

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

2019/20 Annual Report



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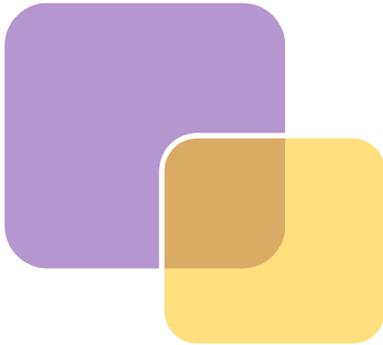
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VIRCS's Mission Statement

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 2019/2020 Board of Directors

Aaron Hall– Board Chair

Osaro Ezomo– Vice Chair

Ayodeji Kuponiy- Secretary

James Wallace- Treasurer

Nancy Hum- External Relations

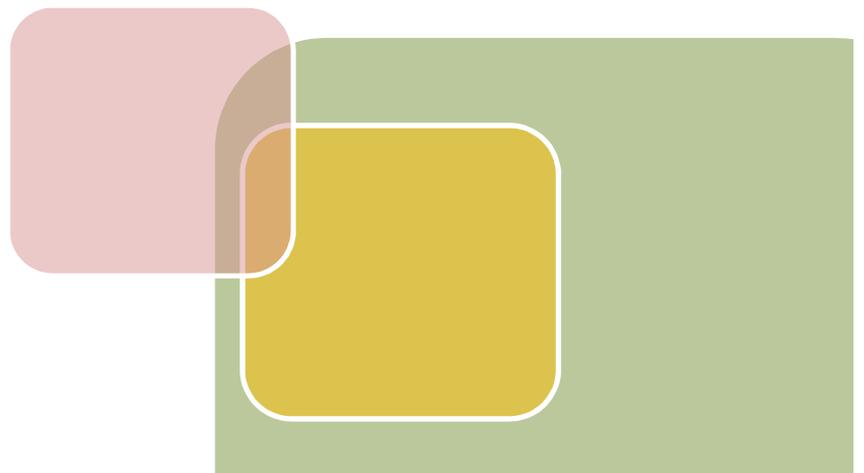
Miguel Espinosa – Director-at-large

Bruce McGuigan – Director-at-large

Ye Li - – Director-at-large

Patti Grey – Director-at-large

Liza Sehic – Director-at-large





Special Thanks to Our Supporters and Donors

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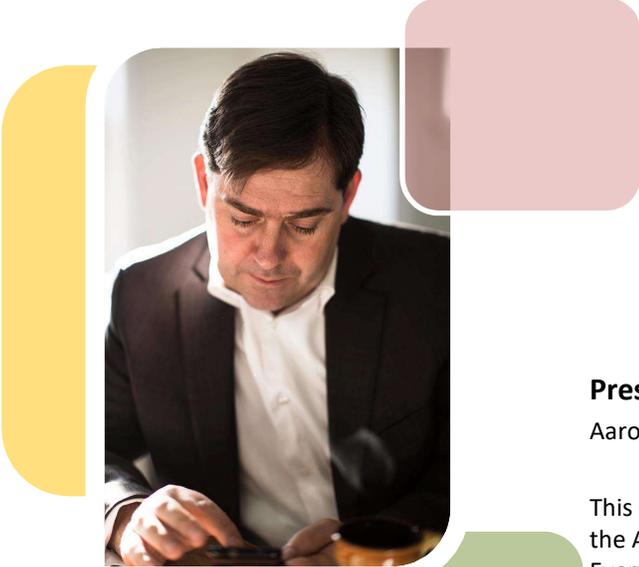
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Community Social Planning Council
Vancouver Island Health Authority
Victoria Chinese Seniors Association*

**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-----	3
Welcome Gardens!-----	4
Settlement -----	5
English as a Second Language -----	7
Emergency Food & Supply Delivery Initiative -----	9
Resilience BC Hub -----	9
Youth Program-----	10
Pathways to Professions and Trades-----	12
Immigrant Women's Project-----	13
Financial Report-----	14





