

Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society



2008 VIRC S' STAFF



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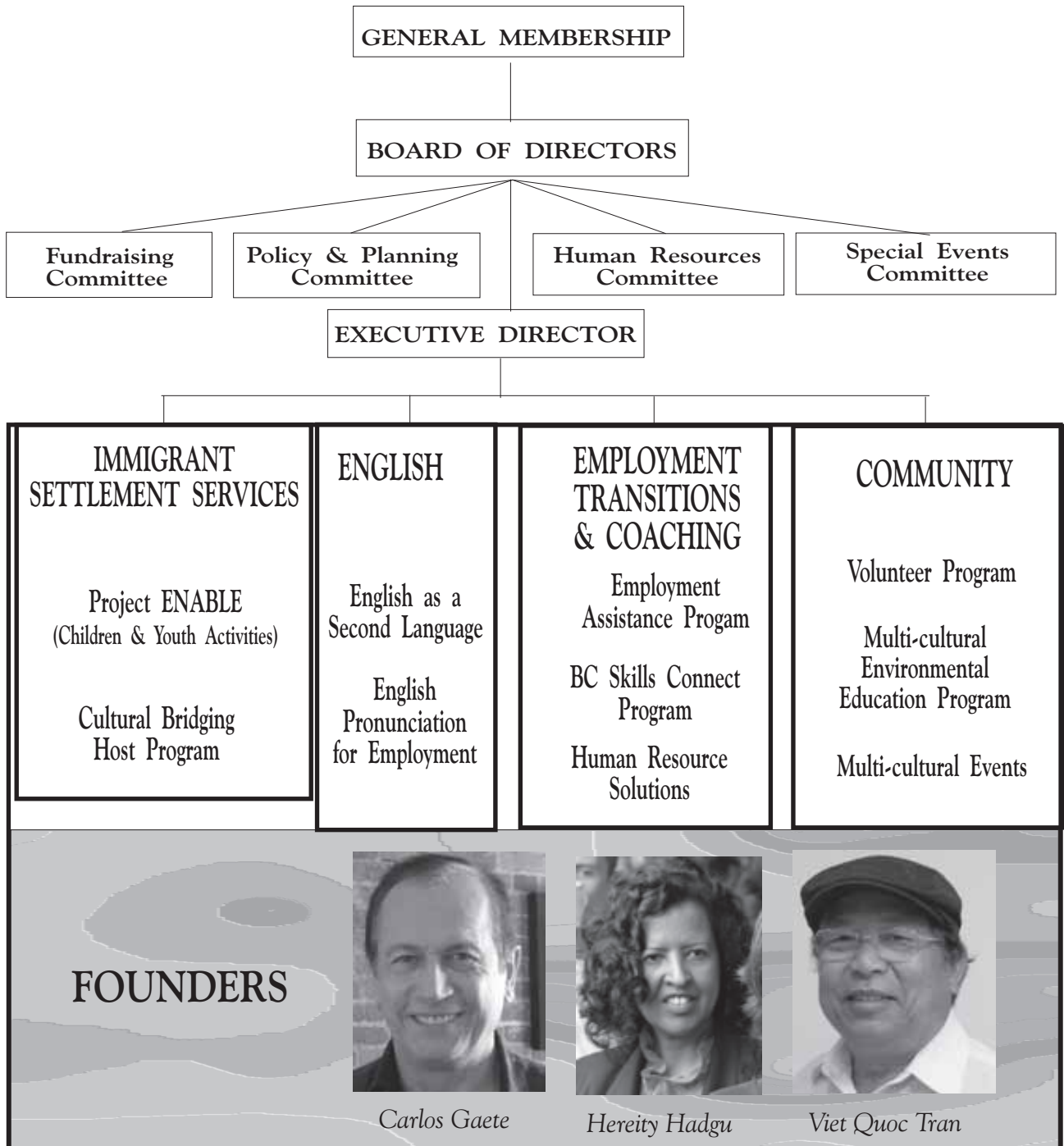
Special Thanks

Special Thanks	
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ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

“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.”





