Integrating immigrants and refugees helps build a better community
Our Vision

Our vision is of a Canada that welcomes all people, that supports their right to equality and choice as they determine their goals and aspirations, and that acknowledges their contributions in enriching and strengthening our communities.

Our Mission

Our mission is to support immigrants and refugees by listening to and responding to their needs. We do this through advocacy and through accessible, practical, and diverse services that enable them to meet their personal goals while building bridges to the larger community.

TABLE of CONTENTS

Responding to community needs ........................................... 3
Practicing health care in Canada ........................................... 4
The global site in BC .......................................................... 5
Learning English at MOSAIC .................................................. 6
Lost-and-found in interpretation and translation ..................... 7
Children separated from culture, separated from family .......... 8
Child Care tackles bullying .................................................... 9
Immigrant stories: Struggle to find work ............................... 10
Loan Program helps engineer .............................................. 11
Get your legal information .................................................. 11
A place like home .............................................................. 12
Community participation through Popular Theatre ............... 13
Becoming self-reliant with CAP ............................................. 14
MOSAIC Services ................................................................ 15
MOSAIC Annual General Meeting ....................................... 16
Membership has its benefits ................................................ 16

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Responding to
COMMUNITY
needs

by Eyob G. Natzghi, MOSAIC Executive Director

How do we manage it all? Though we can’t cover all aspects of our recent activity, this year’s newsletter reflects MOSAIC’s vision and mission, and highlights the challenges and opportunities during a time of uncertainty in the not-for-profit sector.

Clients, community partners and staff tell us how newcomers strive to overcome the obstacles a new life in a new place brings. They illustrate our values and guiding principles of social justice, but clearly show the issues that demand more advocacy. Dealing with the challenges will require social change -- and we will be there, engaging policymakers, identifying stakeholders, forging partnerships.

Articles about the English Language Centre, Workways and the Community Assistance Program, which help people achieve self-reliance and employment, open windows into the experience and challenges of those coming through our doors. It’s heartwarming to see how many immigrants and refugees turn their challenges into opportunities.

One of MOSAIC’s trademarks is partnering with others in innovative initiatives for community-based changes. Such partnerships are showcased in articles about preventing bullying in child care centres; community mobilization that resulted in SITE BC; the Multilingual Legal Website to inform newcomers of their rights; using Popular Theatre to build understanding between communities; and providing Family Places where families adjust to Canadian life through a supportive environment.

This year’s publication also offers the personal touches and voices of an Immigrant Loan Program client who enhanced work skills through education, and Dr. Vesna Stajic who, as a participant and leader, helped mobilize internationally trained medical doctors. The plight of “separated children” points to MOSAIC’s core commitment of supporting communities, while “Lost-and-Found in Interpretation and Translation” advocates for immigrants’ access to translations and interpretations.

We celebrate every success, but each success underscores the important work that remains. Providing multi-lingual legal information is an accomplishment, but cuts to legal representation for refugee claimants is an alarming social trend. MOSAIC must monitor this trend because it has important implications for Canada’s ability to meet its obligation under the 1951 United Nations Convention to protect refugees. Through establishing SITE BC, international engineers have made a significant achievement towards the accreditation of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople. But, it’s too early to sound the horns. We need direct and effective access to, and engagement with, policymakers and regulatory bodies.

Our newsletter demonstrates that despite changing trends and cuts to social services, MOSAIC continues to create ways to support communities. Thank you so much to our dedicated funders and community partners. My appreciation as well goes to MOSAIC staff and the authors who shared their personal and work experiences with our readership. You have put complex human issues into context. Well done!

What you didn’t know about...

ECONOMIC REALITIES

Immigration will likely account for all net labour force growth by 2011, and projections indicate it will account for total population growth by 2031.

– from the Immigration Plan 2002, Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Immigrant and refugee women over age 65 are among the poorest people in Canada and are more likely to be poor than immigrant men.


25% of all immigrants and refugee families, and 51% of those who arrived between 1991 and 1996, are living in poverty compared to 11% of non-immigrant families.

Practicing Health Care in Canada
by Vesna Stajic

I was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. I worked there for almost 20 years as a medical doctor, specializing in anesthesiology. For 10 years prior to arriving in Canada, I headed the Department of Anesthesia and Intensive Care Unit at the Kladovo general hospital in Yugoslavia.

My husband, children, and I came to Canada two years ago. We sought a new life, and I was seeking an opportunity to further my career. After we settled down, I began researching: How could I use my extensive experience from Europe in my new country?