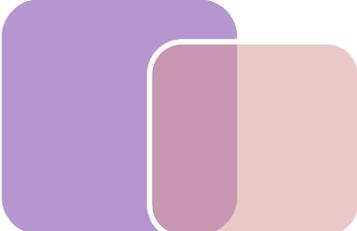
President's Report

Aaron Hall

This was another exciting year for growth and new ideas at VIRCS, and the Agency has a great number of wonderful people to thanks for this. Every year I see a wide range of participation from Clients, Volunteers, and Staff creating amazing programs and helping a tremendous number of interesting people. I am regularly reminded in my day to day life how important this Agency is and about the impact it has in our community. In my personal life, my work life, and in other charity work I do, I am in contact with a wide range of people and regularly

have the pleasure of meeting Community Partners, Past Clients, Program Funders as the President of the Board. This is a tremendous joy in my life and I have the Staff's dedication, skill, and hard work to thank for this positive experience. I am certain that this same positive experience happens for everyone involved in helping our clients reach their goals. On behalf of all of us who are positively impacted by VIRCS, I want to say thank you to everyone who makes that happen. Moving forward I am excited to see what the next year is going to bring and am looking forward to sharing that experience with you all. I encourage everyone to stay in touch with VIRCS and see what new opportunities come up.

Aaron Hall – Board Chair





Executive Director's Report

David Lau

It is obvious to say that 2020 had a surprise up its sleeve.

What was not obvious was how effective VIRCS program and administration staff reacted and pivoted services to deal with the very complicated mess that covid-19 presented to us.

Because we are a hub of activity and our clients come from a very wide range of different cultural communities, it became very obvious that if covid-19 was a serious transmission risk, our Centre could be a very dangerous place to be and a significant risk to Greater Victoria. On 12

March, after our Prime Minister spoke, the VIRCS team met and we gave ourselves the weekend to rethink everything.

The next Monday all our programs had shifted service to online, by-phone etc. Our staff went home leaving a skeleton crew of admin and management staff. In the office. It is very important to know that VIRCS functions with a very spare administration staffing, so making radical changes is NOT EASY. Because our Tech Services Manager, Junnian Li had previously created a VPN we were able to access critical program files from home. Working quickly with funders we were able to pivot programming to achieve our goals with changed service means. Within a month Dallas Posavad was in consultation our staff and with other non-profits who were designing new covid strategies. Soon after that we tabled a solid covid practices manual and agreement that was staff-led and staff-approved. So far, so good.

Other great things happened. We experienced just over 10% program growth! Jane Hurtig came aboard to lead the new Resilience BC Program, later hiring Gurhiraj and Avigail. VIRCS was selected to create and manage the Province of BC's antiracism/anti-hate program. It is an awesome honour for VIRCS to lead this important work that will stem and address growth in hate activity all across BC.

We received a three year and a five year renewal for our federal settlement and youth employment programs. These VIRCS programs are "safe. We also finally managed to get BC Gaming funding for our beloved Welcome Gardens program, stabilizing it somewhat. VIRCS was the only agency in BC that Heritage Canada gave three separate anti-racism grants in 2019/20.

We signed a three year extension to our MOU with District of Oak Bay to continue the resettlement housing service that we started two years ago. As of 01 November, the larger house on Monterey is operational and we are getting ready to welcome new resettlement residents – this is a first on Vancouver Island.

VIRCS made some restructuring changes that are yielding great results. We changed Administrative services from a staffed position to a contract that is being fulfilled by Login Bookkeeping.

Our relationship with Victoria Social Innovation Centre partners is going strongly. Our daycare is months from completion. We increased our budget due to a generous commitment from United Way (\$360K). The building we own via VSICS was re-appraised last March at \$4.15 million, practically double what we paid for it three years ago. This cements our relationships and also creates an incredible sense of financial security. When our daycare is completed, it will contribute to the building's costs and thus reduce VIRCS and FSGV's net exposure to rent costs. (that is a really good thing).

It has NOT been an easy year – it has been a rewarding one for the stability of VIRCS and our services.

Volunteer Programs Amarjit Bhalla

The volunteer program is a vital, dynamic part of the larger VIRCS portfolio of activities designed to meet the specific needs of individual immigrants and refugees, their families and the wider community with targeted, client-driven services. The volunteers' caring, respectful and service-oriented attitude coupled with their willingness to share their time and expertise in meaningful programs and activities helps to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for VIRCS clients and community members.

