



Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society

Annual Report

2010



The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society

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Table of Contents

Mission Statement	2
Organizational Chart	2
Executive Director's Report	3
President's Report	5
Enable	6
Employment Transitions and Coaching	7
HOST	9
I Plan It	10
English as a Second Language	11
Multicultural Environmental Education	12
Settlement	13
Skills Connect	14
Volunteer	15
Auditor's Report	17
Special Thanks	19

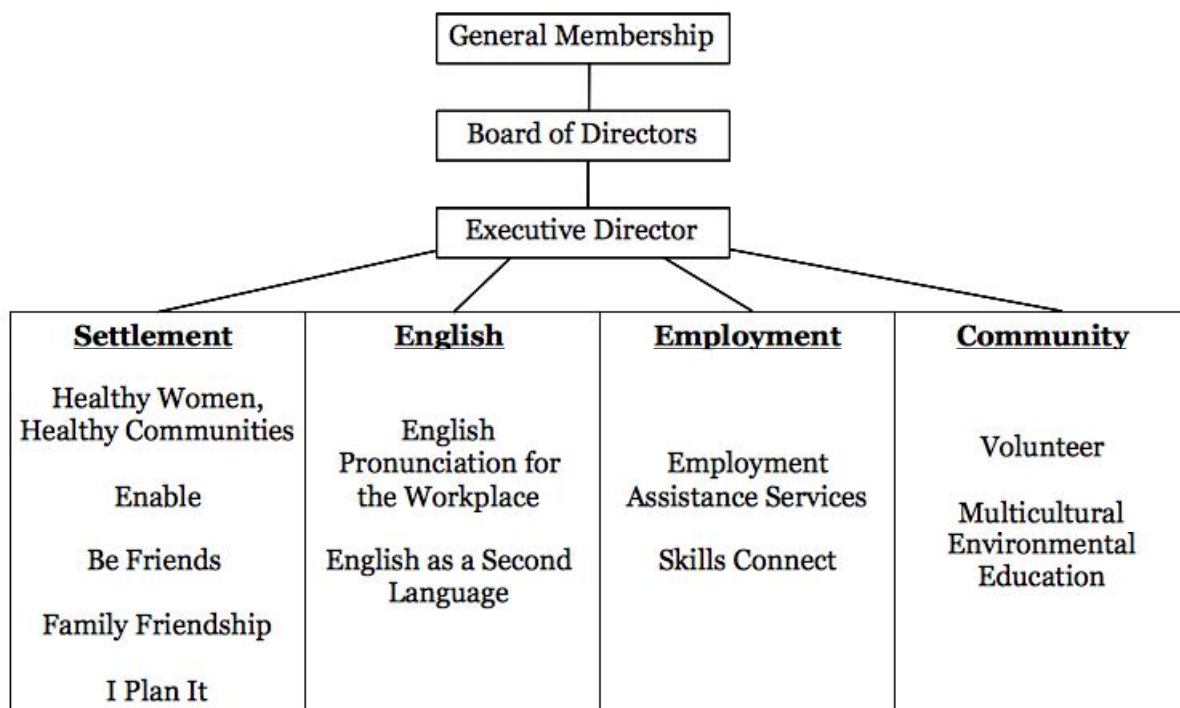


VIRCS Staff 2010

Mission Statement

“To assist in the settlement and adjustment of immigrants and refugees in Canada and to provide services designed to increase the newcomer's participation in Canadian society by assisting the newcomer to overcome barriers.”

Organizational Chart



Our Founders



Carlos Gaete



Hereity Hadgu



Viet Tran



Executive Director's Report Carlos Gaete

After twenty two years of being Executive Director of VIRCS it is time to leave the position to the new generation who work at the Centre. VIRCS has very capable people who can do wonderful jobs; they will bring new ideas and fresh energy to run the Centre effectively. I see no problem in this area at all as we have been through many ups and downs.

It hasn't been an easy route for the last twenty two years for VIRCS; then again, there isn't one! There were some bad days but, the wonderful days were more important and meaningful - two little offices that Hereity, Viet and I started working from in 1989 is now 6700 s/f. From the three brave staff of VIRCS then, we now have a dedicated staff of thirty. I think we did quite well.

VIRCS is a very creative organization. Every year, we create new programs and projects that show the Centre as a real second home for immigrants and refugees - programs for the families, women, youth and children that ease the difficult transition to the new society.

