

# CIES BUILDING THE FUTURE

## Annual Report 2016-2017



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# CIES Vision & Mission

## **Vision:**

*Advancing the future success of newcomers and economically challenged individuals.*

## **Mission:**

*Provide immigrants and economically challenged individuals the tools to be successful and active participants in the community.*





# Report from the President

Canada is globally acknowledged as a safe and prosperous country that many call home, regardless of cultural differences. By extension, Calgary is a vibrant epicenter of multiculturalism, offering many opportunities for new immigrants to become involved. The Calgary Immigrant Educational Society (CIES) strives to uphold these values by providing the necessary tools for newcomers and economically challenged individuals to succeed.

Thanks to the initiative of our devoted staff team, the countless hours of work contributed by volunteers, and the unwavering support of the Board of Directors, CIES continues to thrive in a city where services for newcomers and economically challenged individuals are vital for the well-being of our community. 2017 marks 29 years of service provided by CIES, with 2018 being the 30<sup>th</sup> year of operations. On the eve of such a pivotal milestone, we are pleased to present this annual report, which outlines our achievements during the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

Established by the late Mr. Salim Sindhu, who served 26 years as the Executive Director of CIES, what was once a small group of volunteers has expanded significantly to address the needs of our communities. In 2014, CIES welcomed Dr. Sally Zhao as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

We continue to collaborate and network with community partner organizations to understand and address the challenges faced by newcomers to Canada and economically challenged individuals, as well as promote access to services for these populations by helping them overcome various barriers. Together, we endeavor to cultivate a safe and inclusive environment for residents of Calgary from every walk of life.

Once again, thank you to all who have contributed their time, energy, money, and resources to our vision for CIES. Your commitment to the organization is sincerely appreciated. We look forward to a fruitful 30<sup>th</sup> year, and we hope you will join us in our celebrations.



M'Liss Edwards  
*President, Board of Directors*

# Report from the Chief Executive Officer

The 2016-2017 fiscal year saw huge growth in the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society (CIES). Not only did our clientele grow in number; the number of new programs and projects CIES offered to the community grew in number as well. With the influx of Syrian refugees at the end of 2015, CIES received special funding support from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to run additional Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes. In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the LINC program expanded to accommodate 14 more classes, increasing the total number of classes from 56 to 70. In total, we served 1,611 unique adults and 410 children through the LINC program.

In addition to the regular programs CIES has been offering for decades, such as Drop-In ESL, Clerical Training, Literacy and Basic English, Accounting, Computer Training, Employment Skills Training, and LINC Home Study, many new programs and projects were introduced during the 2016-2017 fiscal year. With funding support from Alberta Labour, we provided Refugee Express Drop-In ESL and Integration (REDI) services to Syrian refugees while they were waiting to get into the LINC program. This project offered training in English and Arabic, which was beneficial to the initial settlement of the clients considering their low English language levels. 88 clients received express services through the REDI project.

Besides LINC and REDI, many other new programs offered assistance to Syrian refugees. The Economic & Social Integration of Syrian Refugees and other Immigrant Youth (EASSY) project, funded by Service Canada, served 24 clients with a 75% success rate. 14 clients secured employment, while another 4 are pursuing further education. CIES also offered services through the Empowering Syrian Refugees through Life Skills and Resources Information (ESR) program. This program was funded by the City of Calgary through the Emergency Resiliency Fund. In total, 119 individuals accessed support through this program.

Other new projects initiated in the 2016-2017 fiscal year were: the Alberta Human Rights project funded by the Alberta Human Rights Commission, the Reading Room project funded by the University of Calgary Students' Union (Committee of 10,000), and Breaking Economic Barriers for Immigrants and Low Income People (BEB) funded by First Calgary Financial, which offered Entrepreneurship Development Training to newcomers and low income Canadians. CIES also launched two new projects, Adult ESL Classroom Online (AECO) and Gardens for Refugees and Other Newcomers Welcomed (GROW), with funding support from Alberta Labour and the Calgary Foundation, respectively. These two projects will continue to run in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Additionally, the CIES website has been redesigned by our innovative communications team, which improves access and understanding of available programs. With funding support from the Calgary Foundation, CIES is currently in the process of updating its five-year strategic plan for 2018-2022. The Society also received a generous donation from the Alex Schaap Charity to Educate and Nurture Development (ASCEND) to help upgrade technology in our classrooms and the childminding department.

During the 2016 to 2017 fiscal year, through both its northeast and southeast facilities, CIES served about 1,400 adult clients and 170 children on a weekly basis. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of approximately 150 devoted staff and 167 generous volunteers, who between them contributed 17,450 volunteer hours, our language education, employment skills training, and settlement programs continue to thrive as we move forward into a new fiscal year full of promising opportunities.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of our valued funders, donors, and community partners, to whom we offer our most sincere gratitude. I look forward to working together with all of you for another rewarding year.



Sally Zhao, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer

# CIES Board of Directors

Our experienced team share a commitment to the goals of CIES and provide good governance on our operations.



**M'Liss Edwards**  
*President*



**John Li**  
*Vice-President*



**Philip Baker**  
*Treasurer/  
Secretary*



**Peter Plesche**  
*Board Member*



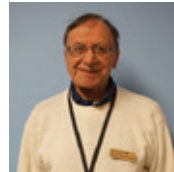
**A. Ray Kristinson**  
*Board Member*



**Wilson Howe**  
*Board Member*



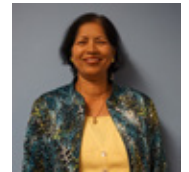
**Nalini Plesche**  
*Board Member*



**Shahid Mohammed**  
*Board Member*



**Rabail Qasir**  
*Board Member*



**Kuldip Thind**  
*Board Member*

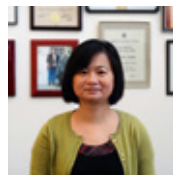
*Not pictured: Board Member Jay Sandhu*

## CIES Senior Management Team

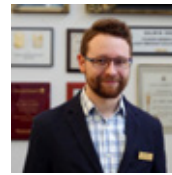
Our senior management team is made up of motivated individuals with a passion and energy to serve the community.



**Dr. Sally Zhao**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



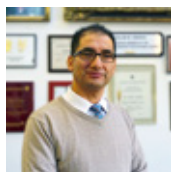
**Eva Su**  
*Human Resources  
& Office Operations  
Manager*



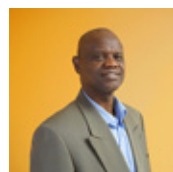
**Colyn deGraaff**  
*Manager of E-Learning  
Programs & Communications*



**Jana Ciobanu**  
*LINC Program Manager*



**Suman Khanal**  
*Settlement Services  
& Employment Training  
Programs Manager*



**Racine Diallo**  
*Computer/Accounting  
Programs Manager*



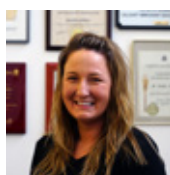
**Olivia Chen**  
*Employment Support  
Program Manager*



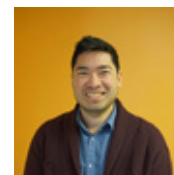
**Wei Dang**  
*Finance Manager*



**Clifford McGuire**  
*Manager, Facility  
& Operations*



**Melissa McKinnon**  
*Drop-In ESL & Volunteer  
Programs Manager*



**Dr. Cesar Suva**  
*Program Development  
Manager*

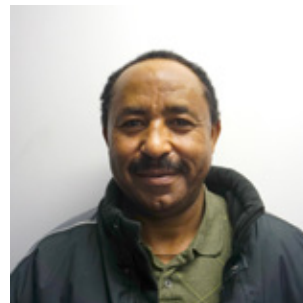
# Language

## LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada)

*Funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is a federally funded program for permanent residents and refugees in Canada. CIES' LINC program was launched in 1992 and has consistently been one of the most popular and successful language programs at CIES and in the city. The course is designed to assist newcomers settle in Canada and learn English in a variety of contexts, including Canadian culture and law, commercial and governmental services, banking, and education, among others. Students in the LINC program are assessed through Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), which is a principled approach to classroom-based language assessment aligned to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).

CIES offered LINC classes from Literacy to CLB 8 with accessible schedules for full-time and part-time morning, afternoon, and evening, and part-time weekend. The 2016-2017 fiscal year was extremely prosperous for the LINC department as our program expanded multiple times, thanks to the generous support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). CIES opened 35 more classes between February, 2016 and January, 2017. Ten classes were opened on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016, eleven on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, thirteen on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 and one on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017. During the last fiscal year, CIES proudly delivered 70 LINC classes, 7 days a week during mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends at its SE and NE locations.



