

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

2014/15 Annual Report



637 Bay St., 3rd Floor
Victoria, BC V8T 5L2

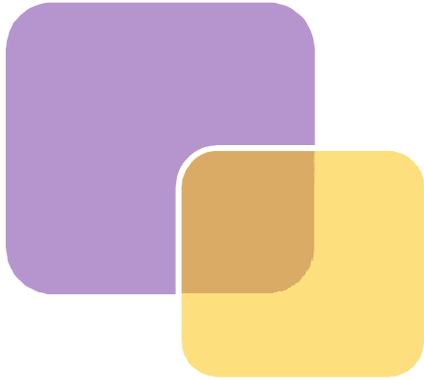
Tel: (250) 361-9433 | Fax: (250) 361-1914
Email: info@vircs.bc.ca

//

VIRCS's 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.





VIRCS's 2014/2015 Board of Directors

Nancy Hum – President

Aaron Hall – Vice President

Anselme Hategekimana –Treasurer

Catherine Kamau - Secretary

Miguel Espinosa – Director-at-large

Ayodeji Kuponiy- Director-at-large

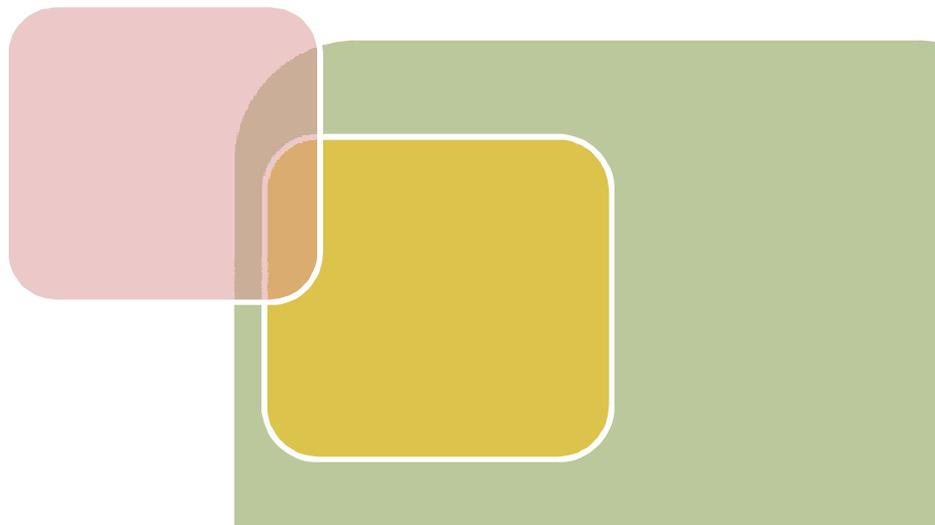
Marie Morrison - Director-at-large

Yu Jun (David) Wang - Director-at-large

Lisa Gunderson - Director-at-large

Parveen Nijjar- Director-at-large

Rita Parikh- Director-at-large



Special Thanks to Our Funders and Donors

ASPECT

*BC Provincial Employees Community Fund
BC Social Development and Social Innovation
Beacon Community Services
Royal Bank Uptown branch
Best of Both Worlds Imports
Weston Foods
Island Farms
Blanshard Community Centre
Canadian Cancer Society
CDI College
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Community Microlending Society
LJ Cote, Consultant
Country Grocer
District of Saanich
Galliano Conservancy Association
Island Savings
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training,
Immigrant Integration Branch
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
WorkLink Employment Society
Ministry of Social Development and Minister
Responsible for Multiculturalism
Provincial Employees Community Fund
Saanich District of Saanich
Steven Nash Fitness World & Sports Club
Together Against Poverty Society
Tomley's Market
Vancouver Island Health Authority
Victoria Chinese Seniors Association
Victoria Society of Chinese Performing Arts
Viva Mexico Dance Society*

