

## Beginnings

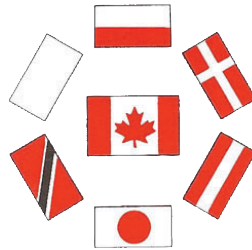
An Interview with Lillian Jones

**"What are we going to do?** Where are we heading? What is it so different from our country? Why don't I understand the English here?" These are always the questions in our newcomers' mind.

In the summer of 1976, a handful of Albertans gathered together to discuss the establishment of an agency that could provide services to immigrants. Realizing that resources for immigrants to Calgary were minimal and sorely inadequate, these Albertans were also cognizant that both immigrants and the host community were struggling with issues related to cultural differences, language, employment and community cohesion. After a series of planning and communication meetings, a committee was established with the intention of creating an agency that could provide appropriate services for immigrants.

Lillian Jones was one of these original committee members. Invited by John Fisher, the then Director of Community Services at Mount Royal College, Lillian later became the first Executive Director of the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society (CIAS). In an interview early this year, Lillian spoke candidly to us about the beginning of CIAS 30 years ago.

According to Lillian, the present economic and social situation in Calgary is similar to the situation in Calgary during the early years of CIAS. In the 1970s,



**Cias first logo was designed by Mount Royal College graphic arts department**

there was a shortage of adequate and affordable housing for immigrants and settlement difficulties such as access to medical and social services were complicated by low English language skills. Furthermore, the inability of immigrants to access services, employment, and housing was creating isolation and complicating the integration process into the community.

To respond to these issues, CIAS employed two social workers bilingual in English and Cantonese to work as counselors. The first counselor worked with immigrants on settlement issues primarily relating to the translation and interpretation of medical issues. The second assisted immigrants to find adequate and affordable housing. In addition, the agency also began working in the areas of immigrant education, employment, and health.

According to Lillian, one of the biggest challenges for any charitable organization is finding financial support for the agency. Approaching potential funders and sponsors, Lillian and other committee members found they needed to utilize every opportunity to submit proposals, network and negotiate for funds. Together with the committee, Lillian perse-

vered understanding that, "once you've got the first funder, you knew other people would show interest." Funding from the Provincial government, the Federal government, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) and other partners began to support the agency. Since that time, CIAS has gained a number of generous, responsive funders and the programming at CIAS has earned an impressive reputation for providing services that are effective at meeting the needs of immigrants.

Since the founding of CIAS 30 years ago, Lillian said she has observed an increased acceptance of immigrants in the Calgary community. She also emphasized that in order to continue to preserve our heritage while increasing the cohesion of our society, we must work collectively as a community and with the government by continuing multi-dimensional education on immigrant issues.

By virtue of the founding members' courage, vision and passion, the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society is smoothly moving beyond its 30th anniversary. The agency's new identity as Immigrant Services Calgary together with a new logo highlight the agency's move into a new chapter of history responding to and meeting the needs of all newcomers and helping them becoming a part of the community.

---Carmen Yu Oct 22 2007



## Tyler Charkie, Chair of the Board Immigrant Services Calgary



### Message from the Chair of the Board

Today, Immigrant Services Calgary is a thriving organization with close to 100 staff including settlement and language assessment counsellors able to help clients in more than 25 languages. Last year we served 16,500 immigrants who started a new life here in Calgary. Our funding now comes from a variety of sources including the federal, provincial and municipal

governments as well as United Way, foundations and private donors. Looking back to our humble beginnings as mentioned in the interview with one of our founding members, Lillian Jones, we certainly have made enormous progress over the last 30 years. The many partnerships Immigrant Services Calgary has established is a testament to the importance the agency places on the involvement of the community as well as the realization by Calgarians of the importance of making new immigrants feel welcome in Calgary; helping them to become valued members of our society. Every year we celebrate these successes during the Immigrants of Distinction Awards and the large audience is a tribute to all those who help us in making Calgary a great place for immigrants to settle.

In recent years, the thriving Calgary economy and the accompanying labour shortage have

attracted an even larger stream of immigrants to our community. For many immigrants this has meant better opportunities but also brought new challenges as the availability of affordable housing has decreased and long waiting lists for services has increased as the capacity of immigrant services is stretched to its limits. Coupled with these challenges, still too many immigrants are not able to reach their potential as their credentials are not being fully recognized and they continue to struggle with an income that keeps them below the poverty line. We are confident that by working together as a community, we will be able to overcome these barriers and make Calgary into a premier destination for people from all over the world – with opportunities to participate and contribute to our great city.

Tyler Charkie  
Chair, Board of Directors 

## High Fidelity Wraparound: Working Together with Families to Overcome Challenges

**High Fidelity Wraparound** is a new system of care provided at the Mosaic Youth and Family Centre. The initiative is the result of a partnership with Calgary and Area Child and Family Services who has introduced an alternative approach to traditional methods of child protection.

The Wraparound approach uses a team of professionals, natural supports (family and friends), and most importantly the family themselves, to collaborate on solutions to crises and family needs. This team works to empower the family through the recognition and the development of the family's skills and

strengths. With this approach families are given ownership of their plan to overcome present and future challenges.

The High Fidelity Wraparound system of care is of particular value for immigrant and refugee families. One of the main guiding principles of the approach is the need for individualized services. It is critical for immigrants to use diverse, individualized action plans, as opposed to commonly used methods. Through this family driven approach, a strong importance is placed on the family's opinions and choices. The approach also places high importance on cultural competence, which is required to understand

the needs and obstacles of immigrant families. Another significant benefit of using this approach is the suitability of the use of natural supports for immigrant families. Many immigrant families come from cultures more collectively-centred and interdependent than mainstream Canadian society; therefore, it may be fundamentally important for families to have natural supports included in services. To participate in this program, families need to be referred by Calgary and Area Child and Family Services.