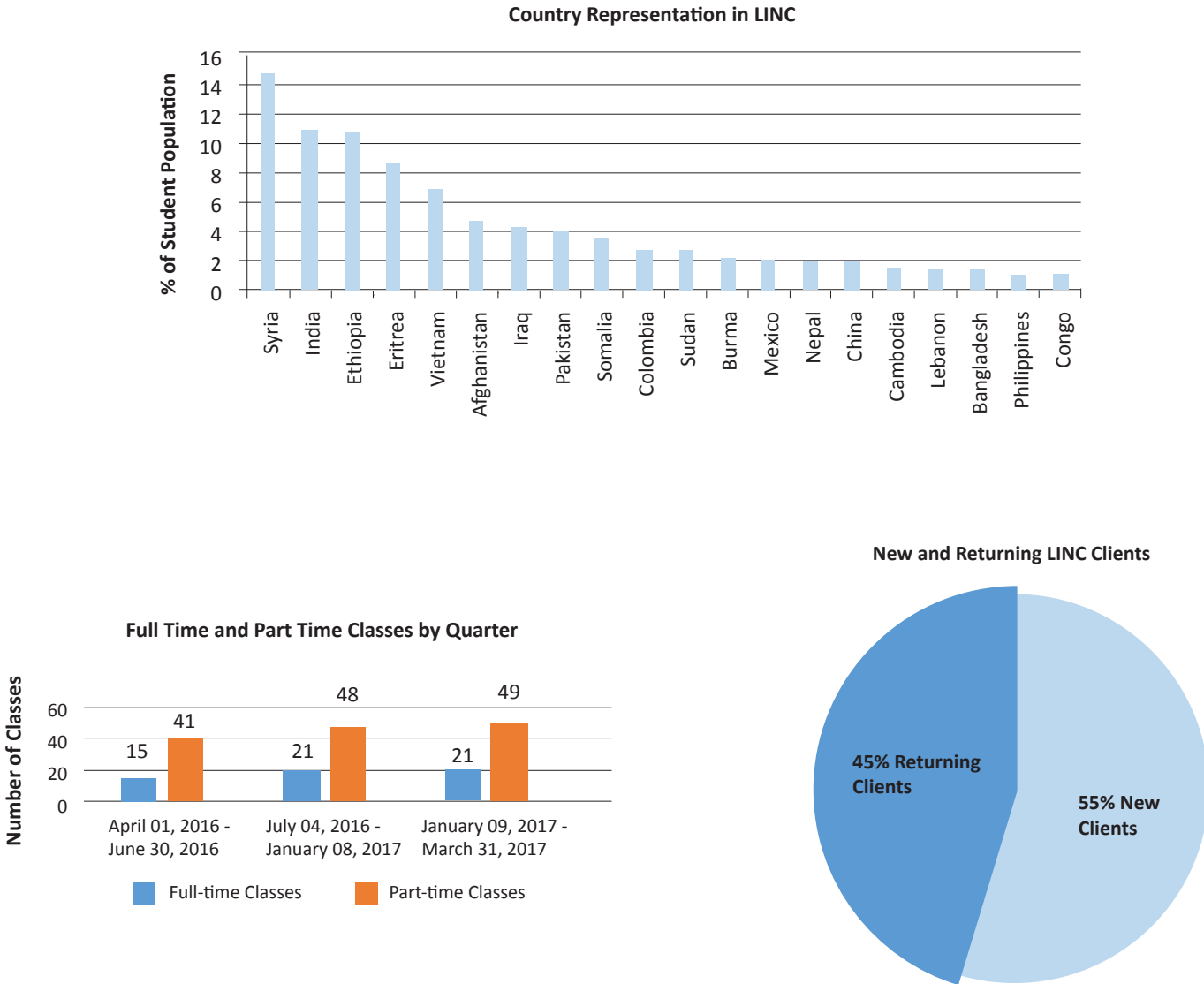


**1,611 clients received service in the CIES LINC program**, with the number of refugees who received service increasing by nearly 42% over the previous fiscal year. Our clients come from 88 ethnic and cultural backgrounds and speak approximately 48 different languages. The top three languages spoken for the 2016 -2017 fiscal year were Arabic (29.3%), Punjabi (11.7%), and Amharic (10.4%).

CIES prides itself on having professional, hard-working and experienced instructors, coordinators and supervisors. Each and every employee in the department does their best to help our clients achieve success.

*The top three languages spoken by our clients during the 2016-2017 fiscal year were Arabic, Punjabi and Amharic.*

*112 field trips to 48 different sites were organized for clients, during which they practiced what they learned in class and became more familiar with Canadian culture. Sites visited include Heritage Park, the Glenbow Museum, the Calgary Zoo, and Fort Calgary.*



## LINC Home Study

*Funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*

Not every student can attend LINC classes. Some are prevented from attending due to illness, disability, conflicting work schedules, or their role as the primary family caregiver. For these students, we offer the free e-learning alternative LINC Home Study (LHS). Clients with benchmarks between 3-3-2-2 and 8-8-8-8 are eligible to join and classes are conducted each week through a combination of a phone/Skype-guided lesson, and self-directed activities on a Learning Management System (LMS).

**During the 2016-2017 fiscal year LINC Home Study provided language instruction for 141 clients - 90 returning from the previous fiscal year with 51 new clients.** Student progress in the program has been high, with 87% of students moving up at least 1 skill per quarter.

Feedback for the program has been overwhelmingly positive, largely due to the successful one-on-one format, flexible class-times, and accessible technology.

Wait times have remained consistently high since the program's launch at CIES in 2012. Clients typically expect an 11-12 month wait for class, due to the overwhelming demand for LINC Home Study as an alternative to childminding requirements (age of children, space for children) or as a means to continue learning English while carrying a full-time job. To address the lengthy entry process and accelerate engagement upon entry, LINC Home Study has continued to offer a resource package to eligible clients, giving them access to self-directed

materials while they wait for their place in class with a LINC Home Study instructor.

*100% of respondents stated that LINC Home Study had helped them with their language goals, while 86% stated that LINC Home Study helped them find a job. 96% agreed that LINC Home Study had helped them learn about life in Canada, including laws, rights and responsibilities, and 99% of students stated that LINC Home Study had helped them feel more comfortable in Canadian society.*

Continuing from the previous fiscal year, LHS continued the development of its video tutorials - quick introductory videos for first-time online learners that are intended to improve client engagement and help catch them up to speed with the expectations and demands of e-learning.

Borrowing from the experiences and knowledge gleaned from LINC Home Study, **we are very excited to announce that next fiscal year CIES will begin offering two new online courses: LINC Blended, and Adult ESL Class Online (AECO).** These new programs will serve as companions to LINC Home Study and bridge the gap for students looking for brief classroom instruction and online studies, as well as lower-intermediate students seeking to improve their English for employment.

We look forward to the future of LINC Home Study, made possible through the generous contribution of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, and our partnership with The Centre for Education and Training.



## AECO and LINC Blended

*Funded by the Government of Alberta Ministry of Labour and Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*

Over the past year CIES has been working behind the scenes to upgrade its capacity for online programming, and we are proud to announce the development of two new e-learning courses to help students who are unable to attend classes in-person.

**Adult ESL Class Online (AECO)** began development in March 2017 thanks to the generous support of the Government of Alberta, and will open **this coming September for CLB 3-4 students who have received Canadian Citizenship** and want to continue their classes online. This program provides online **English classes with an emphasis on employment** and the steps needed to land a job.

**LINC Blended Program** started development unofficially in 2016 as a volunteer-led initiative by members of the e-learning team to create a learning management system (LMS) catered to the future needs of CIES' students. Thanks to the support of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), this project was funded for delivery and will begin in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. It is intended for students who are unable to attend daily in-class instruction, **but can still commit to 1 in-class instruction per week - offering a "blend" of the benefits of in-class and online instruction.**

We are looking forward to these new courses in the coming year and the flexibility they'll provide to newcomers, permanent residents, and Canadian citizens looking to find their place in the community.

## Literacy and Basic English

*Funded by the Government of Alberta Ministry of Labour*

Specifically designed to help adult immigrants who have extremely low to non-literate language skills acquire the basic essentials required for learning English, this program works to minimize the language-learning obstacles experienced by some individuals and prepare them for basic conversation in English.

This program focuses on improving participants' self-esteem and confidence when using the English language. CIES currently offers morning and afternoon Literacy and Basic English classes. The goal of this program is to introduce the basics of the English language to low-literacy participants and minimize language-learning obstacles.

The program helps adult learners develop basic literacy skills and learning strategies which prepare them for future ESL study, such as in our LINC and Drop-In ESL programs.