I can say many good things about VIRCS, but I am going to highlight the most important of all - it is the way we deliver the services to our clients. We are a very welcoming organization, making sure the clients feel at home from the first day the step in our office. Why would this be so important? Our clients are in a difficult process of adapting into a new society which is so different from their home country so, to treat our clients as they were at home is crucial and tremendously important.

I saw this happen every single day when newcomers from all over the world came to our office to see the VIRCS counsellors – it was like they were friends for many years, smiling and speaking with them while explaining the need for a home for their family, school for their children, and a job for themselves to make ends meet. We build trust, then the client feels comfortable to ask us!

Time flies? Yes, and fast. Twenty two years have passed like a cloud on a windy night. Nonetheless, I feel so proud about what VIRCS represents not only to the immigrant community but also to the community at large. It is a NPO with an untouchable record, financially and ethically. During all these years, we worked very hard to sustain and grow the organization – today; it is positioned on the pedestal of an outstanding service delivery agency for immigrants and refugees. A good example is shown on the first page of our website: "MORE THAN 8000 VIRCS CLIENTS WORK IN GREATER VICTORIA". There is a whole army of immigrants working in our community and the number is growing. An even higher number has been served by our settlement counsellors with a very tight funding plus the clients of all the other programs. One could only imagine how many changes we have made in the lives of thousands and thousands immigrants - thanks to VIRCS!

How did we achieve such a great success? Great and dedicated staff who believe in what VIRCS is all about; an organization that make sure that a client who come to our office in search of help will get the aid they needed and there is no other way! Also, great board members who give their volunteer time to the organization, making sure that VIRCS was running the best it could be. They are responsible legally and financially, which isn't always an easy task. It is a difficult and important job. A special thanks to the five brave board members who assisted us when we opened VIRCS to the public with a small budget of \$6000 in 1989. We made this budget last for eight months – Full time volunteers, Hereity, Viet and I. Volunteers (thousands of them over the years), helped VIRCS assist ten of thousands of immigrant and refugees. They supported every program and project of the organization. Sponsors and funders from the private and government sector who believed and trusted this organization as one of the best in the island supported us at 100%. That was the way we worked - team work and good communication among the staff and everybody who was involved to help the client in the best way we could. It sounds as if we were perfect people – far from that but, we just made it possible.

There is so much to say but there isn't enough room so, I am going to end by thanking everybody who was and is still a part of the great future of VIRCS in our community. I named most parties in the previous paragraph but if I have missed out anyone, I truly apologize. Finally I invite the community to come and visit our wonderful and welcoming office that was beautifully designed when we moved in 2008. VIRCS is in the great hands of its staff, management, board and volunteers.

Good bye and have a wonderful life.

Carlos A. Gaete
VIRCS E.D. 1989 to 2011



President's Report John Shields

I would first like to thank you for being members of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society. It has truly been a honor to be a member of your Board of Directors. Our organization needs the support of our members to continue with the great work our wonderful staff do in helping immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Canada.

The passion and commitment from VIRCS staff is unequalled. VIRCS is a unique place where people from around the world come together and help each other to celebrate their talents, share their strengths, and help each other regardless of difference. There was no better symbol of this than Global Fashions On One World Stage, an event held for the first time last year that brought together people from dozens of countries in one evening of support for Settlement Services at VIRCS. It was amazing experience thanks to the volunteers who ran and designed the show. This year, an even bigger Global Fashions return promises to be another sold out event.

2010 was also the last year for VIRCS to have all three of it's founders together in the office. Carlos Gaete, Hereity Hadgu, and Viet Tran came together over 22 years ago to create a second home for immigrants and refugees in Victoria, and the community has benefited ever since. I am so glad that I had the opportunity to witness them together at work, sharing their vision and passion for the many immigrants and refugees they have committed to serve. They truly are an inspiration to us all.

Vision will be particularly important to VIRCS in the coming years. The world is changing and to continue to provide it's great service and support, VIRCS must grow and adapt to these changes. It is up to us to ensure that there is a second home for immigrants in Victoria for the next 22 years. We need to continue celebrating our talents, sharing our strengths, and supporting each other.



