

The Citizen

Durham Region's Diversity Focused Newsletter

ISSUE 10
WINTER 2011



Welcome Centres launch



Top: L to R - Dr. Hugh Drouin (Commissioner, Social Services Department and Co-Chair of the LDIPC) and Tracey Vaughan (Executive Director, CDCD) join the Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism and MP Chris Alexander in cutting the ribbon at the opening of the Ajax site of the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services in Durham.

Bottom: L to R - Richard Lecours (CIC), Maralyn Tassone (DRUHC), Vicky Pidgeon (DDSB), Pixie Cohen (CIC), Constable Kim (RCMP), Monica McClure (DDSB), Catherine Bond (CIC) and Mitch Litvack (CIC) at the official opening of the Pickering site of the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services in Durham.



It's official! After almost a decade of planning, Welcome Centres have finally arrived in Durham Region. On Dec. 2, 2011 the Ajax and Pickering Welcome Centres were officially opened. The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism opened the Ajax site. MPs Corneliu Chisu and Chris Alexander joined other elected officials in opening the Pickering site. Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Welcome Centres offer a variety of services, including language instruction and employment counselling, in one location to assist newcomers in successful settlement.

As a community, Durham Region recognized the need for welcome centres years ago when the first multi-sector consortium was formed to discuss welcome centres, hubs and newcomer information centres. They knew then, what

we all know now that it takes "all hands on deck" for settlement to be successful. Welcome Centres are an opportunity for service providers, education, business, government and civic society to formally articulate their role in making Durham a welcoming community and demonstrating an understanding that when newcomers succeed, we all succeed.

Congratulations to the forward thinking "Durhamites" that came before us; the teams of hard working people, the agency leads, CDCD, and DRUHC; the DDSB and DCDSB; and to CIC for supporting Durham on this journey. The Ajax Welcome Centre will be hosting a public open house on Jan. 27 from 1 to 4 p.m. – all are welcome.

Welcome Centres were identified as a priority by the Durham community in the Diversity and Immigration Community Plan. It is wonderful to see words turn into actions as Durham's capacity to serve residents grows.

*Audrey Andrews
Diversity & Immigration Program
Region of Durham*

Translation links: <http://translate.google.com>

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Prithvi Initiative. Community, faith and the environment



Above: Top row from left to right are Doodnauth Sharma, Chad Shew, Deo Prasad, Shiva Mahadeo, Dev Ramkallie; Bottom row: Cecil Ramnauth. Below: Devi Mandir, 2590 Brock Road, Pickering, Ontario.



The Prithvi Initiative is a major milestone of a greening journey that the Devi Mandir has embarked upon since 2006. On Oct. 12, the Mandir celebrated the roof mount solar panel installation and connection to the energy grid. This, coupled with high efficiency lighting, along with the completion of major roof works as a prerequisite, was made possible through grant funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). According to the Engineering Director and Secretary of Devi Mandir Cecil Ramnauth, "the change perfectly aligns with the Hindu Scriptural beliefs in protecting the environment through sustainability."

Chad Shew and Dev Ramkallie of DM Youth explained that the English translation of Prithvi is earth. The concept of Prithvi Mataa, or Mother Earth, is central to the Hindu belief. It is a concept that is also common to millions, if not billions of people around the world, crossing faiths, races, and cultures. In short, the Earth, like a mother, gives us all that we need to live, and therefore it is our duty to respect and protect it. It is from this belief that the Prithvi initiative was born. They

further explained that the youth have embraced the Prithvi Initiative from its inception as they strive to recognize the importance of giving back, whether to the earth, the community, or each other and it is in this spirit, that the youth programs at the Devi Mandir continue to grow.

Other aspects of the Prithvi Initiative include the green dishwashing initiative and the Milk Bag Project. Green dishwashing has moved the Devi Mandir from disposable, non-biodegradable plates, cups and spoons to stainless steel dishes eliminating tons of waste. The Milk Bag Project focuses on reusing disposable empty plastic milk bags to make sleeping mats for the under privileged kids in third world countries.

*Engineering Team
Devi Mandir*

Embracing entrepreneurship



Keith with a customer's saddle.

Keith Brettell is the Chair of the Clarington Accessibility Advisory Committee which advises and assists Clarington in developing and facilitating strategies toward a barrier-free Clarington for citizens with disabilities. He shares his story on embracing entrepreneurship.