The classes are taught by encouraging and positive instructors who create a hands-on learning environment for all students. The classes extend over a course of 10 weeks with over 100 hours of classroom instructional time. This fiscal year **103 clients were served and volunteers donated over 87 hours of their time in the Literacy and Basic English program** to help assist in and outside the classroom.

CIES is a place  
where we learn about  
Canada's history and  
culture

## Drop-In ESL

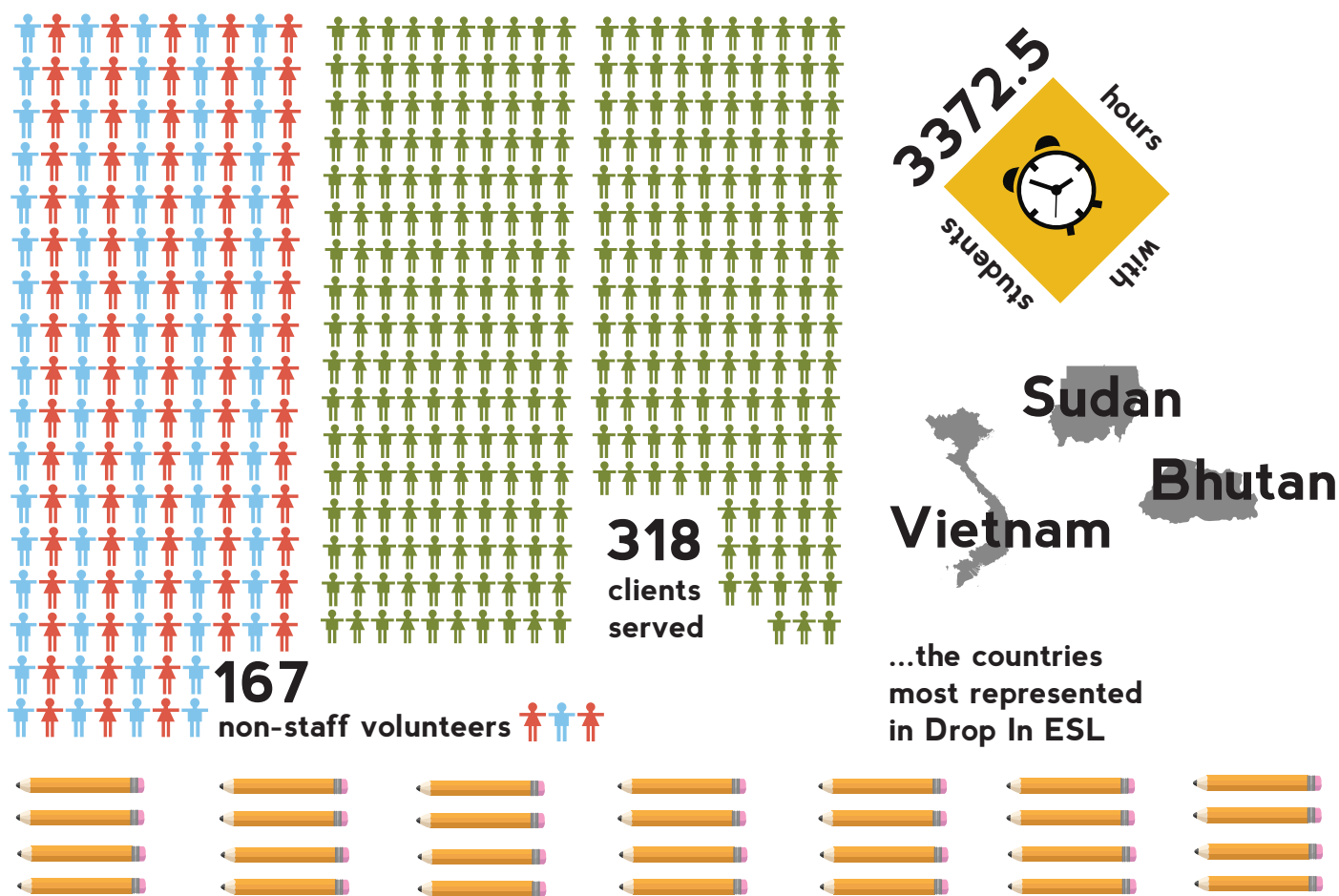
*Funded by the Government of Alberta  
Ministry of Labour*

The Calgary Immigrant Educational Society has been delivering the Drop-In ESL Program since 1988. It is taught entirely by volunteers and helps adult immigrants improve their English skills by exploring weekly themes and practical subjects which are directly related to daily living and employability skills. Aimed at helping participants adapt and integrate smoothly into Canadian society, three different levels of classes are offered: **Pre-Basic (CLB level 1), which served 119 clients in the last fiscal year, Basic (CLB levels 2 & 3), which served 103 clients, and Intermediate/Advanced (CLB levels 4 & 5), which served 96 clients.** This program is designed for (but not limited to) adult learners who have to fit classes around family needs or work schedules or those who are not eligible for LINC (such as Canadian

citizens). It is also ideal for those who cannot attend ESL programs provided by other institutions, whether because of their fixed schedules, strict attendance policies, or because of their immigration status and/or length of residency in Canada. The program provides a valuable service to a significant population that is unable to access other ESL programs in the city. The top three countries represented by the clients in the program were Vietnam, Sudan, and Bhutan.

Volunteer tutors are central to this program. During the 2016 to 2017 funding period, **167 volunteers spent over 3,372 hours both in and out of the traditional classroom setting teaching the 318 clients that were served** during the 2016-2017 funding period.

Four afternoon and three evening classes were offered, Monday through Thursday, for a total of 28 Drop-In ESL classes each week.



**28:** the number of Drop-In ESL classes held each week at CIES



## REDI (Refugee Express Drop-In ESL & Integration)

*Funded by the Government of Alberta  
Ministry of Labour*

The Refugee Express Drop-In ESL & Integration (REDI) project officially opened its doors at CIES in March 2016, and ran until this past March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 upon completion of its one-year contract. Intended as a fast-track language training and social integration project, REDI was designed to help refugees learn essential vocabulary and basic language skills in order to function in their community.

This three-day a week project initially targeted Syrian refugees and other Arabic-speaking refugees displaced by circumstances in the Middle East, but as the year continued REDI expanded its focus to individuals from other countries, including Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and Sudan.

*During the 2016-2017 project period, REDI provided instruction to 88 clients, with 54 in the CLBLA (literacy/pre-basic) class, and 34 in its Pre-Basic/CLB1 class.*

Classes were conducted by two bilingual instructors (English/Arabic), with intake and daily operations supported by a part-time bilingual coordinator, project manager, and two childminders. **26 children were placed in the care of our childminding program for the duration of REDI.**

The REDI team worked closely with CIES' other programming departments, and we are pleased to report that **70% of clients who participated in REDI transitioned into Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) to continue their English classes.** Additionally, REDI paired with CIES' Empowering Syrian Refugee (ESR) project to provide settlement workshops and counselling to its students.

Feedback for the project was overwhelmingly positive, as 97% of respondents felt that REDI provided quality instruction, and 74% agreed/strongly agreed that REDI was preparing them for work in Canada (with **just under 50% directly attributing REDI with helping them get a new job!**). Public support for REDI has also been outstanding: In May, Soup Sisters (a community non-profit)

donated 20 litres of halal soup to REDI's students, and in September the project received a donation of children's books from the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) Library & Information Technology program.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped support the project, including our funders at the Government of Alberta - Labour, and partners in the community: Calgary Public Transit, Safeway, TD Canada Trust, Superstore, the Calgary Public Library – Central, Royal Bank of Canada, and Calgary Police Service (among others).



