

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

## 2017/18 Annual Report



1004 North Park Street  
Victoria Social Innovation Centre, Victoria, BC

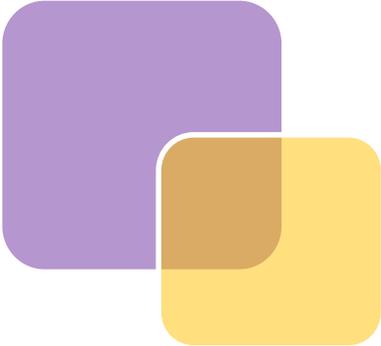
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## VIRCS's Mission Statement

**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 2017/2018 Board of Directors**

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**Osaro Ezomo– Vice President**

**Ayodeji Kuponiy- Secretary**

**James Wallace- Treasurer**

**Nancy Hum- Director-at-large**

**Geanine Robey- Director-at-large**

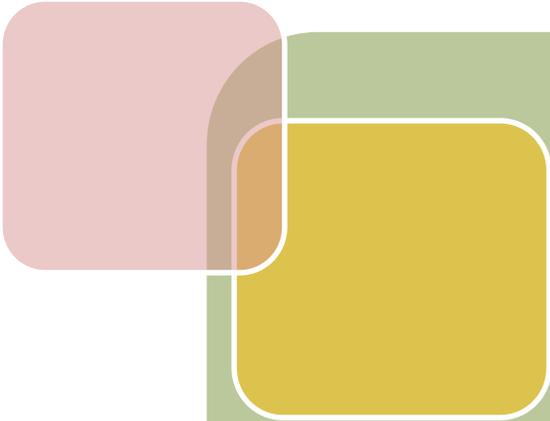
**Neil Osborne - Director-at-large**

**Avi Lambert - Director-at-large**

**Miguel Espinosa – Director-at-large**

**Bai Chang - Director-at-large**

**Approved for appointment 2018:**

- **Jane Hurtig**
  - **Bruce McGuigan**
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## **Special Thanks to Our Supporters and Donors**

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Vancouver Island Health Authority  
Victoria Chinese Seniors Association  
Viva Mexico Dance Society*

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

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## **President's Report**

Aaron Hall

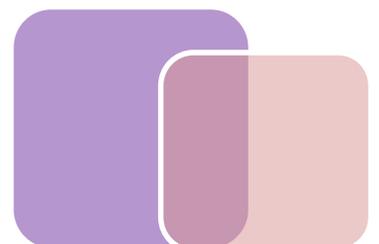
Hi Everyone,

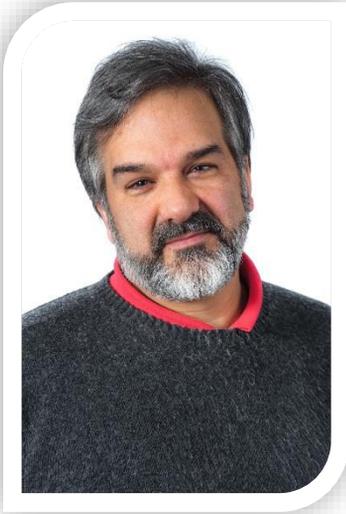
I am happy to report that this past year has been another exciting year of growth for VIRCS. We have again been making new and exciting connections with an ever increasing number of new community partners. One example of our efforts to work with new community partners is the creation of the Welcome Houses Project. Without the solid foundation of programs that our staff provide on a daily basis, projects like this would not be possible.

It is our proven track record that allows us to gain access to these interesting opportunities for growth. VIRCS is a wonderful space that provides our community with a never ending well of amazing and creative new programs. I have said this before and I feel it important to say again, the staff of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society do amazing things every day and they never cease to amaze me. Our staff consistently delivers an amazing and dynamic set of services our community and the effects of these services are seen all around us. My role here is that of a volunteer, and this volunteer experience has taught me a great deal about life in general. Watching what goes on behind the scenes to make this place work is inspiring. I also know that we are working on new exciting programs that will hopefully be rolled out in the coming year. So I encourage you to stay involved in the VIRCS community and be prepared to watch the staff accomplish some more amazing things in this year to come.

