once again say “Congratulations MOSAIC!”
A good place to play and learn at MOSAIC

By Halina Mickiewicz, Child Care Coordinator and Doris Cheung, Infant-Toddler Educator

Our licensed child care centre, which cares for children of LINC participants, currently has 31 children from 10 different countries coming together each day to play and learn about life in Canada. When children come to us they have often been through many changes in their young lives. They do not always look forward to their first day of school, yet one more new place with new faces.

Kenny (name changed for confidentiality), whose family came from mainland China, started with us when he was 32 months old. He was shy and seemed overwhelmed with his new environment. Staff remember him spending the first weeks hiding under tables - something that seemed to comfort him and make him feel safe. Cocooned in this safe spot, he watched the other children playing, eventually venturing out as he became more comfortable. However, he would be back under the table at the first sight of a new teacher or visitor. With understanding, persistence and time the staff in the toddler room soon drew him out for two of his favorite activities: a game of cars or pretend play.

Kenny spoke no English when he joined us. One of our Infant/Toddler teachers spoke his language so communication with Kenny was possible. As with most children, Kenny began learning simple single words and songs in English, and soon he was having conversations with other children and teachers in the child care.

Kenny left us. Anil Bidessie (our star substitute teacher, who is a graduate of the MOSAIC Child Care Orientation Employment Program) took the staff and children of the child care centre on a tour of Vancouver Co-op Radio, where he volunteers part-time.

Children at play in the MOSAIC child care centre

The Disc Jockey on duty asked the children if they would like to be on the radio. The children had been learning a song called "Squirrel, squirrel, squirrel, Shake your Bushy Tail". Four year old Kenny led the count down "One, Two, Three, Go" and the children and staff sang the song live on the air.

Kenny has left us and will enter elementary school next September, speaking English fluently, with an understanding of the culture and experience in a North American classroom setting. We wonder if he will remember the time he spent with us, after he came out from under the table.

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Employment Assistance Services
Continued from page 4

We recently developed a new outline for “Action Plan” development to make this process more effective. This includes: decision-making around long and short-term career goals; surveying challenges that need to be overcome; outlining practical steps to cut through the fog; defining strategies that encompass the process; committing to real individual concrete actions that will ensure success and timelines to monitor progress.

Databases
We now have complete demographic and participant outcome information on a database with which we are able to analyse all areas of our work with clients. It allows us to instantaneously print out detailed reports and graphs for analysis or presentation purposes.

Staff
The aim in programming has always been to organize to free up more time for the staff to spend with clients. It is the professionalism, warmth and humour of our staff that most speak to our program strengths.
What Makes Board Members Run?
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Thelma Siglos, a business advisor, also was a member of the Board before she moved to Halifax and was president of an organization that was similar to MOSAIC. Returning to Vancouver, she got in touch with another long-time board member Joy Miller, and I feel we are lucky to have the wisdom and considerable expertise of both of them on our current Board.

Gillian Creese, professor of sociology at UBC, Elizabeth Briemberg and Gillian Chetty, social workers, have all been members of the Board for four or five years, so were part of the group that worked incredibly hard to radically restructure the agency three years ago when the cuts in federal funding had such serious implications for our employment programs.

As an immigration lawyer, Brenda Muliner’s experience and advice is vital, and we depend on her clear-headed thinking. Janet Austin brings her extensive knowledge of organizations and experience in fundraising to the table. Marilyn Gutierrez-Diez works closely with immigrants and refugees as a settlement worker, and her point of view is often one of compassion and solidarity with her clients.

Bonnie Evans was executive director of the Northern District Community Resources Society in Nelson, and so is familiar with large non-profit organizations. She says that with that background she is “blown away” by Holly’s competence and what she manages to do! (That goes for all of us!) She is a strong believer in people putting in time to help build community and has also been doing volunteer ESL teaching to refugees. About that teaching she says, “this work has given me such an appreciation for what we have here. I get way more from the people I work with than they do from me… the strength and wisdom they’ve gained from the hardships they’ve faced is amazing to me.”

Last October, several new Board members were elected, and each one brings valuable skills and energy to the meetings. Margaret Mitchell is very well known as a former NDP MP whose commitment and integrity, not to mention her vast experience make her a joy to work with. Eva Cheung Robinson is executive director of SPARC; she is very familiar with the issues that MOSAIC deals with, and in her calm and competent way gets straight to the point! Gerry Rolfsen has volunteered many hours with his architectural advice, and now contributes many more hours as a very valued Board member. And last but not least, articling lawyer Robin Hunter, the Board member you may have seen marching in the anti-poverty march or participating in the day-long forum brings her energy, commitment and sense of humour to the table.

So there you have us, a diverse group as you see. I’m proud to work with such a committed and talented Board, and know that together with the management, staff and volunteers we will continue to make MOSAIC as strong and integral part of Vancouver life as possible.

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YES, I’LL SUPPORT MOSAIC
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All donations of $10 or more will receive a receipt for income tax purposes. Other donations will receive a receipt upon request.

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