

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT





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Vision

Fully integrated newcomers who participate in and contribute to all spheres of Canadian society

Mission

To empower newcomers in settling and integrating as contributing members of Canadian society through diverse, professional and innovative services

Core Values

- Compassion
- Inclusion
- Collaboration

Our commitment to our clients:

We are committed to providing our clients with equal access to services that meeting their individual needs.

CICS Board of Directors



Left to right (Front): Ms. Moy Wong-Tam (Executive Director), Ms. Mercy Yan (Vice Chair), Ms. Berta Zaccardi (Chair), Ms. Daisy Chong, Mr. Tim Cheng
Left to Right (Back): Mr. Jeremy Mullin, Mr. Daniel McCoy (Secretary), Ms. Julie Scott (Treasurer), Mr. William Chu Kwan, Ms. Glendy Sze

Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

Reporting that 2019-2020 was an eventful year would be an understatement.

The fiscal year started with news of Provincial government funding cuts, with drastic cuts to legal aid, which has provided important services to newcomers. CICS was involved supporting the advocacy to reverse the drastic funding reduction to legal aid clinics.

While xenophobic reactions to new Canadians and refugees had slowed when compared to the previous year, the fragility of the apparent calm was quickly exposed when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Canada, and we saw anti-Asian incidents rise. This underlines the need for continual public education to counter false narratives, and to stress that Canada has been built by generations of immigrants; that we need immigration in order to fuel our economy; and that immigrants fill an increasingly important gap in labour shortages.

And then, in late winter, 2020, our world changed dramatically. We had been alerted to the practical issues related to COVID-19 when several staff members returned from vacations in Asia during mid-winter. Tracking public health advisories became a daily routine, and posting relevant notices for clients and visitors occupied us.

When the Province declared a state of emergency on March 17th, we developed protocols and policies to guide staff working from home, while protecting confidentiality of client and organizational data; mobile devices were sourced and acquired with limited budget. Without a moment of hesitation, the CICS management team rose to the challenge and began transforming our services from intensively in-person to remote delivery. This incredible feat was achieved in short order with seamless teamwork and a sharp focus on client needs and requisite staff support. Our diligent IT team acquired necessary equipment, trained, and supported staff to adopt necessary technology in order to deliver services and programs online. Volunteers were recruited to support some staff members who are less technologically savvy. The majority of our programs and service were switched to remote delivery by the third week of lock down. The tenacity, dedication, and team spirit displayed by our management team was unparalleled, and the creativity of our staff were unleashed and displayed in the new programming and delivery. The support and trust from the Board of directors facilitated the transition, and the new CICS virtual station with multiple channels was launched. Although some client groups have continued to face challenges in receiving remote services, our Immigrant Youth Centre was the first team at CICS to convert to online programs. In the two weeks in March alone, IYC conducted nearly 20 sessions online and kept the youth engaged during this unprecedented time.

Externally, tables of community partners and networks have been created that have met regularly to update and share resources, and there has been an exponential growth of online resources, as well as new COVID-19 related services and resources, underlining the adaptiveness of the human service sector.

The last fiscal year was akin to a gale-force wind that hit us, causing chaos in the human service sector. Nevertheless, we are proud to say that CICS has been sufficiently agile, strong, and resilient to emerge with the majority of programs and services unscathed and transformed. Furthermore, we have learned new lessons that will prepare us better for both the future of work and innovative service delivery modalities. Doubtlessly, we will need to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of various service modalities for different client groups and various services. The understanding and support that have been displayed by all our funders have been critical in maintaining our stability, enabling us to focus on adapting and continuing to provide services to clients during this season of anxiety and need. This support, shared sense of responsibility, and determination will carry us through the coming months.

Client Statistics from 2019-2020



Canada is a nation of immigrants who come from all over the world with diverse backgrounds. Below are the statistics about our clientele in 2019-2020, reflecting the diversity of newcomers and community members.

