



P.E.I. Association for Newcomers to Canada 1995-96 Annual Report

Bringing People and Communities Together



A New Look for Our Report!

You may have noticed that our Annual Report looks very different from previous ones. We've changed the format and design to reduce costs and make it more readable. With shrinking budgets, and increased workloads, we want to spend our time and money on service and program delivery. We know you understand these are lean times. The full audited financial statement is not included in this report, but copies are available at the Association office.

President's Report

The past year has been characterized by change. Our relationship with the Federal Government is changing through Settlement Renewal. The Labour Market Language Training Program (LMLT) has been eliminated, and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) funding was recently reduced. Even the location of our office has

changed from Kent Street to Queen Street.

I want to congratulate the staff at the Association for managing change so well. There is no doubt that Laura Lee Howard, Heather Irving, Adghas Missaghian and Thilak Tennekone have felt the changes most acutely, but they have kept the organization together and kept us moving forward. They have assured the funding is in place at the same level as last year, to enable the Host, Settlement and Community Outreach Programs to continue into 1997 - no small feat amid pervasive cutbacks. Trudy MacDonald, our bookkeeper, has kept the books in order, and Heather, our Executive Director, is particularly adept at creative and valuable project proposals.

Among the projects that must be marked as the successes of the organization this year are the *Stories by Immigrant Children* project (to begin soon), the *Self-Help* project and the *Building on Strengths and Skills* project: an employment

training program for immigrants. Each of these initiatives and others have come about through the hard work and imaginative approach of the staff. The programs have been implemented with the assistance of talented members of the Charlottetown community who have been with us for contract 'stints'.

Although the coming year will bring changes to the way we provide services to newcomers, I am confident the Association will thrive. We have tremendous resources in the board members who generously volunteer their time and expertise, and we have talented staff.

Gregory J. Howard

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Executive Director's Report

On June 19, 1996 the P.E.I. Association for Newcomers to Canada celebrates 12 years of work in the community - the first nine years we were the P.E.I. Cross Cultural Information Committee. Our work has always included concern for the equality and full participation of immigrants, refugees and ethno-cultural groups. Annual meetings are a time to reflect on the past and look forward to the future. Our Association can look at its accomplishments with pride. However, we think about the future with guarded optimism, and some concern for the many changes and challenges we will face. Settlement Renewal - the federal government's plan to transfer responsibility for the administration of settlement and language programs - has meant we feel insecure about our future as an organization. More importantly, however, we are concerned about the future security and stability of social programs designed to assist newcomers with settlement and integration into Canadian society. Downsizing, devolution, reducing budgets,

trimming programs! Where will it all end? While governments focus on the bottom line, our association and other like-minded organizations working with immigrant and refugee groups must continue to be the voice of humanitarian compassion, social justice and the conscience of the community. The P.E.I. Association for Newcomers to Canada believes in the basic worth and dignity of all people. We value the contributions made by immigrants and refugees from around the world. Prince Edward Island must always keep its doors and hearts open to newcomers.

Heather Irving

Program Reports

Settlement Program

During the last year, the Association helped 58 government-assisted refugees settle in Charlottetown. The majority came from the former Yugoslavia. All families were settled within walking distance of English language schools. After a few days of rest, paper work and shopping for necessities, families are anxious to move into their own apartment. Children start school, and adults start English classes. Everyone understands the importance of learning how to speak and read English, and wants to get down to work right away!

This year, as in previous years, we have had difficulty finding family doctors for newcomers. Since there is no public transportation system in Charlottetown, and newcomers do not have cars, we have to find doctors within walking distance of home and school. Lately this has been impossible. Many families are still without a family doctor. Although evening clinics and the emergency department of the hospital are available, they do not replace the security, peace of mind and consistency of a family doctor. Our Association, along with other community groups, is very concerned about this on-going problem. We are all working together to develop ways to address the impact of the shortage of family doctors on newcomers.

I wish to thank the interpreters who worked with the Association and the Settlement Program this year. Your contribution was invaluable.

Aghdas Missaghian

Host Report

The Host Program is well established in the community. Over 40 host volunteers are matched with newcomers for friendship, social and recreational outings. Volunteers help their matches practice English and understand the customs and culture of the new country. Volunteers help newcomers join the community,

and adjust to their new surroundings. Many volunteers also help their matches with résumés and job searches.

The Host Program works with many community groups, including the Advisory Committee on Race Relations, the International Friendship Association and the Partnerships for Health Project of Women's Network. We had several recreational events this year - a heritage country picnic, a beach party and a Christmas party.

