



Pilot Mentoring Project

by Laurie Winter, Volunteer Program Co-ordinator
and Valerie Van Clieaf, Volunteer Program Assistant

In October of 1998, the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration invited MOSAIC to participate in a unique mentoring pilot—an expansion of the government’s mentoring program to members of visible minority communities. The pilot was developed to support the goals of the Ministry’s Employment Equity Program. Other community groups involved in the pilot included SUCCESS, the Vancouver Association of Chinese Canadians, Immigrant Visible Minority Women of BC and the Congress of Black Women Foundation. Successful applicants were partnered with employees from the Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration.

The Ministry’s program representative, Jennifer Kroecker-Hall, identified a number of important reasons for the expansion of the mentoring program. Mentorees would have the opportunity to learn more about government and careers in the public service. Equally important, information gained through the mentoring partnerships would increase government awareness “about cultural constraints to public sector employment” and “further knowledge and understanding about the communities we serve.”

Margaret Mubanda, Lilia Tercero and Julio Peccorini are amazing people. Their year long commitment to the mentoring program is one proof. Though as different from each other as any three people are, when it comes to pursuing what they want they have the same determination and heart that epitomizes so many who pass through our volunteer program.

As immigrants, Margaret, Lilia and Julio had experienced first hand the barriers to meaningful

employment that newcomers to Canada face, such as the lack of recognition of degrees and work experience gained outside Canada. Margaret, a teacher of 13 years from Uganda, was working as a salesperson. Lilia, a journalist from Mexico with a history of community development activities, was not yet working. Julio, for his part, was struggling to make a career for himself in the settlement field. Their journey to find work, to settle and to get on with their lives yields many bittersweet stories, not so different from those of many other immigrants.

All three approached MOSAIC seeking volunteer opportunities. They knew they had a lot to offer to the community, and that they needed to re-establish their careers. Community work was not new to them; Margaret and Lilia had both been very active in their home countries, on top of acquiring strong educational credentials and many years of professional work. Julio had been involved in volunteering in Grand Prairie and Vancouver.

Their volunteer work presented opportunities to make new friends, gain Canadian work experience and get a sense of “how things move here,” as Lilia so aptly puts it. But they wanted more. They were seeking contacts, information, and resources to enable them to move into their careers. Thus, when the Provincial Government Pilot Mentoring Project came to the attention of MOSAIC’s staff, Margaret, Lilia and Julio were encouraged to apply. For all three, still curious and optimistic but ready for a new challenge, becoming a mentoree was a natural flow from their volunteer work. “I was ready to do whatever I needed to do,” Margaret explains. “Right away I knew it was an open door for me. After working as a sales assistant for five years where I could not utilize most of my skills; just to submit the forms alone was a big step forward.”

Unable to teach locally, Margaret’s long term goal became employment with the Ministry for Children and Families. When she started the project she knew it did not guarantee paid work, but saw it instead as an

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Immigrant/Refugee Poverty in B.C.

by John Argue
WGOP Program Director

The working Group on Poverty (WGOP) was formed in 1997 because it had become clear to organizations like MOSAIC that newcomers to B.C. were experiencing poverty longer and to a greater extent than had immigrants and refugees who had arrived in Canada before the 1990's.

The WGOP poverty report *Unfulfilled Expectations, Missed Opportunities: Poverty Among Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia* substantiated this experience of poverty through the stories of immigrants and refugees who were learning about living in Canada first and in the Lower Mainland second. The researchers interviewed people who were using the services of organizations like MOSAIC, and among many settlement barriers that the study identified, the report shows that:

- 51% of those immigrant families who arrived in B.C. between 1991 and 1996 were living in poverty (i.e., having incomes lower than the Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut Off, or LICO, for their family size) at the time of the 1996 census.
- Almost 40% of parents surveyed were not always able to give their children three reasonably nutritious meals per day, and 27% were not always able to give children the milk they required.

The WGOP has been circulating the report among civil servants of both the provincial and the federal levels of government, in order to substantiate our advocacy about changing legislation and policies that make it difficult for immigrants and refugees to escape from poverty.