Global Fashions Volunteers



Enable Program Megan Thom, Coordinator

In 2010 the Enable Program provided settlement and adjustment services for more than 200 newcomer youth and their families. We provide academic, social and emotional support both in and out of schools. Our program includes weekly Homework Clubs, one-on-one tutoring matches, weekly Youth Activity Nights, in-school art therapy programs, the Sparks Children's Program, Youth Strides Summer Camp and the Enable Theatre Project.

One of the most exciting additions to Enable has been the Enable Theatre Project. The pilot project, "Here I Stand," was a profoundly moving theatre piece created and performed by youth with the support of a professional theatre facilitator and musicians. The project utilized applied theatre to explore issues of diversity and multiculturalism with a group of immigrant and refugee youth. Following a series of theatre-based workshops, the youth created a performance that reflected their experiences and challenges.

The use of theatre was a powerful means of relaying personal experiences and instigating powerful community discussions. "Here I Stand" was performed for youth in School District 61 at the Youth Combating Intolerance Camp and one of the youth in the audience said, "I did not know that other immigrants felt like I did. I no longer feel that immigrants are second-class citizens". The theatre project is quickly becoming one of Enable's most popular programs and an unprecedented tool for helping VIRCS youth speak out and raise awareness about challenges they face as newcomers to Canada.

While the theatre project was a major focus, Enable has continued to improve and expand other core programs. Our Youth Strides Summer Camp was the largest ever with 27 youth, while Youth Activity Night has grown rapidly from an average of 15 youth per week to 30! Both Youth Strides and Youth Night partnered with VIRCS' Multicultural Environmental Education Program to offer monthly nature workshops and field trips for the youth. The youth were connected with opportunities to learn and volunteer with environmental organizations and began to feel more at home in Victoria's natural environment.

The Enable Program would like to acknowledge the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, the United Way of Greater Victoria, the Arts Engagement Program of the BC Ministry of Social Development, Coast Capital Savings Foundation, TELUS Victoria Community Board, the TLC Fund for Kids, the Assembly of BC Arts Councils, the City of Victoria, as well as our partners in the Enable Theatre Program, Yasmine Kandil, Enrique Rivas and MediaNet. Thank you as well to all of the individual community members who donated to our Enable Giving Tree Fundraising Project.



Employment Transitions and Coaching Program Sukhmeet Grewal, Director

2010 was an important landmark not only for BC but for all of Canada when Vancouver hosted the Winter Olympics in February. It showcased the province in the international arena, hopefully attracting new investment from overseas markets. In Victoria, however, it was a tough period economically with little or no spin-off from the Vancouver celebration.

The unemployment rate in our community hovered between 5.1 % and 7.6 %, as the economic downturn dragged on. It was still a tough job market for our clients looking for their first job. Most of the new jobs listed were either part time or seasonal. VIRCS' Employment Transitions and Coaching Program (ETCP) during the year helped 744 immigrant job seekers in their search for employment, with 510 clients successfully finding employment and 13 becoming self-employed.

To help clients effectively deal with the highly competitive labour market, venues were provided for clients to network with local employers. Six "Employer Visit" sessions helped 207 immigrant job seekers obtain insider's information about job prospects and hiring practices at 18 businesses including National Money Mart, University of Victoria, BC Ferries, City of Victoria, Thrifty Foods, Department of National Defence, Home Depot, Safeway, Wal-Mart, Delta Victoria Hotel, Epicure Selections, Sunrise Seniors Living, Red Seal Group, Sapphire Technologies, Beacon Community Services, Custom House, Schell & Associates and BC Transit. We also conducted and moderated two "Employer Roundtable Discussions" for 78 clients. Besides networking opportunities, participants were able to submit their resumes and job applications to these employers.

Almost 700 job seekers attended 49 two-and-half hour "Employability and Employment Maintenance" workshops learned about labour market information, job search techniques such as networking, contacting employers, cover letters & resumes, finding job using social networking websites, and interviews, etc. In addition, 332 people participated in 47 "Practical Job Search Coaching" workshops received more-direct hands-on help in seeking employment. This year more clients attended these workshops due to the impact on the local economy and greater effort required in finding employment. The afternoon practical workshops ran the same day as the morning sessions and basic lunch was provided to the workshop attendees who wished to stay for them.

VIRCS provided 155 clients with four series of a total 115 two-hour "Spoken English Pronunciation and Intonation for Job Search" workshops in a safe environment where students were free to practice and take risks in trying out their pronunciation skills. Participants left the workshop series with increased confidence, more willingness to take risks in such tasks as calling potential employers, better intonation skills, and increased clarity in every day speech patterns. In addition, the workplace language content and topics also helped the participants become more familiar and comfortable with the Canadian workplace culture.