As a founding member of the International Medical Association, I discussed my experience, background and aspirations to work in medicine again with other members. This group of medical doctors focuses on ethical, social and research issues, and I hoped they could provide me with some direction. I soon realized that it would take a lot of time, money, and hard work to accomplish my goal. And there was a high likelihood that I would never be able to practice medicine again. I learned that, even if I excelled at all the national exams the Medical Council of Canada requires, there are no specialist residencies (required training under supervision in a hospital) for international medical graduates (IMGs) in British Columbia.

This meant I would need to study basic medicine again and then compete for a family medicine residency, few of which are available in B.C. My specialization was being ignored, and if I wanted to practice again my only hope was in family practice, and that was just a “maybe.” I still felt family medicine was an idea worth further investigation. The required post-graduate residency training in family medicine was better than for specialists, but my chances were still slim due to chronic under-funding of residencies for international medical doctors. I met many IMGs who had passed all the exams and even had local clinical experience, but they could not get a residency because there were so few in B.C. This was discouraging.

I didn’t take the disappointment lying down and instead joined other doctors to help form the Association of International Medical Doctors of B.C. (AIMD BC). Our association advocates for change and fairness in licensing. Change would take time, and in the meantime I had to provide for my family. That’s when I started to think about working in private healthcare somewhere in the Lower Mainland.

I contacted a private medical clinic specializing in hyperbaric medicine, which focuses on the use of a hyperbaric (pressure) chamber for treating divers who get the bends (nitrogen narcosis), carbon monoxide poisoned patients and wound or injury healing. Executives at the clinic reviewed my credentials and experience, and I was soon offered a full-time job. Four months later, the clinic’s owners sent me to California for additional training at one of the world’s largest hospitals specializing in hyperbaric medicine. I passed the training, received my Hyperbaric Medicine Diploma, and am working full-time in my new field. It feels good to be helping people again within a health care context.

In addition to my job, I volunteer with a research project at the UBC Endocrinology Department, and I’m also the President of the Multicultural Health Services Society.

Although it has been a long and quite frustrating road back to work, I feel grateful that my passion for interest and experience in healthcare can be put to good use again. And this time, my efforts can help to build a better Canada.

What you didn’t know about...

**HEALTH ISSUES**

Immigrant and refugee women have health needs similar to Canadian-born women but far fewer resources (e.g. employment, income, family and support networks, language skills), pointing to the need for public policy and programs that support immigrant women in their need.

– MacKinnon, 1999, “Affirming immigrant women’s health; building inclusive health policy”

The most significant challenges for older immigrants are language and communication barriers, and difficulties accessing the health care system.

– Alliance des communautés culturelles pour l’égalité dans la santé et les services sociaux, 1999
The Global Site in BC  
Society of Internationally Trained Engineers of BC

by Brian Amouzegar

It's official. A milestone has been achieved. The Society of Internationally Trained Engineers of British Columbia, or SITE BC, has come into being!

It is a dream-come-true for B.C.’s engineering community, which has members from around the world. These engineers will, for the first time in Canadian immigration history, have their voice unified through their own unique public platform.

The underlying purpose of SITE BC is to raise awareness in the general public and in specific community groups, to create synergies among members, and to collectively negotiate barriers. Such efforts will allow immigrant engineers to access their profession and Canada will access and benefit from their talents.

SITE BC’s Mission Statement is “to promote utilizing the full potential of internationally trained engineers so they can more meaningfully contribute their knowledge and skills to strengthening the Canadian economy.”

SITE BC depends on member-volunteers to pursue its goals and achieve strategic objectives. The organization is governed by a Board of 11 Directors, which includes an Executive Committee of four Internationally Trained Engineers (ITEs). A lean organizational structure supports SITE BC’s operations. It consists of five Committees: Public Relations, Corporate Relations, Knowledge Development, Advocacy & Qualification Issues, and Membership Services. Special-purpose committees will be formed to implement specific projects.

Some of the other key SITE BC achievements to date include:

1. Bylaws Completed and adopted
2. Non-profit Society registration filed under B.C. laws
3. Membership criteria mutually agreed upon with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEG BC)
4. Building blocks laid for signing a Memorandum of Understanding with APEG BC
5. First SITE BC budget prepared and submitted
6. Public visibility opportunities are being sought and utilized on an ongoing basis
7. Constructed database of prospective ITE members
8. Crafting of a membership intake procedure is in the works
9. Organization of a General Meeting for ITEs is underway
10. Website launched (www.sitebc.ca)

SITE BC is faced with some immediate challenges. Therefore, we seek the support of our community at large, especially our sponsors, to help us in our endeavors:

1. To participate in the building and governance of BC ITPE Net, which is the network of the internationally trained professionals of B.C.
2. To achieve public visibility, reach out to ITEs across B.C., and strengthen our membership base.
3. To be involved with other stakeholders in decisions and initiatives affecting the internationally trained professional community.
4. To secure funding, to complement the voluntary contributions of ITEs, so that SITE BC can work towards practical solutions to the common challenges of the underutilized immigrant engineering community.