Aaron Hall – Board Chair

Aaron Hall





## Executive Director's Report

David Lau

This past year has been eventful for VIRCS our Board, our staff and our partners. This has been our first year as part of Victoria Social Innovation Centre Society and in our new location. Recently a VIRCS Board member remarked that things feel far different in this building now that we are in and services are occurring. He said that is more exciting to be here now and the energy is higher with so more programs and interesting interactions with our new neighbours. I tend to agree. Of course we have much further to go and because of this ongoing movement forward, it can be difficult to sit and enjoy what we are now doing. We need to find time to celebrate all the wonderful things that are happening right now

We have had some fun glimpses of celebrating in our new space. For Refugee Week we had a little summer parking lots concert with Bucan Bucan and Phatfunks.

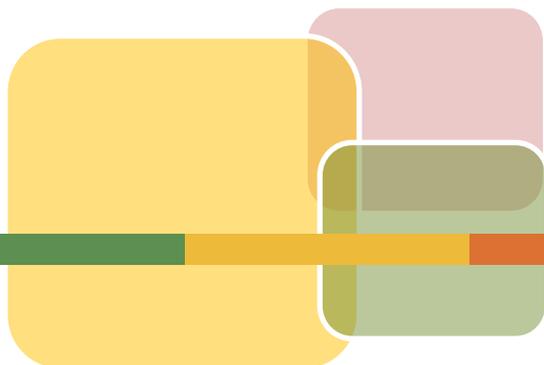
Our services are taking on new form and vibrancy as we roll out our new BC SIS services. We now have staff that are working out as far as Sooke to Sidney to Oak Bay. VIRCS and the Municipality of Oak Bay now have a signed MOU and one beautiful house was renovated by business and community volunteers under the direction of our Board Housing Committee of Avi Lambert and Geanine Robey. In July our sponsored Syrian family moved in and are getting used to the place. We are underway creating a larger home and the two will be part of a housing project that we will further develop in 2018/19. This has been a particularly difficult project since we had no funding and relied on the very thin resources in our Emergency Refugee Fund. More to come.

VIRCS and Family Services welcomed a new partner, The Oasis Society whose staff and volunteers provide supports to local indigenous people who are back into housing solutions. Although the hammers have not begun to swing, we have made some significant progression of the Trauma-informed daycare project that will occupy the large empty warehouse space in the building. This has been funded by MCFB and it will be north America's first specifically designed trauma-informed daycare facility. Once again, more to come.

This next year we will negotiate with IRCC for another multi-year proposal for services. This is always an emotional and somewhat gut-wrenching time as we dream new ideas into form and build services on paper that will help our future clients. We expect this will be a five-year contract so it is a very serious endeavor. Please wish us luck.

VIRCS is now here at 1004 North Park Street. We remain because much work needs to be accomplished in providing the best services to each newcomer who walks through our door: and, we have the heart to do that work.

Harambee!



## VIRCS Volunteer Program

Amarjit Bhalla

Thank you to our exceptional Volunteer Coordinator Pam Devito who left this program for an extended European trip. You have been greatly missed and please accept our good wishes from the VIRCS Staff and Volunteers. Our volunteers' caring, respectful and service orientated attitude paired with their willingness to share their expertise, to learn from each other creates an inclusive and welcoming place for VIRCS clients and community members.

VIRCS volunteers are people with diverse professional and educational backgrounds, languages, life experiences and reasons for volunteering. Over 70% of our volunteers are immigrants themselves; able to provide first-hand knowledge of what services and support people fully engage in overcome barriers.

This year, 226 volunteers donated 12,3532 hours of their time and expertise, delivering over 35 types of services across 6 program areas and within 4 volunteer service clinics. We also added three new programs, Women's Group Buddies, ESL program in the libraries and Resume Clinics in addition to the other clinics.

Volunteer-based services included: ESL classroom assistance and language tutoring; academic tutoring; skill development; children and youth activities support; workshop assistance and facilitation; administrative and communications support; and, implementation of special projects and community events. Our highlight was the Youth Summer Camp where volunteers spent one week with the youth at Camp Barnard. Specialized volunteer service clinics volunteers provided legal information, medical services, income tax preparation as well as residency application assistance. The volunteer program supports VIRCS's program in delivering client-driven services and responding to specific needs of individuals, families and the community. We are honored to be chosen by our volunteers as a place where they want to contribute! Thank you!