VIRCS encourages job seekers to use computers as part of their job search activities. “Career Cruising” workshops are offered every Thursday afternoon and 124 clients have created and managed their portfolios on the Career Cruising website. We also provided 492 job seekers with 108 two-hour “Basic Computer Skills for Employment” workshops to help the participants acquire basic computer skills. These helped the participants increase their confidence for creating their resumes and cover letters, search for labour market information and filling job applications online. Under the Response to Economic Downturn initiative (RED) from the BC Ministry of Social Development immigrant job seekers were provided different tools (such as short training courses, basic work tools and transportation supports) to help them practically during economic hard times. In the last quarter of 2010, 38 immigrant clients received short course trainings and have found employment.

VIRCS also piloted a “I-YES” (Immigrant Youth Employment Services) program from October 2010 – March 2011. The program allowed 12 immigrant and refugee youth (age 20-30) to work intensively for 30 hours per week to develop their skills and personal attributes. The group focused on developing their job-readiness skills while adapting to their new Canadian home. They had to work together to overcome the obstacles of language and cultural differences and, consequently, boost their confidence and communication abilities. They participated in workshops and field trips focussing on life skills and employment skills, as well as volunteered at the VIRCS reception desk, the Mustard Seed Food Bank, and Our Place Society.

VIRCS would like to acknowledge the funding contributed by the Government of British Columbia and Federal Government of Canada to its Employment Transitions and Coaching Program. The society also appreciates the valuable support and the good work relationship of local employers and other community partners.

I wish to thank our caring program staff for their dedication, hard work, and excellent services being provided to the clients. I also would like to express my respect for immigrant job seekers for their strong commitment and trust in our Employment Program. Together we have worked towards the achievement of the program goals and the success of their employment search in 2010.



The I-YES participants and crew



HOST Program Francina Potes

Throughout 2010, VIRCS continued to offer and deliver the Cultural Bridging Host Program to newcomer clients. This 3-month Program gives an individual client or family, the unique opportunity of meeting and connecting with a local resident or Canadian-born person. The program is tailored specifically to newcomer permanent residents recently arrived in Victoria, placed either in the Young Adults (ages 19-30) group, or Family group (parents of any age). Over 240 matches have emerged from the Program since its conception in July 2008, and many of its past clients come back to the Program as host volunteers. By participating in the program, clients are able to feel more confident settling down in their new community, learn about Canadian society, norms, and services, and expand their social and/or professional network in Victoria.

In addition to these outcomes, the Program offers one-on-one support for every match over the course of the 3-month cycle. Enabling cross-cultural communication and understanding between a Canadian and their Newcomer client is one of the main benefits participants obtain from completing this program.

There are many challenges newcomer clients face as they enter Canada including social isolation, English language fluency, lack of understanding and knowledge about their new surroundings, and financial constraints. As a result, the Host Program delivers free educational and social activities twice a month for both programs.

In addition, free monthly group social events and field trips have taken place in different locations around Greater Victoria. These group events allow newcomers, who have been in Canada for 4 months or less for the most part, to directly experience community services, and then be able to access these on their own.

In addition, newcomers also take part in multicultural sessions (such as potlucks, yoga, dancing), where they can share aspects of their home country and culture with their host volunteers. These gatherings have encouraged host volunteers to reflect on their own society, experience the benefits of multiculturalism in Canada, and observe how newcomers' integration evolves.

Below is a testimonial from a Family Friendship participant:

"This Family Program is fantastic! For our two family's meeting, we have met already 5 times in December: first meeting in a café, visited Empress hotel's Christmas Tree, Beacon Hill Park Petting Zoo, VIRCS 2010 Winter Celebration, and an invitation to our host family's home. Our host family is very warmhearted – they have shared some information on daycares for our 4-year old daughter, and giving comments to my resume. It is great program for our family."

~ Newcomer mother from China

Thank you to all the staff, practicum students and volunteers that have put so much effort in to this outstanding program. This program was made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.



I Plan It Kim Veller

In April 2009, VIRCS welcomed an exciting new demonstration project called I Plan It for young immigrants and refugees ages 15 to 25. This program uses a unique combination of one-on-one and group work to help young newcomers adjust to life in

Canada. Over the past year, the I Plan It program has supported more than 160 newcomer young adults.