Finally, SITE BC acknowledges MOSAIC, Immigrant Services Society, and Surrey/Delta Immigrant Services Society. These groups are our BC ITPE Net sponsors; they have jump-started this exciting project and have committed further support so that SITE BC can advance and become the independent voice of BC’s immigrant engineers. Thanks also to Canadian Heritage, our federal funder. Thank you as well to SITE BC's active core of volunteer-members who have tirelessly contributed their ideas, time, experience, and resources since the steering committee formed in May 2003. Please visit us at www.sitebc.ca

Dennis Tsang, MOSAIC Counsellor
Imagine that you’re a 34-year-old male immigrant from China. Although you took a few English classes in school, you can neither make yourself understood nor can you understand what people are saying to you in stores, on the bus, in your everyday life. You have a university degree in mathematics, and you came to Vancouver five months ago with your wife and seven-year-old daughter to start a new life. Although it was exciting when you first arrived, you’ve started to get discouraged. The pay from your restaurant job is barely adequate to keep the family going, you need to find a new place to live, and you find things much more difficult than you expected. You take evening English classes at MOSAIC’s English Language Centre.

Perhaps you’re not that 34-year-old man, but a 57-year-old woman from Iran. You came to Vancouver two years ago with your husband and two grown daughters, and now have a new grandson. You had little schooling in your own country so have trouble reading and writing in Farsi, let alone English. You are uncomfortable in many situations: buying groceries, making a phone call, going to the doctor, telling your landlord that the stove that doesn’t work, even just chatting with the neighbours, because your English is so poor. You want to improve your spoken English, and learn literacy skills so that your grandson won’t be ashamed of you. So you too attend MOSAIC’s English classes.

Every student who attends classes at MOSAIC is unique, with his or her own cultural, educational and employment background, reason for leaving the country of origin, network of family and friends, and settlement needs. Poverty and loneliness are not uncommon. The dedicated and skilled teachers at the English Language School have the daunting job of trying to meet the diverse needs of each student while teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The philosophy of the ELSA (English Language School for Adults) program is to teach the language of everyday social interactions, rather than using a grammar-based approach. In each term, the class covers a series of units on a wide variety of vital topics such as housing, employment, medicine, education, transportation, Canadian geography, history or citizenship, etc. In each case, students determine the priority of the units through a vote. The content of each unit is likewise determined by the particular needs of the students. The goal is to empower them to feel competent in English while learning about Canadian social, economic and political life as well as aiding development of the skills they need to truly settle here.

If you were to drop in at a language class, don’t expect to see a room where students sit at desks in rows, listen while the teacher lectures and do worksheets. On the contrary, you’d probably hear a hubbub of voices and laughter before you even peeked in the door. The students sit at round tables where the learning is extremely interactive and often lively. Once the teacher has presented new material, the students practice it orally through a variety of games and songs, until they are comfortable using it in everyday situations. Teachers have books, audio and videotapes and a very wide variety of teaching activities that have been developed over the years available to use.

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On the first floor of the building that houses the English Language Centre is a childcare for children of students, a bright, cheerful and well-equipped place where the youngsters play and learn under the watchful eyes of the multilingual staff. On Fridays, students can participate in the Family Place Program, where they interact with their children and have discussions with a trained facilitator.

When students have moved through the three levels of classes, they graduate, and it is often at these times that they express their appreciation for the commitment and hard work of their teachers and staff. They know that English is by far the most important tool they need for becoming part of the fabric of Canadian society. MOSAIC has helped them take the first steps in that direction.

Mambo Masinda, MOSAIC Counsellor
Many new immigrants to Canada don’t speak English while others arrive as well-trained interpreters and translators. On one hand, every walk of life is challenging for immigrants who aren’t fluent in the local language, but on the other highly skilled interpreters and translators often cannot find suitable employment. Unless we do better, we’re wasting both opportunity and talent. As immigrant populations grow, particularly in urban centres such as Vancouver, our need for (spoken) interpretation and (written) translation services increases, and our pool from which to train professional interpreters and translators expands. The need is high, but service is low, making this a good news, bad news story.