## Welcome Gardens!

If the year 2018 has given us any indication on what's in store for the future of food resources. VIRCS Welcome Gardens is a warm hopefulness to a growing urban food movement. This diverse group of new coming immigrants and Canadian citizens are engaging in developing the agricultural and food literacy skills to secure a food future in the city. Welcome Gardens is an inclusive intergenerational group with a dominant presence of seasoned senior gardeners and chefs. The Welcome Gardens Program is preserving a diverse set of horticultural and culinary skills from over **16 countries** and counting. This year all our agriculture workshops were hosted in shared garden space for zero cost. Many participants benefit from sharing labour, resources, knowledge, and connections to the food literacy community. Our collaboration with **Yates street garden and Agness garden** has given our participants two social hubs to interact. Our **150+ participants** are looking forward to another year of inspiring those to grow food in their backyard.

## Welcome Gardens! Continued...

### Food Brings Us Together

The food we grow and prepare to share is a common thread that brings us together. The diversity

in Welcome Gardens brings great curiosity to those interested in international cuisine.

Through our Partnership with **Shelburne Community kitchen** we have been able to preserve, learn, and share cultural cooked food. Our monthly **cultural cooking workshops** are facilitated by our participants. We have also been active in sharing a Canadian food culture of picking

fruit and preserving it through the lifecycles society. Our participants have picked over 3000lbs of fruit this year. GREAT JOB! The summer harvest brought bi monthly potluck dinners hosted by our participants in their garden. We were fortunate enough to have a fantastic photoshoot with Victoria Foundation at our potluck. This made a full page in **the 2018 vital signs report**.



### Federal Recognition!

A surprising phone call was received on a Friday that would bring great excitement and joy to the Welcome Gardens program. The honorable Ms. Filomena Tassi Federal Minister of seniors would like to come and learn more about VIRCS Welcome Gardens. It was quite hard to believe that out of the thousands that applied for the New Horizons Seniors grant (NHSP) that we were chosen as one of the six programs for the Minister to visit on the island. For the past 3 years we have received The NHSP grant for welcome gardens. The minister came and our participants showed up for the special promotional TV recorded event. We were the only program that made the news and Ms Tassi's twitter on the island.

### WELCOME GARDENS GROW MORE THAN FOOD – Vital Signs Report 2018

Newcomers may face barriers related to food security, such as limited access to space to grow nutritious food and lack of access to culturally sensitive food production resources.

Through the Welcome Gardens project, the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society is removing barriers for newcomers regarding access to nutritious food.

### 2019 GOALS

- Recruit 30 new participants.
- Increase youth participation by 30%
- Create 43 new shared garden spaces.
- Increased Volunteer capacity to 45 volunteers.
- Host 45 agriculture/culinary workshops /year.
- Raise \$119,737 for 2019 Welcome Gardens.
- Fundraise through social enterprises 25% of budget.

### 2018 Achievements

- 130 to 150 participants from 16 countries.
- Dominant senior participation of 70%
- Average workshop attendance 10 to 12
- 35 agriculture and cultural cooking workshops per year.
- 61 gardens provided resources per year.
- 15 to 35 Multi organization collaborative volunteers.

## Settlement Program, Yazan Khalaileh, Settlement Director

VIRCS's Settlement team continued the delivery of the federally funded Vulnerable Immigrant Populations Program, using "Wraparound" methodology that has originally been developed by the University of British Columbia. Following this service approach has resulted in the best settlement outcomes for newcomers facing multiple barriers to integration in a place that they now call home. VIRCS's Settlement team continued to surpass targets established by the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

VIRCS remains to be the only settlement agency that utilizes wraparound approach, which is an empirically supported, client-centered, strengths-based planning approach that provides individualized interventions using an array of formal services and natural supports. By putting our clients in the center, we ensure that our service delivery is tailored to the specific needs of the individual, and that our clients are surrounded by the best support network that would empower them to overcome barriers. But most importantly, we provide services in a way that preserves our clients' agency and focuses on empowering the individual. By doing so, we aim at enabling our clients to become active members in the society and to contribute to the well-being of all our communities.