2019-20 started with great success as the number and variety of services and activities expanded, opening new avenues for the host community and immigrants and new arrivals to get involved. Volunteer participation has grown significantly in the last few years, with more individuals interested in learning about and assisting newcomers with the challenges they face settling into Victoria. The Volunteer Coordinator receives a steady stream of enquiries from the general public, asking for more information on how they can help, and most of these enquiries translate into dedicated involvement in one or other of VIRCS programs.

VIRCS volunteers work in a variety of programs such as Youth Services; Legal Advice; Immigration Advice; Income Tax Clinics; Administration; the Welcome Gardens; Daycare Services and the Women's Group. They also assist running workshops on Resume writing and Form-Filling, and one-on-one language tutoring. Some of these activities are run and supported entirely by volunteers, and would not be available if volunteers were not willing to devote their time and energy to them.

This year 215 volunteers donated 11,205 hours of their time and expertise to VIRCS programs, delivering over 35 types of services across 6 program areas and within 4 volunteer service clinics.

Volunteers continue to support the main VIRCS programs, including ESL classroom assistance and language tutoring; academic tutoring; skills development; children and youth activities; workshop assistance and facilitation; administrative and communications support and implementation of special projects and community events. Volunteers have also donated expertise services for the Oak Bay Welcome houses, a project recently initiated by the VIRCS.

The program received funding through the Canadian Heritage to offer a unique service to newcomers to participate in mainstream organizations through volunteering. This project was specifically aimed to create awareness for both, the various Ethnic Communities and mainstream organizations of providing opportunities for the diverse population of Victoria to become involved with the organizations. This project provided the newcomer participants a supportive way to gain knowledge and experience of working with volunteer organizations and learn the issues that are facing all Canadians and particularly local issues in Victoria. For the organizations, it provided them with an opportunity to expand their volunteer base to include participation of various cultural and religious groups.



The objective was to increase the awareness of Canada's cultural diversity and help with reducing racism and promoting harmony. The hopeful outcome was that as the participants became more integrated into the main society, it will help reduce misunderstandings, develop friendships and foster understanding.

We achieved and exceeded our goal and placed 58 immigrant participants (newcomers, immigrants and visible minorities) an opportunity to volunteer for 3 months in mainstream not-for-profit organizations. Mainstream organizations included BC Museum, Maritime Museum, The BC Cancer Society, Victoria Police, Leadership Victoria, St Vincent De Paul, Mustard Seed Society to name a few.

Welcome Gardens! – Cenit and Corrie

Over the past six years, the Welcome Gardens! program has connected local residents and newcomers to Victoria to grow food together in shared household and community gardens. Welcome Gardens gleefully continues to provide opportunities for participants and volunteers to gain, share, and preserve diverse horticultural skills and knowledge, to cultivate food literacy and local growing skills, to share multicultural food practices, and to gain access to educational opportunities and community resources that can help

folks grow and preserve food for their household and the community. Responding to covid-19 has been a change-maker for us. We have had to shift to doing online workshops and hosting garden times so that there was adequate social distancing. Our Multicultural Earth-Based Gardens In Esquimalt, North Park, Yates and Oak Bay. We have multiple shared-space multicultural community garden spaces available across the city. Connect with us to volunteer and potentially have a space of your own to grow in (preference for individual or family plots is given to Newcomer Canadians.)

This year we also welcomed a new Welcome Gardens Project Co-Coordinator. Cenit and Corrie have taken over from Liz who went back to the US. Both Corrie and Cenit have been busy as Welcome Garden contractors and volunteers – they are bringing new vision to the project.

In addition to our continued support from the Victoria Foundation and New Horizons for Seniors Project, Welcome Gardens received grant funding from the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. With the support of these grants, Welcome Gardens! Has been able to switch to covid-safe practices and still manage some real innovations! We partnered with a local inventor Alan Murr to create two very specialized aeroponics grow projects. One was situated at the Lieutenant Governor’s Gardens and the second one behind Capital Iron Ltd on Store Street. Both gardens had 14 growers operating. All the produce was donated through our partnership with the Food Share Initiative. We retained a significant portion and that fresh organic produce went to newcomers

who receive our covid food hampers. Once again, we have not only increased our ability but have innovated new exciting programming to help newcomers in this dangerous time!