## The Reading Room

*Funded by the University of Calgary Students' Union Committee of 10,000*

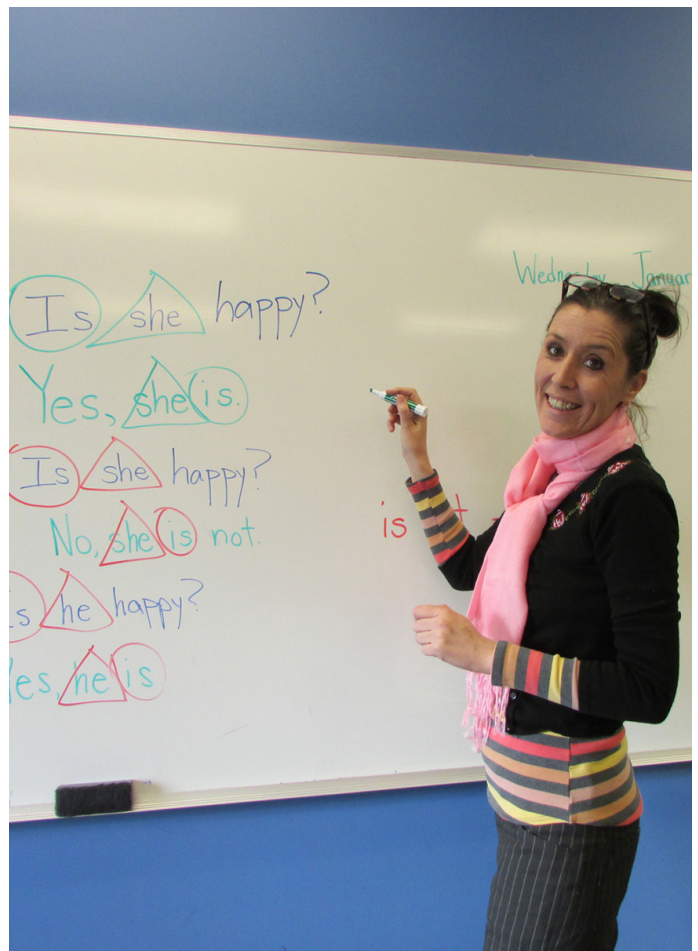
University of Calgary students have long been a part of CIES' efforts in the Calgary community. In previous years, U of C volunteers have assisted CIES in teaching English in classrooms in programs such as Drop-in ESL and in tutorial format in programs such as the Reading Room. The mission of the Reading Room is to provide a quality reading instructional program to reinforce literacy-level learning amongst CIES clients through a one-on-one tutorial context. Students recommended to the Reading Room are those who require additional guidance in reading and comprehension skills because of a limited functional level of literacy for a variety of reasons, such as having had little education or interrupted education in their countries of origin, possessing a learning disability, or having experienced trauma affecting their ability to learn. CIES volunteers serve as language tutors for students in need of additional one-on-one attention.

Over **150 adult language learners registered for LINC** (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes with the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society **require literacy-level support** – they are primarily refugees and other newly arrived immigrants. Some of these learners possess severe limitations in their educational and reading-related skills and are distributed through LINC classes from Literacy levels 1 to 4. They and similarly-profiled clients from other service providers who do not offer one-on-one tutoring constitute the primary target audience for this proposed program. The ability to use and understand written information is fundamental to employment, the performance of everyday essential tasks, as well as being able to interact socially in the broader community.

In the 2016-17 run of the Reading Room at CIES, University of Calgary volunteer tutors assisted participants (identified by their LINC teachers) who often had little, interrupted or no education. These individuals eventually demonstrated a notable degree of improvement over those that had not had a similar degree of additional, individualized tutoring. In particular, CIES Literacy teachers noted that **struggling students who would have normally spent longer periods (approximately 18 months) in a literacy-level class found their time reduced to a more conventional 12 months compared to classmates that did not receive this additional tutoring.**



*The additional one-on-one tutorial support offered by the Reading Room allowed approximately **15 struggling literacy students per week over 48 weeks to perform at par with their more proficient classmates.***





## Training

### EASSY (Economic and Social Integration of Syrian Refugees and Other Immigrant Youth)

*Funded by Service Canada Skills Link*

The Economic and Social Integration of Syrian Refugees and Other Immigrant Youth (EASSY) Program ran over the course of 32 weeks from August 29, 2016 until April 7, 2017. **It has served 24 Syrian refugees and other immigrant youth through 2 intakes** (September 19, 2016 and November 14, 2016). **The program had a 75% success rate**, with students either finding employment or going back to school. The EASSY students have each gained noticeable confidence and skills that will benefit them in their current and future career paths.

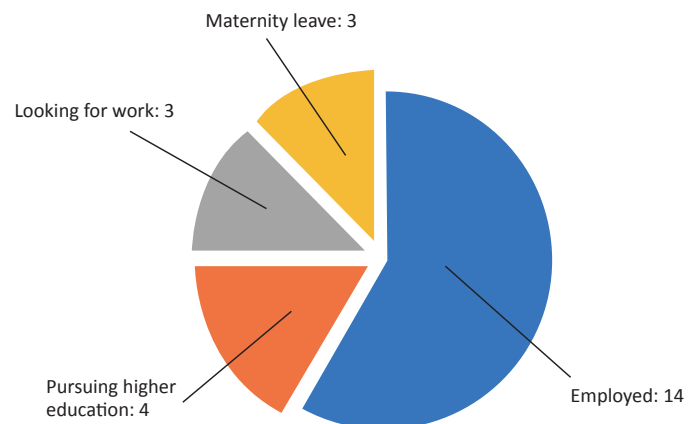
The EASSY program is designed to help youth break barriers to employment and develop a broad range of skills and knowledge in order to participate in the current and future labour market. **The program served an equal ratio of females and males; 50% were Syrian refugee youth and the other 50% were immigrant youth from various countries** such as India, Philippines, Bangladesh, Sudan, Lebanon and Nigeria. Most of them are underprivileged and have many barriers to employment.

Students received an allowance based on the Alberta minimum wage while attending the 20-week program, which was divided into two sessions: eight weeks of group-based employability skills and 12 weeks of work experience. During the group-based employability skills, sessions are focused on life and employability skills including change and time management, effective communication, goal setting, problem solving, budgeting, team building, workplace safety and security, creating resumes and cover letters, interview basics and employment standards. For the work experience portion of the program, students were placed in a company where they practiced their skills and gained hands on experience. Throughout the program the participants received settlement services and one-on-one counselling, as well as ongoing mentoring, which continues even after the completion of the program.

Students were expected to be in class for 6 hours per day, 5 days per week for a total of 30 hours per week, including during their work experience practicums. Host companies included local businesses (Third Academy, TransAlta Corp., Unified Valve, etc.) as well as some not-for-profit organizations (Momentum, Making Changes Association). Some of our students were hired by their host companies, and others found employment elsewhere shortly after the completion of the practicum. Some are planning to go back to school to improve their English and/or to further their careers. 14 participants (58%) have either retained their employment after the work experience practicum or found another job, which is 25% more than the expected result of 9 students (33%). 4 (16%) students will be going back to school as opposed to 8 (33%) set in the expected results; 4 of the employed students are also attending school or will be going back to school once they finalize their admission paperwork. We have 6 students that have not found employment and are not going to school for the time being, which is less than the expected result of 7; two are in the late stage of their pregnancy, one has a very young infant and isn't ready to go back to school or to work, and 3 are actively looking for work with the help of CIES.

We extend our thanks to Service Canada's Skills Link Program's generous funding.

**EASSY Program Graduate Paths**



## EST (Employment Skills Training)

*Funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*

Many newcomers face barriers to getting hired in Canada because they lack Canadian work experience and education. In order to address these issues, CIES has been offering Employment Skills Training since 2009. Over 700 clients have been trained to date, successfully finding employment and integrating into Canadian society.

Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), this program provides unemployed permanent residents and refugees who are not receiving Employment Insurance with essential skills specific to Canadian business culture, including computer skills, business communications and job search skills to enter the Canadian job market. The program not only offers 3 months' employment skills training, but also an optional volunteer practicum to gain first-hand work experience in Canada.

**In 2016/2017, 99 clients attended this full time program across four intake sessions.** The program reported that **over 72% of clients obtained employment as a result of the training and most were hired within the training period.** Others decided to go back to school to pursue an additional degree in order to find employment in their field. The program provided not only effective business communication and computer skills for participants to find employment but helped them to prepare their career plan, connect them with service providers and build networks in Canadian society. One-on-one career counseling was provided to each student to provide industry-specific information on Canada.

**Twenty-two seminars related to employment and career development were organized in 2016/2017, which provided in-depth knowledge about the Canadian job market.** Topics such as employment standards in Alberta, human resource management, personality development, career planning and first aid/CPR were discussed in the seminars. Professional guest speakers from Rapid Response, Momentum, Calgary Workers Resource Centre, (CWRC), Aerotek Recruiting, Better Business Bureau, ATB Financial, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), and Topline Sanitation provided in-depth information on those topics. They also provided mock interviews for the clients in order to help them

prepare for interviews. Students were exposed to career fairs and networking events, finding them helpful in building connections and finding employment in Calgary.

Clients have expressed that the program provided them an opportunity to assess their strengths and weaknesses, increased their confidence, helped them to understand Canadian business culture and assisted them in preparing their career plans.

CIES would like to express our appreciation for everyone who contributed to the success of the program this year. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the guest speakers, program implementation team, students and employment agencies and other stakeholders. CIES would not have been able to offer the EST program without the generous support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). We recognize and thank them for their continued support.