Our settlement service is composed of individual needs assessment and counselling sessions, group information sessions, and events organized with the aim of strengthening community connections and the sense of belonging. Through culturally sensitive approach, our team has been successful again in providing an excellent service.

All of this was possible because of our dedicated staff, and the invaluable support of our volunteers, practicum students and community partners. The settlement team is consisted of Haixia Liu, our intake coordinator who is the first staff member that our clients encounter when seeking our service, and whose wisdom is often indispensable; Alfred Okot Ochen, our troubleshooter when we face difficulties; Samira Wanas, the warmhearted case manager who goes out of her way to help out any one need; Asuka Hirai, our point of reference with family-related settlement issues; and Bushra Al-Qudayri, our newest settlement team member, but who quickly became one of the pillars of our settlement team.

This year, the team provided services to almost 400 people and delivered more than 140 group activities that touched every aspect of the settlement process, and were directed towards all age groups, in several languages, and with sensitivity to all cultures.

Finally, VIRCS is proud to announce that it has been awarded a new contract to deliver BC Settlement and Integration Services Program that is funded by the BC Provincial Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology. VIRCS is

excited about this opportunity as it closes a gap in our service delivery model and enables us to provide more complementary services to broader categories of beneficiaries. This year, we welcomed three new colleagues who joined the program: Nasim Hamed, Program Manager; Serena Lee, employment counsellor; and Hyeyoung Jeon, our settlement worker. However, this will not be complete without mentioning our legendary Jennifer Rawlinson, who extended her support to the program by taking on the ESL teaching component.



## Enable Program, Brooke Shaughnessy

The Enable Program is celebrating another successful year of providing a multitude of programs for newcomer children and youth ages 6-25 years old. Enable consists of five main programs including our weekly drop-in Homework Club, Youth Activity Night, Arts Therapies for children, Sparks children's program, and our ever-cherished Youth Strides Summer Camp. Along with our core programs, we were pleased to offer additional projects for youth including The Onion Theater Project, The Living Library event, and our Youth Ambassador program in partnership with Equitas. All of our activities and programs are designed to address the academic, social, and emotional settlement needs of young newcomers while also providing opportunities to increase their sense of identity, belonging, and connection to community.



This year we were selected to take part in Equitas's Speaking Rights program, in which a youth ambassador and the program coordinator participated in the International Conference for Human Rights Education in Montreal along side representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Premiers from across Canada, and scholars and leaders from around the world. For the community action project component, we hosted a successful Living Library event themed around human rights issues in our community. This received very positive feedback including the following: "An incredible opportunity to connect, build bridges among different communities. Finding strength, building resilience, and empathy through storytelling."

In 2018 we were thrilled to bring back our theater program, offering youth the unique opportunity to work with professional facilitators in theater and music to create an original play. This year's The Onion Theater Project featured themes of diversity, identity, and the many layers of experience endured throughout the immigration process. It was a powerful creative outlet for participants and a valuable opportunity for them to give back to their community by spreading awareness. The final production was performed in various public venues including City Hall!

Early this summer, Nadia moved into the Women's Wellness Program while Brooke stepped into the Program Coordinator role for Enable. We recently hired Brittany Dunstan as Youth Worker, and are very happy to have her on our team! With help from Ida and Karen, we secured funding with the Children's Health Foundation to their support!



partner with UVIC and expand our Arts Therapies Program. We also received new funding from Presidents Choice in order to purchase educational materials about nutrition and for a bigger budget for healthy snacks. We continue to receive assistance from amazing volunteers, practicum students, and staff all of whose contributions we are sincerely grateful.

**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 2018, our ESL classes have steadily grown, and are comprised equally of domestic and international students. Since January 2018, we have registered 135 students.

However, as our program is a flexible, continuous enrolment program, we have averaged approximately 15-20 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 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 offering a free beginner ESL 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 2018, our classes have continued to support refugees in our communities. We have delivered English classes and daycare 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.

Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society has also financially assisted an ESL homeschool group. This group of English teachers reached out to the refugee community in Victoria to offer stay at home mothers with young children the opportunity to have a teacher come to their home to give English lessons. The group contacted VIRCS to request a donation to help them purchase books and resources for their students. We were happy to provide them with a donation from our refugee fund.

At VIRCS ESL 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 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 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.

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. Since August 2018, we have registered 68 students in our formal and informal language classes.

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, BCSIS funding, 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 2019 and hope to expand our program so that we may offer English language training to our growing and changing community.

**Entrepreneurism Project for Immigrants -**  
Amarjit Bhalla

We were delighted to offer two intakes of 24 hour instruction program delivered in eight sessions. The first session was funded through City of Victoria and the second session which was for Youth participants was funded by Coast Capital Community Fund. We provided participants with the knowledge required to start a business, individual business coaching and mentorship. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, expressing feelings of empowerment and positivity about their futures as entrepreneurs. The overall business ideas included: downtown international handicrafts store, daycares, multicultural youth education program run at rec centre, restaurant, tutoring center and world cuisine cooking classes, among others.



Although they are in the development stage these business when open will engage local communities and recreation associations as well as opening retail spaces downtown. These business owners will increase diversity and their businesses all contain a multicultural aspect. The impact extended beyond the participants. Members of the immigrant and refugee communities expressed more interest in entrepreneurship, and that seeing their peers completing our program was encouraging and motivating. We also see better connections to the Victoria business community, and greater recognition of the economic contribution by newcomers and the importance of multiculturalism. Our highlight of the youth program has been that our participant has successfully opened his business and is now in operation at a downtown site. He has expressed that the information and training that he received from the program has been instrumental in him following the steps for a successful launch.



## EPBC Program, Kamal Panesar

The Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) In 2018, EPBC program served **over 240** clients for their initial employment assessments. 150 clients received case-management employment services. EPBC team is comprised of the Program Manager: Kamal Panesar and Lu Bai, Case Manager. In this program, 72% of the clients were identified as tier three clients with lack of labour market information and looking for their first Canadian job. More than 80% clients found meaningful employment. According to WorkBC contract mandate, we had to refer clients to other employment service centers 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, First Aid, WHMIS, and CPR. Financial support is provided to the clients for job search with bus tickets, essential work clothing and work supplies.



In 2018 clients attended VIRCS “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. We offer volunteer service for general clients who are in need of resume writing, but not eligible for our employment programs. Clients are served with their resume needs. This initiative has been a great service to fill up the gap. Up to this point, there have been many clients benefiting from this service. I would like to thank 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.

The P2PT program was launched in April 2017 to assist youth overcome barriers to employment in Canada. This program consists of eight weeks of a classroom learning with community fieldtrips and volunteer work experiences which is followed by 12- 20 weeks of supported employment.

Our small but mighty team consists of our Intake Coordinator, Shazia Suleman Rashid (formerly a Settlement Worker with VIRCS), two part-time employment coordinators, Alix Hotsenpiller and Samira Wanas and part-time program manager, L-J Coté. Jennifer Rawlinson, an ESL trainer at VIRCS was our lead instructor prior to moving to full time ESL role with another program at VIRCS. We welcomed Emma Eisner to our team in September of this year as our full-time instructor. Emma has brought a wealth of teaching experience to our team as and her own perspective as a newcomer to Canada.

### Some statistics

To date, 36 youth have completed the program and 10 are currently in the classroom component. Of the 36 graduates, 29 (just over 80%) have secured permanent work and 4 (11%) have returned to school to pursue their dream careers; 1 is completing fashion design in Vancouver, 1 is engaged in a career in Trades, 1 is attending University of Ottawa pursuing a career in nursing, and 1 is at the University of Toronto taking his Master's Degree in Economics. The remaining 3 (0.08%) are not currently working on a regular basis. We are exceeding expectations and couldn't be prouder of our youth!

Currently we are on track and the work experience interviews with employers have actually started with the goal to have all 10 engaged in their work experience within 2 weeks of completing the classroom component.

### A few Success Stories

One youth came to us with a law degree and wanted a career in which she could advocate for the vulnerable. With the assistance of this program she secured permanent full-time employment with the Vancouver Island Human Rights Coalition as a Client Advocate. In her role, she has returned to VIRCS as a guest speaker delivering workshops on Human Rights for our clients at VIRCS as well as our current P2PT cohort.