Laura Lee Howard

Community Outreach

The Association leads in coordinating efforts to help newcomers feel part of the community. We help organizations and service-providers increase their ability to understand and assist newcomers. We collaborate with a wide range of immigrant and community organizations, and all levels of government, to provide information, resources and training. This year we worked in a number of areas, including: family and mental health; cross-cultural sensitivity; immigrant and refugee law; language training and literacy; employment training and preparation; and the experiences of immigrant children. We also collaborated with many organizations: *Community Legal Information Association; P.E.I. Literacy*

Alliance; Status of Women Canada; Four Communities Health Centre; International Friendship Association; Law Society of P.E.I.; University of Prince Edward Island School of Nursing; Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I.; Health and Community Services Agency; Holland College, Charlottetown English Language Training; AIDS - P.E.I.; Advisory Committee on Race Relations; Catholic Family Services Bureau; Salvation Army; Victim Services Committee; P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Canadian Council for Refugees; Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies; Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture; United Nations Association - Charlottetown Local Committee; United Nations High Commission for Refugees; CUSO - P.E.I. and many more.

Building on Strengths and Skills: An Employment Training Program for Newcomers

Ten participants attended our project-based employment training program for immigrants. Six weeks of intensive classroom training provided individualized assistance to help participants address their own unique labour market barriers. The course covered personal and team skills; corporate/work culture in Canada; Canadian work ethic; local labour market conditions;

juggling personal and family responsibilities; the role of women in the workplace and cross-cultural comparisons of different occupations. The program offered 12 weeks on-the-job training at a host site. Nine of 10 participants finished the program (one left for a job). At the end of the program, four of nine participants had jobs. Congratulations to all participants!

Employment training opportunities for immigrants are in jeopardy because of new eligibility requirements. Many newcomers are 'unattached' to the labour force and not eligible for Employment Insurance. It is difficult for immigrants to find employment because of local labour market conditions, language barriers and numerous social barriers to hiring immigrants. Employment training programs maximize the existing employment strengths and skills immigrants already have. They prepare newcomers for the Canadian workplace, making them more competitive in the labour market. Our Association will continue to advocate for newcomers and their employment training and preparation needs.

Information Workshops for Newcomers

Newcomers often experience 'information overload' after arriving in Canada. Even settled immigrants need basic information, written and

presented in plain language. Our workshop facilitator consulted with recent and settled newcomers, to find out what kind of information they wanted. Fifteen information sessions were scheduled, covering a variety of topics, including: Employment and Job Search Strategies; Economical Shopping and Nutrition; Stress Management; Child Care and Parenting; Legal System; Health Care System; Education and Citizenship.

As a result of the information workshops, board member, Vicky Willson, took the *Nobody's Perfect* facilitator training workshop. *Nobody's Perfect* is a program which teaches positive and effective parenting techniques. Vicky is available as a resource for immigrant families.

A Voice for Immigrant Children

Immigrant children have stories to tell. The telling of stories is empowering for the children and powerful for the listeners and readers. These stories will validate the integration experiences of immigrant children in P.E.I. They will write about their experiences and develop illustrations and design ideas. The first phase of the project will be completed in a few months. During phase two, the Association will collaborate with partners in the business community to fund the publishing of the stories in book

form.

Our Publications are in Demand

When it was first printed in 1985, *Understanding Others: An Multicultural Handbook for P.E.I.*, was an immediate hit. It was distributed extensively in P.E.I., but we also filled orders from across Canada. Since then we have printed four additional editions of the handbook. Now we are collaborating with the Department of Education to translate *Understanding Others* into French, and distribute it throughout the schools and the province.

Getting Settled: An Immigrant Handbook for P.E.I. is now in its fifth printing. In 1993 *Getting Settled* was translated into Spanish and used in the Settlement Program with families from Central America. This year we were pleased to have *Getting Settled* translated into Serbo-Croatian, for work with families from the former Yugoslavia. The translation, printing and design of this edition was due largely to the volunteer efforts of two board members - Alisa Saciragic and Vicky Willson.

Crisis Intervention Workshop

In February, volunteers, board members and staff attended a day-long workshop on non-violent crisis intervention. The course taught basic verbal and

physical skills. We learned techniques for reducing tension, setting limits, offering alternatives to behaviour and controlling our own anxieties. Thanks to Hillsborough Hospital and RN Ann Morrissey for making this workshop available.

Association Finishes Its Information Module on the Geography of Canada

Under the Citizenship Participation Initiative of the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Association researched and developed a unique module to be used in workshops with immigrants and first generation Canadians. Island writer Deirdre Kessler spent over a year consulting with new Canadians across the country. She created a learner-centered facilitator's guide and support materials on the geography of Canada. The guide is now in the hands of educational designers in Ottawa, and will be distributed to immigrant support agencies when completed.