Native Language

Native Language	Overall Percentage	One-on-one Services	Group Programs
Arabic	3.8%	395	266
Armenian	0.3%	24	33
Bengali	0.6%	76	26
Cantonese	21.2%	2,251	1,469
Dari	0.5%	51	44
English	7.0%	627	595
Farsi	4.0%	532	173
French	0.2%	31	11
Hindi	3.3%	400	172
Korean	1.3%	122	103
Mandarin	27.2%	2,513	2,244
Russian	0.7%	94	29
Spanish	1.0%	89	92
Tagalog	1.2%	149	61
Tamil	1.5%	123	142
Turkish	0.3%	52	9
Urdu	1.2%	167	40
Others	24.6%	2,646	1,666
Total	100%	10,342	7,175

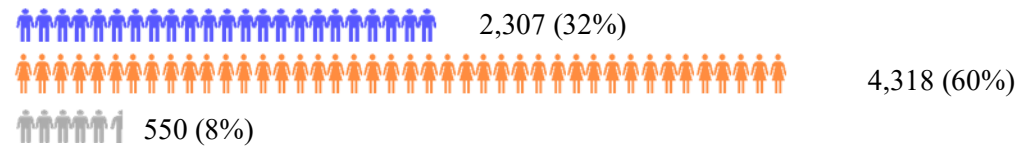


Gender Distribution

10,342
clients
served
one-on-one



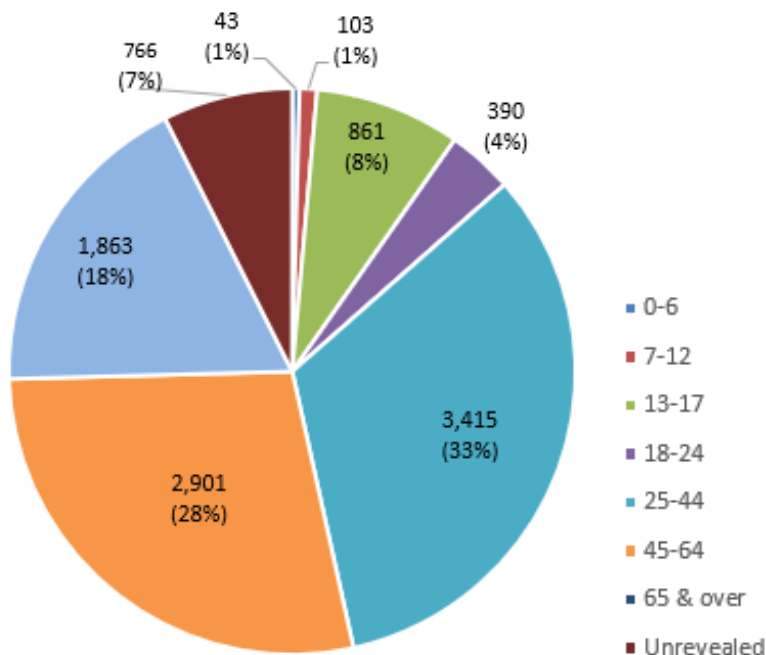
7,175
clients
in group
programs



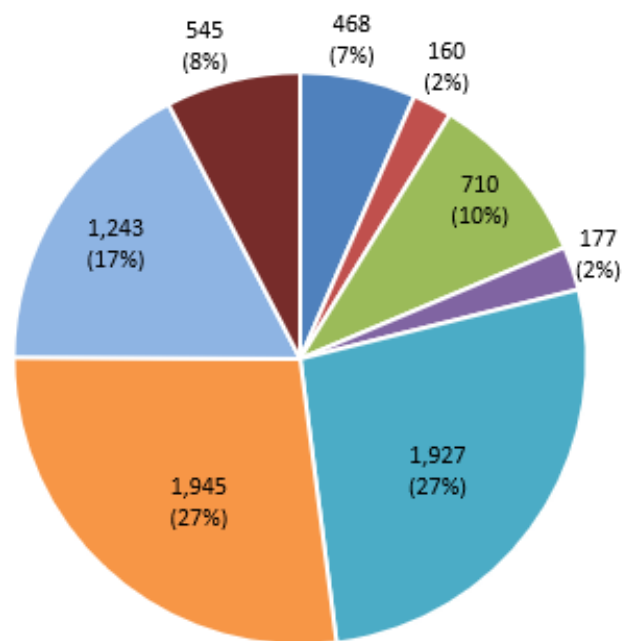
Men Women Untracked

Age Distribution

One-on-one Services



Group Programs



CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION 2020,
A LOVELY NEW GREETING FROM THESE NEWCOMER SENIORS



Settlement and Integration Services in Toronto

2019-2020 was a fruitful year for the Settlement and Integration Services Team. The team had provided a full range of settlement support services to enhance the acculturation process of the newcomers of all age groups in areas such as needs assessment, orientation to the local environment, forms completion, interpretation and translation, information and referral, and linkages to community resources.

One-on-one and group sessions are available to provide support on all aspects related to life in Canada. Our Community Connections programming helps to increase the engagement of newcomers in their local communities, while the mentorship program aims at linking newcomer professionals with established immigrants or Canadians for more exceptional networking and employment opportunities. Settlement services are available at designated public libraries and other itinerant sites.

Success Story from our clients:

Noushin came to the IRC on July 31, 2019, just two weeks after she and her family landed in Canada. They needed information regarding their settlement in Canada, and also with a hope to continue her profession – Human Resources in Canada.

To help her start the licensing process in her field, the settlement worker referred Noushin to HRP-CHRP. To address her need to build her professional network, we invited her to attend both our networking event: OPG and GM day of sharing in August 2019 and IBM-Human resources Professionals Day of sharing in October 2019. She benefited a lot by attending both sessions but in particular the IBM-Human Resources Day of sharing, where she had the opportunity to network and received insightful information from several professionals in her field. To further connect Noushin with the community, we created the opportunity for Noushin to volunteer in some of our events to improve her understanding of workplace culture. We also continued to provide job search support for her, such as resume critique and help her improve her interview skills. We were happy to receive her email that she was able to land a job in her field, even though a contract one and she has started her licensing process where she successfully passed the first exams.