Another P2PT graduate desired work in the non-profit sector. When VIRCS introduced a new program, she requested to be considered for one of the positions. She completed the full interview process and is now working as full time Employment Coordinator in the BC Settlement Integration Services program assisting non-PR newcomers settle in Victoria and obtain their PR. Sometimes the path to the desired career is not always linear and requires some dental technician.



**Creative journeys.** With one participant whose goal is a career with in government office supporting international relations, designing a creative pathway was required. While we were unable to obtain a work experience directly with the government, she joined the staff of a temporary placement agency that works almost exclusively with government offices. Since completing a month-long training program, she has been steadily working within a government position. This experience is providing her with a strong competitive advantage when the opportunity arises. As a dentist in his Country of origin, one participant was working at a moving company and knew he wanted to obtain entry back into the dental field. He is now working as a Dental Technician

## Immigrant Women Projects, Megan Bahremandjooyas

The Immigrant Women Project is premised on the principle that when life outcomes for women and mothers improves, whole community outcomes also improve as the key stakeholder in families are further empowered and equipped with useful knowledge, supports and education. The program offers educational activities that inform newcomer women on health, safety and general wellbeing. Within the past 2 years, the specific areas of focus have been on breast cancer awareness, domestic abuse and wellness. Program activities are delivered through interactive group workshops, translation services, participant feedback, volunteer engagement and presentations provided by skilled facilitators and guest speakers.

In July 2016, VIRCS received funding to launch an innovative Breast Cancer Awareness & Prevention project to engage immigrant men and women. This was a new addition to the ongoing and successful Healthy Women, Healthy Community Program established through the Settlement Department at VIRCS. The focus of the 2 year project was to improve education about breast cancer within the multi-ethnic communities of Greater Victoria. It identified gaps in community resources, and provided awareness education to women and men, maintaining consideration of cultural sensitivity issues. This project concluded on June 29th 2018. Overall, participants consistently found the family health talk workshops to be high quality, valuable, and relevant to their needs. The breast cancer awareness project for newcomers has enabled 40 immigrant women, men and their families to receive information and tools to improve their awareness and importance of health, and wellbeing to make their settlement into Canada more optimistic. VIRCS is proud of the opportunity to deliver such a meaningful program that has a positive impact on our clients, volunteers and staff.

Our ongoing program is called Allies in Action Project (AAP), which is a community education initiative. It provides information and awareness about domestic/family violence to newcomer men, women and youth. The project will also establish relationships with faith organizations and ethno-cultural associations, which are not traditionally included in domestic/family abuse dialogue. Overall, the project's aim is to help break the cycle of abuse by building capacity and knowledge through community education within Greater Victoria. This project will serve newcomer youth, women, and men from urban communities, ethno-cultural or visible minority groups, official language minority groups, and persons undergoing separation or divorce, victims of crime, communities at large.

The immigrant women programs are supported by a Project Coordinator, and an Assistant Coordinator, settlement workers, contracted facilitators and a broad base of volunteer support who bring their passion,



expertise and experiences to help program participants feel more welcomed and empowered in their settlement journey in Canada. This year, we paid farewell to Keri Greenidge, who started this program and made it an integral part of what we do. We welcomed Megan Bahremandjooyas Program Coordinator and also Nadia Sangster who is working as researcher, developing new concepts and methodologies to help newcomer women develop their lives better in Victoria.

## Organizing Against Racism and Hate, Alix Hotsenpiller

Organizing Against Racism and Hate (OARH) is a network of Committees that exist in rural and now urban regions across British Columbia. OARH Committee's are funded through the BC Government's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Multiculturalism Branch, and are composed of community organizations and public institutions acting in coordination to respond to and counter racism and hate activity in BC. The network is comprised of leaders in anti-racism, human rights and multiculturalism work, province-wide.