Atlantic Settlement Conference October 1995

In October 1995, the Fifth Annual Atlantic Settlement Conference was hosted by the Association for Newcomers, Charlottetown English Language Training and the LINC Program of Holland

College. Over 80 delegates from the four Atlantic Provinces, as well as guest speakers and government officials from Ottawa, attended. There were workshops on private sponsorship, cultural interpreting, racism and immigration, employment programs for newcomers and responding to the mental health needs for newcomers, just to name a few. The keynote speaker for the conference was Nanda Na Champassak, Information Officer, United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

Association Partners with U.P.E.I. School of Nursing

Lisa Garland, a fourth year nursing student, joined the Association as part of her course requirements for *Nursing and Population Health*. Lisa completed a community assessment to determine mental health workers' awareness and understanding of the mental health issues of newcomers. The study identified barriers to working effectively with immigrants. It also provided us with information and strategies needed to work effectively with newcomers. Although mental health workers do not see a large number of immigrants in their practice, they are open and willing to help. They want more training and experience in this area. As a result of this study, the Association is

collaborating with the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Self-Help Clearing House of P.E.I. to research and inform newcomers about the self-help movement. The Association is going to host another fourth year student in September 1996. We look forward to working with the School of Nursing again.

Refugee Claimants in P.E.I.

Who is a refugee? A refugee is a person unable to return to her/his home country due to a well founded fear of persecution, based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Refugees may be sponsored for resettlement in Canada by the federal government or by private groups and individuals. Refugees are usually selected abroad. Some people make a claim for refugee status once they have arrived in Canada. These are refugee claimants.

In the last three years over 20 individuals have sought refugee status in Prince Edward Island. Although Citizenship and Immigration Canada is obliged to look at each claim and process the eligible ones, the Government of Canada does not provide further services or humanitarian aid to refugee claimants.

The Network to Assist Refugee Claimants provides

humanitarian and compassionate assistance. Refugee claimants may need assistance with emergency shelter, food, clothing; referrals to service-providers; interpreters; translators; legal counsel; orientation to the community; learning English; employment and job search; and accompaniment to meetings and appointments. *The Network to Assist Refugee Claimants* is an initiative of the Association for Newcomers, and includes a number of community groups.

We wish to thank Klara Elster for her interpreting and translation services, and the following lawyers for pro bono legal work: Kevin Kiley, Mary Nicholson, Michael Ives, Greg Howard, Bill Dow and John Mitchell. These individuals generously gave hundreds of hours of time to assist claimants.

The State of the World's Refugees

In a world where persecution, massive human rights violations and armed conflict are a daily reality, the need to protect refugees is increasing as the number of people who are forced to flee their homeland grows.

- 23 million people are refugees under the mandate of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).
- Almost two-thirds of the world's refugees are women

and children.

•Resettlement in a country like Canada is a practical solution for only a small percentage of refugees (less than 1 %).

Settlement Renewal

The Government of Canada is transferring responsibility for the direct administration of settlement services. It wants to fund partners more closely connected to the communities where the services are delivered. The main objective of Settlement Renewal is to avoid duplication and overlap of programs administered by different levels of government. The three phases of Settlement Renewal are: 1) consultations with those interested in newcomers' settlement and integration - completed June 1996; 2) negotiations of new partnerships - targeted for 1997; 3) implementation - targeted for 1998.

Prince Edward Island's first consultation was held in January. The next one will be at the end of June 1996. The consultations considered *National Principles, Accountability, Refugee Obligations and Humanitarian Principles, Enduring Federal Role and Finding a New Way to Administer Settlement Services.*

**Thank You for
Financial Assistance
Citizenship and Immigration**

Canada - Settlement and Host Programs; Atlantic Settlement Conference

Department of Canadian Heritage - Community Outreach Program; Citizenship Participation Initiative

Human Resource Development Canada - Employment Training Program; Section 25 Job Creation Program

Department of Health and Community Services Queens Region - Employment Enhancement Program

Our Volunteers Do It Again!

Volunteers are the backbone of our activities. Congratulations to the many volunteers who worked for the Association this year. You contributed 4,500 hours of time, worth \$60,000! Thank you.

Our Board Makes Us Strong!

Many thanks to our dedicated board members: Terry Allen, Joe Byrne, Greg Howard (President), Joy Ikede, Juana Polanco (Vice-President), Alisa Saciragic, Dean Sexton, Ann Sherman, Thilak Tennekone (Secretary-Treasurer) and Vicky Willson. And thanks to Lalitha Narasimhalu and Hussein Ahmed, who retired during the year.

A Special Thanks to Ann Sherman!

Ann was a founding member of the P.E.I. Cross Cultural Information Committee in 1984 and the Association's first president from 1993-1995. Although Ann is leaving the board of directors, she will remain active and interested in the Association and its work. Thank you, Ann, for your support and commitment over the years.

Association Staff

Thanks to our hard working full-time and project staff: Lisa Garland, Laura Lee Howard, Heather Irving, Deirdre Kessler, Trudy MacDonald, Shelley Matthews, Aghdas Missaghian, Juana Polanco, Heather Power, Thilak Tennekone and Vicky Willson.



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