*After I got into the program I come to know my mistakes. The program helped me in many ways to prepare perfect Canadian style resume, provided more information about Canadian office culture and good computer skills which helped me to refresh my computer skills. Because of the help from the program, I started getting phone calls for interviews. I am so happy that I finally got a job.*

*- Former EST student **Vinotha Lakkanan***



## Breaking the Economic Barriers for Immigrants & Low Income People (Entrepreneurship Development Training)

*Funded by First Calgary Financial*

CIES implemented a project called Breaking the Economic Barriers for Immigrants & Low Income People (BEB) in 2016/2017. This project was designed to equip immigrants/low income earning Canadians with the knowledge and skill to start a new business by providing classroom instruction and financial literacy education. The expected outcomes of the project were:

- Clients would have improved knowledge and understanding of the Canadian banking system/New to Canada banking program
- Clients would be equipped with the entrepreneurial skills and knowledge required to start small businesses on their own

Over the course of 2016/2017, eight financial literacy presentations were organized on the following topics:

- The Canadian Banking System
- Building and Managing Credit in Canada
- Registered and Non-Registered Savings Products
- Registered Education Savings Plans
- Home Ownership

**These presentations were attended by a total of 285 clients**, who gained awareness of the financial system in Canada, various types of saving products, financial planning, budgeting skills, and home ownership.

CIES also offered **entrepreneurship development training** as part of the BEB project, consisting of 60 hours of teaching over March 2017, which **was attended by 15 clients**. The students studied the principles of effective entrepreneurship: the self-assessment process, internal and external environmental scanning, competitor analysis, goal setting, business selection, business planning, financial management, and risk analysis, among other topics. As a result, two clients are already in the final stages of registering their business, while 70% of the remaining participants have completed their business plan and are working on other logistics to start their own business.

We have a large number of people on the waiting list for this program who would like to attend entrepreneurship development training, and as such **CIES is offering this program into 2017-2018 as well**. CIES would like to express its immense gratitude to First Calgary Financial for providing the financial support to run this program. Our thanks go to the instructor, students and program management team that made the project a success.

*We would like to thank you for making the Entrepreneurship Development Program possible at the Centre. We strongly believe it would help many that are looking to start a business and be part of boosting Calgary's economy.*

**- BEB participants, 2017**



## Accounting Skills Training

*Funded by the Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission*

Our Accounting Skills Training programs guide students through the basics of manual accounting (journalizing, ledgers, and financial statements), specialized software such as QuickBooks and Sage 50, and Advanced Accounting concepts such as payroll systems and taxes. These programs are very popular and in high demand throughout the year. Upon successful completion of any of these programs, students will obtain a Certificate of Achievement.

**Basic Accounting:** The Basic Accounting program is designed for individuals with no accounting background or as a pre-cursor to taking more advanced accounting programs. This program introduces students to the basics of manual accounting, journalizing, posting to ledgers, completing trial balances and preparing financial statements. 24 hours of instruction over 8 weeks prepares students to pursue and reach their goals. Most of the students that finish this course go on to enroll in higher levels.

**Advanced Accounting:** Our Advanced Accounting program provides 24 hours of training over 8 weeks to further refine students' accounting skills through advanced features and functions. Concepts include payroll systems, personal taxes, business/corporate taxes, pensions and other employee benefits, complex financial instruments and accounting principles.

**QuickBooks and Sage 50:** Further education introduces students to software such as QuickBooks and Sage 50, the most commonly used accounting applications for small businesses in Canada. Each software is introduced over 24 hours of instruction over 8 weeks. Students at the highest level can expect to complete the general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll and inventory, taxation principles, and more. Students are trained according to accounting industry standards with the most up to date version of software.

Over this past fiscal year, these accounting programs helped equip 342 students with necessary computer and accounting knowledge. Most students take the classes in sequence from Basic through QuickBooks/Sage 50/Advanced Accounting, learning progressively and structurally throughout. **We enrolled a total of 125 students in our Basic Accounting program, 72 students in Sage 50, 97 in our QuickBooks programs and 48 in Advanced Accounting.**



## Clerical Training

*Funded by United Way of Calgary and Area*

Designed to foster business skills for administrative support in the modern office, our Clerical Training program has two main audiences: immigrants who have previous experience in clerical positions in their home countries but lack the necessary skills required to get employment in a Canadian office setting, and economically disadvantaged Calgarians who held clerical positions before computer technology became prevalent.

The Clerical Training program includes 51 hours of classroom instruction over 17 weeks on the Windows operating system, MS Office Suite, keyboarding, an introduction to the internet, business communication, office practices & procedures, career search techniques, cover letter and resume writing, and job interview skills. Following in-class training students can take part in an optional 80-hour job placement for further workplace training.

We implement a combination of directional and responsive teaching approaches for the Clerical Training Program: the instructor explains each lesson to the students and demonstrates how each task can be done. The students then perform each

learned task (with the instructor's help). This hands-on training is integral to the program's success and provides practical experience with computers, printers, and software such as Typing Tutor, Windows 10, Windows 8 and Windows 7 Pro, MS Office Suite 2010/2016, and printed handouts. Students will receive a certificate of achievement when they attend at least 90% of the 51-hour class and complete 70% of their class work. Clerical Training classes are held at both of our locations, CIES' SE building (Forest Lawn area) and our NE Welcome Centre for New Immigrants (Whitehorn area).

**We proudly served 135 clients in our Clerical Training program over the last year;** and 89% were immigrants who previously held clerical positions in their home countries. The top five countries of origin for our Clerical Training students are the Philippines, India, Colombia, Ethiopia, and Canada.

**84% of students who completed the program obtained clerical employment,** meeting our expected outcome for program success. 90% of students felt they improved their networking skills while attending multiple career fairs and participating in volunteer opportunities around the city.





## Computer Skills Training

*Funded by the Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission*

Our Computer Skills Training program has three components: Essential Computer Skills, Computer Skills for Employment, and Advanced Computer Training. **24 students were served in two separate sessions of the program this past fiscal year, 92% of whom successfully completed the program** and were awarded a Certificate of Achievement. 87% of applicants came from Calgary's SE or NE quadrant, and 74% were women.

Among those who finished the program, **97% say they are more equipped with Microsoft Office's advanced functionalities.** 88% were very satisfied with the program delivery.

### Essential Computer Skills

This 30-hour course is the first step for those unfamiliar with using a computer. The course covers basic functionality of hardware and software such as computer components, troubleshooting, the Windows operating system, keyboarding, basic Microsoft Word, email and basic internet use. After successfully completing this program, most students enroll in a higher level of training, such as Clerical Training or Computer Skills for Employment.

### Computer Skills for Employment

This 42-hour course is for those who want to enhance their Microsoft Office and general computer skills while preparing for the Canadian job market. The course covers enhanced keyboarding, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook email, job search techniques and Canadian workplace culture.

### Advanced Computer Training

This 20-hour course allows students to improve their computer skills in advanced and in-depth functions in Microsoft Office. Students gain familiarity with features not commonly known or used, such as advanced functions in MS Word (mail merge, macros, table content, and templates), advanced Excel (pivot tables and charts, VLOOKUP commands, IF statements, and functions) and advanced PowerPoint (hyperlinks, animations, and professional slide shows) in order to increase their productivity and value in the office.





# Settlement

## Care for Newcomer Children (CNC)

*Funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)*

CIES has offered its Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program, also known as Childminding, since 2003. The service is free of charge for LINC and Employment Skills Training students with children between 19 months and 6 years of age, and allows students who are parents of these young children to attend the LINC or EST programs without any extra cost.

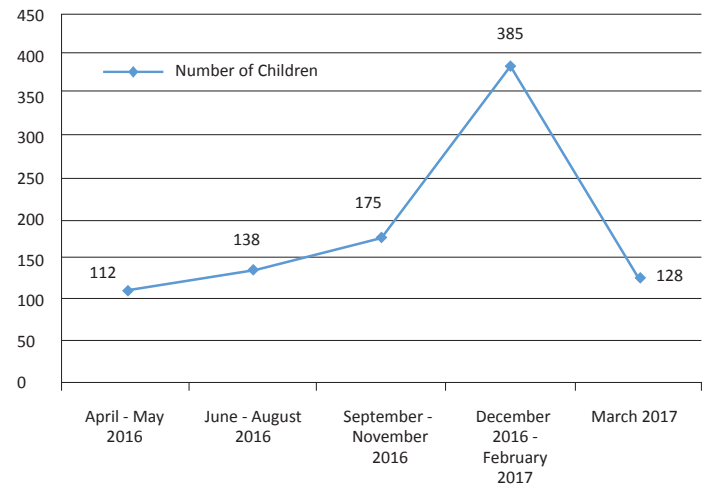
By creating a welcoming environment and providing a positive experience, we make both children and parents feel Canada is their new home. In this program, we take care of the children's health, safety and well-being. We also help them build social skills and establish new relationships, and, when necessary, cope with the effects of dislocation and trauma.