In the next year we shall be focusing on a number of needed changes:

- Continuing to work with the Ministry of Social Development & Economic Security to improve the effects of its programs on immigrants and refugees.
- Convincing both the federal and provincial

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*i*ACT Immigrant Access Centre for Training

by Kelly Pollack
Director of Employment Programs

*i*ACT—the Immigrant Access Centre for Training was first conceived in the spring of 1999. MOSAIC, along with other immigrant serving organizations, had just spent the winter discussing the impact of the end of project-based training with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). As we moved into the new model of EI eligible clients going through an assessment and budget negotiation process before being approved for training, we recognized that our clients would need a culturally sensitive service to help them. HRCC Burnaby and Vancouver, acknowledging this need, asked for letters of intent to operate a Training Access Centre.

MOSAIC and the Immigrant Services Society of BC decided to partner in writing the letter of intent, with the goal of running the service together. MOSAIC and ISS both wanted to see the service available for immigrant clients, and felt that there would be additional strengths in a joint venture. The partnership was awarded the contract by HRDC, and on August 30, 1999 *i*ACT was open.

Clients come to *i*ACT because they need training to upgrade their skills in order to find a job. HRDC mandates that they must go through a rigorous process to ensure they are (a) clear about their job goal and the opportunity of finding work in that field and (b) committed to sticking with both the necessary training and job search. *i*ACT Assessment Counsellors work with clients from the time they come in to the weekly information session, through filling out the application form and budget, to the final approval for attending a training institute. They touch base with clients regularly while they are in school, helping them stay on track and confident in their ability to complete school and get a job.

*i*ACT is still a new service, and we're learning as we go. How can we reach more clients and let them know this service is available? How can we make the application process faster and more streamlined so clients don't give up because of its complexity? How

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African Francophone Communities in the Lower Mainland

by Mambo Masinda
African Francophone Settlement Worker

The study conducted by Joseph Mensah and Senyo Adjibolosoo¹ indicated that in 1996 the Francophone African immigrants in the Lower Mainland numbered 1,490 out of 21,805 African immigrants. The largest Francophone ethnic groups were the Mauritians with 385 immigrants, the Moroccans with 340, the Congolese (Kinshasa) with 195 and the Algerians with 185.

Numbers have certainly grown since that time considering the political and economic situation in Africa in general and in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular. In fact, given the ongoing political crisis in the Francophone countries such as Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Rwanda, Burundi and Chad, the number of Francophone immigrants coming from the Sub-Saharan Africa will certainly continue to grow in the next decades.

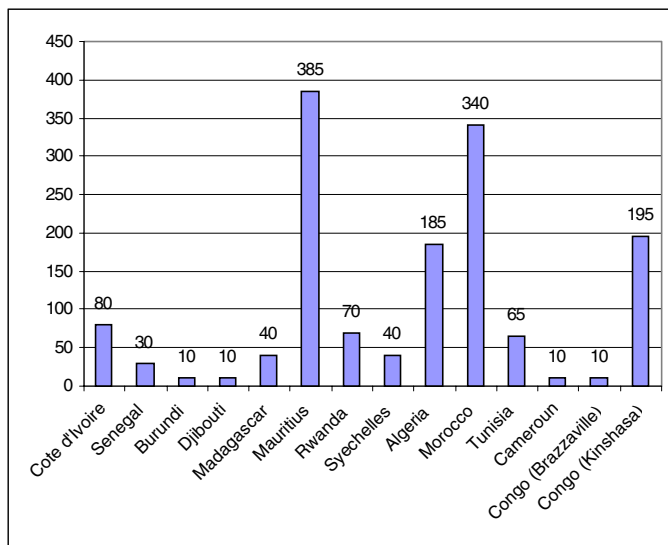


Figure 1: Francophone immigrants in the Lower Mainland by place of birth, 1996

Diversified societies pose the difficult challenge of promoting access and equity. More importantly, small groups are often lost and forgotten by the multiculturalism institutionalization policies, which mostly address the issues of large minorities. What future will be reserved to the African Francophone immigrants is an important

question to be addressed now for paving the ways for their integration. Without any doubt, the number of Francophone immigrants coming from Africa will continue to increase. So, immigrant-serving agencies should be equipped to deliver services in French as a strategy to better welcome them and to identify their specific needs for their effective socio-economic integration in Canada.

It is known that the most critical barrier to the integration of immigrants and refugees is the linguistic deficit that hinders their ability to access services. As a small but growing ethnic group, the African Francophone immigrants feel isolated because of the language barrier. The challenge is to identify them and to encourage them to fully participate in the socio-economic and political life of their new country.

Hope is in the air as the new millennium dawns. Indeed, since February 1, 2000, MOSAIC has hired a Francophone Settlement Worker. The position is funded by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, an expression of the government's willingness to promote the just access of the African Francophone ethnic communities to the large immigrant-serving agencies. This initiative is the result of a project developed in partnership between the Congolese Community of BC and MOSAIC, a wonderful way for a large organization to enrich and empower small ethnic groups.