Michael Deakin-Macey - President
Malcolm Zoraitk - Vice President
Ben Andersen - Treasurer
John B. Shields - Secretary

2008 VIRCS Board of Directors

Ron Millard
Menaka Giri
Helen Lennie
Gwicham Sufi
Chris Mutadi (Past President)

2008 VIRCS Staff

Abdulsalam, Hammuda
Bhalla, Amarjit
Cua, Rosalyn
Chettleburgh, Sarah
Du Vent, Anna
Gaete, Carlos
Geater, Christopher
Grewal, Sukhmeet
Hadgu, Hereity
Khan, Ayesha

Kallos, Sarah-Joy
Leekha, Gagan
Liu, Haixia
Li, Junnian
Leaman, Roy
Mergaert, Meshan
Naraghi, Negin
O'Carroll, Christianne
Qureshi, Naveed
Panesar, Kamal
Robinson, Airlie
Saavedra, Robertina
Shi, Zihan
Shum, Annie
Shtull, Aviva
Tran, Viet
Zaharchuk, Oksana
Zhong, Song Yun
Zhou, Kefen
Yeend, Linda



President's Report



Michael Deakin-Macey



Fellow members of the Society:

Our purpose at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society is to make it easier for newcomers to become part of Canadian society. VIRCS welcomes newcomers and refers them to our Settlement, Employment, ESL, Host or any other program they might need. All of these together help to prepare immigrants for the Canadian labour market and settle in their new country. VIRCS helps them through their journey through successful job placements, their children finding the right school and becoming productive members of the community.

It has been a very busy year. The first order of business was that VIRCS had to move to a new home, our splendid new office space on Bay Street. It was nip and tuck on moving day, as the trades people had to work around the movers, and the staff had to work around all of them! My heartfelt congratulations to all the staff who worked so hard to make the move a successful one. Thank you for your work ethic and professionalism.

The organization also had to come to terms with all of us being under one roof, never a simple transition. It is said that next to public speaking, moving is the most stressful thing that we do,



which of course all of our clients are only too familiar with! We also were successful in getting our Employment Assistant Service funding signed to a three-year contract. We were honoured with the presence of The Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, who used the opportunity to announce the contract. At this time, the Minister exclaimed about the excellent work VIRCS has done over for the last 20 years. "Our government is proud to support community organizations that help unemployed people find and keep quality jobs," said Minister Solberg. "Not only will this funding help almost 2,000 new Canadians in the Victoria area who need employment and career help, but it will also help local employers recruit and keep staff for the long term."

I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to the many volunteers who work countless hours to help us be the organization we are, from language training to child minding, we could not do what we do without your tireless support. I also would like to thank the support of the board, the staff, the executive director, the members, the sponsors and donors who have given us invaluable support through the year. Thank you to you all.

VIRCS is a very unique organization. It is the people that make it what it is -- all of the staff with their unique skills and strengths that together make us one of the premier immigration organizations in the province. It has been a privilege to work with all of you over the past year, and I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM.



Executive Director's Report



Carlos Gaete



In 2008, we have seen an increasing number of newcomers coming to Greater Victoria with great hope to start a better life and a promising future for themselves and their children. VIRCS welcomes these newcomers with its unique staff whom may have experienced the same period of adjustment into Canadian society as their clients. They provide a healthy and friendly environment for these clients to ensure a successful integration into our community.

This past year was successful and at the same time difficult for VIRCS. Positive because we saw emerging new programs like the **Environmental Education Program** which provides immigrants with important information and education on the environment while they are adjusting. The environmental community is very excited about this new great step to bring this important sector of our society into the environmental movement. The **Cultural Bridging Host Project** offers newcomers the opportunity to be matched up with a buddy and will link them with the community. This program started in November 2008 and has already helped 15 clients by year end.

Along with these two new programs, we continue to offer services such as the **Employment Transitions and Coaching Program** that helped over 600 newcomers find a job or the right training to get them into the labour force. The skilful and professional case managers surpassed their quota for this year



and continued the tradition of warm and professional services that have been offered for the past 18 years. This has been another great year for this program and its clients.

The **Skills Connect Program** was also very successful this year in helping professional immigrants find work in their own field. By offering assistance with assessment, training and workplace practice, this program gets better every year and I will not be surprised if we have expand it next year. The demand is growing due to the excellent services VIRCS is providing in this area. 66 clients received valuable services from this program.

The **Human Resource Solutions Project** ended the second successful year linking employers with immigrant employees. Eventually, it will seek to help employers build up the necessary skills to hire and retain a productive multicultural workforce. Both Phase I and Phase II were conducted to help employers extensively in their working relationship with their multicultural employees. It is currently in Phase III of the project which focuses on applying this research in practical ways to assist employers successfully hire and retain immigrant employees.