To make their environment safe and welcoming, we make sure that toys and equipment reflect multiple cultures and materials are labeled in multiple languages. Program activities are related to the cultures of the children. In order to foster respect and understanding within a multicultural context, we encourage the children's creativity while taking into account their differences in cultural understanding,

physical and emotional development and their past experiences (such as separation and trauma). We provide a positive transition to Canadian society.

In order to meet with the high demand for childminding, CIES ran two licensed CNC programs during four different shifts, morning, afternoon, evening and weekend. With the ratio of 1 CNC educator to 5 children, **we have assisted 410 children from April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.** On average, 13% of LINC students used our CNC programs.

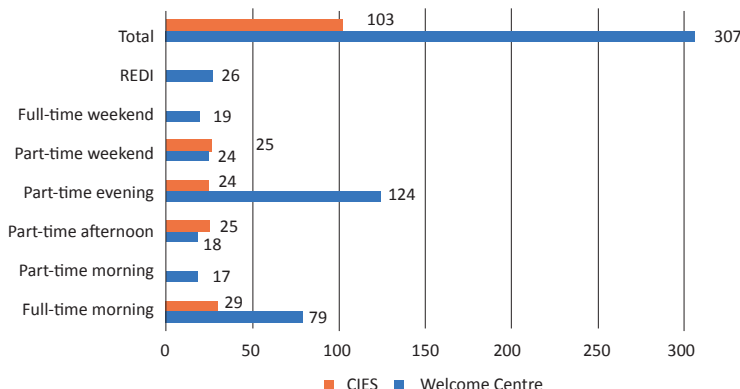
Children Served per Quarter, April 2016 - March 2017



*I brought my little one to the childminding program - I was very happy with my experience there. They're so dedicated to the children, they help them a lot. It's not just childcare, it's education as well. I wouldn't be able to come to school without the childcare program.*

**- Venelina Ivanova, former LINC student**

Children Served by Schedule & Location, April 2016 - March 2017



## ESR (Empowering Syrian Refugees Through Life Skills & Resource Information)

*Funded by the City of Calgary Emergency Resilience Fund*

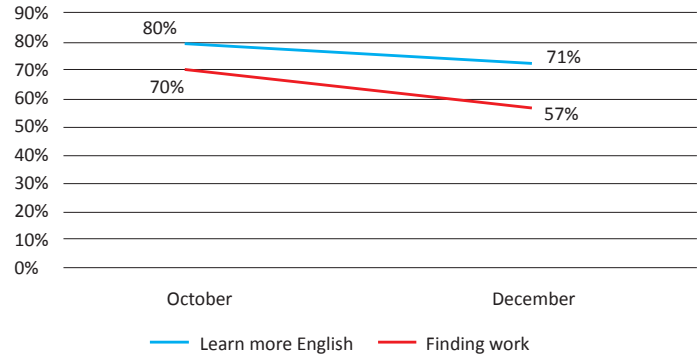
The economic downturn in Alberta has exacerbated some of the barriers faced by Syrian refugees in the area of employment. As many more established Albertans join them in searching for work, Syrian refugees face a disadvantage in language and the lack of local workforce experience. The Empowering Syrian Refugees (ESR) program provided concrete information on how to approach these challenges by identifying agencies and programs participants could turn to, as well as providing an emotional avenue for expression, as many participants found it comforting to discuss these issues with volunteers who had experience in the community and who spoke their language. The ESR program at CIES started on June 1, 2016 and completed its initial year of implementation on March 31, 2017. Through 16 monthly sessions and subsequent one-on-one consultations with the participants, **ESR served a total number of 119 unique individuals - 23 more than was originally targeted.**

Pertaining to the goal of equipping Syrian refugees with tools needed to lead productive lives in Calgary and the sharing of that information with families at home, post-program survey results indicated that 83% found all the information helpful, while 17% found most of it helpful. 78% indicated that what they learned from the program was 'very' useful for their lives in Calgary, whilst the remaining 22% indicated that it was 'somewhat' useful, with none indicating that it was not useful or not at all useful. Finally, **94% have indicated that they have shared the information with their families**, whilst only 6% have indicated they have not yet. 100% expressed the intention to share the information.

The ESR program has brought to light the key concerns facing Syrian refugees. Based on those raised during one-on-one consultations and follow-ups with program participants, the top two concerns over the course of the program were 1) improving their English language skills, and 2) finding a job. While these consistently remained primary concerns, they have tapered off recently, indicating reduced urgency as more clients become better settled in language programs and employment. While learning

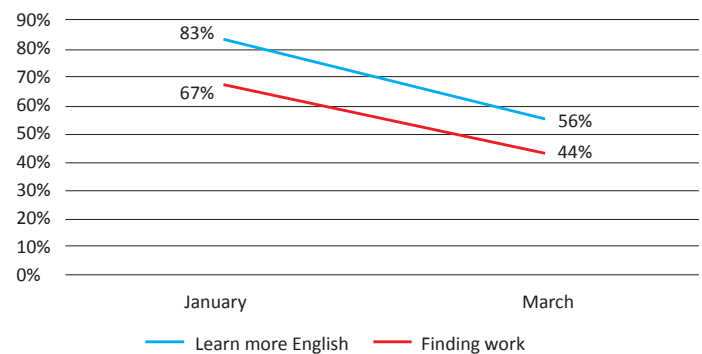
English was mentioned by 80% of our daytime clients in ESR in October last year, this number eased somewhat to 71% in December.

**Top Two Needs Expressed (Daytime Participants)**



Similarly, amongst evening clients, it went from an 83% frequency of mention in January to 55.6% in March. Finding work went from being mentioned by 70% of daytime class participants in October to 57% in December, whilst for evening participants, it went from being mentioned 66% of the time in January to 44% of the time March.

**Top Two Needs Expressed (Evening Participants)**



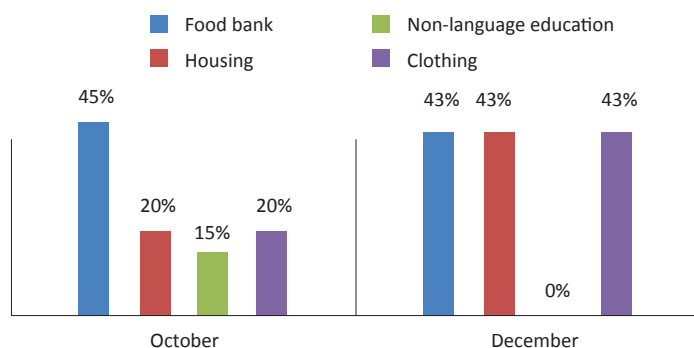
The second tier of frequently expressed concerns include, in descending order of frequency:

- 1) Access to the food bank (mentioned 33% of the time overall);
- 2) Housing concerns (mentioned 27% of the time overall);
- 3) Non-language education (19%); and
- 4) Access to free clothing (19%).

The demand for food bank access has remained relatively consistent amongst daytime class participants, having raised 45% of the time in October and falling only slightly to 43% of the time in December. For evening students the reduction is more significant, going from 33% to 22%. Non-language education went from being mentioned 15% of the time amongst daytime students, to 0% of the time between October and December, while it went from 33% to 22% for mentions for evening students

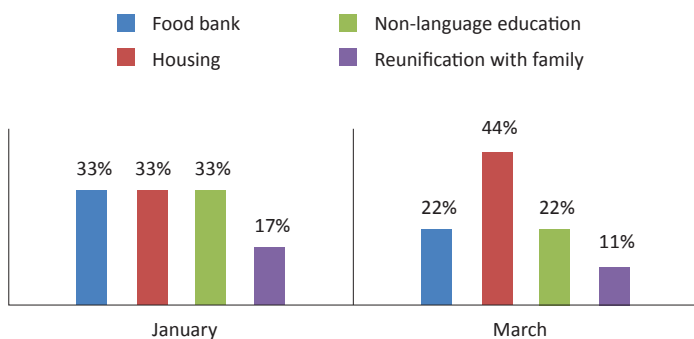
between January and March. The two concerns that saw an increase were 1) affordable housing, and 2) seasonal clothing. For affordable housing, the demand doubled amongst daytime students, going from 20% of concerns mentioned in October to 43% of concerns mentioned in December. This was also the case amongst evening students between January and March, with an increase from 33% to 44% during that period. Affordable housing may be the emerging concern amongst Syrian refugees at CIES as they move off their subsidies, and the moving season during the spring and summer approaches.