We are proud and excited to be working with families in this new initiative! 



▲ **Immigrant Services Calgary Staff dressed in ethnic costume for the kick-off of the United Way campaign**



▲ **Mercedes Iparaguirra and Vivien Lok at the United Way campaign Bake Sale**




▲ **Volunteers Seungmin Oh, Vanna Keo, Vannary Keo, Xiue Liu enjoying the volunteer party**

## 2007 United Way Campaign

Once again, **Immigrant Services Calgary** actively participated in the annual United Way campaign. With the slogan "For a city to be truly great, it must be great for everyone" the 2007 United Way Campaign was officially kicked off on September 6th. A large group of enthusiastic Immigrant Services Calgary staff dressed up in ethnic costume and added an international flavor to the event. The organizing committee started planning early in the summer for a week long campaign of fun activities; the campaign was such a success that the fundraising goal was exceeded!

During the campaign week, two ongoing events and one special activity per day were organized. Every morning delicious pre-ordered breakfasts were delivered to staff offices and the Stair Marathon encouraged staff to take the stairs to their offices instead of the elevators; in total we climbed more than 27,000 stairs! A record breaking of 3,738 and 3,639 stairs was achieved by two of our fittest staff. Our daily activities included the Manager's challenge, a Multicultural Bake Sale, Haunted office contest, Pizza & Movie and a fabulous Wrap-Up Party.


Congratulations to all Immigrant Services Calgary Staff for your participation to the United Way campaign and your contribution to the community! 

## In the next Issue:

"Children", "Art", "Immigrants of Distinction Awards", "Immigrants", "Mosaic", "Clay", how can these words be connected and turn into a meaningful project for our new immigrant generation?




▲ **Budding young artist at the Mosaic Centre Preschool working on artwork for the Immigrants of Distinction Awards Silent Auction.**

In the next issue, our Manager of Mosaic Children and Parents Centre, Wendy Auger, will share with us the upcoming exciting activities and events for the year 2008 at Mosaic Centre. 



▲ **The Mosaic Centre Preschool program celebrates Halloween.**

## Celebrating 30 Years of Talented Volunteers

When **120 volunteers** from over 40 different countries gather in one place at one time, it is bound to be an unforgettable evening! On Friday September 7, 2007, CIAS hosted its annual Volunteer Appreciation Event in recognition of the outstanding contributions CIAS volunteers have made to the agency over the past 30 years. In celebration of the many unique talents the CIAS volunteers possess, the crowd was treated to a talent show from around the world including East Indian henna art, and music and dancing from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The festivities continued with the dance group Peruvian Rhythms performing a traditional folk dance from the highlands of Peru which left the audience tapping their feet and ready to hit the dance floor. CIAS would like to thank all those who participated in the event and looks forward to the 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Event! 



# What's new?

## Citizenship Classes

If you would like to become a Canadian citizen, then it's your chance to join our next preparation course! Please call Claudia at 265-1120 for new dates in 2008.

## Upcoming CELBAN Test

ILVARC is offering the next Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN) test on January 16&17, March 19&20, April 16&17 and June 18&19. Contact Daniel at 265-1120 ext. 362 or daniell@immigrantservicescalgary.ca or Rhea at 265-1120 ext. 274 rheac@immigrantservicescalgary.ca. Details can also be found online at [www.celban.org](http://www.celban.org)

## Youth Industry and Internship Program (YIIP)

YIIP Intake #11 will hold an Employer Breakfast on November 22 to introduce program participants and employers. The Mosaic Centre will host a graduation celebration for the participants of Intake #10 in the month of December; date TBA.

## Toys for Children

The Settlement/Integration team will once again be helping to distribute toys to children of families in need. The United Way will donate toys to our agency to give to those clients who need extra help this holiday season. We are working with community partners such as the Interfaith Food Bank, the Mustard Seed, the Salvation Army and the Magic of Christmas to provide referrals for clients who need food, clothing and toys for their children.

## Workshops

Settlement/Integration Counsellors will continue to provide group workshops to clients in their first language or in simple English. The workshop schedule for Jan-April 2008 will be posted on our website by mid-December. Topics covered in the

last quarter included Community Resources, How to start your own business, How to apply for Canadian citizenship, Driving in Alberta, How to establish credit in Canada, Health Services, Immigration and Sponsorship and others.

## Children & Parent Program

The Mosaic Pre-School Program will celebrate the end of the fall semester with a celebration on December 6. A surprise visitor from the North Pole who goes by the name of "Santa" will join the celebration

The Early Childhood Programs at the Mosaic Centre would like to congratulate the practicum students from Bow Valley College and Mount Royal College who will be completing their practicum placements with the Mosaic Centre in December.

## ESL Directory

The ESL Directory is a "Directory of ESL Programs and Services for Immigrants and International Students in Calgary". The new version is available online at [www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca](http://www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca)

## 2008 Immigrants of Distinction Awards

Call for Nominations - Extended to December 7th Immigrant Services Calgary announces the 2nd Call for Nominations. Individual nominations are being accepted in the categories of Arts & Culture, Business, Community Service, and Distinguished Professional. The Youth Scholarships are awarded to immigrant youth aged 14-24 who have demonstrated outstanding achievements in one or more of the following areas: Academics, Arts, Community Involvement or Sports. If you would like to nominate someone, check our website at [www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca](http://www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca) or call Tracy at 538-8352 for more information. 

# Thank You

## Funders:



We would like to thank the following 2007 Immigrants of Distinction Awards Sponsors:

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*All opinions expressed in I-Connections are those of the individual authors.*

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