We have exchanged many emails with Noushin and her family and received heartfelt quotes from all of them for the support and the guidance they received. “I am extremely grateful to you for your help and concern for my family and me, as we were finding our feet in Toronto last year. Thank you for being there for us and for encouraging us. By the grace of God, we are gradually finding our place and working towards our future in our new home – Canada.”

CICS Social Connection Hub

to help newcomers improve English communication, employment, education and culture adjustment skills. This hub is designed to be an interactive platform where newcomers can practice business and small talks, public speaking, celebrate important dates in Canadian culture. Throughout the sessions, participants have meaningful conversations, socialize and support each other



Senior Ambassador program to equipping newcomer seniors with a range of senior-related information and issues to help build their self-esteem and to groom them to become peer leaders.



Taxation Workshop for Newcomers



Our signature networking program – IBM day of sharing, a fantastic networking event connecting newcomer with experts in their professional field.

Settlement and Education Partnership in Toronto

CICS is a partner in The Settlement and Education Partnerships in Toronto (SEPT) in partnership with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Since 1999, settlement workers from CICS have been placed in elementary and secondary school in North York. The staff speaks over 12 languages collectively and we serve newcomer students and parents in about 78 schools.

The client was a single mom who lives with her son with no support. She enrolled her son in school and received our SEPT worker's contact information from the school because she needed a lot of help and support.

She was in serious financial difficulty. Our worker helped her in the application for Ontario Works and child tax benefits. Our worker identified all the needs, made plans and provided services to the client according to her priorities.

Once her immediate needs were met, the client started her career planning by going back to school and getting her nursing degree in Canada, as she had been a nurse in Iran. She applied to a college and she was accepted into the program and is now attending college full time.