*Jeremy Loveday, Victoria City Councillor
Communica
Costal Capital Savings
Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
Leanne Gislason
Roberto Alberto
Horner Foundation
India Canada Cultural Association
La Societe Francophone de Victoria
Mr. Gerald Pash, Citizenship Judge
Ms. Lorraine Murray
Murray Rankin, MP for Victoria
Ross Flower
Sara Spencer Foundation
Sonya Boya
Sprott Shaw College
Clive Townley
Telus
United Way Greater Victoria
University of Victoria
Vessela Kostova
Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Victoria READ Society
Mr Viet Tran
Volunteer Victoria*

Thanks also to the many individuals and
Volunteers who made significant personal
contributions to our society

Table of Contents

President’s Report-----1

Executive Director’s Report-----2

Volunteer Program-----4

Settlement Program-----5

Enable Program-----7

English as a Second Language -----9

Skills Connect -----10

WorkBC -----11

Financial Report-----13

President's Report

Nancy Hum

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members and Friends of VIRCS. On behalf of VIRCS and as President, I would like to personally thank each person who took the time out of their busy schedules to help us accomplish another amazing year. This is the time to reflect on all that was achieved this year:

The Welcome Gardens Project was highly successful, the objective being to match newcomers with seniors who have love for gardening. Seniors enjoyed partnership of newcomers and newcomers learned the value of working with the land. Many learning experiences and friendships were formed in the workshops. Our volunteer coordinator, Pam DeVito, was very instrumental in making this a success, so our sincere thanks go out to Pam.

Health Clinics were also formed, and many thanks go to the volunteers who help there, as well in the legal and counselling clinics. Our various groups for parents, youth, children, seniors, ESL, social, men and women are all going smoothly, and a great many workshops have been given throughout the year. Our Settlement Director, Leanne Gislason, let VIRCS for amazing challenges at VIHA. That role was taken by Alvaro Moreno, who has taken over settlement services with great enthusiasm and ability.

International Refugee Week was marked by the official raising of the UNHCR flag at City Hall and proclamation by the City of Victoria, with a good attendance, bigger every year. The Library on Broughton was the scene of a very interesting and unique panel discussion regarding the experiences of refugees and immigrants, and the new immigration laws. Speaking of refugees, in view of the Syrian Crisis, VIRCS has been formulating a planned response in consultation with Canada Council for Refugees (CCR), several other agencies and spiritual leaders regarding sponsorship. At the same time, our Settlement Manager, Alvaro, our ED, David, Sharmarke and Alfred and other staff have worked tirelessly with two very gifted and experienced trauma counsellors, Adrienne Carter and Linda McLagan, setting up the BC's first ever Orientation Training to Support Refugee Mental Health. I took part in this training which was unique, interesting, informative and very constructive in preparing us in how to work compassionately with refugees when they arrive. The response was overwhelming with close to sixty participants and proved to be a very positive experience for all. With leadership of City Councillor Jeremy Loveday, we are actively pursuing the concept of making Victoria a Sanctuary City, so that refugees feel safe here and will not face undue dangers for lack of incomplete paperwork. As well, David, Sharmarke and myself have been asked to give talks and take part in various panel discussions with regard to the refugee crisis.

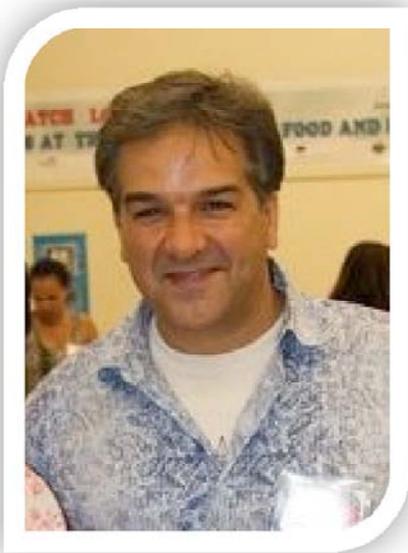
VIRCS has been represented by myself the past several years in the United Way campaigns in giving talks to various companies about the vital work that we do. This year the mantle has been taken up by our Youth Manager, Danny Tes, who will do an excellent job. By the way, we received full funding from United Way for our Youth camps and programs. Thanks so much United Way!