**Secondary Concerns (Daytime Participants)**



While clothing was not a concern for participants from evening classes polled between January and March with 0 mentions (an indication of the waning of the winter season), it was an increasing concern for daytime students, who were polled between October and December. For these participants, the demand doubled, from being mentioned 20% of the time to 43% of the time. For evening students, surveyed in January and March, instead of clothing as it was with daytime students from previous months, the fourth most common concern was reunification with relatives abroad. This concern emerged 17% of the time amongst evening participants in January, and tapered somewhat in March, with it being mentioned 11% of the time (this data is based on the responses of 48 unique participants who attended both group sessions and consultations sessions offered).

**Secondary Concerns (Evening Participants)**



This program has certainly provided concrete guidance and much needed orientation on community resources for Syrian refugees. It provided an additional layer of support beyond the language programming they have been enrolled in. For many of our clients and the Syrian participants of ESR, their primary gateway to Calgary has become CIES. Whereas they previously acquired knowledge about services and resources in the community in an ad hoc manner from their teachers (who continue to provide information on their own), the ESR program has provided a more systematic and comprehensive channel through which they have accessed these services. Indeed, the usefulness of the program is reflected in the consistent desire of non-Syrians to participate in the workshops and one-on-one consultations, despite the fact that it has clearly been stated (through program name alone) that the target audience are Syrians. In post-delivery surveys, virtually all participants who responded found the information conveyed in the program to be useful, with 78% indicating that it was 'very useful' and 22% indicating that it was 'somewhat' useful.

The ERF-funded Empowering Syrian Refugees program was instrumental in assisting the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Calgary by providing a source of advice and information on how to approach/where to start in building a foundation for a new life in Calgary. Most participants were able to acquire information and guidance on at least one aspect of their resettlement in Calgary. In particular, ESR program presenters and volunteers have responded to many of the primary concerns expressed during the workshops and consultations sessions, as a tapering of concern for English learning and employment needs indicates. Recent concerns that have been raised by the clients differ from the two most commonly mentioned concerns, which indicates that primary needs were being addressed while concern was shifting to a second tier of needs expressed, such as more affordable housing and seasonal clothing. **The ESR program has made a key contribution in mitigating the impact of the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe by successfully supporting and starting the integration of Syrians into the Calgary community.**



# GROW (Gardens by Refugees and Other Newcomers Welcomed)

*Funded by the Calgary Foundation*

Gardens by Refugees and Other Newcomers Welcomed (GROW) is a project spearheaded by a group of green-thumbed, gardening-loving refugees and newcomers based at the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society's (CIES) southeast location in Forest Lawn. **19 individuals have organized themselves into a committee, called the CIES Students Gardening Committee (CSGC).** All of the members have indicated that they have the ability to make tangible contributions, from their backgrounds as agriculturalists, horticulturalists and garden enthusiasts, to those who have abilities in carpentry and landscaping. The aim is to work together to establish a community mini-garden that will benefit the Society and its neighbours through the spring and summer of 2017. While the harvested vegetables will supplement the meals of low-income families, the gardens also offer an opportunity for newcomers to learn about gardening in Canada, to get to know each other, work together and build a sense of community in their new city. The gardens can attract others in the Forest Lawn area to CIES, and foster interest in community gardening.



To be completed by the fall of 2017, the garden is fast taking shape, with a dozen planter boxes, a fence and a tool shed constructed as of June 2017. Students also planted seedlings in late March and have cultivated an indoor nursery in the lobby at CIES southeast. The CIES garden will allow refugees and newcomers to make an investment in the community, in this case in terms of time, energy and labour. They will also form part of the steering committee and leadership group, critical in the planning and management of the project, fostering opportunities for responsibility and cooperation with members of CIES as well as that of the community. This collective sense of purpose will give a sense of ownership over an aspect of the community, giving the participants a stake in it, which ultimately results in a stronger sense of belonging. Once the gardens have been built, participants and their leaders can view the gardens as one of their first contributions and accomplishments in Calgary, and perhaps in Canada. **While they may benefit from the gardens through the harvesting of its vegetables, participants in GROW will also benefit by having imprinted themselves on the community, and in a real sense, becoming a part of it.**





## Human Rights Workshops

*Funded by the Alberta Human Rights Commission*

The Human Rights Workshops program was funded by the Alberta Human Rights Commission to provide informative workshops about human rights to newcomers. Overall, the program created awareness amongst the newcomer clients of the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society (CIES) and other immigrant serving organizations of common issues involving human rights in everyday circumstances, offering information on participants' rights and responsibilities. This program was completed on October 31, 2016. **A total of 701 clients attended 12 human rights presentations by various speakers, for an average of 58 attendees per session.**

The presentations, via various related sub-topics, revealed to participants how the broader theme of Human Rights in Alberta is important for newcomers to learn about and become aware of. Specifically, the participants were made knowledgeable of: services available for domestic violence; how to report domestic violence; a clearer understanding of what constitutes abuse within Canadian cultural norms; safe resources; increased awareness about internet and online harassment; an understanding of the role of Child Protective Services and how/when they get involved in the lives of families; socio-cultural issues that newcomers deal with and actions that may be taken; additional services available to newcomers; awareness of Canadian law vis-à-vis their country of

origin; and increased knowledge about human rights in the workplace.

These series of talks became an important part of the foundational knowledge necessary for recently arrived newcomers, refugees and disadvantaged Calgarians to settle into or improve their lives in Calgary. The most sustained activities that the Human Rights presentations initiated include the creation of new lessons and curriculum content used by CIES' teachers in their classes. In response to issues and information gleaned from resource persons presenting at the sessions, several teachers have planned and implemented lessons relating to the various aspects and issues of Human Rights and the duties of an individual in Canada. Examples of these lesson planning and teaching activities include integrating human rights topics such as human rights laws within pre-existing citizenship classes in the current LINC curriculum and using real-life examples and anecdotes from students' lives throughout lesson activities relating to human rights issues in Alberta.

In addition to the extension of lesson content into the themes of Human Rights, newly fostered interest in such topics have motivated plans for more presentations and information sessions from experts. In particular, there are plans to repurpose presentations and information on domestic violence for the lower level learners (LINC Literacy) at CIES with simpler language and abundant pictures to make the knowledge accessible to more newcomers and refugees from various linguistic backgrounds.



## Registered Education Savings Plan Education

*Funded by Momentum*

CIES has provided financial literacy education to newcomers and low income citizens alike since 2013. In partnership with Momentum, CIES promoted the Registered Education Savings Plan Education program through training and personal counseling to our clients. **There were five RESP awareness sessions organized in 2016/2017, which were attended by a total of 210 clients.**

CIES arranged for major financial institutions to meet with clients on site at both of our locations to better facilitate the opening of an RESP. These visitors included TD Canada Trust, RBC Bank, ATB Financial and Bank of Montreal (BMO). **56 clients reported that they opened an RESP for their children after attending RESP education** and many others mentioned that they were already in the process of opening an RESP account by March 2017.

Some of the challenges we encountered during the project period included:

- Many clients were under the impression that they had to contribute money every month to an RESP account, which was a deterrent in opening an RESP account for their kids.
- As most of the clients were new immigrants, they were reluctant to make a phone call to the bank and make an appointment to open an RESP account. This was due to the language barriers and cultural differences, or assumptions about banking institutions.

The RESP awareness sessions made a big difference in our clients' understanding of RESP accounts and many went on to open them. CIES is committed to helping newcomers and lower income citizens save for their children's future education, and as such, is continuing its partnership with Momentum and other stakeholders to achieve this goal.

## WRIP (Welcome Resource Information Program)

Smooth settlement of newcomers is the goal for government, settlement agencies, other service providers and immigrants themselves. CIES believes that prolonged struggles with settlement can cause stress, anxiety, uncertainty and depression for newcomers, and to mitigate some of the stress encountered upon arrival, has been offering settlement services since its inception, albeit in different ways. Finding the right information, accessing available resources in Calgary, finding help in completing forms, connecting with the ethnocultural community, and gaining soft skills to bring to the Canadian workplace were some of the challenges identified by new immigrants for their smooth settlement in Canada. In order to address these issues, CIES formally implemented the Welcome Resources Information Program (WRIP). It provides information and guidance on services around the city, health and housing organizations, and employment information, but also provides clear directions to other immigrant service providers to help bring the immigrant-serving community together and ensure clients are receiving the most effective help. The program is divided into three major components: Information and Orientation, Counseling, Needs Assessment and Referral, and Community Connection.

CalgaryConnect.ca, the supplementary website designed to provide pre-arrival service, provides information in the areas of immigration, housing, health, employment, education, community connection, legal support, and daily life in Canada. Clients may visit the website and find appropriate links to the services they need. **About 250 clients visit the website every month** and contact CIES for detailed information and other necessary support. We continue to build connections with overseas agencies to provide arrival information for the people who are ready to come to Canada. CIES program information is available at the Calgary airport.