First the good news: A 1997 Supreme Court of Canada decision ordered that medical interpretation services be provided within six months to the deaf in British Columbia. That decision rested on the finding that not providing such service had an “adverse effect” on deaf people and failed to meet the Charter of Rights test. Clearly if that is the case for the deaf, the same would apply to Canada’s non-English-speaking population. Happily, that court decision had a trickle-down impact. For instance, most B.C. hospitals do provide professional language interpretation and translation services, but the bad news is that can’t be said about the “family doctor” and the many other professionals a new immigrant encounters in daily life. In far too many cases, lawyers, counsellors, paramedics and schools don’t or can’t provide the necessary service. This means that one of our most vulnerable populations is not fairly or adequately served and is too often, and sometimes dangerously, left on the outside of the mainstream struggling for a way in. That’s not good enough, especially when an obvious solution exists and when only political and public will to do better is missing.

The underlying problem is that society places too little value on professional interpretation and translation services. English-as-a-first-language Canadians too often fail to consider the serious implications for an immigrant when something is lost in translation or interpretation: jail sentences or deportation could result, funds could be cut, or physical ailments could go undiagnosed and lead to a more precarious prognosis. The problems no or poor service can create are limited only by one’s imagination, but for the new immigrant these risks and hardships result in real-life consequences and so must be taken directly to heart. With a well-trained pool of professional interpreters and translators originating from other countries and seeking work, and with a population of new immigrants from which we could draw students to train, the solution is clearly two-fold. Our community must provide the inspiration. Government must provide the collaboration.

Where the rubber-meets-the-road we know both the importance of professional and the consequences of absent or poor interpretation and translation services. It’s a discussion we’ve so often had. It’s also a discussion being held in many neighbourhoods where friends fret over fences about how new immigrants on their block seem lost, without support and no one knows how to help. As a service-provision community we should unite to lobby politicians and raise public awareness of the widespread need.

The provincial government has said it understands the importance of reviewing how various foreign credentials are assessed here. Existing professional interpreters and translators need to be involved in that process with the aim of bringing our foreign counterparts and newly trained professionals into more “daily life” services.

The professional interpretation and translation community here has created an industry standard; it must be showcased for its successes and promoted for its plans to expand and improve. Communications projects and information campaigns can play an important role because we will not meet the mission until both politicians and the public understand the overwhelming need for these services. They need to hear loudly and often that we need more training spaces in colleges and universities, and adequate and consistent funding to run volunteer, internship, and mentoring programs. They need to hear, learn, and understand. Then government must act to meaningfully address the need.

As we move forward, inclusion must be our guiding principle, and an adequate interpretation and translation service provision that leaves no one out of the mainstream must be our goal.
The Separated Children Intervention and Orientation Network (SCION) serves children who are new to Canada. The program involves governmental organizations such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and NGOs such as Inland Refugee Society and Covenant House. These organizations work together to solve some of the problems separated children face. We define separated children “as any child under 18 who is outside of their original country and without parents or a legal guardian.” But, how does a situation such as that happen?

Commonly, these children are refugees who have arrived on their own, with siblings, aunts and uncles, or family and friends. Sometimes children migrate for work and to send money home. Other times they are trafficked – SOLD – then exploited for domestic work, the drug and sex trades, or slavery. In rare cases, parents leave children here when they are deported. SCION is here to help.

We provide indirect services such as advocacy. For instance, a boy was adopted from overseas by a Canadian couple. The relationship failed and the parents withheld his legal documents. Though legally here, without identification such as a Social Insurance Number he could not work, making him desperate and at-risk commit crimes just to survive. SCION advocated for him, resulting in his obtaining ID.

We also offer direct services such as a designated representative who assists the child-refugee in a claim to the Immigration and Refugee Board. A father from another country claimed his wife abducted his son and brought him to Canada. A legal dispute between the parents ensued, so the Board designated a SCION representative to assist the child in his refugee claim.

Child-refugees can benefit from the December 2000 “Aden decision” by Federal Court Justice James K. Hugessen. The judge ordered that undocumented refugees from countries without governments could file claims by using affidavits, or statements written under oath. Through the 2002 Immigration and Refugee Act, the court decision became federal law, the understanding being that one cannot produce documents that do not exist in countries such as Somalia or Afghanistan. SCION helps children write affidavits for use in their permanent residency applications.

Sometimes an adult wants to become a legal guardian of a separated child. We inform them about and accompany them to a duty council, which is a lawyer who provides basic legal information before they go to family court. Since legal aid has been cut, this Law Society of B.C. volunteer initiative is the only legal advice that poor or cash-strapped families can access. It’s heart-warming that these professionals understand the importance of serving this population and use their own time to do it.