I have also been working since last December to increase literacy on behalf of VIRCS with the Greater Victoria Literacy Challenge Dialogue Organizing Team. This team is composed of Victoria's literacy agencies, raising awareness by creating a Challenge Dialogue Paper and Survey that has now been sent out to many other agencies and individuals. We will have a public forum in November. Our hard working board participated in different committees this year for fundraising, of which there were two very successful fundraising events and plans for another soon. The other committee was for Strategic Planning and surveys were sent out to all staff and board members for their input.

Sadly Board Members David Wang and Anselme Hategikimana are retiring their positions, both have faithfully served on the board for several terms, and we wish them the very best in their endeavours. We sincerely hope they retain their interest in VIRCS. It has been my great pleasure to serve and work with the staff and board and with David this past year and look forward, more than ever, to another fruitful year as we follow our mandate: " 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." Thank you.

Thank You.

Nancy Hum VIRCS Board President



Executive Director's Report David Lau

- "I wish for my application for extension of my stay to be approved"
- "I wish for abundance, happiness, money, health, sense of value and belonging, feeling valued by others"
- "I wish for a day off to see whales with my daughters"
- "I wish and hope and believe, the blessings from God will be upon VIRCS (staff and clients)"
- "I wish for a nicer pen : ("
- "Higher hourly wages for Client Services Coordinators"
- "I want to be a billionaire"
- "To have a feeling of more time"
- "We need more staff potlucks"
- "I wish for peace"
- "Wish I have enough money for my college"

Some wishes come true and some will not. Last year's wish came true. VIRCS made it through another year of change in Canada. We made it through four years where newcomers were increasingly isolated by the government we rely on for security. Running this beautiful organization in such a time has been a challenge. Today our wonderful MLA Carole James gave me a pat on the shoulder in the legislative assembly and thanked me for keeping VIRCS together for the past four years. I thanked her and corrected her that it was the board, the staff, incredibly generous donors and over 250 volunteers that have kept VIRCS together. What happens is dependent on what we decide to do together.

I am humbled by the VIRCS staff and their interminable perseverance creating options for newcomers. This past summer we put on our "optimism faces" and wrote six stellar funding applications for CIC's second call for proposals. The level of skills, quality and attention to detail displayed in each proposal is the highest I have ever observed. Practically every staff member had some role. Alfred and Jennifer (Rawlinson) did remarkable work in truly challenging circumstances.

I want to express my deepest thanks to Leanne Gislason who returned, showing love to VIRCS; writing one proposal single-handedly then helping give shape and form to the largest (settlement) proposal while Alvaro dealt with more serious challenges. LJ Cote worked tirelessly beside me on two innovative employment proposals. Karen Hira created standardization and accuracy, consistency and uniformity managing assets of the proposals. Fanny managed to budget all six complex proposals and take a vacation – utterly amazing! Our only wish is that this time, we are allowed a fair chance to negotiate for these services. Three years ago we were denied this chance. What happens is dependent on what we decide to do together.

We know that next year will bring big changes and opportunities to grow and hopefully assist refugees. That will require more collaboration and cooperation with local governments, community groups and like-minded agencies.

VIRCS' steadfast Board of Directors has facilitated all these efforts. I am thankful for their patient, committed and flexible oversight in all issues of governance and support they extended to me in 2015. I do not think they fully realize how much I enjoy their company and appreciate their contributions. I know that Catherine Kamau will read this and think of the wise Kiswahili word: *harambee* which eloquently encourages people to "all pull together". What happens is dependent on what we decide to do together.

VIRCS is still here. We remain because much work needs to be accomplished in providing the best services we can to each newcomer who walks through our door; and, we have the heart to do that work. Harambee!



VIRCS Volunteer Program and Welcome Gardens!