"The amount of help and support I received from the settlement worker at my son's school is beyond any sort of support I would have been able to get from anyone. I was all alone with no one to get me on my feet again, but I was able to put all my problems behind me and start a new here. I'm now in school, working towards my goal of getting my degree and continue working as a nurse in Canada."



Celebrating Lunar New Year



Effective parent and school communication: A series of three- day Writing Workshops for a group of Korean newcomer parents to help them communicate effectively with their children's school admin staff

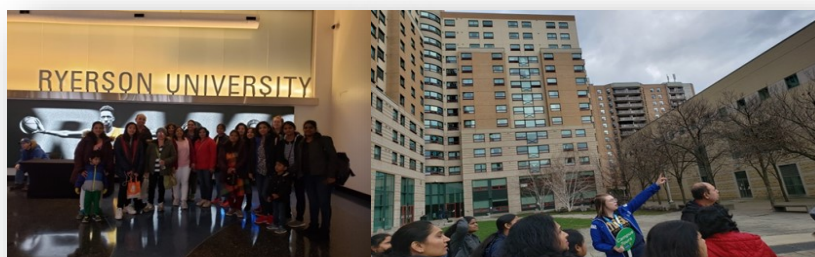


NOW Program

The NOW program was held at five North York schools during the last two weeks of August. The WIN program was held at Cumber Valley Middle School with participants from two nearby schools.



The NOW and WIN programs prepare newcomer youth for smooth entry to school, reduce their stress and anxiety about the transition and prepare them for earlier participation in the life in their new schools. Both programs have proven to be an empowering experience for both the newcomer participants and Peer Leaders.



Trip to Ryerson University for Parents

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program offers basic language training to eligible clients. LINC students strengthen their ability to communicate in English through attending classes that follow a theme and skill-based approach, while becoming familiar with various aspects of life in Canada. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide clients with the necessary language skills to participate actively in Canadian society. In 2019-2020, we continued to provide language training in both Toronto and York Region. Our LINC program served a total of 1,012 newcomer and immigrant language learners who received practical training to improve skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as essential skills. Adapting a wholistic approach to language learning, LINC has collaborated with the Settlement team to support student settlement and integration needs, including cultural events, guest speakers, field trips, and fundraising, into LINC program to make learning English as relevant as possible.



Community Garden Visit



In-Class Reading Activity



Mother's Day Potluck



REEL Canada Field Trips



LINC Welcome Day

Success Story from our clients:

"I have been a LINC student at CICS for 2 years. I used to travel a long way to attend my English classes elsewhere, but my daughter introduced CICS LINC to me and I joined Woodside LINC. Now with the aid of TTC transportation, I can take a bus from home to school. It is safe and easy. I still spend roughly an hour but I don't mind.

My instructor knows what is most needed for us. He explains with simple and clear words. He does not mind explaining many times as long as we really understand. It is a wonderful feeling that I can start to speak in clear English. For example, I bought meat, and I heard the cashier say "enjoy" and I understood it! Or I took the wrong bus and was able to explain to the driver and did not have to buy a new ticket. I can read TTC map now and take the bus anywhere without worries. In case I am lost, I can ask - in English!

I have made friends among LINC classmates. We have built a warm relationship and are willing to help each other. CICS LINC makes our circle of friends bigger. Thank you CICS!"



Care for Newcomer Children Services (CNC)

LINC programs in both Toronto and York Region offer transportation assistance and Care for Newcomer Children services onsite, which removes a significant barrier for mothers of young children who want to improve their English skills.

Success Story from LINC clients:

"Like all newcomers, I came to Canada with no English skills and no local knowledge. With the help from CICS for my English learning, also daycare for my daughter while I'm studying, I have the opportunity to learn, to make friends, and most importantly, to slowly like and love my new country, Canada. The services help me go shopping, buy groceries, see family doctor, and do banking.