As a Good Shepherd Sister, I have been involved in refugee work, including with Vancouver’s separated children, since 1996. In 2001, I attended the National Round Table on Separated Children in Ottawa, which was sponsored by Senator Landon Pearson. When I moved here from Montreal in 2002 no NGO was dealing with the separated children issue. MOSAIC and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd formed SCION later that year, and I became the founding Project Coordinator. Since then, SCION has helped separated children in a variety of situations, and we will continue to work for these children. We will also continue to participate in programs dealing with the growing question of child trafficking.

The Aden decision document is available at http://www.cpj.ca/getting_landed/docs/aden.pdf
Child Care tackles bullying

by Aldona Kaminska, Julie Zhou, and Halina Mickiewicz

In June 2003, the MOSAIC Child Care Centre was asked to participate in a bullying prevention program introduced by Vancouver’s Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre Multicultural and Diversity Services. The program teaches young children the skills they need to resist and prevent bullying.

Before implementing this program, all of our staff attended workshops, which covered bullying prevention strategies, suggestions to raise children’s awareness, and ways to improve their positive social skills. Staff felt so strongly about establishing a bully-free environment for our children that we started work on it immediately.

MOSAIC’s Child Care Centre now applies four safe centre principles: my body is safe, my feelings are safe, my thoughts, ideas and words are safe, and my work is safe.

We focus on children’s positive, rather than negative, behaviour. By teaching them key words such as “friendly, safe, happy, and good,” and modeling positive emotions and behaviours, we noticed they respond more appropriately and are more constructive during their conflicts.

It is essential to address any hurtful behaviour whether it’s physical such as hitting or biting, verbal such as teasing or name-calling, or relational such as gossiping or excluding another child from play.

Our implementation process is also featured in a video, which was produced to educate parents as well as other childcare centers and schools about the Safe Spaces Program. The video is called West Coast Safe Spaces and is available through both MOSAIC and the Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre Multicultural and Diversity Services, www.westcoast.org

Safe places result in relaxed young faces!

What you didn’t know about...

REFUGEES

About one quarter of all migrant children younger than age 12 enter Canada as refugees.

– Beiser et al., 1995

During the first five months of 2004, 9,956 people sought asylum inside Canada, a 35% drop from the 15,379 newcomers who filed refugee claims during the same period last year.

Canada may record as few as 19,900 refugee claims in 2004, the lowest total since 13,000 in 1983.

The number of refugees worldwide has fallen to 9.7 million, the lowest level in at least a decade.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said the latest figure for refugees, at the end of 2003, was down 920,000 from the previous year.

– from the CBSA brief, obtained by the National Post under the federal Access to Information Act

Judy Wong, MOSAIC Counsellor
Immigrant stories:

by Peter Paul Harnisch

Settling into Canadian life can cause incredible personal, family and financial hardship for immigrants and refugees. Though some newcomers arrive with professional credentials and personal savings that support their families, others come with little more than the clothes on their backs. Those immigrants survive on government financial support called Employment Assistance. These supports do not last forever; therefore, this group eventually must find work or risk being cut-off from funding. This is where the MOSAIC Workways Program can help. Regardless of one’s circumstances, MOSAIC has probably seen it before. Perhaps you’ll recognize yourself or someone you know in the stories below.

Louisa has been on welfare for five years. She is married and has four children. Her husband, Vito, has held a minimum-wage job for a few years yet the family can barely make ends meet, even though their monthly income includes a welfare payment. Now, the government wants Louisa to get off welfare, but she does not know where to begin. If she finds employment, it will probably pay minimum wage to start, so Louisa worries about who will pay for childcare.

Hasan has been clinically depressed for about four years since having to flee his home country. He is mentally incapable of finding a job. Being deemed “fit for work,” by the government, adds stress, which worsens his condition. He feels lost and hopeless.

Chung lives with his aging mother in the Lower Mainland. He is in his late 50s and spends most of his time providing care and attention to her. Chung has received welfare for seven years and is now faced with having to find a job. He is afraid of leaving his mother unattended for long periods of time.

Although Thi has been in Canada for 10 years, she speaks virtually no English. While here she has socialized almost entirely within the Thai community. She has two boys who were raised in Canada and speak perfect English. On welfare the entire time, she must now find a job. She needs to learn how to speak English but cannot afford the classes.

Julia has bad knees and cannot stand for more than four hours at a time. She needs to find a job but wonders who will hire a disabled immigrant.

Niko is 63 and has never worked in Canada. Therefore, he will not receive Old Age Security funds, which would help support his wife and him in their retirement. He could work for a few years but fears no one would hire him at his age.