Pam Devito

VIRCS Volunteer Program's overall goal is to support the Centre and its staff in effectively administering programs and delivering quality services to our clients, their families and the community.

Our volunteers' caring, respectful and service orientated attitude married with their willingness to share their expertise and experience with others, creates an inclusive and welcoming place.

VIRCS' volunteers are people with diverse professional and educational backgrounds, languages, life experiences and reasons for volunteering.

Over 70% of our volunteers are immigrants or newcomers themselves; able to provide first hand knowledge of what services and support can help people identify and overcome barriers.

Other volunteers support people in participating more fully in their new community by helping people understand Canadian systems and ways of life.

In 2015 VIRCS' Volunteer Program recruited, trained and engaged 217 volunteers who invested approximately 10,400 hours of their time and expertise assisting VIRCS in delivering client-driven services and supporting its operations.

Volunteers delivered 26 types of services within 7 program areas; assisting over 120 people individually and served over 300 people through 7 specialized volunteer service clinics.

The types of volunteer-based services include: ESL classroom assistance and language tutoring; academic tutoring; children and youth activities support; workshop assistance and facilitation; administrative and communication support; and, implementation and coordination of special projects and community events. Volunteer service clinics provided legal information, income tax preparation, permanent residence and citizenship application support, Canadian citizenship test preparation / study support, computer and social media skills development, and, resume writing assistance.

The newest addition is VIRCS Health Clinic, where people who do not have a family doctor or no medical insurance have access to medical services.

Welcome Gardens!

Welcome Gardens! is a new VIRCS project bringing seniors and newcomers together to learn and share their time, knowledge and resources to grow food in household gardens. Through a Victoria Foundation grant and in-kind contributions from VIRCS, forty (24 seniors and 16 newcomers) participants ranging in age from 10 to 72 years old, from 10 different countries as well as other parts of Canada received resources to prepare beds, plant seeds and grow vegetables in 12 gardens.

The project hosted 4 information and garden planning sessions held in local community and senior activity centres where participants came together to share horticultural knowledge as well contribute their thoughts on senior, intercultural and ESL related topics. Participants also enjoyed hearing each other's personal and cultural stories and came together for 2 informal gatherings where produce from the garden was cooked garden-side!

Through Welcome Gardens! activities, the 40 participants and 6 volunteers realized opportunities to: volunteer, mentor and contribute to social and cultural activities; gain a greater sense of belonging and feeling value through engagement with neighbors and community members sharing a common interest; form culturally diverse social and personal connections; and, expand their horticultural skills and food literacy. Through enthusiasm, commitment and the inclusive attitude of all participants; Welcome Gardens! is participant driven and inspired.



Newcomer Wraparound Support Program,
Alvaro Moreno

While working with VIRCS' Citizenship 101 project from 2012 to 2014, I had the opportunity to get to know all the staff and volunteers that make of VIRCS the strong and dynamic organization that it is. I am very pleased to continue to be part of VIRCS, this time as the director of the Settlement Programs. I am delighted to be part of the staff, particularly of the settlement team.

The settlement team is formed by Haixia Liu, who is the Intake Coordinator and the first settlement staff member that people seeking our services see; Alfred Okot Ochen, Asuka Hirai, and Karen Hira are



the Adult/Family Case Managers, and Sharmarke Mohamed is the Youth Case Manager. They work closely together to ensure the services delivered to the community of immigrants and refugees respond to their settlement needs. Many of these newcomers are facing multiple barriers that require a carefully planned approach, emphasizing the importance of welcoming all people with respect and dignity. VIRCS has adapted a service delivery model that focuses on the core principles and values of the Wraparound approach – a model that has proven to work well with immigrants and refugees with significant integration barriers in communities across Canada. The individual attention given to a newcomer, and the number of hours dedicated to each person within this model, far exceed services under more traditional models.

In keeping with this model, and taking into account the characteristics of the immigrant community who may find it difficult to work with text-based tools, we continue to work with a framework that draws heavily upon non-text approaches. A personalized set of service goals and a plan of action are developed with each individual *in order to make of their life in Canada* as healthy, meaningful and happy as possible.