The **Settlement Program** helped over 1,800 newcomers during the difficult process of adjusting in the community with valuable information on health, housing, legal issues, seniors information and linking them with mainstream organizations. It was a difficult year for this program. After twenty years providing these important services, the Province cut our funding. Regardless, we kept this program going because our clients needed this service.

The **Enable Program** assists young immigrants and their families to settle in the community, exploring and overcoming the challenges that young immigrants encounter while they are adjusting in the new environment. There is a great professional support for these young minds. More than three hundred clients were helped by this program in 2008.

The **ESL program** helps immigrants, refugees and international students to learn English. VIRCS' ESL teacher for the last 15 years, Christianne, has made this class very popular and well-attended. In her unique ESL class, international students and refugees have the opportunity to learn not only English but also from each other's positive life experiences. Two hundred students went through the ESL program this year. English Intonation Workshops assisted clients of the ETCP program to learn to speak clearly and increase their employability in a very competitive market environment. The pronunciation workshop had a successful year at giving clients the skills and tools they need to be successful in the Canadian workplace. Hundreds of professionals attended these workshops.

The **Volunteer Program** supports all the programs and projects with the volunteers required by them. These volunteers play a very important role in the development and the execution of every project VIRCS has. Without the help of these volunteers it would be very difficult to run our programs. Thanks to the volunteer team and VIRCS staff who worked in the production of the Fundraising Dinner at the McMorran's Beach House and in the Open



House - they did a wonderful job. In 2008 our Volunteer team grew by over 300 new members, while many of our long-time volunteers continued their tradition of excellence and made many new friends.

The **difficulties**: After twenty years of being at 535 Yates Street, we had to move VIRCS offices to another location. We ensured that the move would not interrupt the services provided to an average of 3,000 clients every year. Our budget was small but we wanted to stay downtown for ease and accessibility for clients. We found an excellent place. However, it didn't have enough offices, so we decided to build them. In three short weeks, 6,000 square-foot offices were built accordingly to VIRCS needs. Now the place looks just wonderful. It is important to mention that everybody pulled together to achieve this enormous task. I would like to thank everyone who helped us: HRSDC, the Victoria Foundation, Island Floor Centre, Roemer Interior Design, VIRCS volunteers, the staff (who did a wonderful job taking care of the moving) and the Board of Directors and its president, Michael Deakin-Macey (who made sure that the renovations were finished on time). Special thanks to the "Q" and The Zone for the great promotion they did on our new place. Finally I would like to thank our funders: the federal, provincial and municipal governments as well as all the funders listed on the last page of this report for their financial support on our programs. To the hundreds of volunteers, to the membership, the business community and to the friends of the Centre, we thank you!

I hope that by reading this report, the Victoria community will catch a glimpse of the diverse strengths and talent of our staff, board of directors and volunteers and feel proud of their accomplishments just as we all at VIRCS are.





Immigrant Settlement Services



Meshan Merzaert



Over 1800 immigrants and refugees received services through the Settlement program in 2008. They receive information, orientation, adjustment support, referrals and links to community resources. Immigrants that have been living in Victoria area for many years also benefit as well from these services.

The Settlement Program and staff proved their resiliency over the past year. In the past 18 years, close to 90% of Settlement operating funds had been funded from the BC Ministry of Attorney General. Unfortunately, in April we were notified that we were not successful with our application for continuous funding. It has become a challenge for the program to continue providing regular settlement services for its clients. An immigrant organization without a settlement program is like a body without a heart.

We facilitated over 100 client surveys identifying needs of clients. Through this feedback we were able to plan how to provide services in a more efficient and effective way. Settlement workers focussed on providing services and information in group settings. By restructuring our services we secured different funding for some vital aspects of the program.

In early 2008 we offered a woman's support group using theatre as a medium. The group had a huge impact on the women and their families.



Funding was secured to offer an additional support group in the fall.

We relied on the legal advice of Roger Batchelor Law Office and Andrew Rafuse. The weekly immigration law clinic helped over 140 individuals with legal advice related to immigration. Settlement workers and volunteers provided translation and interpretation for 177 people and we met the needs of new Canadians by introducing a monthly Citizenship Class. Staff received training on temporary foreign workers rights through an AMSSA funded project. Workshops were delivered in partnership with the Inter Cultural Association of Greater Victoria.

Additionally VanCity supported a Financial Well Being project aimed at increasing financial stability and capacity of newcomers. The project is a series of 10 seminars that will run in 2009 focused on topics such as banking basics, budgeting, and building credit.