The overall goal of the program is to assist young newcomers with finding short-term and long-term work and/or enrolling in educational or training programs that will help them succeed in their new lives in Canada.

Newcomer youth are faced with several barriers in Canada, including not being able to meet British Columbia graduation requirements, dealing with social isolation, and the financial burden to work, often before they are ready. Youth frequently have ambitious goals when they arrive, after which they are faced with many obstacles and frustrations, and find it difficult to access support to address these challenges. The I Plan It program supports newcomer young adults with long-term education and career planning, life skill training, and social activities to ease adjustment.

I Plan It helps young newcomers enrol in education and training programs, get better connected to the community and feel able to reach their goals. We offer financial support to help youth access short course employability training such as FoodSafe, First Aid and Serving It Right, and access to personalized clinical counselling to address other barriers to settlement for youth.

Group Activities include:

Social Nights are for young people aged 18-25 years old to meet once a week to have fun, learn more about their new community, and expand their social networks.

Life Skills Training is a 12 week course in which participants get paid up to \$300 to gain skills in areas including career planning, financial planning, stress management, cooking and nutrition, communication, assertiveness training and more.

Young newcomers receive one-on-one support from staff with education, employment, and settlement issues. This includes education and career counselling, specialized settlement support, and assistance with long-term action planning and goal setting. Along with personalized support, we also offer group activities.

Through this demonstration project we have gained a lot of knowledge about the specific challenges and needs of new immigrants who are entering adulthood. We have learned better ways to help young people as they transition into Canadian culture and we look forward to the success in the third year of I Plan It.

Thank you to all the staff, practicum students and volunteers that have put so much effort in to this new program. This program was made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.



English as a Second Language Christianne O'Carroll

The ESL program at VIRCS caters to permanent residents, Canadian citizens, refugees, and if we have enough space, visitors to Canada, also. For the past fifteen years, we have held classes four days a week from Monday to Thursday. In the summer of 2010, for the first time, we were forced to cut back our hours from four days a week to three, due to lower enrolments.

For the last two years, there have been greater numbers of beginners than intermediate-level students, and we attribute that to the increased need for employment among our clients. Intermediate-level English speakers have more opportunities to obtain jobs. The beginners often have much fewer choices in the job market, at least until they have developed a better proficiency with the language.

The small and friendly size of the classes allowed the maximum of person-to-person interaction in what has always been a relaxing, non-institutional setting. Course content covered subjects and themes that were helpful to the students in their daily lives. Some of these topics included transportation, health, entertainment, relationships, community services, and business English. We presented classes on grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening comprehension, as well. These are the essential building blocks for the acquisition of the English language.

At VIRCS, we have always understood that our students are individuals with individual needs, strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, our students were put on personalized homework programs that took into account areas that need improvement. Field trips and guest speakers also helped round out students' ESL training.

Our English classes have always been warm and welcoming to put newcomers at ease as they adapt to a new country and culture. Many of them have not grown up in multicultural environments, so being at VIRCS is quite an eye-opening and educational experience for them. New friendships that transcend ethnic, cultural, and religious differences spring up all the time. In 2010, we had students from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as a few from Quebec.

Our ESL Program would not be the same without our dedicated team of classroom volunteers. Volunteers assist the teacher and students in a variety of ways. In addition to facilitating small group discussions where students put into practice the new vocabulary and grammar they learned, volunteers also mark homework, work one on one with students who need extra help and attention, and accompany us on field trips. Many students have told us that one of the best things about our ESL Program is the presence of the volunteers because they can develop friendly relationships with them and practise their English conversation skills. We consider ourselves fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers bringing their skills, time and energy to our program.

In 2010, we once again received funding from the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch. We are very grateful for their continued support.



Multicultural Environmental Education Megan Thom

2010 was a big year of exciting changes for the Multicultural Environmental Education Program (MEEP), with many wonderful moments of exploring nature, laughter, cheese-making and sharing our knowledge about multicultural environmental education. The biggest change of the year was the departure of Gagan Leekha, the founder and coordinator of the program and Rosalyn Cua, the MEEP Communications Coordinator. However, with the support two federal internship programs, MEEP was able to hire two new interns to replace these irreplaceable MEEPls. Some highlights of 2010 include:

Trailer Trashed Short Films

Rosalyn and Gagan finished their time with MEEP with an exciting new project called Trailer Trashed. MEEP partnered with Kirk Schwartz from MediaNet to train and support 15 clients and 5 volunteer mentors to make short films promoting the use of reusable cups, rather than disposable ones. They produced 8 high quality films ranging from Armenian fortune-telling to a Star Wars parody and gained media coverage of the project in the Times Colonist, the Vancouver Sun and others. The films were all submitted to the Recycling Council of BC's Trailer Trashed Competition and they are all available on MediaNet's YouTube channel.