<https://www.douglasmagazine.com/innovative-urban-farming-project-supports-food-security-in-victoria/>



Settlement Programs, Asuka Hirai, Settlement Director

Newcomer Wraparound Support Program (federal)

The Newcomer Wraparound Support Program (NWSP) provides settlement and integration services to newcomers with overwhelming and or complex barriers. Through this program, clients receive one-on-one, family and group orientation support. The program utilizes the wraparound approach and is based on an in-depth needs assessment, where the NWSP case manager works with a client and creates a wraparound plan. The plan is created based on the client's strengths, wishes, and dreams. Through the program, clients feel their voices are heard, their strength is utilized and they also feel they are not alone in a new country.

In 2019/2020, the NWSP team provided services to over 400 clients through one-on-one consultations, as well as, family and group orientation sessions. The NWSP organized over 87 group information and orientation sessions where clients enjoyed participating in workshop activities such as: Parenting, Food Skills for Newcomers and Digital Literacy workshops, which helped newcomers navigate their new Canadian lifestyle. Through the group activities, the clients learned about many topics including basic life skills, laws and regulations in Canada, cultural differences and similarities, environmental sustainability and basic employment skills. The clients often mentioned that they enjoyed learning new skills, meeting with other newcomers and obtained a lot of support from the program.



The NWSP is grateful to the federal government and its contribution. In 2019/2020, the NWSP team successfully applied and renewed its contribution agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and obtained multi-year funding. With this federal government support, the NWSP can continue to provide specialized settlement services to the vulnerable newcomer population. The NWSP staff is trained and equipped to provide services to the most vulnerable newcomer population. In fact, when COVID-19 hit Canada, the NWSP began providing timely and critical services to those newcomers through information orientation and connected them with community resources.

The NWSP will continue to work with our funder, community partners and volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic and provide services to the most vulnerable newcomer population. Many of our newcomer population are resilient, bright and hardworking individuals and once they are provided with 360 degree support, they are able to integrate into their new community, and realize their value as a member in this society. The NWSP staff will continue to provide critical services during the pandemic, contributing to strengthening our community's capacity and creating a safe and welcoming community.

Settlement - BC Settlement and Integration Services (Provincial)

In 2018, VIRCS started a new settlement program and it has been successfully extended until March 31, 2022, which is funded by the Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness.

The program targets newcomers who are not eligible for federal settlement services. The services are intended to help clients achieve their best possible settlement outcomes. The BCSIS Program served over 1,500 clients during the fiscal year 2019.

The BCSIS Program has become very successful and well-known in Victoria since the program staff has been actively promoting the program within the local community.

Over exceeded Hub and Spoke locations created high demand from BCSIS staff – trying our best to accommodate all clients and their needs. BCSIS connections with communities are becoming very strong. Libraries and librarians were very generous and kindly accommodating to support our program's needs.

Eligible clients include: Temporary Foreign Workers; Post-secondary International students; Provincial Nominees; Refugee Claimants; Naturalized Citizens

BC Immigration and Settlement Services: Orientation, information and referral to community resources and government services such as: Housing, Health Care, Social Benefits, Income tax, Legal issues, Counselling.

Assistance to navigate immigration and work permit applications. Community connections. Law clinic – VIRCS

Labour Market Services: Information and networking; Employment counselling

English Language Training: Formal language training; Informal language practice

BCSIS team will continue: Working remotely answering calls and emails; Supporting clients with information and resources in regards to Covid-19, immigration issues, EST, online information and settlement support; Supporting clients with EI & CERB information; Organizing and attending several online trainings; Business Creation with Project Management - the last session is ending soon for 2020; Bi-weekly BCSIS team meeting and several communication by phone or emails per day to each other; Connecting and informing our clients to online information and learning; Assisting many refugee clients; Assisting many TFW and International students; ELT students are actively enjoying online lesson and conversation classes; BCSIS online workshop activities.