We rely on the support of amazing volunteers that provide one-on-one service to clients, support for staff, translations and many more. Thank you as well to practicum students from the University of Victoria's Women's Studies program, Intercultural Education program, Social Work program, as well as an intern from France. A huge applause goes to the settlement staff who give so much support to their clients and the newcomer community.

This program received funding by the Settlement and Multiculturalism Division of British Columbia Settlement Program (BCSAP), Ministry of Attorney General, Vancity, BC Gaming Policy Enforcement Branch, and AMSSA.



English as a Second Language



Christianne O'Carroll



The ESL program at VIRCS aims to celebrate multicultural diversity by providing a warm, welcoming environment that promotes acceptance and inclusion. We offer English language classes at beginner and intermediate levels for immigrants, Canadian citizens and international visitors. Students are ethnically and culturally diverse and come from a wide range of countries. In 2008, we had students from Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, and even a few French speakers from Quebec.

We experienced a dramatic increase in enrolment in 2008. For the first time in years, we had to increase class size and run waiting lists for both classes. Class sizes regularly reached 16 students or more, with a total of 200 students in 2008.

Two new developments in 2008 were: extra half-hour pronunciation drills in the first quarter of the year, as well as a three-month pen-pal arrangement with Brentwood Middle School. Thirteen-year-old students from that school exchanged letters with the students of VIRCS' intermediate class. The objective of the program was to allow young Canadian students to become acquainted with newcomers to Canada, and for the two groups to learn about each other's traditions and cultures.

The sharing of food is a time-honoured way of making new friends and learning about other cultures. In 2008, we had 17 in-class potluck parties, as well as several at different locations, including Beacon Hill Park and Willows Beach.

The VIRCS ESL Program thanks the Central Baptist Church for providing us with a large, beautiful room in which to hold our annual ESL Christmas party.

Workshops and field trips expose our students to community resources and allow them to learn important skills for daily life. Workshops in 2008 included Choking, Diabetes, the parks of the CRD, Renting in Victoria, How to Grow A Herb/Vegetable Garden, Personal Safety, and Fire Safety. We went on field trips to The Greater Victoria Public Library, Goldstream Park for the salmon run, Beaver Lake for educational canoeing sessions put on by the Capital Regional District, Government House for a tour of the interior, and also to the Parliament buildings. We joined the annual Gallery Walk tour of the art galleries of downtown Victoria, too.

Tests are a big part of the average week for our students because they make it possible for us to track progress in measurable ways. In 2008, 46 tests were written in the intermediate class, and 39 tests were written in the beginner class.

The ESL program gratefully acknowledges the help it receives from a large team of volunteers. We experienced a stunning increase in our number of volunteers, going from 45 in 2007 to over 100 in 2008.

In closing, we would like to express our gratitude to the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch for the funding we received through their Direct Access Program Grant. It assists us immeasurably in the running of the ESL Program.



Employment Programs



Viet Q. Tran



The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) has two employment programs: Employment Transition and Coaching (19 years old) and Skills Connect for Professionals (three years old). Both programs provide a wide range of employment assistance services to assist immigrant job seekers in obtaining professional employment in their former field as well as their survival jobs.

The majority of job seekers were from three major countries: China, India, and Philippines. Many other clients came from the Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Europe, Middle East, and the United States. Immigrant clients often have high education levels and a wide range of professional backgrounds including engineers (mechanical, electronic, software), managers (retail, IT systems), medical field specialists (veterinarian, medical laboratory technologist, and pharmacist), chefs, textile and clothing designers, teachers, accountants, and economists.

In 2008, for the first time in its history, VIRCS signed a three-year agreement with the Federal Government of Canada to continue providing the Employment Transitions Coaching Program (ETCP) until March 31, 2011. This year the ETCP provided counselling services and other employment assistance to 669 job seekers in their search for employment. The program helped 403 people find jobs and four people become self-employed. The Skills Connect for



Professionals provided its customized employment services to help 50 Internationally Trained Professionals successfully find suitable employment in their field. 46 clients were able to access education or join professional associations; 19 worked with mentors or conducted informational interviews; and nine clients received assistance with credential evaluations.

Labour shortages had changed the hiring practices of local employers. Many local employers - who called the program for referral of job applicants - preferred to see the applicants in person immediately without asking for resumes. Consequently, most immigrant job seekers who were job-ready could find employment.