Nature Outings and Events

In response to the overwhelming popularity of nature outings, Megan Thom and Robert Newell were hired to offer a wider array of outings and events for all VIRCS clients. Some highlights include two outings to Galiano Island to learn about marine life and forestry, two canoeing outings in Elk and Beaver Lakes, gardening workshops, farm tours, edible foods that grow in local ecosystems, composting and much more. Some participants in our Learn to Bike workshop even learned how to ride a bicycle for the first time!

EarthFest

MEEP was also a major organizer in the newest music festival in town – EarthFest! EarthFest was a community music festival in Fernwood to celebrate Earth Week in April, and it attracted over 300 people to a day of music, dance and environmental fun. The event was organized in partnership with the Sierra Club of BC, the Dogwood Initiative and the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group.

Our partnerships with environmental organizations and community members has always been a major strength, and in 2010 MEEP partnered with over 20 different community organizations. These partnerships not only introduced our clients to the many ways they can get involved in their new communities, but also spread the word in the community about the great work that VIRCS does. Overall, MEEP engaged more than 400 people directly with outings and events and countless more through our multi-media projects and media coverage.

MEEP would like to thank the Federal Youth Eco-Internships Program of the YM-YWCA of Canada and the Create Action Internship Program of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCED-Net) for their support in enabling us to hire our two Nature Outings and Events Interns.



Settlement Meghan Mergaert

2010 proved to be another busy year in the settlement program. With 2 staff and a few practicum students we assisted over 900 immigrants and refugees with information, orientation, adjustment, support, referrals to community resources. Our translation and interpretation services, law clinics, and group sessions remained fully active throughout the year.

As busy as it was, it has been challenging to continue services under current circumstances. The stretched economy created difficulties for many of our community partners, and unfortunately some had to close their doors. This has resulted in an increased need for in-house services, such as supporting women to overcome domestic abuse, finding legal guidance, applying for income assistance and counselling.

We have continued to provide support one-on-one, as well as offering group workshops.

Some highlights of our workshop programs have included:

Our Healthy Women Healthy Community Program helped immigrant and refugee women to increase awareness of health and healthy living. Activities included nutrition tours, dental workshops, mammogram tour, and stress reduction workshops.

Our Financial Wellbeing Workshop Series increased the financial knowledge of many newcomers. Topics included the Canadian Bank System, Basic Banking, Credit, Employment Standards, Income Tax, Social Benefits and more. Together over 150 newcomers received more than 100 individual services related to financial and health issues.

Our weekly Law Clinics helped 124 clients with law advice ranging from immigration to family law. We are extremely grateful to the Windsor Law Group (Andrew Rafuse and Joshua Weizner) who donated their time for the bi-weekly immigration and family law clinics. Monthly Citizenship Class helped clients to prepare for the Citizenship Test.

Our resource library grew as well, now offering over 100 different community resources related to housing, legal guidance, health, and other issues. We continue to provide many different application forms for Immigration, housing, health and social benefit.

This year we had another great team of volunteers that provided one to one service with clients, support for staff, translations and much more. Practicum students from the University of Victoria in the Social Work Program and from Camosun College's Community, Family and Child Studies program were a huge help to our staff. These great students and volunteers were lead by a team of settlement staff with inspiring dedication and commitment to their clients and VIRCS. Thank you all for your hard work!

This program would like to thank and acknowledge the following for their financial support: the VanCity Foundation, BC Cancer Agency, BC Gaming Policy Enforcement and all of our private donors.



Skills Connect for Immigrants Annie Shum

Skills Connect is an individualized employment designed to help internationally-trained immigrants find work related to their pre-landing skills, experience, knowledge, and training. The goals are achieved through one-on-one career counselling; assessment of credentials and experience; financial assistance for appropriate training; guidance through licensing process; and workplace practice, including mentoring, job shadowing, and volunteering.

This was VIRCS's 4th year delivering the Skills Connect program as a subcontractor with ASPECT. In 2010, we hired 2 new staff members: Marian Britto, Mentoring Coordinator/Employment Counsellor and James Sultanum, Employment Counsellor. Together, we accepted over 138 new clients in 2010, serving a total of 172 clients in the year. Financial assistance from the program helped 134 clients to access short-term training, licensing, credential evaluation, and association memberships.

The mentoring program was completely revised and revitalized this year. 50 clients were successfully matched with mentors who provided invaluable career advice; some were even directly responsible for finding employment for their mentees. The Skills Connect program also organized an information session for clients interested in the Certified General Accountants (CGA) designation and for internationally-trained teachers.

The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program is part of the WelcomeBC umbrella of services, made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. We would like to thank ASPECT for partnering in this program and our wonderful volunteer mentors who have generously given their time.



Mentors and skilled immigrants meet



Volunteer Program Krissy Yang

The year of 2010 is a successful year for volunteer program, with the support from all the fabulous volunteers; the volunteer team has grown to a big program with 838 volunteers. Volunteers are a fundamental part of VIRCS' services. In 2010 alone, volunteers provided over 10,275 hours of support to immigrants, refugees, and their children in the greater Victoria area through VIRCS. This contribution is the equivalent to an extra 5 full-time staff members, providing a significant additional support to the more than 3,000 clients VIRCS serves annually.

Volunteers helped in all the programs here at VIRCS, without the help from them, VIRCS cannot provide quality service to the clients in need.

Youth Program

Volunteers are the fundamental base of the Youth program. In Enable program, volunteers play the role as tutor to help the students to improve their academic learning; assist the program coordinator in I-Plan-It Program to facilitate a series of workshops help the immigrant youth to fit in Canadian life. And volunteer leaders also plan and run Strides, a free, week-long summer camp on inclusion and leadership skills.

ESL Program:

VIRCS offers unique ESL classes eight times each week. We provide more opportunity for smaller size groups, and one on one activities with the help of volunteers, and that's where the main value of the assistance of the volunteers comes in. Volunteers lead small groups of students in discussions and help to facilitate the learning of new vocabulary and forms of grammar. Volunteers also work one on one with students who are struggling with a particular concept, or falling behind.

Employment:

In our Employment Program, volunteers facilitate workshops, mentor professionals from around the world, run computer skills courses, and provide office administration support for all of VIRCS' programs. VIRCS Skill Connect Program includes volunteer mentors. Mentors facilitate skilled new immigrants into Canadian workplace by networking with professionals in their field of interest and expertise. Through the mentors, 30 clients were introduced to the hiring authorities, department managers and other potential networking sources within the companies and 4 clients had job offers in their own field after completing the selection process of the companies.

Settlement:

Many consider Settlement the heart of VIRCS. Settlement provides support for newcomers through workshops and counseling to overcome any barriers they may face adjusting to Victoria, including access to services, immigration, family support, health, and legal aid. Settlement volunteers plan and facilitate workshops, and act as translators.

Host:

The Cultural Bridging Host Program delivered at VIRCS is a unique program that helps newcomers feel more integrated in their new community, as well as gives them an opportunity to connect with a local resident or Canadian-born person. For each newcomer participant, a host volunteer is found, matched based on characteristics such as: age, occupation, similar hobbies, character, schedule availability, children's age (if applicable), and neighborhood. The role that volunteers play is: providing social and moral support to their match during the 3-month program, giving them general information on any topic or issue regarding the local community; meeting them in person and engage in a common hobby or activity; sharing cultural customs such as food; celebrations; and having fun together!

Income tax

The Income Tax Return program at VIRCS offer free tax clinic year in partnership with CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) as an agency in CVITP (Community Volunteer Income Tax Program). Filing income tax is a vital aspect of participation in Canadian society, but can be an extremely stressful and bewildering experience for newcomers who are unfamiliar with our taxation system. In this program our CRA trained volunteers create a welcoming and supportive environment where clients are supported step by step through the process of filing income tax. The client centered approach used by our volunteers eases our clients' anxiety and stress about filing income tax in Canada. Through our Income Tax Return program, filing their tax is a positive experience for immigrant families and individuals.

Volunteers contributed to VIRCS directly through the volunteer program as well. This was in the form of designing new services, participating in a skilled volunteer team such as the Volunteer Marketing and Research teams, becoming board members, and providing volunteer-led services, such as our weekly law clinics (operated by two lawyers).