In March, 2018 the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) was funded by the province to provide be the lead agency for our regional OARH, providing administrative and coordination support to the committee's work. Alix Hotsenpiller (previous refugee response coordinator, and P2PR staff), and Jane Hurtig, (civic processes, consultancy, intercultural facilitation) will co-coordinate this project in the next year. In meetings hosted by the GVPL, the OARH has been successfully building representation from the school district, settlement sector, police, local government, public library, Indigenous organizations, multicultural associations, faith groups and social agencies. In the process of formalizing our Terms of Reference, our OARH will focus on activities related to Response, Awareness and Prevention.

The provincial OARH program works with the BC RCMP Hate Crimes Lead Investigator, Cst. Gareth Blount.

**Context:** Victoria has recently been listed by local media as ranking among the top 10 Canadian cities with the highest level of hate crimes. A 2017 Vancity poll shows that in BC 82% of respondents from visible minority groups have experienced some form of discrimination or racism. In Victoria, Indigenous peoples, members of religious communities, homeless individuals, members of the LGBT community and other minority groups all report being targeted.

### Launching OARH - Media Roundtable

Through the coordination initiative and effort of **Jane Hurtig**, we are organizing a unique Media Roundtable Event on Racism, Hate and Discrimination, facilitated by BC Newspaper Award Winning Journalist Jody Paterson. Guest community presenters include Ismail Mohamed Nur, | Imam of Masjid al-Iman Mosque, and Chief Ron Sam, or designate, Songhees First Nation. Local media attending will include print, radio and television (Times Colonist, CBC, Chek, as well as Ethno-Cultural media). The closed breakfast event will take place **on Wednesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018**. This event will serve to launch OARH, initiate relationships between the communities and media, and media and ethno-cultural media, and create an opportunity for journalists and editors to have a discussion about addressing racism, hate and discrimination in the current context, develop questions, and make requests which will be taken forward to diverse stakeholders and communities represented in OARH.

Within the next 6 months, we look forward to **presenting the Board and community with the Draft Community Response Protocol.**



# VIRCS's 2017 Financial Report

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

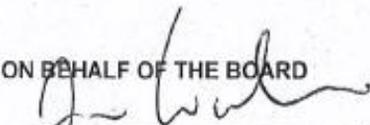
Statement of Financial Position

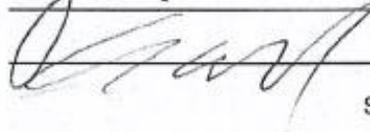
December 31, 2017

*(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)*

	2017	2016
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 266,965	\$ 233,280
Accounts receivable	98,539	135,248
Prepaid expenses	4,758	4,758
GST receivable	1,925	900
	372,187	374,186
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT <i>(Note 3)</i>	2,529	7,061
LONG TERM INVESTMENTS	157,921	-
	\$ 532,637	\$ 381,247
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 41,792	\$ 12,004
Employee deductions payable	14,479	20,193
Dawod Family Trust Fund	20,000	20,000
	76,271	52,197
DEFERRED REVENUE <i>(Note 4)</i>	313,691	79,977
DEFERRED CAPITAL ASSET CONTRIBUTIONS <i>(Note 5)</i>	625	893
	390,587	133,067
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
General fund	1,892	6,157
Restricted fund	140,158	242,023
	142,050	248,180
	\$ 532,637	\$ 381,247

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

See notes to financial statements

**LEE & COMPANY**  
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Statement of Revenues and Expenditures**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2017**  
*(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)*

	2017	2016
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Operating Grants <i>(Note 6)</i>	\$ 1,019,729	\$ 910,489
Gaming	82,341	83,480
Donations	81,749	127,244
Training	47,616	57,705
Social Events	0,218	100,200
Interest Income	151	47
Amortization of deferred capital asset contributions <i>(Note 5)</i>	268	383
	<u>1,240,072</u>	<u>1,279,638</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Amortization	4,532	4,997
Building Occupancy	104,530	105,109
Direct Program Costs	121,262	101,929
Office and Supplies	43,584	47,836
Professional Fees	6,288	4,725
Recognition, Training and Recruiting	1,399	2,950
Travel and Transportation	2,751	11,589
Wages and Contracted Services	1,061,856	915,093
	<u>1,346,202</u>	<u>1,194,228</u>
<b>EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ (106,130)</b>	<b>\$ 85,410</b>

See notes to financial statements

**LEE & COMPANY**  
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS