



ORIENTATION SESSIONS FOR FUTURE NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

CANADIAN ORIENTATION ABROAD IS AN INTEGRATION BRANCH INITIATIVE ESTABLISHED TO FAMILIARIZE FUTURE IMMIGRANTS WITH LIFE IN CANADA.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada established the Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) program in 1998. Where available, COA sessions are offered to future newcomers so that they will have some familiarity with life in Canada before their arrival. Orientation sessions are delivered abroad by a service providing organization (currently the International Organization for Migration - IOM) and may be available to all categories of immigrants and refugees selected overseas for Permanent Resident status.

In 2005-2006, sessions will be offered in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, specifically:

- Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Kenya, (with mobile training missions to Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda), South Africa, Zambia, Sudan and Zimbabwe (from Kenya), and in Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Congo Kinshasa,

- Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo (from Ghana).
- Mobile training missions will take place in Central Asia (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan).

ORIENTATION SESSIONS

Sessions are organized as one-, three- and five-day modules designed to meet the needs of a diverse clientele. The sessions' content covers an introduction to Canada, culture shock and the settling-in period, employment, rights and responsibilities, climate, finding a place to live, living in a multicultural society, the cost of living, family life, education, communications, and adaptation to Canada.

Topics are presented in a simple, straightforward manner, and all emphasize the importance of arriving in Canada with realistic expectations. The same topics are covered in each module but in varying degrees of detail depending on the length of the sessions. In most cases, the sessions are



delivered in the language of the participants. COA participants are also provided contact information for service providing organizations located across Canada to help with the settlement process.

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ICNSS LEADS THE WAY WITH ENHANCED LANGUAGE TRAINING

By Usman Ali

Executive Director, ICNSS

The past decade has witnessed immigration trends in Canada geared towards attracting highly skilled individuals with demonstrated abilities. With immigration expected to account for all net labour force growth within the next 10 years and for all population growth in Canada within the next 25 years, the skills these immigrants bring with them are critical to Canada's economic health.

Yet, despite the increase in the number of highly skilled immigrants in Canada, they continue to face significant challenges when entering the Canadian labour market. Ranking high among these challenges is the lack of recognition for

internationally trained professionals' credentials.

Statistics show that six out of ten immigrants are making a downward shift into careers other than the ones for which they were trained. Canadian employers are clearly not leveraging the real potential of immigration in their workforce. And regulatory bodies continue to impose barriers that make it difficult for internationally trained individuals to integrate into the labour market. Ignoring the credentials of these individuals and under-utilizing their skills translates into a significant loss of earnings potential for the Canadian economy.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada is aware of this situation. The Department has initiated programs for integrating immigrants' skills into the labour market. One such initiative is the Enhanced Language Training component of LINC, which funds higher level English classes, which often have an employment focus.

Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services (ICNSS) in Mississauga has taken the lead on training and bridging initiatives over the years. Committed to improving the integration and



retention of foreign-trained immigrants, ICNSS is working with CIC to provide the best possible environment for newcomers to prepare for success.

In March 2004, CIC's Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative was launched to develop four English Language curricula, specific to four occupations. By November, with the completion of the developmental work, ICNSS was ready to offer sector-specific language training to enable immigrants to find and retain jobs commensurate with their qualifications and skills. The communities in Peel Region received the news of the ELT

SNAP

SNAP is designed to share information about CIC-funded settlement programs in Ontario, including LINC curriculum, innovative programming, training, resources, policy, and administrative updates.

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We encourage submission of articles that relate to settlement programming in Ontario.

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COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE INTEGRATION AND RETENTION OF FOREIGN-TRAINED IMMIGRANTS, ICNSS IS WORKING WITH CIC TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENT FOR NEWCOMERS TO PREPARE FOR SUCCESS.



initiative with enthusiasm and support.

ICNSS is currently running two ELT classes, one for newcomers with administrative skills and ambitions, and the other for individuals in environmental professions. One additional course for entrepreneurial occupations is being planned for Spring 2005.

Classes are taught by trained ESL instructors who use experiential teaching techniques to encourage interaction, discussion and learning. Topics include defining and obtaining Canadian work experience; improving presentation and interview skills; application of transferable job skills; credentials assessment and certification; and diversity in the Canadian workplace. Students receive one-on-one counseling and are coached for job interviews. They learn how to network, how to conduct self-directed research and how to conduct a job search. They are also provided with job placements and are matched with mentors for additional support and guidance. The program recognizes the need to promote sector-specific terminology within higher levels of English language training, as well as the value of community involvement in the process.

INTEGRATION OF FOREIGN-TRAINED INDIVIDUALS INTO THE LABOUR MARKET IS THE AIM OF THE ENHANCED LANGUAGE TRAINING INTERVENTION.

Integration of foreign-trained individuals into the labour market is the aim of the Enhanced Language Training intervention. At the end of the 16-week program, newcomers are equipped with appropriate workplace language skills and experience, and are ready to compete in the labour market. The ICNSS ELT initiative is one of many federally funded projects across Canada that address the employment needs of Canadian newcomers.

With extensive language training, mentoring and work experience, newcomers gain confidence and develop job search skills, which allow them to reach their full potential in the labour market. This is what organizations such as Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services are committed to helping its clients achieve - success in the face of challenges.

For more information on ICNSS, visit their web site at <http://www.icnss.org/>

Established in 1986,

ICNSS is a multi-service centre that delivers social programs and inter-cultural activities while promoting community partnerships that build a strong and dynamic society. Besides developing and implementing the first community mediation service in Peel, ICNSS works with community partners to deliver language classes, job search workshops, leadership skills development, pre-employment counselling, pre-school programming and services for senior citizens. ICNSS serves approximately 52,000 clients a year in 29 languages and enlists over 350 volunteers to help deliver services throughout Peel Region



LEARNING ENGLISH WITH THE CBC

CBC OTTAWA AND CBC ARCHIVES HAVE TEAMED UP TO PROVIDE AN EXCITING NEW LEARNING RESOURCE FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA. DEVELOPED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE APPLIED LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA, THE GOAL OF THIS PILOT PROJECT IS TO HELP NEW CANADIANS ENHANCE THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THEIR NEW HOME.

The following organizations were partners in the creation of this new resource for language learning: English Language Tutoring for the Ottawa Community, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, Ottawa Public Library, the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, and the Ottawa Carleton Catholic School Board.

The lessons featured on the web site cover a wide range of topics, from how maple syrup is produced to the role of women in Canada's World War II efforts. They include reading texts, video footage and comprehension questions that promote active listening and learning.

Perfect for those who do not have access to formal ESL learning, the web site can also be used by individuals who wish to enhance their skills and knowledge independently. LINC instructors may wish to encourage learners to try some lessons on their own, on personal computers or through public access sites.

The site's organization allows for easy navigation. In total, there are 10 lessons available to choose from on the web site. By selecting topics, students follow links to texts that cover a variety of historical topics. Each lesson is assigned a level: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Lessons typically start by providing a text to familiarize readers with the topic. This first section also introduces key vocabulary that will be used in the

lesson, and asks individuals to check their own familiarity with the topic before moving on.

Lessons encourage interactive participation with the materials. Video footage from the CBC archives provides relevant and interesting narratives to support the lesson's content, with activities designed to ensure student comprehension and reflection.

The web site is most easily accessed using faster internet connections. Users with dial-up access or less computer memory may experience delays or interruptions with video clips, but the rest of the lessons, audio clips, should be accessible.

Reports from CBC staff indicate that this popular web site's reach has already extended well beyond the Ottawa area, with users accessing the site across the country and as far away as Japan, Italy, Taiwan and Germany.

Learning English with the CBC is available at www.cbc.ca/ottawa/esl

HERE'S WHAT ONE LINC INSTRUCTOR HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE CBC WEB SITE:

"Visually, the site is very attractive. It is user friendly, very interactive and very interesting. The variety of topics, layout and multiple-choice format are easy to use, and the narration on video footage is clear and easy to understand. The whole program is a clever use of materials available through CBC to educate ESL learners about Canada and its history."



OCISO

By Nancy Worsfold, OCISO

Here's a question for you: How do you define 'survivor'? Do you choose

(a) a reality television show where the winner is awarded a million dollars, or (b) a person who continues to function, despite facing severe, often brutal conditions?

Unlike their TV counterparts, survivors of torture don't win a million dollars. In the real world they struggle to live with their memories and the often debilitating effects that torture produces, including nightmares, depression and feelings of shame and guilt. If they are lucky, survivors make it to a place like OCISO in Ottawa, where they can access therapeutic counselling tailored to the needs of victims of torture.

OCISO, the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, has been providing settlement services since the 1970s. Over the years services have become more specialized in order to meet clients' increasingly complex needs.

In the early 1990s, specialized longer term counselling was separated from the general supportive counselling offered as part of settlement services, and the OCISO counselling program was born. The OCISO counselling program offers intensive and

culturally sensitive psychological counselling to newcomers and refugees who are survivors of torture.

REFERRAL

Clients are referred through OCISO's own settlement department, as well as through a variety of community channels. These include health, education and legal practitioners, churches, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in addition to a variety of community service providing agencies.

In some cases, settlement workers may refer clients to counselling because of indications that clients are experiencing challenges with the adaptation process or in controlling their emotions. They may have no knowledge that clients were victims of torture. In fact, clients themselves may not be aware that the torture they experienced is the source of their present pain and difficulty. Even as therapy progresses, it may take months before clients develop sufficient trust to unmask their agonizing memories.

The counselling program is supported by the United Way, the City of Ottawa and, since 1997, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT). Started in 1981, the UNVFVT was charged with assisting victims of torture and keeping them safe from further harm. The fund is administered by the United Nations High



Commissioner for Human Rights. As a voluntary fund, it derives its income entirely from individual and UN member country donations.

REBUILDING LIVES

The cultural and language resources at OCISO are key to rebuilding lives torn by the inhumanity of torture. Our experience, supported by what clients often reveal, indicates that Western mainstream therapeutic services, such as group therapy, are less effective in assisting victims of torture than the one-on-one model offered through OCISO.

With patient and culturally sensitive counselling, clients who have experienced torture can progress over a period of months to finally begin achieving some of their goals, whether those include finding a job, going back to school or improving parenting skills. Clients are welcome to return to OCISO for counselling should they encounter difficulties that might cause a relapse of symptoms or a setback.

For more information on the OCISO counselling program or any other aspect of OCISO's settlement services, please visit their web site at <http://www.ociso.org/>



CANADIAN NEWCOMER MAGAZINE: AN AUDIENCE THAT NEEDED SERVING

By Dale Sproule, Editor, Canadian Newcomer Magazine

CANADIAN NEWCOMER MAGAZINE IS A FREE MAGAZINE THAT CONNECTS ONTARIO'S DIVERSE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO NEW IMMIGRANTS IN BOTH OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES.

When Issue 1 hit the streets in spring of 2004, the Toronto Star ran the headline "Magazine for Newcomers Sticks to 1700 words". The response was impressive, with phones at the magazine office ringing off the hook. Many calls came from ESL teachers who wanted to use the magazine as a teaching tool. Immigrant serving agencies also responded positively, attracted to the idea of an accessible, easy-to-read publication addressing issues of concern to newcomers.

From ESL to health, from housing to employment-related topics, and even lifestyle topics, the magazine covers issues that

newcomers care about. The latest issue – Number 6 - is a special edition familiarizing newcomers with the conventions of life in Canada. It includes advice on how to avoid scams, an overview of laws regarding child neglect and spousal abuse (including multilingual help line numbers etc.), information about workplace norms and etiquette that make it easier to adapt to life in Canada.

CIC Settlement Directorate in Ontario Region provided financial support for two issues in 2004 and 2005 by covering the printing, distribution and translation costs. This enabled the magazine to start serving the francophone audience in Toronto with a separate French edition.



The Canadian Newcomer Magazine is published four times per year. It is distributed to settlement agencies, libraries and retail outlets and is available on-line at <http://www.settlement.org/site/cnmag/fall04/home.asp>

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LITERACY AND HIGH NEEDS SURVEYS FOR LINC

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA, SETTLEMENT DIRECTORATE, ONTARIO REGION, IS FUNDING TWO PROJECTS TO SURVEY THE LANGUAGE TRAINING NEEDS OF NEWCOMERS IN THE LINC PROGRAM.

LITERACY SURVEY

The goal of the literacy survey is to identify best practices as well as tools and resources currently used in the LINC classroom. The survey will also help identify resource gaps. In addition, the contractor will identify additional resources available in the larger ESL field and those that may be of use in LINC.

HIGH NEEDS SURVEY

The high needs project will survey assessment centres and language

instruction providers to determine the size of the high needs newcomer population seeking language instruction through LINC, the range of needs presented, and the current practices in place for the referral and instruction of these clients.