English As a Second Language – Jennifer Rawlinson

For more than 20 years, VIRCS has offered a comprehensive English Language Training program. Our program's 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 2019, our ELT classes have steadily grown, and comprised equally of domestic and international students. Since January 2019, we have registered 130 students. However, as our program is a flexible, continuous enrolment program, we have averaged approximately 10-15 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 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.

Our newest program is in collaboration with the Greater Victoria Public Library. We are now offering a free beginner ELT conversation class, one evening per week at the Central Branch Library. The classes run 3 times per year for 6 weeks. The Greater Victoria Public Library has offered us a space to deliver the program as well as the assistance of experienced staff who give library tours and a hands-on tutorial on how to use the Mango languages program. Due to the popularity of this program, we have plans to expand and offer similar programs at other branches in the Greater Victoria area.

During 2019, our classes have continued to support refugees in our communities. We have delivered English classes and children's workshops to more than 40 individuals, both on short term and long-term programs. Our settlement and ESL programs delivered timely services, which resulted in many students moving on to academic programs and permanent employment. At VIRCS ELT programs, 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 actual 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 Language Training.

In addition to our ELT 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 ELT classes.



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 ELT programs, which will reflect the diverse, and complex needs of newcomers in our community. One such opportunity has been our registration as a Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test licensed site. While we can provide this testing to VIRCS clients, we have also delivered the test for Cambria College and Sprott Shaw College on a fee for service basis. Students who want to take the Health Care Assistant program at these private colleges need to pass a Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test in order to take this program.

VIRCS began a new program in August 2018, funded by BC Settlement and Integration Services. (BCSIS). The BCSIS funded program delivers settlement, employment and English Language Training to newcomers who are in the process of trying to gain permanent residency in Canada. The English language component delivers formal and informal classes to newcomers both at our Hub location (VIRCS) and at several library branches in our community including Saanich, Langford, Esquimalt, Sooke and Sidney.

In March 2020, our English language programs moved online due to the pandemic. While it has been a challenge to deliver our programs, we have managed to retain our students and deliver quality program through Zoom and Webex platforms. It is our hope that we can resume our in person classes at VIRCS when it is safe to do so.

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 2020 and hope to expand our program so that we may offer English language training to our growing and changing community.



Don't worry – these are pre-covid pictures!



Emergency Food & Supply Delivery Initiative - Asuka Hirai

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, VIRCS expanded on the existing Emergency Assistance Resources Program and started the Emergency Food & Supply Delivery Initiative to deliver food to clients every Thursday. The initiative aims to address rising concerns of food security for the vulnerable newcomer population in our community, and to provide timely support to them.

At the beginning of the initiative, we received food from Food Share Network and hygiene items from Soap for Hope. Our goal was to not only provide emergency food and supply, but also provide information about COVID-19 (translated version), food safety, community resources, important contact information and online group activity information through this initiative. The VIRCS Enable program also provided educational supplies to meet the learning needs of newcomer children and youth during the pandemic.

A few weeks into the pandemic we came to realize that Covid-19 was not going away anytime soon, so we applied for additional funding and support. Soon after the applications, we received funds from the Victoria Foundation, Good Food Access Fund and Second Harvest FoodRescue.ca. Some of these funds were used to purchase fresh vegetables from local farms through the Farmbucks program. Some of the grant was used to purchase additional PPE items, food and supplies. The VIRCS Welcome Garden also provided fresh produce from their community garden. Khalsa Aid Canada additionally provided 2 trucks full of vegetable boxes and culturally diverse food items. In addition, VIRCS received clothing donations from Brands for Canada to provide added support to clients.