Interestingly, job hunters became more selective and more demanding in their employment search, because they had more negotiation power in this local market where the demand exceeded the supply. The ETCP also witnessed a new generation of clients with multiple barriers who needed a combination of different services and support.

A total of 308 clients participated in 44 Job Search workshops to gain various job search skills such as resume/cover letter preparation, interview, networking, and many other job hunting techniques. 49 Practical Job Search and Employment workshops were attended by 125 clients. The small-sized workshop format provided a safe, friendly environment and better chance to raise questions and engage in discussions.

The English Pronunciation for Job Search Workshops continue to be popular in that the accent reduction helps the participants regain their confidence with better communication in English. The ETCP conducted four series with a total of 120 two-hour workshops and 96 participants. Each participant attended a series of 30 workshops in a three-month period.

To help immigrant job seekers acquire basic skills required by local employers, VIRCS recruited volunteers to organize a total of 38 computer workshops for 148 participants. We did it to meet the need of our clients even without receiving any extra funding for the new services.

To address the issue that immigrants generally lack a local network, the program organized six Employer Forums with 14 local employers from different sectors to meet with 117 job seekers. Employers provided the participants with insider's information about their businesses and their

hiring process. The Employer Forum has become very popular as many participants are able to find employment through the networking event.

And last but not least, 1,269 job seekers paid 8,895 visits to the Employment Resource Centre. Those self-served job seekers had access to ten computers with internet connection and received help from the Employment Resource Advisor in their search for employment and online labour market information. 7,608 clients received the program's Front End services on different issues.

We would like to acknowledge the Federal Government of Canada and the BC Provincial Government for their contribution of funding to VIRCS' Employment Services.





Human Resource Solutions

Viet Q. Tran



2008 was a very challenging year as the labour market had changed dramatically because of negative impacts from the global stock market meltdown in the last quarter of the year. Labour and skills shortages were the sizzling issue for local employers as the Capital Regional District had been leading or near the top of Canadian cities with its low unemployment rates for many months (3% in June and 3.2% in July, 08). The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society has undertaken the three-phase Human Resource Solutions (HRS) to study possible impacts of a multicultural workforce and potential solutions in order to help local employers successfully employ and retain immigrant workers.

The first phase of the HRS was completed on March 7th, 2008. During the nine-month period of Phase I, the HR Solutions Team completed two surveys: the immigrant survey with 106 questionnaires and the employer survey with 96 questionnaires. Primary results of the first phase of the project indicated that labour and skills shortages were the issue that local employers - particularly big businesses - were taking seriously. However, while they recognized the negative impact of labour shortages on their business, many of them did not have a human resource plan and/or a specific strategy targeting 'alternative'

labour sources – the under-represented groups. Others only had short-term, 'quick-fix' human resource solutions. In addition, local small businesses did not have HR skills, time, and resources to deal with this complex HR issue. In general, local employers lacked the experience in cultural diversity and awareness of potential workplace conflicts. The employer survey suggested that employers were very supportive of hiring immigrants. Nevertheless, some of them were reluctant to hire immigrants for a position other than an entry-level job. On the other hand, immigrants increasingly expected to obtain a position in their former professional field. They expected local employers to recognize their overseas skills, experience, and credentials.

Phase II of the Human Resource Solutions from March 10, 2008 to December 12, 2008 consisted of two separate components: 1/ the rack card pilot providing human resource tips about hiring and retaining multicultural workers for 953 local employers and 2/ fifty semi-structured interviews combining with two focus groups (one for 36 local employers and the other for 37 immigrants) in the Capital Regional District (for further information, please refer to www.vircs.bc.ca for the final reports for the first two phases and the rack card final report). VIRCS will complete Phase III of the project in 2009.



The HR team would like to acknowledge the Federal Government of Canada and the BC Government for its funding through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement. We appreciate the participation of all employers and community partners. And last but not least, the HR team extends its thanks to all volunteers and members of the Employer Advisory Committee, the Immigrant Advisory Committee, and Multicultural Advisory Committee.



ENABLE Program



Nejin Naraghi



The Enable Program for Children and Youth offers multiple services to an average of 300 immigrant children, youth and families annually. Our goal is to assist and support newcomer children and youth to settle into their new community by providing programs that are designed to address their emotional, academic and social adjustment needs. Services include: Home-Work Clubs, One-on-One Tutoring Matches, Weekly Youth Activity Nights, Sparks (children's group), In-school Art Therapy groups and Youth Strides, our annual youth summer camp.

