Ontario RAP Conference

Toronto    February 3-5, 2009

The Ontario RAP conference took place in Toronto and was attended by 132 delegates comprised of individuals who manage and deliver the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and invited guests.

The first full day of the conference (Feb. 3) began with opening welcoming remarks from Darlyn Mentor, Director of Settlement Programs, CIC Ontario Region. Following Ms. Mentor was the keynote speaker Dr. Richard Heinzl, founder of Doctors Without Borders Canada. Additional keynote speakers included Michael Casasola from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Colin Mackay from the Toronto based service provider organization COSTI. After lunch, five concurrent workshops were conducted followed by two more plenary presentations.

The first afternoon plenary presentation was from Ahmad Fahim of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the second was Dr. Laura Simich from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

The entire morning of the second full day (Feb.4) was comprised of a World Café plenary, where delegates moved from table to table discussing one issue/question/topic.

Similar to the previous day, the afternoon included five concurrent workshops followed by two plenary sessions, provided by Carl Nicholson from Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa and Ginny Santos and Roxanna Vahed from Access Alliance of Toronto. That evening, dinner was provided followed by entertainment by DJ Glen.

The final day (Feb.5) comprised a full morning of plenary sessions beginning with compassion fatigue consultant Jane Bradley, followed by a documentary on Bhutanese refugees, produced by Annika Gustafson and entitled, “Killing Time”. For more information, see article on page 3.

The YWCA Prince Albert began delivering services to Government Assisted Refugees in August 2008 as part of their Newcomers to Canada Program. In their first year of services, the center focused on establishing the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) delivery structures, and adapting the facility to accommodate 2 LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes under RAP. The YWCA provides temporary accommodations on site, and refugees have access to a kitchen, living area and laundry services. The center also has 24 hour support staff available. Services are delivered to clients in a holistic manner by a Program Coordinator, Life Skills Worker, Language Coordinator and Instructors, as well as an Executive Director whose enthusiasm and “client first” focus, has moved the programs forward in a very short time.

In the upcoming year, the YWCA will expand the Newcomer programming to include HOST, as well as a Newcomer Resource Center for drop-in self service for information and referrals, or to meet other newcomers to the area. Currently the center has clients from 20 different countries, speaking 10 different languages. As a long standing community organization, the value of volunteers is recognized and encouraged.

Immigrants and refugees who arrived in Prince Albert in previous years, are coming to language classes, participating in programming and connecting with newer clients to help them feel welcome in their new community.

Mandated by Treasury Board’s Transfer Payment Policy, CIC is currently developing a performance measurement framework for its resettlement program (both GARs and PSRs). When implemented it will involve the systematic gathering of and reporting on refugee outcomes, such as adequate housing. In so doing, it will tell the story of how service provider organizations (SPOs), sponsors and CIC work together to enhance the lives of refugees. This information will facilitate informed decision-making and contribute to responsive program and policy development. It will also allow service providers and sponsors to learn from each others’ existing best practices in both service delivery and data collection.

To help us better understand the breadth of the refugee resettlement story CIC convened the Resettlement Performance Measurement Working Group. This group includes representatives from SPOs, sponsors, and CIC at the local, regional, and national level. The group was tasked to suggest measures (also known as indicators) of refugee outcomes to help respond to questions like “What does it look like to have refugees’ immediate and essential needs met?”

The Working Group has helped us understand the detailed story but we need to decide which parts to focus on in order to develop a performance measurement framework that is workable and does not overwhelm the resettlement system. To do this we need to understand how information on refugee outcomes can be measured without burdening SPOs, sponsors, and CIC. Discussions at the SAH Meeting in Quebec City in May 2009 and the RAP Working Group in Halifax in June 2009 on this topic are a key step towards the development of a feasible performance measurement framework that improves refugees’ lives.

CIC will be continuing to work on the framework over the next year. Look for further updates in future newsletters!
Betty Zangari is a recently retired RAP Officer in our Windsor office. She has agreed to share with us some tales from the ‘front lines’.

When did you join Citizenship and Immigration Canada and when did you join the Resettlement assistance Program (or AAP)?

My 35 Years with the Federal Government started in 1974 working for Unemployment Insurance. In 1984, I transferred to Employment & Immigration and joined the Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP). In 1994, the Adjustment Assistance Program was transferred to Immigration and I was deployed to Immigration as the AAP Counsellor. After Settlement Renewal in 1995, I became a member of the Ontario pilot project group that changed the orientation responsibilities to Reception Houses, standardized the AAP rates and went to a cheque mailing process. In 1998, CIC withdrew direct delivery of Settlement Services and I believe that is when we changed the name of AAP to RAP.

What are some of your most memorable recollections while working in RAP?

One of the most memorable recollections while working in RAP was in 1995 when the 3/9 Government/Private Group Sponsorship of Refugees Pilot was announced. I was involved in the recruitment of sponsors for refugees from the former Yugoslavia and for the reception of the refugees when they were ready to arrive in Windsor.

Another memorable recollection was in 1999 with the airlifting of the Kosovo Refugees to the Military bases. Although I was not involved with the processing of the refugees at the bases, I was involved behind the scene. I provided orientation to the joint sponsors and helped them with the preparation of their arrival. When the Kosovo clients were ready to arrive at their new homes, I was there at the buses with their joint sponsors welcoming the new Kosovo arrivals to their new home. I witnessed all of the hugging and tears of joy. It sure proved how CIC was able to work as a team and get things done.

Annika Gustafson BFA, MBA
(Producer/Director) Originally from Sweden, Annika Gustafson moved to Canada in 1995 to pursue a degree in cinema at Concordia University, Montreal. She also holds an international MBA specialized in film producing from l’ESCP in Paris, France and Lund University, Sweden. She has worked as a producer, director and camerawoman in both Sweden and Canada. She recently started filming the second part of the saga of the Bhutanese refugees, Are There Chillies in St Jérôme? She’ll be following three orphaned siblings and their integration in a rural Quebec town. Annika Gustafson lives with her husband, daughter, and two sled dogs in Montreal, Canada.

www.killingtimethefilm.com
Stay tuned for the next issue of Inside RAP.
Feel free to contact us, we appreciate your feedback!
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