Through this program, many immigrants and refugees from more than ten African Francophone ethnic communities have been reached. Clients have access to information on different services available in the Lower Mainland that might help them to a better socio-economic integration. This position is welcome to agencies serving immigrants and refugees.

Funding for this initiative is made possible by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, Community Liaison Division. For more information contact Mambo Masinda at 254-9626.

¹ Mensah, Joseph and Adjibolosoo, Senyo (1998). *The Demographic Profile of African Immigrants in the Lower Mainland of BC*. Vancouver: Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration.

Building and Sustaining Effective Partnerships

by Dr. Martin Spigelman, Martin Spigelman Research Associates Ltd.

A partnership is defined as a relationship in which two or more parties, having common and compatible goals, agree to work together for a particular purpose and/or for some period of time.

Government funders believe partnerships can stretch limited resources and achieve administrative efficiencies and savings. Community agencies believe that partnerships will enable them to provide service in a more effective and comprehensive manner.

While partnerships often do bring these benefits, they also present very significant challenges.

For example, they:

- require a great deal of effort to build and sustain, and can consume a great deal of time;
- may create new legal or financial liabilities;
- can compromise an agency's credibility with both its funders and its community; and
- require that agencies surrender a measure of their identity, power and autonomy.

A group of community organizations and funders—the Collaboration Roundtable—has been working to develop a “culture of collaboration” in the Lower Mainland region. The Roundtable's most recent endeavour provided agencies with concrete tools for building and sustaining effective partnerships.

This phase included two well-attended workshops during which participants explored the risks associated with partnering and engaged in a series of exercises designed to prepare them for all that could go wrong when building a partnership or attempting to sustain it. Ultimately, the workshops recommended that the Roundtable develop a “Partnership Toolkit.” It would include practical tools that any agency—large or small, ethno-cultural or multicultural—could take from the shelf, consider and apply to their own situation. It might include the following:

- **A Partnership Compatibility Chart** to allow potential partners to compare their

organizations and structures, and to assess their compatibility. If differences were identified—for example in values or financial systems—the partners would know to devote special attention to these areas before proceeding with the partnership.

- **Models for Making Decisions and for Financing the Partnership.** Many organizations are not aware of the different structures that are possible for sharing resources or for making decisions within a partnership. The toolkit would include a number of models that agencies could either adopt for their purposes or adapt to their particular circumstances.

- **A Partnership Agreement.** Partnership agreements are vital for limiting risk and liability and thereby for sustaining effective partnerships. The toolkit could include either a generic or a sample Partnership Agreement that addressed those issues which most often confound relationships.

- **An Evaluation Framework.** Agencies usually appreciate the need for evaluation but often do not know how to organize or manage an evaluation. The toolkit would include both a “how to” guide and a sample evaluation framework. This framework would focus on the partnership itself rather than on the outcomes associated with the partnership.

This phase of the Collaboration Roundtable's work offered other recommendations as well, including one which emphasized the importance of funders becoming partners in this community-based effort to build a “culture of collaboration” in the Lower Mainland region.

For copies of Phase I, Phase II and Phase III visit:
www.amssa.org/publications/index.htm

The Financial Assistant Worker Pilot Project

“Connecting with the Community”

by Eyob Naizghi
Director of Settlement Services

It is more than a year since the report *Unfulfilled Expectations, Missed Opportunities: Poverty among Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia* (the WGOP, October 1998) was made public. The report highlighted the incidence of poverty among the immigrant and refugee population. Even more significant is the fact that the process of completing the report was a collaborative one, that pulled together community agencies with a “social justice” mandate and different levels of government. Moreover, the report also identified a number of recommendations to “lessen the impact of poverty” which were a task for community organizations and governments to undertake. One such recommendation was “placing Income Assistance staff, on a pilot basis, in immigrant-serving agencies so as to ensure that people are supported in their struggle for survival.”

In early 1999, the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (MSDES, then MHR) started a dialogue with MOSAIC towards implementing this particular recommendation. The discussion with the Ministry had two components: the piloting of the Financial Assistance Worker (FAW) Project, and looking at ways of creating an open line of communication between the front line workers and ministry staff. Besides addressing the client access issues, the initiative also promised to create awareness and understanding among the different levels of “communities,” government agencies, community organizations and immigrants and refugees.