During the pandemic, VIRCS staff and volunteers have provided over 600 food hampers/boxes to the newcomer population and this initiative has been greatly appreciated by the newcomer community especially single parents, families with multiple children, seniors, and people with disabilities and/or chronic illness. The food initiative staff and volunteers continue to monitor the Covid-19 situation and communicate with clients to modify the program accordingly. The volunteers played a significant role in the success of this initiative. The program has proven successful, and VIRCS will continue with the initiative for the coming months

Resilience BC Hub - Jane Hurtig

In November 2019, the Province of British Columbia launched Resilience BC, a multi-faceted, province-wide approach to challenging racism. Following a competitive bidding process, VIRCS was selected to serve as the Resilience BC Hub. The Hub's mandate is to support the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network by connecting communities, increasing capacity to share information and resources, and coordinating training and anti-racism initiatives. The network is composed of 36 organizations operating in more than 50 communities throughout B.C. VIRCS proudly holds the contract for this program in Victoria.

The Resilience BC Network sees a future free from racism and hate. Their goal is to bring communities together to do the hard work and make this vision a reality.

The Network strives to provide their communities with leadership, knowledge, and support to create a decolonized, equitable and just society. With the help of the Hub, members deliver accessible resources for education, community building, dialogue, issues identification, and mobilization throughout British Columbia. To support this work, the Hub is building a diverse library of anti-racism educational materials and community resources. This valuable information will be available on the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network website which will also host an interactive map designed to connect British Columbians to their closest network member.

The Hub is creating training opportunities and resources for network members to provide them with tools to lead anti-racism and anti-hate work in their communities. Resources include creating and promoting a community response protocol for public incidents of racism and hate and a toolkit for creating Police Diversity Advisory Committees.

Resilience BC Hub - CONTINUED...

Training will include sessions on creating an organizational racial equity strategy; leading discussions about decolonization; and accepting reports of incidents of racism and hate.

The Hub convenes monthly network meetings. Special guests have included the then Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Anne Kang, BC Human Rights Commissioner Karsari Govender, and Gold Trail School District Superintendent Teresa Downs. Meetings include topical discussions among network members, training on BC211 resources and other tools, and opportunities for regional breakout groups.

The Hub tailors supports to the unique needs of each community in the network.

While one network member may be working with schools, another may be targeting local businesses. The Hub also coordinates with national, provincial, regional and local anti-racism and anti-hate efforts to ensure members have access to other relevant, current resources.

Enable Program – Jennifer Rubin

The Enable Program has said goodbye to Brooke Shaughnessy who left for a provincial coordinator position with our ally, BC Assn of Native Friendship Centres. We wish her well and look forward to ongoing partnerships! We were very lucky to have hired Jennifer Rubin who has taken over and is dealing with covid-related programming complexities.



The Enable Program has had an exceptional year delivering various programming to newcomer children and youth aged six to 25 years old. This program's services include activities that meet the children's and youth's academic, social, and emotional needs. The Enable program consists of the following primary programming: Homework Club, Youth Activity Nights, Arts Therapies for children, Sparks children's program, and the Youth Strides Summer Camp. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have faced unprecedented times in terms of program delivery. For instance, our Art Therapy Program and our Sparks programs were put on hold due to school closures. Similarly, the Youth Strides Summer Camp is on hold until we can safely continue this programming.

Unforeseen needs have required some improvisation and the adaption or changes to the Enable program to better align with changing government restrictions. For instance, during Covid-19 lockdown, we adapted programming to online delivery to continue to support our clients' needs. For example, as we could not offer one-on-one support, Homework Club shifted to focus on creative projects, games, movement activities, and activities to learn and practice English. Likewise, in April, we moved our Youth Activity Night online, during which we continued to offer weekly activities, including check-ins, games, casual hang-outs, and educational workshops. From July to October, we were thrilled to provide outdoor programming for both Homework Club and Youth Activity Nights. We facilitated Zumba, tennis, arts and crafts, youth-facilitated communication games, and partnered with community facilitators, including the Maritime Museum and the Youth Excellence Society.

Despite Covid-19 related challenges, we continued to have youth involvement in our programs, and we ran a Youth Advisory Committee from April to July. A small group of youth practiced their leadership skills and worked with Enable staff to plan Youth Activity Nights. By participating Enable and other VIRCS programming, our youth learned a variety of life skills including employment skills, public speaking, budgeting, disaster preparedness and self-care. The youth-led committee also organized youth care packages called Sparks of Happiness. The objective was to keep newcomer youth connected, cared for, and supported with wellness and recreational supplies throughout what could be a potentially long and isolated summer. They communicated with local teachers to outreach other newcomer youth and successfully delivered 35 hampers.