My daughter likes a lot the activities in the classroom. She makes her little friends, learnt to share and be respectful to her teachers and classmates. She really enjoys going to class every day!

Thank you. I really appreciate what CICS provides in helping me and my daughter learning to be a good citizen, and a new Canadian!"



Success Story from LINC clients:

"I am a LINC Level 3 student. I want to say thank you Welcome Centre for providing me with a free English course and helping me with my PR card application. I am glad I can learn English without any worries, because it has a daycare. My twin girls learn new things every day in the daycare. They are very happy and enjoy the program. It has really benefited me a lot!

When I first arrived in Canada, I was worried about my life, and my English was not good. I've learned English in LINC. Now I can make simple conversations in English, for example, I can make an appointment with a doctor, I can talk with my children's teacher. I have improved a lot in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Hope for life! Thanks again to the Welcome Centre."



Markham South Welcome Centre (MSWC)

It is hard to believe that the Markham South Welcome Centre will be celebrating our 10th anniversary in 2020.

10 years ago, we turned a commercial unit that was a Chinese supermarket and converted the 20,000 square feet space into MSWC. We opened our doors at the same time with three other new Welcome Centers (Markham North, Richmond Hill and Newmarket). Our York Region Settlement staff moved into the office in the summer of 2010 with our partners and started providing our core services to the clients.

Much has changed in the last decade: New partners have joined us; today our Associate Partners in Markham South Welcome Centre deliver more than \$1 Million worth of services annually. We have more community groups offering their activities and services in our space: senior exercise groups, cancer support groups, parent with special needs children, youth groups, etc. Our traffic and volume have risen every year. In 2019-2020, over 25,000 people came through the doors of the Markham South Welcome Centre while we provided services to over 7,500 clients, even when we were affected by the COVID 19 Pandemic starting in February, and closing our doors in March as Ontario entered a state of emergency. The faces of our team have also changed in the last decade: Out of the entire original team that moved into MSWCS 10 years ago, only the Centre Manager, the Office Administrator, and an IT specialist remain.



While much has changed, the service delivery model of the Markham South Welcome Centre has remained the same: We put all the important services a newcomer needs under the same roof. A new client meets with a case manager and this “one trusted person” listens to the client’s story and puts together a settlement plan for the person including all the referrals that are necessary and helpful. The core services offered in the Welcome Centre include: Language Training, Employment Support, Settlement Services, Accreditation and Qualification Information Services, and Youth, Women and Senior services. In 2019-2020, over 70% of our new clients came in for Settlement services. The strength of the Welcome Centre model lies in the fact that while clients come in looking for a particular service, our case managers introduce and often refer them to additional services that they need. In 2019-2020, each of our clients received on average close to 2.5 referrals.

The COVID 19 Pandemic forced us to find new ways of delivering help to clients when they needed it the most. We moved our services online and on the phone, while staying connected within the team via various video and online platforms. Whether virtual or in person, our message to clients remains the same since the first day we opened: At the Welcome Centre, you will find all the services you need, all in one place, at no charge to you.



Youth and Family Services

CICS started offering settlement services in York Region over two decades ago. Today, our services in York Region are based out of three locations: The Markham South Welcome Centre of Immigrant Services, the Immigrant Youth Centre and the Immigrant Women Resource Centre.

CICS is mandated within the York Region Welcome Centre system to provide women, youth and seniors services in five Welcome Centres. Our Immigrant Women Resource Centre offers a wide range of services such as women mentorship, information workshops, volunteer training, employment support, entrepreneurship programs, interest classes, etc.

Immigrant Youth Centre

This past year marked the Immigrant Youth Centre's 10th anniversary, celebrating a decade of delivering innovative and engaging programs in support of immigrant youth clients' growth and development. Numerous unique workshops, field trips, and community engagement opportunities have been offered to foster their knowledge and skills in their settlement journey. To celebrate our milestone, IYC hosted a grand event at Markham's Crystal Fountain, where both current and past youth participated as guests, volunteers, speakers, and performers to showcase its impact and mission to enhance youth's overall sense of community.