Nan is married with two children. His life savings, brought from his home country, have dwindled to nothing. He’s willing to work anywhere and has taken many survival jobs, but he cannot seem to keep them and he doesn’t know why. Because Canadian customs and people’s behaviors are so different, he finds it difficult to adapt to life here.

The MOSAIC Workways Program helps people from a variety of backgrounds and who face a challenging array of situations. It provides free vocational training in the building and food services sectors for immigrants on welfare. This training is offered in a supportive and safe learning environment where people can work toward the lives they dreamt of before coming to Canada.

Graduates can expect to find entry-level positions as heavy or light duty cleaners, hotel room or laundry attendants, hotel housemen, or housekeeping aides. Or they can find work as kitchen workers, baker’s counterpersons or helpers, fast food counterpersons, prep cooks, bussers, production workers, or dietary aides. Over 50 percent of graduates successfully find employment opportunities before graduation, and another 25 percent are offered jobs within one month of completing the program.

Graduation is often seen as a whole new beginning, offering an opportunity to enter the Canadian workforce with increased confidence, newly developed skills and having acquired certificates in a number of key areas. It is one important victory toward the dream.
Loan Program helps engineer upgrade skills

by a client of the Immigrant Loan Program

I came to Canada in June 2003 because of life circumstances beyond my control. Moving here was not easy, and integrating into Canadian society is an ongoing challenge.

My goal is to access and perform my profession here. So last December, I applied to MOSAIC’s Immigrant Loan Program and was pleased to be approved for a loan of about $2500 to upgrade my skills as an engineer. I could not have received such funds from other lending institutions on my own. The loan helps me with the cost of courses, which are very expensive, and to obtain new credentials in Canada.

After attending a job-search program in Burnaby I spent a lot of time writing my resume and cover letter. I’ve applied for many jobs but unfortunately no employers have called me back. My biggest barrier, so far, is getting an interview. Maybe this is because of my age. Regardless, I find the experience of dealing with Canadian employers so different. In my original country there is open communication and employer contact. I’ve experienced none of that here.

Not having feedback from employers is difficult, so I have to get used to these new circumstances. Language and lack of Canadian education, training, and work experience are also barriers I must overcome.

Being new to Canada, I see a big gap between getting the loan and becoming employed in my profession. This is my main concern. That’s why I can always use support in finding appropriate employment. Therefore, I’ve contacted the association and regulatory body for engineers and am going through the process of becoming a licensed member. By no means is it easy.

Finding suitable employment is the key for me. Fortunately, I have been able to work part-time as a translator and nanny to pay my basic living expenses, and to participate in and contribute to my new country. Still, I have my goal, so I continue to work every day to find employment in my field. I know it will take time.

Get your legal info

www.multilingualegal.ca

by Dora Replanski

The Latin American Community Council and MOSAIC, with the financial support of the Law Foundation of BC, have implemented the Multilingual Legal Website, designed to provide newcomers to B.C. and community workers comprehensive and critical legal information in nine languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Objectives of the project include improving the accessibility and utility of legal and law-related materials to both the legal profession and the public throughout B.C. and assisting community workers and settlement practitioners in B.C. to provide essential basic legal information to newcomers with limited knowledge of English.

This website includes a wide variety of publications and additional resources, covering subjects that have been selected through community consultations. The database includes more than 100 publications, searchable by keyword, language, subject and title. We encourage community groups and agencies to share their multilingual documents. Please read the submission guidelines on the website and contact us at dreplinski@mosaicbc.com

We hope that community workers and newcomers to B.C. will frequently visit www.multilingualegal.ca and regard it as a favourite online resource for relevant and up-to-date multilingual legal information.

Dora Replanski is Project Coordinator for the Multilingual Legal Web Site

The Immigrant Loan Program is a partnership project of MOSAIC and VanCity Credit Union, funded by VanCity Community Solutions, VanCity Foundation, and the Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women’s Services. MOSAIC cannot assume responsibility for the content, errors or opinions expressed in this article and hereby disclaims any liability to any party for any damages whatsoever.
A place like home:
innovative support for newcomer families

by Diane Wilmann

MOSAIC launched the Latin American and Vietnamese Family Place Programs in November 2003. They, like the babies and children involved in them, are off to a healthy start!

These programs are based on the now internationally recognized model of a family place or family resource program. What makes them unique is that they are offered in the first language of the immigrant and refugee parents who participate. Therefore, they respect different cultural approaches to parenting as well as provide children with a wonderful opportunity to develop skills in their first language environment. For new parents struggling with life in a new country, these programs provide weekly contact with a place like home.