This year, the team provided services to almost 400 people and delivered more than 150 groups and workshop activities such as the Mom's Group, which provides a space for immigrant mothers to socialize and learn new skills while their children are at the VIRCS daycare. Seniors are also meeting weekly to learn how to prepare and cook healthy meals in their homes and increase their independence. Men and youth also have their respective groups. The men's Group gets together usually outside of the office to discuss issues around employment, family relations, and other topics of their choosing while at a cafe or an outing. The youth have access to three different opportunities to improve their lives with activities focusing on literacy, life skills, and support in general. Among the topics covered in the different training and orientation workshops are: Employment skills, computer and social media skills, multicultural dance and music, parenting skills and, my favourite one - Tai Chi.



We are grateful to enjoy the collaboration with other community organizations through partnerships and joint activities. They are: Victoria Women's Transition House; Esquimalt High School, North Saanich High School, Gordon Head High School, SJ Willis, Victoria General Hospital, Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advocacy Committee, James Bay New Horizons/Disability Resources Centre, Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiative Roundtable, Public Health Association of BC, Burnside Gorge Community Centre, Fernwood NRG, Citizens Counselling Centre, Quadra Village Community Centre, Together Against Poverty Society, Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, and the Victoria Coalition for Survivors of Torture. Our community partners are an important component of the network available for addressing important needs of the immigrant population, especially those facing complex challenges and vulnerabilities.

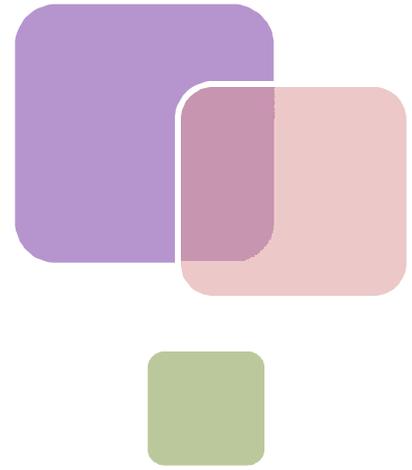
We would not be able to provide the quality of services VIRCS is known for without the many volunteers and practicum students that every year complements our staff. Pam Devito, VIRCS volunteer coordinator, has proven to be a resourceful planner and she always maintains a valuable pool of volunteers supporting our activities and workshops.

March 2016 marks the end of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada's 3-year funding cycle, which funds the VIPP program. Once again, the Settlement team came together to support David and other contractors in writing the next three-year proposal for CIC. The new funding negotiations will begin in December 2015. I am looking forward to closing the current contract and to begin a new 3-year plan full of meaningful programs, exciting activities, learning opportunities, and professional services for the benefit of our immigrant and refugee community.



Enable Program, Danny Tes

Greetings! Enable Program had a great 2014-2015 year! As the primary point of contact for newcomer children and youth our role in helping them succeed is of great importance while the parent(s) is being supported by other vital VIRCS services. The goal of the program is to provide settlement and adjustment support focused on the academic, social and emotional support for all young newcomers both in and out of school. Our activities include a weekly Homework Club drop-in, one-on-one tutoring matches, weekly drop-in Youth Activity Night, in-school Art Therapy Program, an afterschool Sparks Children Program and Youth Strides Summer Camp. This year Enable supported over 200 newcomers, immigrant and refugee, children to youth between the ages of 6 – 25.



Our approach with young people is meeting them where they are at in life and increasing their sense of identity, belonging and community with their everyday environment.

A significant highlight of this past year is the successful completion of the *Young Immigrant Life Skill Training Program* (YILTP) pilot that was funded till March 2015. YILTP had 36 workshops, broken into 3 series of 12 serving up to 15 youth at a time over 4 months. A total of 40 newcomer youth between that age of 15- 25 registered and participate in pilot program. Skills that were built included managing stress, financial management, career planning to leadership. Our goal for the future is to reflect on the success of this project and envision what Enable could do in the area of pre-employment, education and career.