I was frustrated with trying to find a job working for someone else. I'm college educated but I

just couldn't seem to find what I was looking for, due to the job not being available or employers nervous about hiring a person with a disability. I've always been interested in starting my own business, it's something that runs in the family. After much thought about my skills and experience I took the leap and created my own business.

I started Casper's Tack Cleaning Service as a result of cleaning the tack at the stable where I board my horse Casper. I realized that if I didn't do it wouldn't get done as often as it should. A person's tack can be a significant investment and if not taken care of properly it will not last. The problem most people face is the lack of time to do it due to careers, school, family etc.

Casper's Tack Cleaning Service is a mobile service where I go into a stable and clean tack on-site. With the support of the ODSP Self-Employment Program and Northern Lights Vocational Services, a business plan and much research I am now enjoying being an entrepreneur.

Keith Brettell
Clarington Accessibility Advisory
Committee

Supporting newcomers in their employment search



Rosalie Fontaine, an Employment Advisor at the Brock CERC assists a couple with their employment choices.

Chances are if you reside in Durham Region and are looking at your employment or training options you have heard of or possibly used Durham College Employment Services (DCES). Funded by Employment Ontario and delivered by Durham College and the Township of Brock, DCES has six locations spread throughout the region and its surrounding areas.

Regardless of the location, the DCES customer service goal is

to ensure that our customers know and understand the supports that are available to them. Accessing the full suite of Employment Ontario programs (jobs, free use of employment related resources such as computers, faxing, copiers, workshops, labour market information, employment counselling, Second Career/ OSEB applications, etc.) is as easy as walking into any one of the locations and meeting the friendly and welcoming staff members.

Each centre is uniquely compatible to their community, with expertise in the employment structure and trends within each area. Our staff are professional, well trained and strive to constantly remain updated with relevant resources to assist our clients fully.

Whether you visit the Port

Hope, Bowmanville, Oshawa, Uxbridge, Port Perry or Beaverton Centre you are sure to be treated with excellent customer service and respect while being assisted in your employment search. We welcome you to come out and visit our centres and meet with our Resource Information Specialists as well as our Case Managers and Job Developers. For more information, please contact one of our locations directly.

Please visit our website for full contact information for each of the sites:
www.durhamcollege.ca

Adrienne Rogers
Employment Advisory
Durham College Employment Services

Happens to Be...LGBTQ in Our Schools: Inclusive communities

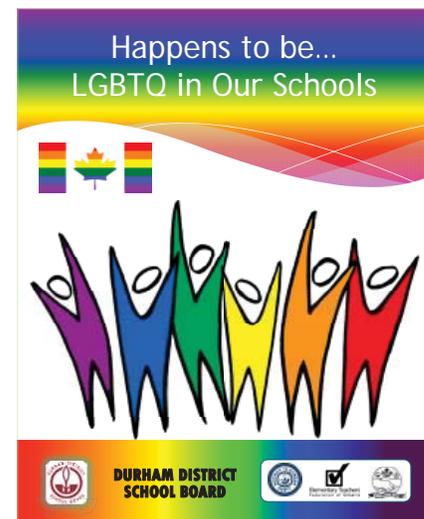
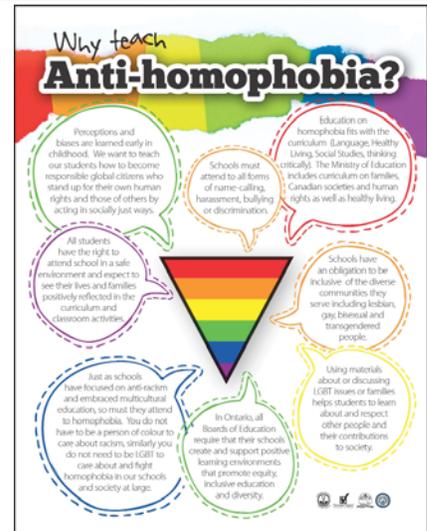
Durham District School Board has completed a K-12 Resource document supporting LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, queer) students and staff in our schools. Included in this project are lesson plans and slideshows for use in schools with teachers, support staff and the larger school community. Elementary and Secondary parent education pamphlets, support materials, and book lists are provided. In addition, all schools will be given a teaching set of 6 posters to use in classrooms or around the school.

Anti-homophobia education affirms the worth of all our students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and show respect for diversity in the school and the wider society. It requires schools to adopt measures to provide a safe environment for learning, free from harassment, violence, and expressions of hate. This education encourages students to think critically about

themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship.

Critical thinking skills include the ability to identify perspectives, values, and issues; detect bias; and read for implicit as well as explicit meaning. In the context of anti-discrimination, critical literacy involves asking questions and challenging the status quo, and leads students to look at issues of power and justice in society. Sincere thanks to OSSTF District 13, ETFO Durham and CUPE Local 218 for their support of the use of this very timely resource.

*Barry Bedford
Education Officer
Durham District School Board*



Rick Lea - community champion

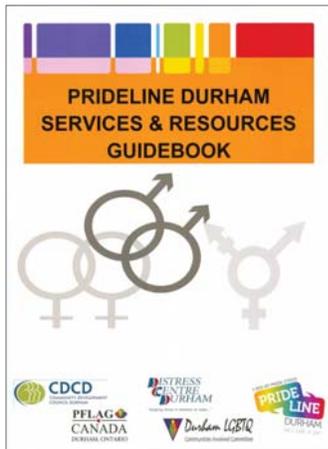
It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Rick Lea on Nov. 16 after a six month courageous battle with cancer. Rick was a driving force in promoting Durham region as a welcoming and inclusive community. Rick was a convening partner and member of the Local Diversity & Immigration Partnership Council. Rick was also instrumental in the creation and promotion of the Durham Immigration Portal.

As Executive Director of the Durham Region Local Training Board, Rick brought the voice of the employment sector to the work of the LDIPC. Rick was always a champion for rural Durham and was a tireless proponent for rural and northern economic development in the region. Rick's voice, dedication and vision will be missed.

*Dr. Hugh Drouin
Commissioner, Social Services Dept
Co-chair, Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council
Region of Durham*



Prideline Durham project: Creating inclusive practices



On Oct. 18, 2011, the Prideline Durham project partners (DCD, Durham LGBTQ CIC, CDCD) hosted the first in a series of community forums. The first forum was a great success, with 78 representatives from local businesses, agencies, groups, school boards, students and community

members in attendance. The forum focused on a discussion of current barriers and potential solutions for organizations, businesses and groups looking to provide a more welcoming space for their LGBTQ customers and clients. A second forum will be held in the spring of 2012.

The forum also provided an opportunity to highlight the first edition of the Prideline Durham Services and Resources Guidebook. The Guidebook lists 75 organizations, businesses and groups who completed a survey which explored the collective capacity in Durham to address the unique needs of the LGBTQ community. Three categories were created to inform the community about what to expect when accessing a service or product:

- LGBTQ Friendly - those who do not provide specific services but are open to accommodate members of the LGBTQ community.
- LGBTQ Positive - those that offer some specialized services or products, provide a welcoming environment and can offer appropriate referrals to those with specific needs.
- LGBTQ Focused - those who specifically reach out to the LGBTQ community and offer programs and services that meet their needs.

If you are interested in the work of the Prideline Durham partnership please contact Erica Simpson at erica@distresscentredurham.ca

*Megan Cramer
Community Developer
Community Development Council Durham*

Diversity: A way of doing business



Pictured clockwise from left to right, Shivani Dass, Sharon Bacchus, Maria Feehely, Wassay Shefa, Brenda Howard, Anna Frances and Kamal Jagdev.

Our conversations and experiences inform who we are and through sharing we learn about each other and increase our awareness of diversity.

Gulnar Kamadia, Manager of Diversity at Kinark Child and Family Services, is leading these conversations across the agency. Recently, Kamadia sat down with

Kinark's Family Services team in Durham. The two-hour session offered an opportunity to discuss Kinark's newly introduced Diversity Vision and Principles. The session allowed participants to touch on areas like demographics, dynamics of culture, and approaches to encouraging self-awareness and raising social consciousness.

"Just like the families we help, no two groups of people are the same," says Laurie Marsan, Durham Program Director.

"We need to create a climate for staff and families to be comfortable talking about their diversity and telling their stories."

Kinark Child and Family Services is a not-for-profit accredited children's mental health centre providing a range of programs from Cobourg to Oakville.

The session focused on the importance of being respectful, having healthy curiosity about others and asking open questions to learn each person's story.

"People often don't ask questions for fear of offending" says Maria Feehely, Durham Supervisor. "But how will we work well with diverse communities if we don't take steps to learn from others?"

For Kinark, engaging in conversations about diversity is an important component of achieving effective treatment outcomes for families and interacting productively with each other in the workplace. Engaging in diversity is a journey – having conversations are steps in that journey.

*Sara Lennox
Communications Coordinator
Kinark Child and Family Services*

Sharing traditions of hope, thanksgiving and light

It is the season to celebrate in Durham! While Christmas, the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, may be the most popular in terms of visibility, there are many other special days being celebrated throughout the late fall and early winter. We asked people across Durham to share some of their family memories and traditions and we're sharing those with you here.

Whether you're celebrating Diwali, Eid, Hannukkah, Christmas, Thai Pongal or Chinese New Year, each of these special holidays gives thanks and the symbol of light, of hope is central to nearly all of them – which at this time of year in Canada seems all the more fitting as the days grow shorter.

Diwali in Guyana

Our house and yard would be thoroughly clean. Diwali morning starts off with prayers to Laxhmi (goddess of wealth) followed by my mother's preparation of sweetmeats and vegetarian lunch. At twilight prayers would be repeated followed by the lighting of dozens of Diyas which would be placed around the house and yard. My community used to be filled with spectators admiring the brilliant rows of lights that were created in intricate patterns. As children we would admire our yard, counting and comparing diyas as we watch the gleaming yellow flames of our homemade diyas, with satisfaction. There would be much delight and friendliness around our home and community. Reflecting on this auspicious occasion brings me nothing but childhood joy! Leila



Eid Mubarak!

Eid-ul-Adha, known as the "Festival of Sacrifice" (begins after the annual pilgrimage ("Hajj") of many Muslims to Mecca). In our family, Eid day begins by rising bright and early and everyone getting dressed in new outfits. A special Eid prayer is performed early morning in a large gathering at the Mosque. Once the prayer and sermon is complete, good wishes are exchanged with each other by greeting "Eid Mubarak", meaning "Blessed Eid". After prayers, a grand Eid Dinner is always a tradition at home with a wide variety of traditional Pakistani and Arabic dishes. No Eid dinner is ever complete without mom's special Eid dessert, almond kheer (rice and almond pudding). All the young kids would gather after dinner around the elders and receive their gifts, candy and money. Nadia



Lighting the Menorah

Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by Jewish people around the world. Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days and each evening candles on a Menorah are lit to commemorate the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Hanukkah starts at sunset on December 21st this year and many families will celebrate by lighting the Menorah, giving gifts, spinning the dreidel (a game using a spinning top) and eating fried foods like donuts and latkes (potato pancakes). Risa



A Canadian Christmas

As a child I remember our house was full of anticipation at Christmas time. Every day in December we opened a window on our advent calendar until finally on December 24 it revealed a picture of Baby Jesus lying in a manger. We attended an evening Christmas Eve service, and family would stay overnight because we woke up very early on Christmas morning to open presents. Pam



Glaedelig Jul!

In Denmark Christmas "Jul" is celebrated on Christmas Eve. As a little girl I remember celebrating Christmas at my grandparent's house. Christmas elves called "Nisse" would be found throughout the house. The lighting of the Christmas tree is considered as one of the highlights of Christmas Eve. It was the father in the family (in this case my grandfather) who was in charge of lighting the candles on the Christmas tree. After dinner he would go to the adjacent room on his own and light up the candles. Then he would invite the rest of the family to join and view the tree. The family would hold hands and walk around the tree singing Christmas carols. After the carols the gifts are handed out and coffee and almond cakes, marzipan and chocolate are served while the gifts are been opened. Betty



Celebrating Thai Pongal in Durham

The Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham holds an annual Thai Pongal celebration. Thai Pongal can be said as the "Tamil Thanksgiving". Tamil people all over the world celebrate Thai Pongal, as a harvesting Festival for two days. On the day of the festival, Tamil people rise early in the morning and cook a special rice to offer to the God of Sun. The next day, they worship and celebrate the animals that help them to grow their crops. Thai pongal is a festival to celebrate agriculture and farmers. Vashine



Pongalo Ponggal!

Tamil Thai Pongal is a harvest festival celebrated between January 13th and the 15th. It symbolizes the beginning of the Tamil month "Thai". This festival is dedicated to the Tamil sun god Surya, who is given offerings of the first harvest. On Thai Pongal day, a family begins the celebration early. Every member of the family gets up early in the morning, bathes, puts on new clothes and gathers to cook the traditional pongal (rice pudding). When the milk boils over during the cooking of the pongal, the moment is celebrated by the yelling of "Ponggalo Ponggal!" Nan



Gung Hei Fat Choy!

As a child, I looked forward to the Chinese New Year every year. There were always gorgeous cherry and peach blossoms, chrysanthemum and peonies displaying around the house, delicious food such as ba bao (8 treasures) with 8 sugar fruits and melon seeds as well as nian gao (sweet cake), deep fried dumpling and fresh fruit scattering the dinning table. One particular memory that stayed with me was a new dress. This was the only time of the year I got to choose a brand new dress and a pair of shiny shoes from a shop and I no longer wore the 'hand-me-downs' on this day. Relatives and friends were coming and going visiting our home. As a child we would greet our guests by saying "Gung Hei Fat Choy" (wish you have a prosperous year) and we would run away happily with red-pocket money. Cindy



Diversity this holiday season: Region of Durham

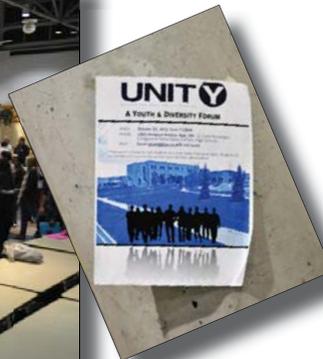
The holiday season is just around the corner, and preparations are underway to decorate Durham Regional Headquarters in celebration. For many years, staff and visitors to the Region have enjoyed a tree and light display in the front entrance. Lights and Christmas trees are traditional symbols of Christian celebration during the holidays. Yet as the communities of Durham Region have grown, they have become much more diverse. This rich diversity is reflected in both the people we serve, and in the staff who deliver those services. The Region of Durham recognizes that employees and residents share a wide variety of festive traditions and celebrations. Many of these will take place during the months of December and January. To

honour the variety of faiths and cultures that can be found within our offices, this year Regional Headquarters will be displaying a Holiday Table alongside the Christmas tree and lights. Regional employees have been invited to share different religious and cultural artefacts of significance, and the Holiday Table will be on display at 605 Rossland Rd. E. from December to mid-January.



*Sonya Hardman
Policy and Research Advisor
Region of Durham*

First Annual Youth and Diversity Forum: Informing planning



On Oct. 21, 2011, The Durham Regional Police, in partnership with local youth, hosted the First Annual Youth and Diversity Forum at J. Clark Richardson Collegiate and Notre Dame Catholic High School in Ajax.

The event was a resounding success with more than 80 youth attending to share ideas, ask questions and speak about their experiences. The evening commenced with presentations

on youth rights, diversity, discrimination and racism.

Next were breakout sessions where the youth provided police officers with valuable information about how officers can better understand and relate to our local youth. The youth then received a huge surprise when members of the new professional basketball team, the Oshawa Power, arrived to speak to the youth about their life experiences.

They were very generous and provided each youth with a ticket to a future game.

The evening concluded with some fantastic singing and dancing from local youth performers. The talent showcase was organized with the help of our friends from the Town of Ajax and hosted by our friends from The University of Ontario Institute of Technology. Little did we know there is some outstanding entertainers right in our own backyard.

The feedback has been overwhelming with the vast majority asking when the next event will take place.

The Durham Regional Police is committed to working hard to better understand what the community needs us to do to ensure their continued confidence and trust.

*Inspector Bruce Townley
Durham Regional Police Service*

My journey to Canada: Truly settled

*I always dream of Canada
Oh! Canada I love
So far away, too far away
From my homeland above*

*But then one day no more I dreamt
'Cause Canada was there
Beneath my feet, above my head
And all around so fair*

*The splendour and reality
was far too much to bear
I laugh, I cried and then I prayed
And gave thanks that I was here*

*But I had so many things do to
And don't know where to start
As Canada seems such a big wide world
And I have to be very smart*

*But luckily I found a friend
Who rescued me, and, to my delight
She told me of a place to go
The name was "Northern Lights Canada"*

*At Northern Lights it's joy to be
And the people there to meet
The information and service shared
Twas a second home so sweet*

*I must say though an outstanding one
Was there for all my needs
The guidance, warmth and advice received
Was well ex-e-cuted indeed*

*So Canada oh! Canada
I hope that I can do
My part as I try to shape my way
In becoming a part of you*

Violet Tulloch



Northern Lights

Violet is a newcomer to Canada and was a client in the Job Search Workshops for newcomer youth at Northern Lights. The Job Search Workshop for Newcomer Youth provides youth with:

- Thorough needs assessment of short and long-term employment and education goals
- Personalized action plan including one-on-one job search coaching
- Pre-employment workshops conducted in computerized environment
- Specialists who understand the job search needs of newcomers youth
- An environment to learn about job search strategies and Canadian employer expectations

The program is available to newcomer youth who are:

- Permanent residents, landed immigrants, convention refugees or live-in caregivers
- Between the ages of 14-24 years
- Ready, willing and able to work
- Able to communicate in the English language

For more information about the program, please visit the Northern Lights website at www.northernlightscanada.ca

Radiance India at the Oshawa Public Library



Eva Saether (OPL), Shashi Bhatia (ICCADI), and Nicky Patel (Durham College).

Oshawa Public Libraries, in partnership with the Indo-Canadian Cultural Association of Durham and Durham College, hosted a colourful celebration of Indian culture on Saturday, November 5th. Shashi Bhatia, President of ICCADI, narrated the fun-filled afternoon of Indian music, dance, food and fabrics. Nicky Patel, ESL Specialist at Durham College welcomed over 100 people. Displayed on the library tables were materials in Hindi, Urdu and Tamil, and resources in English about India's history and culture. A classical Indian dancer dazzled the audience with her beauty and agility while Shawn Chohar, a student and comedian in Durham, did his part to get the audience laughing. Lively dancers from the Shoba Talent School, as young as the age of six, jumped and jived across the stage. Everyone learned about

The regional fashions of India and the way in which they add Indian charm to everyday style. Several women, who volunteered to learn about sari wrapping, felt so elegant once in their saris that they modeled them to the audience as if they had been given a luxury makeover! Representatives from the Durham Immigration Portal and CDCD answered questions from participants. Delicious pakoras, samosas and poppadom were provided by Oshawa's Curry Club restaurant on Simcoe Street.

The Oshawa Public Libraries are committed to serving the needs of all populations. Please visit our multicultural collection at www.oshlib.ca.

*Sally Grande
Serials and Multilingual Collections Librarian
Oshawa Public Libraries*



Right: Participants volunteered to try on a sari.
Above: Young dancers helped celebrate Radiance India.



Women's Institutes: here and around the globe

Women's Institutes (WI) were first formed in Ontario over 100 years ago. They quickly spread across Ontario then Canada and then to the United Kingdom. The purpose was to give women a chance to advocate for social and economic change, and work towards the personal growth and empowerment of women. Eventually in 1933 the WI's joined with similar organizations with common aims and objectives to form the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). Today 70 countries belong to this organization of which Canada is a major participant.

ACWW has two unique features. The first is the many projects that they support worldwide. These range from literacy, to safe drinking water, to proper nutrition, to economic development. The second is that ACWW is the only women's organization that has status at the United Nations. Currently Canada's project is supporting Caribbean women in coping with climate change. Canada's immediate past project was assisting an orphanage in India for victims of the tsunami. All members of ACWW come together every three years. The next Triennial will be held in

India. The Canadian delegation is looking forward to travelling there and learning more about the country. For more information on the ACWW, visit www.acww.org.uk/



*Barbara Weese
Women's Institute*

Update on the Diversity & Immigration Community Report Card

The Diversity & Immigration Community Report Card is a tool that will track the community's progress against the results the Durham community set itself in the Diversity & Immigration Community Plan. It will track changes over time, measure real change in people's lives, and is a way to tell the community's story.

In October and November a series of seven community focus groups were held to identify preliminary indicators – ways to measure those results the community wants to see. In total, 90 people participated in face to face meetings. Fifty-six community partners from 34 different organizations and agencies and 34 newcomers from across the region attended. The groups brainstormed potential indicators, gathered stories and developed a preliminary data agenda. We looked at each of the results the community identified in the Community Plan and we asked people what would it look like if that were the case now in Durham?

The Community Report Card will only be as successful as the community input into the plan.

We are very pleased with the level of interest in the focus groups, in the information we gathered and the continued engagement of the community in this whole process of creating a more inclusive and welcoming community for all members of the Durham community. Stay tuned for more as the project progresses!

COMMUNITY PLAN HIGHLIGHTS			
PRIORITIES	PROSPECT AREA 1: CREATE A CULTURE OF THE FUTURE	PROSPECT AREA 2: IMPROVE LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES FOR NEWCOMERS	PROSPECT AREA 3: ATTRACT AND RETAIN INVESTMENT
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 1.2. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 1.3. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 1.4. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 2.2. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 2.3. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 2.4. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Attract and retain investment in the community. 3.2. Attract and retain investment in the community. 3.3. Attract and retain investment in the community. 3.4. Attract and retain investment in the community.
AREAS OF ACTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 1.1.2. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 1.1.3. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 1.1.4. Newcomer integration is a priority for the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 2.1.2. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 2.1.3. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 2.1.4. Support new business start-ups and expansion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1.1. Attract and retain investment in the community. 3.1.2. Attract and retain investment in the community. 3.1.3. Attract and retain investment in the community. 3.1.4. Attract and retain investment in the community.
TIME FRAME			

Samantha Burdett
Policy Advisor, Diversity & Immigration Program
Region of Durham

Bridging the gap between employers and immigrants



Lionel Laroche shared his knowledge and experience of cultural differences with participants.

On Oct. 21, Lionel Laroche of MCB Consultants shared his wisdom about newcomers in the workplace with over 90 service providers, HR specialists and community members at Regional Headquarters in Whitby. What made this event unique were the organizers. After hearing Lionel speak at the launch of the Diversity & Immigration Community Plan in March 2010, ten community organizations came together to organize a return visit.

The session provided an entertaining and educational look at diversity in the workplace. Participants were challenged and provoked

but in an atmosphere of mutual learning. Participants came away from the event with a deeper appreciation for the cultural diversity in our community and with some useful tools to help better engage with colleagues and clients in a mutually respectful way.

Over the past ten years, Lionel Laroche has provided cross-cultural training, coaching and consulting services to over 15,000 people in nine countries. Lionel specializes in helping professionals and organizations reap the benefits of cultural differences in their work.

Good things are going to happen; you just need to be patient



Canada has a long history of providing a safe haven for refugees from around the world. In 2010, over 12,500 refugees were accepted into Canada, just over 9 per cent of newcomers to Canada that year.

Vilma Oliveros and her family arrived in Oshawa in January 2010 from Guatemala, a country they fled due to ongoing violence and threats to their family.

The Oliveros knew a family in Oshawa who they were able to stay with their first few days in Canada and the family was able to act as a reference for an apartment in the same building, "The landlord was great, we didn't have any references in Canada or any credit history here but because she knew our friends, she rented us an apartment".

The family all spoke English (both Vilma and her husband, Saul Perdomo, were English as a Foreign Language teachers in

Guatemala) but they signed up for ESL classes right away. "We knew the language but it's not the same here, the accents are different".

Taking part in ESL classes also provided a way for them to meet people, to network and as Vilma laughs, a way to get out of the house "what would we have done at home all day doing nothing?" They also started volunteering nearly as soon as they had arrived – both Vilma and her husband were volunteer tutors for students at lower ESL levels at the school. Saul also volunteered with AIDS Committee of Durham and she started volunteering at a seniors home and the Durham Hospice.

At the same time, the family was going through the refugee claimant process, "the uncertainty was very hard, you don't know what's going to happen, they can say no, they can send you back, you don't know if you're going to be able to stay." Added to this was the search for jobs, "one of the worst things is thinking that you're never going to get a job. We had our jobs back home, we had a house and cars, a certain status, everything we needed and we were forced to leave it all behind". Despite all of this, the family was determined to

succeed in Canada and they worked hard to get their kids settled and they took advantage of all of the supports offered to them. Vilma remembers telling herself, "Ok, I'm going to try to get to know people and do things. So, I used to go to anything, if I saw a training session or a conference, I went".

Both Vilma and her husband recently got jobs in their fields, Saul is working in IT and Vilma is a Durham Hospice Palliative Care Coordinator – an organization she volunteered for before working there. Vilma's advice to other newcomers: "Get out, get involved – and don't be afraid to practice your English. Everybody should go to ESL classes, that's the main thing to do, and try to volunteer in your field, there are lots of volunteering opportunities out there. You have to do the research but there are places where you can access the Internet for free." On an additional positive note, Vilma and her family have been granted "protected persons" status in Canada and so they are safe, and staying in Durham. Asked for any additional advice for newcomers, Vilma smiles and says "don't be afraid, be patient, good things are going to happen, you just need to be patient".

Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council

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