Each program shares a common structure, while developing its own unique identity. Both programs have steadily grown: over 56 families are served through the overall project. Staff members from both programs successfully link parents with other community resources and build parents’ confidence in taking ownership of programming. Some parents endorse the project with their involvement in the advisory committee while others show their appreciation through program evaluations and letters-of-support. Aida Pinada reflects the thoughts and opinions of many parents in both programs when she says:

“This program represents a vital space for our children. They can socialize with other little children who speak the very same language, where they learn traditional songs and stories. And all this to teach them to identify themselves with their first culture which is Latin American at the same time this will make them identify themselves as Canadians; you need to have strong roots to be able to give back to society...the educational sessions in this program give us a good guiding support to become moms in a new society – with a new language, new people – new culture.”

Just as with any good home, laughter and fun play an important role. For instance, Lupita, a mom who dressed up as a four-year-old girl, brought a special touch of humour to the Christmas Celebration at Latinas en Accion (the name mothers gave the program). For Mother’s Day, families danced Salsa and sang traditional Latin American songs. In the Vietnamese program, families laugh and smile as they sing and share traditional Vietnamese thymes and songs. When families play and celebrate together, when parents, staff and the broader community work together, friendships are made and maintained, and a solid foundation is laid for the children’s futures.

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Happily, our village is about to expand. In September 2004, a family place for Korean families will open and they too will thrive in and enjoy a place like home!

Our other village members: Strathcona Elementary School and the MOSAIC Language Centre provide space and staff time to the programs. MOSAIC is part of the Ethnocultural Committee along with the Pacific Immigrant Resource Society, the Multicultural Family Centre and other community agencies that contribute by developing funding, donating meeting space, and providing considerable administration support. The Ministry of Children and Family Development through Windows of Opportunity provides funding.

For more information about the Latin American and Vietnamese Family Place Programs please contact Kim Ton, Manager of Family Programs, at 604-254-9626.
Community participation through Popular Theatre

by Victor Porter

Something special and profound happened in spring 2004. With funding from the Community Mobilization Program, National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Department of Justice Canada, MOSAIC brought together Lower Mainland members of the Korean and Somali communities in a project called “Deep Roots, Stronger Families, Safer Communities.”

The project’s objective was to train these members in the Popular Theatre Methodology and assist them in using it to address issues affecting their communities. The methodology was developed in Brazil in the early 1960s, and it considers people’s life experiences as a resource for learning and social change.

Through games and exercises participants embark on a journey. They use basic theatre skills to develop trust and an ability to reflect upon their current challenges, and to rehearse possible solutions. During the process they, speaking English, build short scenes based on their collective experiences. The scenes display situations for which the participants have no answers. The scenes are later shared in the two communities’ languages of origin in what is known as Forum Theatre. In Forum Theatre the scenes are shown to the audience. The second time through each scene, audience members are asked to yell “stop” if they see somebody struggling in the scene and if they have an idea of how to resolve the situation. Those audience volunteers, called “spect-actors” (rather than spectators) are then asked by the facilitator to come into the playing area. They either replace a character or add themselves to the scene and try their idea. One audience member’s idea sparks another’s idea and the result is a community engaged in the resolution of a particular issue through theatre.

The Korean and Somali participants developed a variety of scenes dealing with challenges such as integrating into a new country, teens dropping out of school, role reversal in newcomer families, and difficulties in communication. The scenes were presented during three Forums in both communities. Audience members ranged in age from 7 to 86. These theatrical interactions provided the communities with an invaluable opportunity to take a profound look at their serious issues, and the events generated an exciting, dynamic and empowering way to find solutions.

These two very different immigrant and refugee communities slowly found the best way to cooperate. In doing that they recognized their similarities, shared their concerns, and through working together for only a limited time they became each other’s extended family and social support network. It was a remarkable process by which newcomers contributed to the larger community.

Popular Theatre opens doors to social change, promotes dialogue on crucial issues and raises awareness about people’s daily struggles. It develops communities and at the same time participants, with laughter and hope, enjoy each other’s presence and experience. No wonder it is so popular.

MOSAIC

acknowledges the continued support of

BC Gaming Commission
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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General of BC
Solicitor General of Canada
Status of Women Canada
United Way of the Lower Mainland
VanCity Community Foundation/Credit Union
Vancouver Foundation
Becoming Self-Reliant with CAP

by Sherman Chan and Flora Lung

Let us tell you about Lee, a client of MOSAIC’s Community Assistance Program (CAP). Lee has separated from her abusive husband, is on Income Assistance, has low self-esteem and health problems that include fainting spells, shortsightedness and a facial disfigurement. Because of a Grade Three education from Hong Kong as well as not working for 14 years, she has poor English, communication and problem-solving skills. Clearly, Lee faces multiple barriers to employment.