Youth Strides Summer Camp of 2015 was significant with 70% of youth participants were first time VIRCS users including their family. With this come a milestone as its celebrate its 10th annual camp and is has been one of the most impactful programming in welcoming, introducing and increasing youth in participation in the Enable Program. A BBQ reunion in August 2015 celebrated the success of the camp with visit from funders including Coast Capital Savings and TELUS to connect with youth and families about the camp experiences.

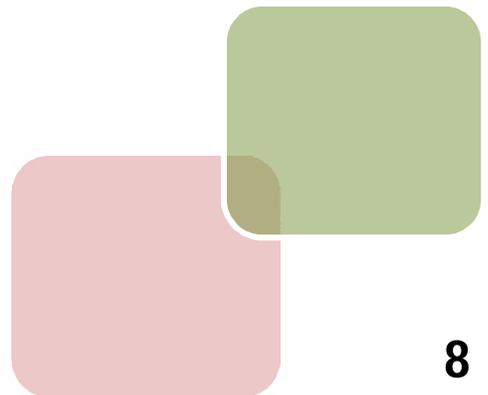
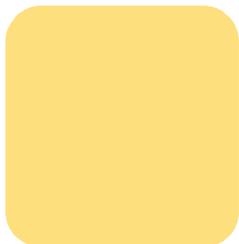
Enable continues to be enrolled in the *Youth Program Quality Assessment* (YPQA) Initiative for upcoming 2015-2016 year. The YPQA is a validated instrument designed to evaluate the quality of youth program and identify staff training needs. Through this process Enable staff continues to maintain a high standard through observation-evaluation-improvement process within a yearly cycle to ensure high quality youth programming. Staffs have become more knowledgeable, skilled and competent in doing work with young people

The Sail and Life Training Society (SALTS) has given us the privilege to offer one of our young newcomer youth a scholarship for a 10 day on a sail boat to explore our beautiful BC coast. This marks the 3rd year that SALTS has sponsored a now\$1,700 scholarships for summer sailing voyage. The selected youth was between the ages 13 to 25 and sailed from Victoria to Port Hardy through the Strait of Georgia with other individual youth from around the world. As a group these youth learn how to sail, build on current life skills and experience life at the sea on a large sail boat. The Enable Program is sincerely grateful to the SALTS for offering another substantial gift to young person at VIRCS.



2014-2015 brought a change in staffing with the departure of long time VIRCS Staff and two year as Enable Youth Worker, Anna Chpilevaia. In her place in September of 2014 came Jaspreet Grewal who was a practicum student with Enable and a recent graduate from University of Victoria's Child and Youth Care faculty. "Jaz" does not only bring her relevant education background as staff. Her personal experiences and connections with immigrant to refugee experience have been noteworthy too.

The Enable Program would like to acknowledge the various supports of community partners, supporters, donors and funders. We would like to acknowledge the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, the United Way of Greater Victoria, The Victoria Foundation, TELUS Community Board, Coast Capital Savings, Island Savings, True Sport Foundation and Children's Health Foundation. We are extremely excited to have the support of the United Way of Greater Victoria for the \$105,000 distributed over the next 3 years (\$35,000 per year). Also, we would like to thank all the volunteers, practicum students, contract partners and staff who made 2014-2015 for amazing year. Thank You!



English as a Second Language, Jennifer Rawlinson

For more than 17 years, VIRCS has offered a comprehensive English language training program. Our programs doors have opened opportunities for thousands of newcomers and citizens, who are seeking to improve their English language skills and increase their chances of gaining meaningful employment or continuing their studies in their chosen fields. Language training is crucial to the success of many of our clients here at VIRCS. Integration and a sense of community belonging are possible with improved English skills

During 2015, our ESL classes have steadily grown; comprised equally of domestic and international students. Since January 2015, we have registered 75 students. However, as our program is a flexible, continuous enrolment program, we have averaged approximately 20 students on most class days. Our first class, Beginners, is offered 9 am to 11 am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. In this class, students are introduced to basic grammar structure and literacy skills. The focus of our beginners' class is communication, which is facilitated through comprehensive, communicative activities as well as one to one conversation with one of our wonderful ESL classroom volunteers. Our intermediate/advanced class is offered 11 am to 1 pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. This class is typically larger than the beginner class, and focuses on academic as well as communicative skills. Students in this class also benefit from the **help of volunteers and guest speakers** to give them a more authentic English experience.