2008 has been a year filled with new faces, projects and successful initiatives. With an expanding number of participating children and youth, Enable increased its activities and programs to include: a new In-School Art Therapy Group; a youth project called "A Sense of Place" as well as an arts based project called "PhotoVoice".

The In-School Adjustment Support Group works in collaboration with local Elementary and Middle schools to deliver a ten-week program that utilizes art-therapy as a non-language bound medium for self expression. Its success at both George Jay Elementary and Central Middle School allowed us to launch an additional group this year at Quadra Elementary.



Another exciting accomplishment was "PhotoVoice", a new arts-based project that originated from the Youth Strides summer camp. Spearheaded by a team of 7 youth leaders, Youth Strides 2008 collaborated with six community organizations to bring together 7 days of workshops, art projects, and life-skills training to a group of 17 newcomer youth from over 10 different countries. Throughout the camp, youth were given their own cameras and were asked to document their experiences of community, friendship and multiculturalism. Following camp the youth hosted over 100 people in an open community event that displayed their art work.

A recent addition to our Youth Activity Nights has been the launching of a project titled "A Sense of Place". With the incorporation of field trips, educational workshops and artistic self expression, the aim of this project is to connect youth to organizations, opportunities and information that will help foster a sense of connection and involvement to Victoria. There are currently 20 youth involved and the project has had a very successful start.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Direct Access, Coast Capital Savings Foundation, BCAMP, TLC Fund for Kids (with 100.3 the Q & the Zone) and the Rotary Club of Greater Victoria for their generous funding. We would also like to thank the many volunteers who have donated their time and energy to ensure the success of these services. On behalf of the children, youth and staff, we are grateful for your support.



Multicultural Environmental Education Program



Gagan Leekha



In January 2008, VIRCS started its Multicultural Environmental Education Program (MEEP). MEEP's mission is to bring together and support newcomers and the wider multicultural community in making sustainable choices for a healthy planet. This is the first program of its kind that has been initiated by a settlement agency in Canada. The program offers workshops, outings, multilingual educational resources and one-on-one support for individuals and families interested in taking environmental action.

This year, the program grew from a small seed of an idea to a living program. We have an advisory committee comprised of environmental, multicultural and community development consultants and we have built partnerships with local environment non-government organizations, eco-friendly businesses, funders and most importantly engaged Victoria's multicultural community in environmental education and action. Some highlights from the year include:

Research and information gathering - We conducted research through focus groups and surveys to get input on what kind of environmental programming our clients would like to see at our Centre and in the community. We explored our varying perceptions and relationships to the natural environment as well as barriers to action. Through our research we found that our clients were interested in seeing more education and engagement in the following areas: healthy homes (energy conservation, alternatives to toxins in the home, waste reduction); transportation alternatives; and access to locally grown food.

Educational workshops and outings - Workshops for our clients included: Home Energy Efficiency with City Green; Green Collar Jobs with Renewable Recruits; Office Cooling Party with Sierra Club BC. Outings included Victoria's Earth Walk which had participation from VIRCS clients, youth and staff for the first time and a Canoe trip

on Elk/Beaver Lake with ESL students and CRD Parks.

VIRCS Green Team – Our office Green Team is a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who provide leadership and support for greening efforts in the office. The Team is interested in shifting the office culture to one that is more environmentally aware and engaged. The Team surveyed staff to identify three greening priorities: Energy (lights/computers), Paper and Printing/recycling; and Green Kitchen (Mugs, plates, waste management, disposables, etc). The Team has also been educating and mentoring staff and clients so that these changes become integrated into the organizational culture of VIRCS.

Zero Waste Open House - Every year VIRCS hosts an Open House where we offer office tours, presentations and ethnic foods for over 200 guests. In spring of 2008, we achieved a new goal to have a Zero Waste Open House. Leading by example from event preparation to clean-up, we reduced the amount of waste produced and recycled or composted 100% of the waste we did have.

It has been an incredible year of learning and growth and we look forward to 2009 when we will focus on more workshops and a multi-lingual environmental education media ad campaign as well as sharing our experience with immigrant organizations across Canada.

We are also thankful for the generous support of our funders: Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program, Vancouver Foundation, Victoria Foundation, Catherine Donnelly Foundation and the City of Victoria.