We soon developed the terms of reference to operationalize the pilot to place the Financial Assistance Worker closer to the communities. The initial role of the FAW was to support community workers in “trouble shooting” and in cases where clients were encountering obstacles accessing income assistance.

But after a review of the Financial Assistant Worker Project by MOSAIC and MSDES, and with feedback from frontline workers in different organizations, it was recognized that the pilot needs to go beyond “trouble shooting” and move more to practical solutions for clients. MSDES agreed to look at introducing a number of changes, among them:

- change the scheduling from bi-weekly to weekly for half a day;
- the worker needed to have access to technology that allows them to communicate with the system;
- agencies should be able to refer clients directly;
- the FAW should be in a position to process new applications for income assistance, including new refugee claimants; and
- the FAW could help with a number of emergency applications and benefits, including MSP, and dental benefits.

It is expected that most of these measures will be implemented by the end of Summer 2000. The project has great potential as a means of reaching out to the most vulnerable elements of our society, particularly refugee claimants. It will assist newcomers to access the system in a more supportive environment as they “try to just get by” in their daily challenges and tribulations.

The project has also demonstrated the true sense of collaboration and partnership that needs to be in place to bring about practical solutions to real people’s issues. It has illustrated that if there is commitment and political will for collaboration, government bodies and community organizations can work together to bring about meaningful changes in people’s lives.

Strengthening Families Through Teamwork

Building Blocks Program for Grandview Woodland Area

by Ninu Kang
Manager of Family Counselling Programs

The Building Blocks program is for families from the Aboriginal, Spanish and Vietnamese communities with their first newborn. MOSAIC, the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, the Ministry for Children and Families (MCF) and the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board have partnered together to promote the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of children and families. The Building Blocks program is an effort to support parents to become self-sufficient, stable and equipped with good parenting skills, as well as to encourage communities to take an active role in supporting the healthy growth and development of their children.

The program has served over 60 families in the last two years. Referrals come from Healthiest Babies Possible, MCF, Women's Hospital, Elizabeth Fry Society and other community support groups. In addition to providing home-visiting support, the Home Visitors provide advocacy on issues such as subsidized housing, food bank, legal issues, training and accessing other support services.

Home Visitors with cultural and linguistic sensitivity from the three communities empower new parents through regular and long term in-home emotional support, informal counselling, modelling of family relationships and life skill development. They foster healthy child care practices and linkages to other community services. The home visitors bring their own experience of being a parent as well as experience and knowledge of their own cultural values related to parenting and creating healthy families.

Houng, our Home Visitor from the Vietnamese community who has been with the program from the beginning, shares her views: "...from my experience, most first time moms from my community benefit from reaching out to the Building Blocks program and other community services as it allows them to break their isolation and expand their support network. New parents often find that they don't have the family role models who would have been in their life if they were still living in Vietnam. As well, it allows these parents to combine their own cultural values around parenting with the values of the Canadian culture."

Maritza, our Home Visitor from the Spanish speaking community, describes her experience: "In most cases, I end up working with the new mom and child on a weekly basis. However, as the home visits continue, in some cases I have noticed that the father will also start to become involved and take a more active role in parenting the child. This experience has left me with the hope that this program can contribute to both parents' taking responsibility for their new family."

Home Visitors often describe their work with the new mom and child as one where they are mentoring and role modelling. "I often feel like I am filling the role of an older sister or mother when I teach a new mom how to hold the baby when nursing, or how to comfort the baby when the baby cries," shares Maritza.

The Home Visitors work with a support team that integrates the experience and skills of managers, a social worker and a community health nurse to assume the clinical and operational responsibilities of the program. Building Blocks is a program that provides families with a healthy start to their journey in parenting.

MOSAIC

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: 25th September, 2000
Place: Van Dusen Gardens
Floral Hall, 5251 Oak Street

Registration: 5:30 p.m.
Meeting: 6:00 p.m.

Phone (604) 254-9626 for more information

commercial_translations.com

by Chava Glouberman
Translations Department Supervisor

Every morning we troop into the quiet room, our small space in the agency, and switch on one, two, three, four, five PCs and one Mac. The printers hum their way back to life; the modem that was on call during the night gives way to other applications on the same platform; the photocopier slowly warms up for another day of reproducing personal documents, letters on letterhead, enlargements of small print and collages of misprinted pages or partially faxed materials. The office is buzzing and ready for another busy day.