Permanent residents and Canadian citizens are given priority seating as well as a subsidized tuition fee. We also welcome international visitors and students, and while their fees are reasonable by industry standards, they more accurately reflect the true cost of delivery of the program. This two tiered fee system allows us to deliver a program, which is affordable to more students who are interested in studying English As A Second Language.



In addition to our ESL classes, VIRCS also offers short-term programs for youth, workshops for professionals and a successful weekly conversation club. In collaboration with our Volunteer Coordinator, we have also established a program for conversation partners, which primarily assists students who are registered in one of our ESL classes.

Our newest program is a joint program with the Greater Victoria Public Library. We are offering a free beginner ESL conversation class at the Central Branch which includes a library orientation as well as an introduction to Mango Languages, a computer based language training program. Students may use the program at the library or anywhere from their own laptops and devices. The program is unique in that it gives instructions in the students' first languages while teaching English. Due to the popularity of this program, we are planning to launch similar programs at different branches. This program is possible due to our dedicated volunteers who assist the students in small conversation groups.

Our classes are partially funded by the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, while tuition fees cover the remainder of the costs. Our program is currently investigating the possibility of partnerships with other organizations as well as other funding opportunities, so that we may deliver more ESL programs, which will reflect the diverse, and complex needs of newcomers in our community.

The ESL program at VIRCS is as exciting and diverse as its students. Our program welcomes students from all countries and we embrace our diversity with compassion and understanding. Our success as a program has been possible due to many factors; funding through BC Gaming, a positive, welcoming environment at VIRCS, our dynamic and well trained volunteers and our incredible students, each who comes to our class with their own experiences to share and dreams to fulfill. We anticipate another successful year in 2016 and hope to expand our program so that we may offer English language training to our changing community.

Skills Connect, Jennifer Almeida

The Skills Connect for Immigrant Program is currently being delivered at VIRCS for the 7th and final year before it returns to the federal government. The program has assisted close to 800 newcomers since it started in 2009. VIRCS was able to successfully meet all contractual targets set up with the program's prime contractor - ASPECT (Association of Service Providers for Employability and Training). This tremendous success was because we shared a common goal or vision of newcomers. Newcomers were able to access funding for re-training that helped improve their lives in Canada.



For the fiscal year 2014/2015, we had 65 new clients who had come to know our program mainly through the word-of-mouth. The Skills Connect team is comprised of the Program Manager: Jennifer Almeida and two Case Managers: Caroline Yeend and Amarjit Bhalla.

The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program is an employment bridging program that assists immigrants to secure jobs that fully utilize their pre-arrival qualifications and work experience so; immigrants integrate into the BC labour market. It is specifically targeted to highly educated and trained career professionals, which a high level of English language competency. Clients in 'Stream A' have a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) in excess of 6, and the vast majority of our clients have post-secondary credentials, including Bachelor and Master's degrees, and in some cases, doctoral degrees. Clients in 'Stream B' have high school or other but lack essential skills or certification and have moderate English language skills of CLB 5 or above. Stream A and Stream B the program has a substantial lifespan, and clients can access support services and training funds for up to 12 months.

In 2014, the program provided all of the following: career planning, prior learning assessment, qualifications assessment/credential evaluation, connections to professional regulating bodies, counseling on short-term / industry-specific training, networking and mentoring; as well as, one-on-one job coaching.