(Left top): The 2019-2020 Immigrant Youth Centre Community Action Network (iCAN) Committee supporting the IYC 10th Year Anniversary Event "The Many Ways We'll Grow"



(Left Bottom): IYC's annual Halloween event led by the iCAN Committee, which provided a safe and fun space for youth to celebrate the holiday together

Mason first accessed IYC in March of 2019 with the intention of making new friends and enhancing his knowledge in different academic topics. Although observed by staff as shy with a tendency to keep to himself, his genuine love of reading and academic research was evident and Mason was highly recommended as a Youth Animator for the United Way Neighborhood Development project, that CICS was undertaking in collaboration with a community partner

As a result of having to work more closely with others for the project and participating in other youth programs, Mason slowly became more open to socializing. He began to visit the centre frequently to hang out with new friends, study, and participate in gatherings or events. In less than a year Mason showed so much growth and increased self-confidence, that he is now a very familiar face in the IYC community where he often volunteers his time to support other youth or initiatives. He said, **"IYC is a place for growing minds through journeys of self-exploration!"**

Mason surely has a bright future ahead, and when asked to reflect on the future, he shared: **"Tomorrow... I will do the things I was too scared to try!"**



(Right Top): IYC youth enjoying CICS Day at BMO Field; which for almost all of the youth, was their first time attending a professional sports game in Canada



(Right Bottom): IYC youth volunteers supporting the annual OASIS Zoon Run in Toronto where they helped keep the event space clean from trash and educated community members about proper recycling practices

S.O.A.R. (Skills, Opportunities, Action Plan, Resources) Employment Training Program for Immigrant Women

Finding suitable employment is a critical step in a newcomer's integration journey. Both of our signature programs, Building Connections and S.O.A.R. (which stands for Skills, Opportunities, Action-Plan, Resources) offer employable skills training in Toronto and York Region respectively. Both programs serve newcomers from low income background and offer skills training in job search, computer usage, communication and soft skills, as well as life and leadership development. S.O.A.R. also provides placement opportunities where immigrant women can experience working in a Canadian office environment. Many of the participants end up being hired by their employers following their placement. Over half of the participants secured employment within three to six months of program completion.

In addition, we offered training programs in culinary skills, manicure and pedicure training throughout the year. We also partnered with over 30 employers to hold six hiring events this year, with a total of over 600 participants.



S.O.A.R. Program Partner's Story

"Before discovering the SOAR program, I was actively looking for a qualified candidate to add to my team of employees at my office. I had previously advertised in local newspapers but encountered difficulties in finding suitable applicants for the job opening.

I chose the SOAR program because I believe in helping new immigrants settle and integrate into Canadian society. It is also beneficial that the program provides the opportunity to work with the applicant on a trial basis to determine the compatibility of the candidate.

The outcome was amazing. Amy, the placement candidate (now my employee), was already well trained as a result of participating in the SOAR program. She has a positive attitude, has great interpersonal skills, is computer savvy, is eager to learn new tasks, and is enthusiastic about taking on new responsibilities.

I found the experience to be a great way to hire an employee. My office has benefited by gaining a new highly qualified team member and as a bonus, I was able to save both time and money during the hiring process. I am extremely satisfied with the SOAR program and in particular with the Employment Counsellor's assistance along the way. In the future, I would not hesitate to contact her again if I need to hire another employee.

I would strongly recommend the SOAR program to other employers who are looking to fill available positions with qualified employees."

Dr. Christine Li – Owner of Dr. Christine Li and Associates, O.D.

Community Services

During the third meeting with the CICS counsellor, Sue confided that she just signed the separation agreement. There had been three people in the marriage for years...it was too crowded. She felt very depressed, lonely and hopeless. Our counsellor listened and supported her emotionally. In the following months, Sue met with our counsellor at CICS regularly, and started planning her new life. Sue applied for government housing, Canada Pension Plan, and drug benefits. She also met her financial advisor to discuss cashing her RRSP. Now, Sue stands up, raises her head and walks each small step with courage and confidence.