Additionally, in June, we began offering the adapted online tutoring project called Keep On Learning, provided via zoom; this was a direct response to expressed concerns newcomer children and youth and their families voiced. Since their schooling had switched to online platforms, learning English while completing schoolwork proved challenging. This project provided Canadian curriculum workbooks, English learning materials, and supplies for hands-on learning and creative projects, along with ten 1.5 hour tutoring sessions for 45 children and youth to participate for ten weeks.

In late February, we were pleased to run our first pilot project called Education for Equality, which was a great success. The project focused on newcomer girls, young women, and trans-identified youth ages 14 to 20 years old, by providing the tools, skills, and confidence to pursue post-secondary education and one-on-one support in applying for colleges, universities, and skills training programs. The project consisted of workshops covering Admissions and Applications, Financial Aids and Scholarships, Safety and Resources on Campus, Balancing Life and School Responsibilities, Careers in Climate Justice, and Women in Leadership. We collaborated with a diverse group of local organizations, including UVic, Project Respect, Sierra Club, and Raven Trust. This project was very well attended both in-person and online, with 18 participants total. We are sincerely grateful to all our generous funders and community partners. We are also thankful for the assistance from our incredible team made up of staff, practicum students, and volunteers, who have contributed to this program's success.





The P2PT program at VIRCS has successfully completed its third year and we have now completed the program which concluded on August 15, 2020. P2PT is a youth employment program aimed at overcoming barriers to employment in Canada. This program consists of eight weeks of classroom learning followed by up to 20 weeks of supported employment.

Our team consists of two employment coordinators, Samira Wanas and Dallas Posavad, who is also our curriculum developer and instructor, our intake and outreach worker, Shazia Rashid, and myself, Jennifer Rawlinson as program manager.

Participant Outcomes:

- Total Participants Served: 83
- Total Participants Employed: 60
- Total Participants Returned to School: 12
- Total Participants neither Employed nor Returned to School: 7
- Total participants moved away or abandoned the program: 4

The above numbers reflect our high success rate at supporting our participants to find and maintain employment in our community. The employers who have supported our clients and program have reported that they are impressed by the quality of the work produced by our youth newcomer clients. The benefits to both the participant and the employer as well as the community are immeasurable.



With the onset of COVID 19, many of our employed youth became unemployed. As a response to this need, our Instructor and Employment Coordinator, Dallas Posavad, created an online platform to assist our participants to find work during the pandemic. He did this through careful research to understand which industries would survive and where the new employment opportunities would be. Dallas also created a job buffet and sent out emails with job links to all previous clients who were looking for work. Our employment coordinators supported our clients by offering job leads and assistance with applications, resumes and cover letters. Despite the massive job losses in Victoria during the spring and summer of 2020, we still managed to exceed our required outcomes for the program. With an exceptional record for removing barriers for unemployed youth, and our subsequent ability to find meaningful employment for newcomers, the P2PT program has been given another three year contract from Service Canada. The new program, Pathways to Professions, Trades and Entrepreneurship (P2PTE), began on August 17, 2020. This program is funded under the YESS program, (Youth Employment and Skills Strategy), and has a few differences from the previous Skills Link program. Under YESS, funded by Service Canada, the P2PTE staff and participants are given more flexibility and the focus is on individual needs. The new program also welcomes Indigenous youth and youth with disabilities, as well as newcomer youth. We have also added an Entrepreneurship stream delivered through our partnership with Community Micro Lending. Youth who are interested in entrepreneurship can take this stream which includes in class instruction, mentorship, and a comprehensive business development plan.