In addition, the program interviewed over 30 highly educated and skilled newcomers for Canada Immigration and Citizenship under the Federal Internship (FIN) for Newcomers Program which is in its sixth year. A comprehensive selection process was undertaken for a 90-day paid internship with local Federal Government departments.

Who does Skills Connect help?

"So far I found skills connect is the most effective way to obtain employment in Victoria."

Irena, Chemist from Australia

"I have much more clearer view about my future steps that I want to take"

Mansoor, Clinical Counselor, Iran

"A big thanks also to VIRCS and the great work you do there. I've seen <Case Manager> only twice but I received so much help already: with career planning; learning about Skills Connect - I had no idea such a thing existed; resume and cover letter coaching; advice about job search, volunteering and networking; etc."

Uli, Accountant, Germany

EPBC Program, Emily Zhong

Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) was launched in 2012. This year, BC Ministry signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Government to renew the Labour Market Agreement and extended the EPBC contracts for additional 2 years until 2019. "Good news for those who are currently involved in the EPBC and not so good for those who were hoping for another chance to bid in 2017" by Norma Strachan, CEO of ASPECT

VIRCS have been sub-contracted by Worklink Employment Society for West Shore and Beacon Community Services for Sidney. We don't have any contract for Saanich and Victoria areas. These areas are currently served by GT Hiring Solutions, and we cannot serve those clients who live in these catchment areas. We are continually facing the contractual restriction, and our program will continue experiencing tremendous frustration on providing employment services to those visible minority and immigrant job seeker living in Sannich and Victoria catchment who come to our door seeking for employment help. Despite challenges, EPBC program served over 200 immigrants for their initial employment assessments in 2015. 90 clients received case-managed employment services. In this program, 70% of the clients were identified as tier three and four who were new to Canada, with lack of labour market information and looking for their first Canadian job. In total, 64 clients found meaningful employment and 20 have completed case managed services and are on the follow-up stage. According to WorkBC contract mandate, we had to refer 200 clients to other employment service centres whom we were not eligible to serve due to contractual restriction.

If eligible clients' action plan identifies a need for employment benefit, EPBC program is providing assistance in applying for employment benefits. We assist those clients for EI benefits application, Skills Training (ST), Self-Employment (SE), Wage Subsidy and Opportunity Fund for Disability. To help clients deal with the highly competitive labour market in Greater Victoria area, we offered wide range of services and activities to meet clients' needs.

These activities, services and supports include both self-served and case-managed clients. We also assist clients through Short-Course training such as: Food Safe, SuperHost, Smart Serve, First Aid, WHMIS, and CPR.

In 2015, over 400 clients attended VIRCS monthly "Job Search Club" workshops and one-on-one job coach assistance. To increase clients' employability's skills, variety topics were offered through workshops. In addition, we provided soft skills training such as communication and problem solving skills within the Canadian workplace.

In June, EPBC and VIPP pooled together and provided a 6 part workshop series called Pathways to Health Care Employment. We worked with employer and provided client opportunity to directly meet with a local employer, Shekinah Home Society. There were 4 clients who received job offer by Shekinah Society. In July 2015, we worked with Abebooks and provided 5 days customer services training which was designed to provide an overview of the call centre industry. Clients gained the understanding of the call centre activities such as market research, establishing and building relationships with customers. In September 2015, we hosted two days mini job fair for 15 clients with Transtech. There were 8 clients who were hired by Transtech after the job fair.

We were very excited to offer the new service for general clients who are in need of resume writing, but not eligible for our employment programs. Every Friday, three clients are served with one-hour free session with our volunteers to help them with their resume needs. This initiative has been a great service to fill up the gap. Up to this point, there have been 78 clients benefiting from this service. I would like to thanks all the volunteers who are involved in this initiative, and appreciate their contribution with their time and dedication. EPBC program staff demonstrated commitment, hard work and excellent client services. We have faced many challenges but despite that, our main goal has always been to help immigrants. We would also like to express our respect for immigrant job seekers for their strong commitment and continued trust in our Employment Program. Together we have improved program goals and resultant successful employment for our clients.