Over the past years, the Volunteer Program has also developed good relationships with universities from around the world. By hosting practicum students and collaborating on pilot projects, VIRCS has greatly improved services to clients, adopting international best practices, developing and piloting unique service models, and sharing Canada's multicultural expertise.

All in all, because of the volunteers, we can continue providing service to the new immigrants to help them integrate in the communities, and because of volunteers, we are able to help more and more people. And VIRCS is so proud of all the volunteers' hard work, and thank you for all the support from our fabulous volunteers.

Auditor's Report

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2010

(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)

	2010	2009
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 259,556	\$ 133,610
Accounts receivable	7,348	59,239
GST receivable	3,109	1,179
Prepaid expenses	5,703	6,069
	<u>275,716</u>	200,097
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 4)	<u>50,112</u>	64,692
	<u>\$ 325,828</u>	<u>\$ 264,789</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable	\$ 60,337	\$ 54,606
Wages payable	17,204	13,088
Deferred operating grants	113,533	112,870
	<u>191,074</u>	180,564
DEFERRED GAMING REVENUE	46,250	9,861
DEFERRED CAPITAL ASSET CONTRIBUTIONS	7,587	10,839
	<u>244,911</u>	201,264
NET ASSETS		
Investment in capital assets	42,513	53,853
Unrestricted net assets	38,404	9,672
	<u>80,917</u>	63,525
	<u>\$ 325,828</u>	<u>\$ 264,789</u>

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

 Director

 Director

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures

Year Ended December 31, 2010

(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)

	2010	2009
REVENUES		
Operating Grants	\$ 1,414,361	\$ 1,340,830
Gaming	58,611	86,890
Donations	12,540	13,825
Social Events	2,062	-
Training	46,673	43,358
Interest Income	124	129
Amortization of deferred capital asset contributions	3,252	4,645
	<u>1,537,623</u>	<u>1,489,677</u>
EXPENSES		
Amortization	14,580	19,351
Office and Supplies	22,373	21,877
Direct Program Costs	149,515	154,327
Travel and Transportation	2,291	1,567
Recognition, Training and Recruiting	28,418	16,671
Building Occupancy	113,788	108,480
Wages and Contracted Services	1,181,901	1,154,712
Professional Fees	7,365	6,351
	<u>1,520,231</u>	<u>1,483,336</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES BEFORE EXTRAORDINARY ITEM	17,392	6,341
EXTRAORDINARY ITEM		
Legal settlements	-	(22,579)
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$ 17,392	\$ 28,920

See notes to financial statements

Lee & Company
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Special Thanks

Komal Dodd - Dodd Developments
Boston Pizza
Palagio Pizza
Dr. A.W. Stankoven
100.3 The Q/ The Zone at 91.3
Salmon Kings
Safeway
Market on Yates
India Canada Cultural Association (ICCA)
Victoria Lampshade Shop Inc.
James Bay Community School
Oak Bay Community Centre
YMCA Community Centre
Nando's Chicken
Toys R Us
National Geographic IMAX Theatre
Miniature World
McDonald's
Settlement Workers In Schools
School District 61
VanCity
B.C. Community Gaming
B.C. Settlement and Adaptation Program
B.C. Cancer Agency, Screening Programs
Sarah Spencer Foundation
Coast Capital Savings
City of Victoria
C-Fax
Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
Investors Group
ASPECT
B.C. Arts Council
TELUS
Central Baptist Church

The Diversity Reporter
A Channel
Times Colonist
Dinning Hunter Lamber & Jackson
University of Victoria
Compost Education Centre
Saanich Parks
Subway
Laurel Point Inn
Victoria Francophone Society
Volunteer Victoria
Revenue Canada
Lee & Company
Employment Standards Branch
Service Canada
Global Fashions on One World Stage
Power to Be Adventure Therapy
MCFD Multicultural Outreach Counsellor
Together Against Poverty Society
Cridge Centre for the Family
Canadian Cancer Society
Child Care Resource and Referral
Victim Services
Young Parent Support Network
South Island Dispute Resolution Centre
AMSSA
Embrace BC
Vancouver Foundation
Catherine Donnelly Foundation
TLC
Victoria Foundation
BC AMP
Ministry of the Attorney General
Ministry of Social Development

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