Immigrant Women’s Projects: Healthy Women, Healthy Communities

Nadia Sangster, Program Coordinator

It has been a big year for the Immigrant Women’s Projects: Healthy Women, Healthy Communities program. 2019/20 has shown us challenges working to advance the three major projects we received funding for, as you could guess covid has had impacts. Much of the planned work included workshops and we had to pivot significantly to find alternate means of conducting this research and service delivery.:

THE TOGETHER PROJECT, generously sponsored by Canadian Heritage and led by Ariel Reyes Antuan in the role of Multicultural Events Project Coordinator, this project celebrated the diversity and multiculturalism of Greater Victoria through live events and – following the onset of the COVID-19 community shutdown and social distancing restrictions – online discussion groups. Three examples of our very successful live events were: a speaker event called, “More than a Place of Worship,” held at Masjid Al-Iman Mosque; a multicultural/multi-national food-based event called “For the Love of Food,” held at Cook Street Village Activity Centre; and an indigenous-led, multicultural crafting event called, “Sacred Circles: A Multicultural Beading Party,” held at James Bay Community Centre. Of our online offerings, the “Rebalance: Movement and Mindfulness Series” and our “Life, Death and Dignity” discussion series were particularly well-received by participants. A wide variety of community groups contributed significantly to the success of our events, and we are grateful for their involvement.

WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT. We are currently in Year 2 of this five-year project, which was generously funded by Department of Justice Canada. The project’s goals are to: (1) create workshops to inform newcomers about sexual harassment in the workplace, their rights as employees, and available resources; (2) offer training sessions for those who wish to become resources for information about and prevention of workplace sexual harassment in their respective cultural communities; and (3) educate employers about the unique needs and potential vulnerabilities of newcomers in the workplace. Despite having to move the project to an exclusively online format, we continue to experience positive engagement from participants, and continue to move forward in our current, Curriculum Development phase.

Domestic violence education and prevention workshops. Thanks to repeat funding by BC Gaming and BC Civil Forfeiture, we have been able to continue offering workshops series focused on informing newcomer women regarding their legal rights and protections with respect to domestic abuse and intimate partner violence, as well as familiarizing them with community-based resources, and also promoting general mental health and wellbeing.



A highlight of 2019 was the invitation of Project staff member Nadia Sangster to a small information update event with federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General, the Honourable David Lametti

VIRCS's 2018 Financial Report

Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2019
(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)

		L/s	2019	2018
ASSETS				
CURRENT				
Cash	A		\$ 174,198	\$ -
Accounts receivable	C		182,424	168,696
GST receivable	C		1,372	1,277
			<u>357,994</u>	169,973
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT <i>(Note 3)</i>	U		106,920	121,881
			<u>\$ 464,914</u>	<u>\$ 291,854</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS				
CURRENT				
Bank indebtedness	A		\$ -	\$ 3,764
Accounts payable	BB		20,552	23,806
Wages payable	BB		999	-
Employee deductions payable	BB		19,304	17,367
			<u>40,855</u>	44,937
DEFERRED REVENUE	GG		277,982	60,774
DUE TO RELATED PARTIES	MM		185,944	115,102
DEFERRED CAPITAL ASSET CONTRIBUTIONS	KK		-	437
			<u>504,781</u>	221,250
NET ASSETS				
Operating fund			(146,787)	(50,840)
Capital fund			106,920	121,444
			<u>(39,867)</u>	70,604
			<u>\$ 464,914</u>	<u>\$ 291,854</u>

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures
Year Ended December 31, 2019
(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)

	L/S	2019	2018
REVENUES			
Operating Grants	20	\$ 1,306,725	\$ 1,162,981
Gaming	20	74,750	97,500
Capital Project Grant	20	79,158	82,469
Donations	20	41,755	43,212
Training	20	45,262	38,035
Rental	20	17,869	7,448
Social Events	20	5,142	3,003
Interest Income	20	2,781	1,395
Interest	20	437	187
		1,573,879	1,436,230
EXPENSES			
Amortization	40	14,961	14,883
Building Occupancy	40	172,215	116,237
Capital Project Grant	40	79,158	82,469
Direct Program Costs	40	102,083	70,891
Office and Supplies	40	23,443	39,971
Professional Fees	40	8,010	5,670
Recognition, Training and Recruiting	40	10,530	1,546
Travel and Transportation	40	3,664	3,049
Wages and Contracted Services	40	1,270,286	1,166,263
		1,684,350	1,500,979
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES		\$ (110,471)	\$ (64,749)