Cultural Bridging Host Program



Aniva Sktull



The Cultural Bridging Host Program for young adults and parents had a great beginning. This is a brand new program to the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society and there has been a large interest in it from both newcomers as well as the volunteer hosts.

The objective of this program is to match immigrants and refugees with volunteer hosts on an one-on-one basis so that they can better understand Canadian social life, work life and culture; and to develop friendships with Canadians and learn to access services in the community.

Host volunteers and their communities also benefit from these friendships by learning more about immigrants and immigration as well as developing some multi-cultural relationships and friendships.

There are two different groups that are run under the Cultural Bridging Host Program. The Be-Friends Host group is for young adults between the ages of 19 and 30 and the Family Friendship Host Program is for parents of any age.

These newcomers are matched with a local host based on their gender, age, interests, hobbies, schedules, family, etc. The paired matches are expected to meet up together once a week for three months. Also everyone in the group comes together for social events and educational workshops twice per month.



The Cultural Bridging Host Program aims to help newcomers feel welcomed and embraced by the Victoria community. This project will help new immigrants and refugees adjust into our community by providing them with one-on-one support from their local peers.

This past year we have had many friendships come about thanks to this program and watched many people make connections with each other. Not only do the connections happen between the host and newcomer but also between everyone in the group. As a group we had workshops on multi-cultural communication, understanding culture shock, and Canadian society, as well as workshops and seminars on different local organizations that have free resources for parents and newcomers.

As a group we did fun social events like going salsa dancing, visiting restaurants, having parties, going ice skating, making food together and much more! As this program grows, we look forward to connecting more people in our community. The friendships continue long after every three-month group ends and this program creates a wonderful ripple effect throughout the community.

These programs are run through the Community Bridging Services that is funded by the Provincial Government – specifically the Ministry of Settlement and Multiculturalism Division and Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism. Thank you to our wonderful and dedicated volunteer hosts and to the kind and enthusiastic nature of our newcomer participants who have made this program get off to a fantastic start.



Volunteer Program



Christopher Geater

Volunteers play a vital role in all of VIRCS' programs. Volunteers contribute by becoming mentors, workshop leaders, tutors, ESL classroom helpers, translators, Income Tax Clinic helpers, receptionists, counselors, youth activity and summer camp leaders, and much more. In 2008 our Volunteer team grew by over 300 new members, while many of our long-time volunteers continued their tradition of excellence and made many new friends.

Through the many changes of 2008 VIRCS' volunteers demonstrated their caring and willingness to help in many new ways. Volunteers helped enormously with the transitions in our Settlement services, which are still changing, and in the launch of our new Be-Friends and Family Friendship Programs. These two new programs also opened up a whole new way for volunteers to help newcomers, making friends and giving one-on-one guidance to making a start in Victoria.

Volunteers also played a vital role in VIRCS' move from Yates Street to Bay Street in November. Volunteers helped with the sorting, packing, setting-up, and designing the new space so it feels like home. We were especially lucky to have the volunteer help of architect Nindi Sehmi and interior designer Julia Roemer, as well as Canada World Youth participants.



Two annual events remained highlights in the volunteer year: the Multicultural Winter Celebration and the Youth Strides Summer Camp. The Winter Celebration produced over 80 smiling faces on children and parents from around the world, especially with the dancing, face painting, and interactive performance by volunteers from Pearson College.

The Volunteer Program also expanded to include practicum students from around the world. Students from the Ukraine, France, Australia, and many parts of South America, Central America, and Asia came to VIRCS for experience in their fields, and also became part of the VIRCS family.

Lastly, I would like to send a special thank you to our funders, Provincial Employee Community Services Fund and Direct Access, for making this program possible. Thank you for your great continued support!

With such a great year behind us, 2009 is going to be even better. Thank you so much to all of our volunteers and practicum students, from all of us at VIRCS!

You make VIRCS work!