When we purchased our new Mac a technician came to configure it to our needs. He looked around the office and mused for a moment: "These pieces of equipment should talk to one another! The telephones could be hooked up to the fax machine and the computers to the phones. All six computers should be communicating in an enclosed network. Files and projects could then flow from one station to the other without the use of floppies or zip diskettes. Letters could be faxed, paperless, directly from the application that produced them to the customers through the phone lines. Incoming files and faxes could be received at the respective stations without coming into contact with a wood byproduct."

To listen to the gurus and mavens of what a short while ago was a development known as e-commerce that rapidly evolved into e-business, in some time from now we will be doing business by using features provided by "a completely new interface that transforms the corporate Internet procurement experience by presenting a business-to-consumer user friendly, e-commerce shopping experience, similar to a web-shopping experience found on most popular consumer web sites," (quoted from Oracle's press release on 25 April, 2000). One big server will replace the bank of computers. A single platform will accommodate all languages and all alphabets. The customers will place their orders on our user-friendly web site by filling out pdf forms which will compute the cost of the translation, typesetting and dtp needs automatically and will return the amount payable, which will be processed by e-money or credit cards. The customer will then upload the required files for processing, the deposit going directly to the bank. The

request will then be sorted and assigned by the server to the appropriate translators, typesetters and dtps in its large database—all without human intervention—and the files will be shipped through broadband directly to them. The server will keep track of the accounting and cost accounting data while the network of subcontractors will be fulfilling their tasks with the help of sophisticated machine translation software and corresponding aids. The finished products will be shipped directly to the customer. We will have support staff take the calls from customers who were not completely satisfied with our on-line customer support (not e-mail back and forth, but a chat group format). This business model, incorporating both on-line and telephone support, will help us achieve the best balance of live human contact and cost management. Staff may well be working from different geographical locations.

The small office network thus turns into a larger network including the customer, the translators and other professionals, even more loosely related industries. Imagine the final product *not* going back to the customer in digital form but being shipped directly to the pre-press bureau and from there to the printers without the intermediation of couriers, mail, and other not-entirely-reliable physical means of conveyance. The small network will then be part of a larger portal which will include all the services in one cyber address, very much along the lines of recent development in the North American automotive industry which allows the integration of suppliers, producers and customers to interact via one large portal on the internet, all purchases and sales done through the portal—saving months of processing and production. Some visionaries are predicting that in the automotive sector the customer, with one click of the mouse, will soon be able to 'virtually' assemble his or her dream car and see it being driven up to the house almost before you can say 'Bill Gates'—or is it 'Larry Ellison'? The possibilities are boundless. We need only to understand the direction things are taking and set our sails to benefit from the winds of change. One can, in fact, even feel them stiffening up as we write.

A Memorable 'All Staff' Meeting

Way to go MOSAIC!

by Chava Glouberman
Translations Department Supervisor

The room was arranged as a theatre forum. The seats were all taken. Indeed, the place was packed. People stood at both entrances, and staff and volunteers were seated precariously for the length of the meeting behind the back row of chairs on tables piled against the wall. Nobody budged. Very few left the room to attend to urgent matters, such as drop-in clients for the Translations Department and an Assessment of Qualification for the Translations Fund. A few, regrettably, were prevented from attending by their duties. The receptionists stationed at the entrances of the building and the Interpretations Department Customer Service Workers remained at their posts to attend to the inexorable flow of incoming calls.

The room was, as I say, full. In addition to MOSAIC staff, three Board members came too, prominent among them our President, Ms. Bonnie Evans. In the audience one could also see one of our funders. And many volunteers attended the meeting as well.

What a meeting it was! The confrontation of MOSAIC with the media was a one of a kind occasion: MOSAIC vs. the outside world, so to speak. The thrill of being able to voice the concerns that pile up during the days, months, years of work in this sector. The well-informed and well-armed guest, John Cruikshank—Senior Editor of the Vancouver Sun—seated at the front of the room vs. the strength of conviction, passion, and diversity of his audience. And the impressive comportment and wit of our Executive Director too. All these made for a memorable event.

The many voices heard during the meeting touched upon subjects that ranged from a philosophical debate concerning the relative merits of Noam Chomsky's views on communication and Wittgenstein's. The learned guest and Jiri Adler, who raised this subject during the discussion, seemed to agree with one another by preferring Wittgenstein's position. Did they agree on the substance of the position? Chomsky says that it is all in the brain: basic syntactic ability is hard-wired in the brain. If Chomsky is right people would be less susceptible to advertising and other tricks of the printed media. Wittgenstein maintains (to simplify wildly) that

it all comes from outside: we learn by interacting in this world. The Chief Editor claimed time and again that it is ultimately the reader's responsibility to make sense of the printed matter.

This discussion followed Flora's very well prepared argument, which set the tone of the meeting, about sensationalistic headlines on the front page cheek-by-jowl with issues that touch our everyday lives; for example, an article on cuts in health care services next to a huge headline about illegal migrants disembarking on B.C.'s shores. Flora's persistence coupled to her delicate manner had a powerful impact on listeners like me. It offset the aggressive rhetorical tactics of the guest to the point of making the latter look slightly ridiculous. Further underscoring this point we heard the very eloquent description of the impact printed materials have on the daily lives of ordinary citizens as so ably described by Eyob, in his recounting of an incident from his own personal life earlier that very week.

Many of our staff pointed at the difficulties the diverse communities in the Lower Mainland have with the way ethnic related news is presented by the Vancouver Sun, the gratuitous labelling of people in the news (for example, naming the country of origin of perpetrators of crimes, while remaining silent about the nationality of academics awarded high distinctions for their scientific and other accomplishments) was mentioned.

These points triggered explanations and justifications from our guest regarding the intricacies of putting every edition together for next day's issue. He talked about the fine balance that has to be struck between tight deadlines, advertisers, target audience, budgets, and keeping his employees' and his own position viable. We heard about good news and bad news, and which of the pair is more likely to be read. A little bit of an analysis was made about the readership's habits and known apathy, about gaining and losing market share, about policies and mandates. We heard about the competition of high-brow national newspapers at the upper end of the Sun's market, and the tabloids at the bottom end. The Language Services

Department (former Fee for Service) felt in its own medium...some witty exchanges occurred here between Jiri and the guest.

The discussion was constantly returned to the matters of principle and to the concerns MOSAIC staff has with the way happenings are presented in the newspaper. Bonnie Evans made quite clear that responsibility for what the paper prints rests ultimately on the editor's shoulders. Which brought the discussion back to the mission and vision of the Sun and a clarification from the editor that the editorial part of the newspaper is independent of the advertising that appears on the same pages.

Our own Holly was an excellent M.C. She was very witty. In a very elegant manner and with the just right amount of subtlety she did not permit the discussion to stray from the key matter. How do news portrayals impact the different communities? She shaped what might have degenerated into an amorphous discussion into a dynamic and poignant package, one that even the very sophisticated and cool guest could not but have been affected by. She acutely summarized the argument at the end of each segment, before going on to the next speaker, so that it would not be fudged or forgotten.

Last but not least: Victor's and Laurie's presentations and the wonderful work of MOSAIC's volunteers became an important part of the event. The writer is herself being exposed to a different dimension of volunteer work. Having volunteered for many years at museums, public schools and other institutions, I never envisioned that the work could count for more than very cheap labour to fill in the gaps of a very slim budget. For a couple of years now, being one of those who leave the building at late hours in the evening, I am witness to the extraordinary sight of MOSAIC's classrooms, lunchroom, and other available space coming alive after 6:30 p.m. several evenings each week. Volunteers fill the place with eager ESL students. At the AGM we hear of the great dedication and accomplishments of extraordinary individuals committing their time and effort to benefit the agency and the communities. And now we hear that volunteers are researching and preparing a list of carefully considered recommendations for the newspaper. All in line with MOSAIC's spirit and mandate, as it was so eloquently conveyed at this extraordinary meeting.

MOSAIC Afghan Women's Group

by Momena Qaumi
Group Member

It has been more than three years that I have been coming to MOSAIC to the Afghan group. Every Tuesday when I am on my way to the meeting there is a great amount of joy that comes over me and I feel free. I feel blessed that I have found such a great group to be a part of. These women are my dearest friends. I believe MOSAIC is my second home and each of the group members is my sister, my child and my friend, like those that I left behind. The women in the group helped me gain my strength back; just seeing them makes me forget about my problems.

I came to Canada one year before I joined the Afghan Women's Group at MOSAIC. At that time I was very sick physically and emotionally. A very good friend of mine who was part of the group took me to MOSAIC and introduced me to the Afghan Women's Group. By coming to the group I gained back my health and my self-esteem and I think I am as good as I was before, in Afghanistan.

There are single moms in the group. I am very grateful that we can get together and help each other. The new members are usually new to the country, and here at MOSAIC they receive information and support from the group members. We have at least six new babies in the group. We have our own community room with a beautiful mural and other facilities to enjoy our time together. Since I started, we had many different programs such as English courses, hair dressing, sewing, conversation, and we also had speakers from different organizations.

In addition, now I also know how to move around the city. I have learned English, I can read addresses. I am happy to be with other women from my own country, we have our young children among ourselves. We have the opportunity to talk about our problems and solve them. We are proud to publish the first Afghan Women's Newsletter.

This Community Development initiative is made possible by funding through the City of Vancouver, Social Planning. For more information contact Sedi Hendizadeh at MOSAIC, tel.: 254-9626.

Such Sweet Sorrow

by Elizabeth Honsberger—A dear friend and
former Director of Program Development

The news of Holly Whittleton's resignation as Executive Director generated equal parts excitement and concern. Make no mistake—we're thrilled she's accepted the position of Assistant Director at MMI. She's worked hard to improve the economic, social, and training conditions for newcomers. Given her remarkable skills, her impending move is another example of "the universe unfolding as it should."

Still, it's hard watching MOSAIC face the end of an era, and people are justifiably uneasy with the vacuum her leaving creates. Fortunately, dealing with change was one of first lessons she ever demonstrated. She was first to embrace opportunities, and her work imparted how to "stop directing the wind and start adjusting the sails."

The legacy Holly leaves behind is substantial. You have to wonder what Holly thought of the agency she joined early in 1993. MOSAIC had only 70 workers—a far cry from its current profile as employer of 125 staff and 300 contractors, with responsibility for a budget of \$6 million dollars. During 1993-1994, the agency struggled with difficult organizational issues, but by February 1995 Holly was appointed ED and a firm hand was finally on the tiller.

She quickly displayed the skills that would later win her agency-related and personal awards. Chief among these skills was the ability to develop "right-place/right-time" strategies and to build partnerships, long before it was fashionable.

In 1995, Holly chaired the first meeting of the "Coalition for Refugee Access to Income Security." The 35 member-strong coalition tried to persuade the province to rescind the clause that required refugee claimants to be residents for three months to be eligible for income assistance.

There were countless calls, meetings, and faxes over the next six months. A "Protest Refugee Camp" was set up in February 1996.

Victory arrived on June 1, 1996: the clause was rescinded! In February 1997 Holly lead a group of community organizations to form the WGOP. The group gained a huge victory in July 1997 in advocating with and on behalf of the African Workers Network for convention refugees to be fully eligible for regular income

assistance and access to training.

Holly's style proved no less effective when advocating for employment training. After the fateful restructuring of HRDC in July 1995, she began to plead the case for improved training access for newcomers. Analysts claimed some 25,000 clients and 2,000 staff across Canada were affected by the federal cutbacks.

Holly developed community-based strategies that launched us on a course of action we still follow. She promoted sectoral responses and encouraged funders to collaborate in addressing common agency and client concerns. "The Looking Ahead Project," the "Steering Committee for Pilot Employment Programs," and the "Collaboration Roundtable" are but three of the many groups that currently serve as evidence to Holly's efforts.

Holly strengthened the agency by implementing pro-active policies, procedures, and systems. She worked hard along with the Board of Directors to ensure that MOSAIC makes a monthly contribution towards employees' RRSPs—a first in the sector! New departments were created for Operations, Fee-for-Service, and Program Development. Family-friendly policies became the norm. The child-minding service evolved into a licensed child-care facility that currently employs 6 staff and cares for 25 children. The Language Centre finally found a new home at 11th and Commercial Dr.

Holly also worked with our board to develop a mission statement and guiding principles that address our commitment to the "social contract." She worked diligently to acquire additional training space at 2555 Commercial Dr. and at 1522 Commercial Dr. She fashioned together the collective will and funding to transform the ground-level office at 1720 Grant St. into a "Community Room" that provides free meeting space for women and their children. She initiated a computerized case management system that was ultimately selected to serve as the prototype for immigrant agencies across the province.

Holly's tireless effort and indomitable spirit will long inspire us. She never forgot that the work was "about the clients," and she made many significant contributions in improving conditions for newcomers. She will always serve as a reminder to us that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

If only we could clone her!

by Bonnie Evans, President

It's been nearly five years since I was first ushered into Holly's office to be interviewed as a prospective Board member. I remember being impressed with her ability to articulate the purpose and the structure of MOSAIC with passion and clarity. In the ensuing years my appreciation has become something akin to awe. Holly has taken MOSAIC to an enviable position in the multicultural community. She has brought us stability, growth, and vision. She has consistently supported communities in finding their voice and speaking their experience. She has led, she has inspired, and she has listened.