Related tasks will be to assist CIC Ontario Region in developing a working definition of high needs that can be used within the context of LINC instruction and to identify potential target students who may not have accessed LINC instruction at all.

The contractor will also identify best practices, tools and resources currently used in the LINC classroom, as well as service and resource gaps. Recommendations will then be developed for the enhanced support of high needs learners.

WATCH FOR SURVEYS

Contractors working on these surveys will be contacting agencies in the near future. You or your agency may be contacted to carry out one of the surveys.

OHIP ELIGIBILITY: WAITING PERIODS REDUCED OR ELIMINATED FOR SOME IMMIGRANTS

Changes were made to OHIP in 2004, which affect certain classes of immigrants. The changes stipulate that these classes become eligible for OHIP coverage immediately after arrival.

These changes apply to privately and government sponsored refugees categorized as "Convention Refugees", who now qualify for immediate OHIP coverage. Prior to June 2004, some categories of private and government sponsored refugees qualified for OHIP only after a 90 day waiting period. Under the old system, refugees relied on the Interim Federal Health Plan (IFH) to cover any medical expenses

until OHIP coverage became effective.

As of June 2004, OHIP announced a policy change that allows the following two categories of immigrants to be eligible for OHIP effective immediately without a wait period.

- **Humanitarian Designated Class** (also referred to as Asylum Country class and Source Country class) introduced in 1997, which ceased in 2002; and,
- **Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Class** (also known as Asylum Country class and Source Country class) introduced in 2002

with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

These immigrants will also continue to be eligible for IFH for the extended benefits such as coverage for prescription medications and emergency dental care.

Immigrants in the category of **Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Class** will have one of the following codes on their immigrant document (Confirmation of Permanent Residence or Permanent Resident Card): RA3, RA5, RAC, RAS, RAG, RAX, RS1, RS3, RS5, RSC, RSS, RSG, or RSX.

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COA ORIENTATION SESSIONS

RECENT SUCCESSES

Successful COA mobile training missions were recently conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. When the refugees from Kyrgyzstan arrived in Canada, the stories in the newspapers quoted some of the information that they had learned about Canada before they got here. It was information that they obviously had learned through COA.

One former participant from COA Lebanon wrote an e-mail to his COA facilitator saying that an HRSDC employee in Canada had been surprised to find that a newly-arrived immigrant knew so much about settlement in Canada. As an example, the immigrant knew how to obtain a Social Insurance Number card and a health care card, and which documents were required to obtain each card. Apart from the form-filling requirements of settlement, the sessions focus on raising awareness amongst participants about the challenges ahead and about the attitudes and skills necessary to meet those challenges.

COORDINATING EFFORTS

The IOM is currently pursuing ways to increase coordination with settlement agencies across Canada. One example may be to have participants contact settlement agencies before they immigrate as a way to boost their confidence about the move to Canada. The IOM also recommends closer contact with in-Canada service providing organizations so they can assist in updating COA course content and information.

This year COA facilitators from Kenya will travel to Ontario to liaise with refugee service providing organizations. IOM and CIC will work with the refugee and immigrant serving agencies to identify ways to improve the level of preparedness of the next group of Government Assisted Refugees and to develop strategies to address their specific needs. The site visit will also enable COA trainers to establish permanent links with agencies in Canada and address their concerns and issues regarding overseas orientation.



ONE PARTICIPANT'S WORDS

Approximately 13,000 immigrants and refugees participate in COA each year. A short excerpt from the letter of a participant to the COA worldwide project manager gives some sense of the COA experience:

Thank you so much for your concern, and the prompt reply to our questions! The seminar yesterday was a real eye-opener. My teenage sons told us last night that they were glad they went, because many of their fears and doubts were addressed. They even "forgave" me for waking them up so early that morning!

The wealth of practical information that your seminar provided has helped us clarify our goals and expectations. And for that, we are truly grateful. Thank you again, and warmest regards.

OHIP ELIGIBILITY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

It is possible that some OHIP offices may not yet be aware of this policy change. If an immigrant in one of these categories is refused immediate coverage by OHIP and told they must wait 90 days, the immigrant may appeal the decision. This is done by writing a brief letter

indicating why the immigrant should be given immediate coverage. Letters should be sent to:

General Manager
OHIP
49 Place D'Armes, 3rd floor
Kingston, ON K7L 5J3
Fax: (613) 548-6557

OHIP has assured CIC that as long as the immigrant is otherwise eligible, the waiting period will be waived.