She rents one room in a basement suite where her grown children, ex-husband, his partner and her children all live together. Living there enables Lee’s children to care for her, but her former husband’s new family bullies her children, leaving her feeling helpless, vulnerable, stressed and anxious.

But Lee’s life has changed during the past six months she’s been in CAP. Lee benefits from all four areas of the program: advocacy and support, life skills training, pre-employment services, and volunteer work. She willingly shares frustrations about life and school with her worker, even with other clients during group sessions. Through the life-skills group sessions, Lee has developed a positive attitude towards her job search and life impediments. And, despite discrimination because of her visible disfigurement, she still dedicates long hours to search for work. Every day she builds her social network, asks friends for job referrals, and calls or visits employers. Her financial situation is so strained that she saves money by eating plain bread and instant noodles, but she never stops going out to contact employers for potential job opportunities.

Lee is also an active volunteer. Besides a previous placement at Gather & Give as a clothing sorter, she works as a kitchen helper for Collingwood Neighbourhood House. Volunteering enhances her self-image and equips her with Canadian work experience in a relevant position.

About the Community Assistance Program (CAP)

The Ministry of Human Resources requires income assistance recipients to develop employment plans. CAP helps clients meet this condition, and gain the skills and tools they need to achieve self-reliance.

CAP is an excellent way to serve clients facing multiple barriers to employment. Client feedback and statistics back us up. For example, we serve 13.5% more clients than what the Ministry contracts the program to provide. MOSAIC uses a group dynamic where participants learn to break their multiple barriers to employment, take advantage of community resources, and become self-reliant.

CAP is inclusive, providing a “full package” of skills that help clients build confidence, adjust to life in Canada, and the Canadian work environment. Many clients say that by providing them with volunteer opportunities and experience, as well as skill-building sessions, the Program raises their self-awareness and helps them build a network in the community.

CAP is exceptional in its ability to address individual concerns in a client’s first language. We provide service in 22 languages: Arabic, Cantonese, English, Dari, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Kurdish, Lingala, Mandarin, Persian, Punjabi, Polish, Russian, Somali, Swahili, Spanish, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese.
MOSAIC Services
www.mosaicbc.com

Bilingual Counselling serves communities in a variety of languages, providing information, counselling, referrals, and advocacy.

Building Blocks Vancouver provides support to first-time parents through home visits.

Community Outreach Programs work with diverse communities and the public with the aim of developing organizational structures that embrace diversity.

Employment Programs offer a variety of programs including employment counselling, access to skills training for EI clients, skills training for clients on BC Employment Assistance, job search skills and career exploration. General information sessions are held each Tuesday at 3 p.m. at 1522 Commercial Drive.

English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) is a beginners English program for immigrants and convention refugees. A licensed childcare facility is available on site.

Family Support Programs assist communities by providing group support to women with children to break isolation and promote healthy families and communities.

Language Services offer interpretation and translation services in 64 languages and 40 alphabets, simultaneous interpretation, language fluency evaluations, and focus groups in target languages. These services are offered on a fee-for-service basis.

Paralegal Advocacy Project provides summary advice, legal representation and referral for immigrants and refugees with regard to issues such as immigration, family, social assistance, housing and employment.

Multicultural Victim Support Services Program offers support to victims of crime with emphasis on cultural sensitivity and service in the client's first language.

Volunteer Program assists immigrants and refugees to take an active part in community life.

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For more information on our services please call:

Settlement Services . . . . . . . . . . . 604-254-9626
Family Programs . . . . . . . . . . . . . 604-254-9626
Employment Programs . . . . . . . 604-254-0244
English Language Centre . . . . . . . 604-684-8825
Interpretation Services . . . . . . . 604-254-8022
Translation Services . . . . . . . . . . . 604-254-0469
MEMBERSHIP

Join MOSAIC and share the news and exciting developments. As a member you will receive the General Meeting and be entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting. To support MOSAIC's Programs and advocacy work fill out the form and become a member today!

Memberships are annual from April 1 to March 31.

Please consider a monetary donation. 

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For more details please contact Sandra at 604-254-9626 or e-mail mosaic@mosaibc.com

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MEMBERSHIP

MOSAIC’s Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, September 14, 2004
Van Dusen Gardens
The Floral Hall
located at Oak & West 37th Avenue
at 5:30 pm

Membership is $25, $50, $100

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Membership fees are: $25.00 per person; $50.00 for families

[ ] Check if you do not wish a portion of your donation to be applied to memberships

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For more details please contact Sandra at 604-254-9626 or e-mail mosaic@mosaibc.com