Recently I had the privilege, along with several other Board members, of conducting a performance evaluation of our Executive Director. I cannot begin to tell you in what regard she is held by staff, managers, peers and funders. I can only echo the words of one funder: "If only we could clone her!" Well, we can't, and in work as in life time brings not only change, but also new challenges and new opportunities.

I know that because of Holly's work, MOSAIC will endure—will continue to go from strength to strength. But that knowledge is cold comfort to those of us who have worked so closely with this extraordinary person. We wish all good things for Holly in her new job. But we will miss her. We will miss her very much.

iACT Immigrant Access Centre for Training

(continued from page 2)

can we help more clients access more training and get back into the work force as quickly as possible?

We are grateful to HRDC for funding iACT, and to our HRCC programs and services officers (Carol MacDonald, John Duggan, Tania Little) who work with us on a daily basis and have been so committed to the success of this service. Since September of last year 87 clients have made their way through the system to access training, an important step in their return to work action plan.

my A Letter to Staff

by Holly Whittleton, Executive Director

My decision to leave MOSAIC has been a very emotional one. For me, the most difficult part will be leaving you, the staff, who I think of as a second family. For seven years we have worked alongside each other and have experienced many of the joys and sadness associated with being a part of a large family. We have experienced marriages, birth, the pain of death and terminal illness. We weathered funding crises and rapid growth, expansion of services and organizational renewal. Through it all we supported and looked after each other and in doing so created one of the most unique work environments I have ever had the pleasure to work in. You have touched my life, educated me and challenged me in ways that have changed me forever.

Thank you!

MOSAIC/BRITANNIA SECONDARY SCHOOL BURSARY

MOSAIC's Board of Directors is pleased to announce that we have worked with our community partner, Britannia Secondary School, to establish a bursary for students who are pursuing post secondary education. The MOSAIC/Britannia Secondary School Bursary will be awarded yearly to two students identified by the school to be immigrants or refugees, or the children of a parent who is an immigrant or a refugee. The value of each award is \$500. Elizabeth Briemberg, Vice President of the Board of Directors of MOSAIC, attended the Britannia graduation ceremonies on June 16, 2000 at the Orpheum Theatre to present the awards to this year's recipients. MOSAIC congratulates Thai Ngo and Avana Vranic. We are proud to support both the students and Britannia Secondary School in this community initiative!

Pilot Mentoring Project

(continued from page 1)

opportunity to prove that her “background training and experience in teaching were worthy of recognition.” Margaret remembers: “As optimistic as I was, I was also well aware of the challenges. Luckily, these challenges could not stand in the face of the shared vision, collaboration, determination, hard work, openness and respect that characterized our mentoring partnership.” After a year of hard work, Margaret was tipped off about a social work job by her mentor, Lani Tom. She applied and was hired. Happily, she has attained her goal. Although still working towards his job goal Julio says, “I got to see how government works from inside, and gained access to a lot of resources and contacts. My mentor, Hayne Wai, bent over backwards for me.”

Lilia also feels that the “mentoring project was a great opportunity” and she was “honoured and delighted” that Patsy George was chosen as her mentoring partner. Patsy was very supportive and in fact suggested that Lilia apply for a position at the Burnaby Multicultural Society, where she is now employed.

The mentorees’ praise for their mentors is swift and heartfelt. As for volunteering, Lilia says: “Volunteer work will help you to do networking that eventually will lead you to get a paid job...you are going to give but you also receive...and [for me] the most important thing...was the opportunity to meet the people that are my friends now.”

Immigrant/Refugee Poverty in B.C.

(continued from page 2)

levels of government that sponsorship breakdown means that immigrants need help soon after they identify that fact, in order to end the present long and intimidating wait that many suffer before receiving any financial help.

- Improving the availability of well qualified child care services, in particular, to recent immigrants and refugees.
- Trying to convince both the federal and provincial governments that the national children’s agenda needs immediate investment, and specifically, that government must provide more support for early childhood development, increased economic equality, and thoughtful and caring communities for all children, including those of immigrant and refugee families.
- Trying to improve the availability of adequate and affordable housing for low-income immigrants and refugees.

For more information please contact John Argue at 254-0244. Funding for this initiative is provided by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, Vancouver Foundation, Law Foundation and the Ministry for Social Development and Economic Security.



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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.