

# MOSAIC, a non-profit that aids immigrants, hosting fundraising gala Thursday

BY LARISSA CAHUTE, VANCOUVER DESI NOVEMBER 16, 2014



Tatiana Nunez plays with four-year-old son Matthew at their home in Burnaby on Sunday. Nunez immigrated to Canada five years ago from Venezuela. She struggled with English and didn't have many friends, and as a result was unhappy. She soon had Matthew, enrolled in a MOSAIC program for moms and picked up a lot of skills, made friends and now works for the same program. Arlen Redekop/png

**Photograph by:** Arlen Redekop, Province

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When Tatiana Nunez first immigrated from Venezuela to Burnaby five years ago she couldn't help but feel isolated.

With her husband already having Canadian citizenship he was able to quickly pick up a job, but Nunez was left to stay at home until her residency came through.

"I didn't know anybody here, I can't do any job, I can't work," Nunez told Vancouver Desi. "I (felt) like I (didn't) know anything, anybody, any English — I can't communicate with others.

"I felt very depressed, I was at home all the time ... it was a very hard time."

It wasn't until Nunez came across MOSAIC — a non-profit group in Metro Vancouver that helps new immigrants and refugees settle in Canada — that she was able to finally find her footing.

She enrolled in the group's HIPPY program, which offers home-based parenting support services for multicultural parents with preschool kids. Through the program she learned how to properly prepare her then-three-year-old son Matthew for school, which simultaneously improved her English, opened her up to meeting new people and making friends, and even set her up with a job, as she now works for the program, providing support to moms who struggled with the same challenges.

"(It) helped me a lot with my child, with my family to be a better mom and a better person," said Nunez. "(It) gave me a lot of skills and built my confidence."

It's programs like this that will directly benefit from the organization's fifth annual fundraising gala, Festival MOSAIC 2014, at Yaletown's Roundhouse Community Centre on Thursday night.

"As a non-profit organization, like many in our sector, we are highly reliant on government funds," said MOSAIC's director of communications Ninu Kang.

But according to Kang, with immigration policies constantly changing, many programs — like the HIPPY program — lose funding, so MOSAIC is left struggling to find ways to keep the programs alive, often looking for fundraising opportunities, like Festival MOSAIC.

"We want to do some independent fundraising so we can respond to the needs of certain vulnerable immigrants and refugees that the government doesn't necessarily support," said Kang, adding that funds raised on Thursday will go back into programs for new immigrant mothers, youth and seniors. "We want to be able to provide services to the more at-risk groups that don't get funding from government."

And while the fundraiser is in its fifth year, it's being rolled out with a new concept this year, boasting a more "interactive evening," as opposed to its former sit-down, performance-based event, said Kang.

With the gala moving to an open space at the Roundhouse Community Centre, the more than 300 guests will be able to roam around and take in various exhibits, from theatre activities, to dance lessons, rangoli, henna painting, sitar performances and an on-site chef preparing delicious fusion food, with West Coast world fusion group TANGA closing the night with an upbeat Latin, jazz and electronic performance.

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#### INFO BOX

When: Thursday, 7 to 10:30 p.m.

Where: Roundhouse Community Arts Centre, Exhibition Hall, 181 Roundhouse Mew, Vancouver

Tickets: \$65, [mosaicbc.com/festival-mosaic-2014](http://mosaicbc.com/festival-mosaic-2014)

Performers: Mohamed Assani, sitar, Circus West, Michael Gabriel Rosen, salsa and meringue, TANGA, West Coast world fusion group

Food: Salmon provided by B.C. Salmon Farmers Association, cuisine inspired by Asia, India, Latin America, chai tea and fusion cocktails.

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