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures
Year Ended December 31, 2008
(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)

	2008	2007 <i>Revised</i>
REVENUE		
Operating Grants (Note 6)	\$ 1,232,544	\$ 1,000,952
Gaming	60,749	81,000
Donations	25,245	13,268
Social Events	-	7,564
Training	28,052	20,832
Interest Income	631	836
Amortization of deferred capital asset contributions	6,636	9,479
	<u>1,353,857</u>	<u>1,133,931</u>
EXPENSES		
Amortization	18,206	17,478
Wages and Contracted Services	988,290	840,111
Direct Program Costs	122,817	104,006
Recognition, Training and Recruiting	13,821	5,221
Building Occupancy	176,628	105,757
Office and Supplies	22,485	22,326
Professional Fees	23,266	18,864
Travel and Transportation	3,025	2,538
	<u>1,368,538</u>	<u>1,116,301</u>
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ (14,681)	\$ 17,630

See notes to financial statements

Lee & Company
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

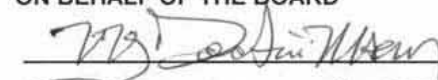

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2008

(Unaudited - See Notice To Reader)

	2008	2007
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 173,634	\$ 129,875
Accounts receivable	8,099	28,212
GST receivable	3,424	1,359
Prepaid expenses	6,648	3,044
	<u>191,805</u>	<u>162,490</u>
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT (Note 4)	<u>65,469</u>	<u>40,782</u>
	<u>\$ 257,274</u>	<u>\$ 203,272</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable	\$ 47,448	\$ 38,758
Deferred operating grants	159,736	93,107
	<u>207,184</u>	<u>131,865</u>
DEFERRED CAPITAL ASSET CONTRIBUTIONS (Note 5)	<u>15,485</u>	<u>22,121</u>
	<u>222,669</u>	<u>153,986</u>
NET ASSETS		
Invested in capital assets	49,983	18,661
Unrestricted net assets	(15,378)	30,625
	<u>34,605</u>	<u>49,286</u>
	<u>\$ 257,274</u>	<u>\$ 203,272</u>

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

 Director
 Director

See notes to financial statements

Lee & Company
 CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Special Thanks
to following funders & main donors

Federal Government

Service Canada/HRSDC
Canadian Heritage
CFB Esquimalt
Environment Canada's Eco Action Comm. Fund. Progr

B.C. Government

Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD)
Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ELMD)
Gaming Policy & Enforcement Branch
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of the Attorney General

Municipal Government

City of Victoria

Thanks

Businesses/Organizations

ASPECT
Bill Hartley Insurance
Business Bingo Esquimalt
Central Baptist Church
Dinning Hunter Lambert & Jackson
Business Bingo Esquimalt
Catherine Donnelly Foundation
Coast Capital Foundation
Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
Vancouver Foundation
Victoria Foundation
London Drugs Foundation
Positive Living Centre
Roger Batchelor Law Office & Andrew Rafuse
Rotary Club of Victoria
Shaw TV
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St. Andrew's Refugee Association
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Volunteer Victoria
Work Source Wage Subsidy
Zoraik Law Offices Barristers & Solicitors
100.3 The "Q" & The Zone

Businesses/Organizations

Akal Airporter
B.C. Society
Boys & Girls Club
BC Ferries
BC Public Service Agency
Bee Clean
Benson Industries
Best Western Carlton Plaza
Catholic Foundation of Vancouver Island
CellFor
Compass
Cox Taylor Law Firm
DFH the Real Leader
Dood Development
Fast Signs
HBC (Hudson's Bay Company
Island Motor Sports
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Legal Services Society
Provincial Capital Commission
St. John's Ambulance
Marquise
McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Limited
R. A. Malatest & Associates Ltd
7-Eleven Inc.
Subway
Standard Furniture
The Fairmont Empress
The Mothering Touch Center
TNT/Tamara Thorpe
Walmart

Media

A-Channel Victoria/Vancouver
CBC Victoria
CFUV Q FM 101.9 (Postales Musicales)
CH TV
Focus
Kids in Victoria
Times Colonist
Vancouver Island News Group

Schools

Camosun College
Central Junior High School
George Jay Elementary School
School District #61
Stewart College of Languages
University of Victoria
Victoria High School

Churches

Church of St. John the Divine
First Metropolitan United Church
Holy Cross Catholic Church
James Bay United Church
Sacred Heart Church
St. George Church
St. Aidan Anglican Church
St. Aidan's United Church
St. Andrew Church
St. John's Anglican Church

Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society



Fax: (250) 361-1914
Email: mail@vircs.bc.ca
Website: www.vircs.bc.ca

Phone: (250) 361-9433

ENABLE:	Ext. 203
Employment:	Ext. 206
English as a Second Language:	Ext. 210
Volunteer:	Ext. 212
Administration:	Ext. 214
Executive Director:	Ext. 215
Environment:	Ext. 217
Settlement:	Ext. 241
Cultural Bridging/Host:	Ext. 242

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2008 VIRCS' STAFF