- A Client Story from Crisis Intervention and Support (CIS) Service

A Story from Early Years Program

A new immigrant mother with a three-year-old daughter and a five-month-old baby participated in our 24-session parenting program – ParentSmart, while her daughter participated in our 24-session school readiness program-StudentSmart in October, 2019.

After joining our 6-week program, the mother learned some parenting skills, and was better able to control her emotions when disciplining her child. She started to set rules at home and she has found it really helpful in managing her child's behavioural issues. The mother is also glad to see that her child has made great progress in social skills. Her child starts to share and takes turns with her classmates.

The mother really appreciated CICS for offering this program to her and her child as both of them gained a lot from it. She hopes that this program will continue to offer to the community so that more families will benefit from it.



Thank you note from a Client of Postnatal Caregiver Certificate Course

I cannot thank CICS enough for the Postnatal Caregiver Course offered to the community. I am an HR Consultant where my expertise is to solve or meet a human resource related need. However, when my daughter in NYC asked me to find her a postnatal caregiver, I was at a loss. Luckily, my friend referred me to this course. After completion, my confidence in

taking care of my daughter and her newborn was reinforced. My son-in-law, an ABC (American born Chinese), used to sneer at the concept of postnatal care giving. But when I applied the theories and skills in taking care of his loved ones, he was so impressed and convinced. I am grateful that three generations in my family are benefited from this course and it wouldn't be the same if I hadn't attended it. Thank you so much, CICS.

Garden and Kitchen Program (ENRICH Project)



Funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the ENRICH project is a continuation of the Garden and Kitchen Program. The ENRICH project provides an intercultural space that brings people together and make social and cultural connections through food.



ENRICH Volunteer Gardening Program

The garden is a symbol of unity and life that draws people from across the community, encouraging adults and seniors to build new social connections and relationships with each other. The Community Garden produced about 1500 lbs of fresh vegetables and almost half that was donated to ACSA's Dorset Park food bank. The program provided 70 volunteer opportunities for 59 Adults and 11 Youth, contributing about 860 volunteer hours.



Community and Volunteer Engagement Program

The impact of volunteers and their dedication to furthering CICS's mission through its various programs and services has always been immense. This past year, we engaged over 750 volunteers across our agency's eight locations, collectively totaling over 17000 hours of volunteer service! They supported us in a variety of roles, such as early years' programs, event planning, translation and interpretation, ENRICH program, front desk reception, and facilitating workshops, to name a few. In addition to our own annual volunteer appreciation event that was held in conjunction with the Harvest Festival, where we honoured 100 volunteers, we also recognized the efforts of our long-standing volunteers through the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. This year, 21 of our volunteers received an award from OVSA.



We are so moved by the efforts of our volunteers, and it turns out we have quite an effect on them as well. Check out what a few of our volunteers from this past year had to say about us:

Volunteering is an act of compassion, as it brings care to our society. From one person to another, we are united. I am proud to be a volunteer at CICS and believe that unity is strength to establish a strong and compassionate society. [translated] --- Hui Lin, Program and Event Assistant

As a volunteer interpreter at CICS, the agency provides its supports as much as they can, such as TTC tickets, small rewards like gift cards, and so on. The recognitions have always deeply moved me and made me feel my work worth something. Thanks so much to all very kind and supportive staff members at CICS". --- Carolyn Li, Community Garden

Volunteering at CICS not only enriched my life, but also helped me reap the joys of being recognized by society. I would love to encourage you all to become a volunteer and bring more love and warmth to our society! [translated] ---Lynnete Mei, Translation

Appreciation to Our Funders

City of Toronto

Employment and Social Development Canada

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Service Canada

The Regional Municipality of York

United Way of Greater Toronto



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