*In 2016/2017, 198 new families and 30 returning families were provided guidance and resource information in person from our NE office and over 3,000 clients were served over the phone and through email.*



198 clients were helped in prioritizing their needs, provided employment leads, referred for various services in the city and connected with ethnocultural communities and technical institutes. Of these 198 clients, **170 are permanent residents, 12 are refugees, 6 are refugee claimants, 7 are citizens and 3 are temporary foreign workers; 55% are female and 45% are male.** 35% of the population helped were from India, followed by Nigeria (16%), Pakistan (10%), and Syria (8%).

As a result of WRIP's service referrals process, clients were able to develop their settlement and career plans, understand Canadian culture, obtain social assistance and benefits and connect with their ethnocultural communities. Hence, the program has been able to achieve its objectives.

**CIES also partnered with the Women in Need Society (WINS) for the Free Goods Referral Program, which benefitted over 30 clients in the fiscal year 2016/2017.** The Calgary Public Library also provided employment and settlement information over the course of the year.

CIES would thank the Women in Need Society, the Calgary Public Library, and all other stakeholders including clients, partner organizations, service providers, community leaders and interpreters for their valuable contribution to making the program a success.

*I would like to thank CIES for all the useful and helpful programs they prepare for all new customers in general and for Syrian refugees specifically. And a lot of thanks to the CIES team for their efforts to make everything happen.*

*- Saad Chuck, WRIP client*

## Volunteer Program

Volunteers are the backbone of the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society. Their commitment and contributions allow us to provide more comprehensive services to our clients. Their generosity and commitment help adult immigrants acquire and polish their English language skills, familiarize with Canadian culture, and integrate into Canadian society smoothly.

Our volunteers contribute in many areas. Besides helping in ESL programs such as GROW, the Reading Room, Special Events (Summer Festival and Canada Day celebrations), Drop-In ESL, Literacy and Basic English and LINC as volunteer tutors or instructor's assistants, there are individuals who assisted in areas such as maintaining computers, helping in computer classes, providing administrative assistance, helping in fund raising events, and preparing tax returns for economically challenged members and seniors in our communities in March and April every year.

We are fortunate to have a group of dedicated volunteers for all of our programs, especially our ESL volunteer tutors who play an important role in the success of the Drop-In ESL program. Simply put, without their commitment, the program would not exist. Their dedication and commitment have a tremendous impact on immigrants who come to our society, not only in terms of learning the English language, but also in understanding Canadian culture. The more positive the interactions new Canadians have with other Calgarians, the easier it is for them to find a sense of belonging in Canada. Therefore, each of our volunteers' support is significant and this serves as the most valuable asset of CIES. We would also like to express special thanks to our volunteer Board of Directors for their continuous support, guidance, and direction. **In total, in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the volunteers at CIES contributed 7,318 volunteer hours across departments.**





# Communications

The CIES Communications Department is structured into 4 assignments – web development, social media, outreach & networking, and print/video design, and is responsible for a large part of CIES' branding and external communications at a variety of levels, including attendance at community events, partnerships and fundraising, and program promotion.

The biggest undertaking by Communications over the last fiscal year was the launch of CIES' new website. CIES recognized that it would need a new website to meet the needs of a student population that is increasingly communicating online, and a re-launch would provide the opportunity to migrate the old blog onto the website (it was previously hosted on Blogger) as well as optimize the site for mobile (tablets and cellphone) viewing. Accordingly, a new website was launched on November 29, 2016, and now features a web chat (operated by the Communications and Reception departments), online program registration, automated translation into 34 different languages, the integrated CIES blog and newsletter, an employee intranet for daily operations, and a newly designed learning management system which will be used to offer online classes in the coming fiscal year. These new features for communication with prospective clients have been especially popular, **with 302 clients applying for program registration through the site, over 90 website users served with the website's chat feature, and 4,500 unique clients visiting per month.**

Communications also maintains a visible social media presence in the newcomer community. The department currently posts 1-2 blog posts per week to the website promoting new developments at CIES as well as community events, and the department frequently advocates its mission on social media with an average of 22 posts per month on Facebook and an average of 33 tweets via Twitter. Audience reach continues to expand, with 20 or more new followers choosing to follow CIES each month on Facebook and about 25 more each month on Twitter, for a total of 1,039 followers and 594 followers, respectively. Instagram is also used on a less-frequent basis, with the year's most popular posts following the development of CIES' summer GROW program. All of these updates are collected into a weekly newsletter, sent out every Monday to students, staff, and community – so sign up today!

Partnerships within the community flourished as well in 2016/2017, with **CIES contributing to or partnering with nearly 30 initiatives over the past 12 months.** Notable new partnerships include First Calgary Financial's sponsorship of the Entrepreneurship Development Training program, the federal government's generous grant for Empowering Youth Through Employment, the Pho Down project, which was a recipient of Soul of the City, and CIES' role in organizing the Building a Life in Calgary event at the BMO Centre with the Calgary Local Immigration Partnership. CIES hosted a variety of events as well, with the sixth annual Summer Festival on August 30, 2016 being the organization's biggest yet. CIES played host to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary's Unsilenced: Spoken Word contest, and an informational evening on the private refugee sponsorship program. CIES was also featured in the Calgary Foundation's Great Storytelling Inspires Change presentation for its media depiction of an inspiring organizational culture.



# Client Success Stories

## **LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada): Venelina Ivanova, *Bulgaria, via Bahrain & Oman***

My name is Venelina Ivanova – all my friends know me as Lina. We came here a year and a half ago – today [May 30] we make 18 months here. Our family is myself, my husband and our three children.

I'm from Bulgaria, but the last 12 years I lived in the Middle East, with my family – we lived in Bahrain, and after that we moved to Oman. I arrived here from Oman, not Bulgaria. Many years ago – my education is related to sport – I was a climbing coach, and I have a bachelor's degree from the National Sport Academy.

When we signed our children up for school in Canada, there was a counselor who said they worked with newcomers to help them settle down in Calgary, and she suggested it would be nice for me to improve my English in school. I finished CLB 7 here in Jana Ciobanu's class – which was the best experience that I had here. It wasn't only English class – she helps a lot with advice, with raising the self-estimate of her students so they feel comfortable in their new country. I enjoyed everything in my class, definitely. We are from all around the world – there are so many different stories – we can feel the multiculturalism in the classroom. We are equal, and everyone is important there.

English, the language, is hard for me, especially the grammar. Writing is the hardest for me, because you never write the things that you hear – there's always extra letters! The English class here has helped me every day because it's not only English, they show us Calgary, they show us what we can do here, they've showed us many places we can visit with the children, and they prepared us how to deal with everyday conversations – for example how we can go to the zoo and buy tickets, how we can go to Heritage Park... many, many places.

I was in the SE location [for class], so I brought my little one to the childminding program. I was happy with my experience in childminding. They're so dedicated to the children; they help them a lot. It's not just childcare, it's education there as well. I wouldn't be able to come to school without the childcare program.

I'm sure this class will help me in my future. In my country we say that North America is the land of unlimited opportunity – my plan right now is, once my little one is older, I want to attend Employment Skills Training here at CIES – and I hope I can find some job related to my experience – like a store manager or in some office, I'm not sure.

If anyone is considering coming to school, this is what I want to say – it only helps, they will find friends here, they will improve English, and they will know a lot about Canadian culture. They'll learn how to help themselves, not to be dependent on others, and it will only improve their everyday lifestyle.

I've had the opportunity to volunteer here at CIES and I have this amazing opportunity to come every day for a couple of hours in the southeast. The support continues from CIES, it's not just the programs that I take – they help me with this volunteer position. I try to be as helpful as I can here. Now, I feel more confident in my English. I know that there is a lot to learn, but as they say, we learn until we're dead. Definitely after finishing the LINC program here, I feel more confident in everyday conversation.

When I think about Canada, my first thought is that I'm proud to be Canadian. The second is the future – we have the freedom here to be ourselves, and there's many reasons to be proud to raise the Canadian flag.



### **LINC Home Study: Martiza Delfin Santiago, Mexico**

My name is Maritza, and I am from Mexico. We have been here in Calgary around 8 years – we have been here since 2008, when we arrived as foreign workers. We've been challenged by many things, but the most important is language skills.

The most difficult part about coming to Canada was probably when we wanted to study, but as foreign workers we couldn't do that. So we had to listen to the radio, and go to the library for audio books, and some people helped us with free courses, and all these things helped us to become better, but there was no formal training. When we became permanent residents, we realized we needed more English learning help to achieve another step in the Canadian job market. I am the mom of two beautiful girls, so I don't have too much time. I need to take care of our baby, and I don't have anyone else to take care of her. So many programs care about kids, but not babies, and I wasn't able to find a regular classroom program.



Finally, a couple of friends told me that they have a young family too, and have to take care of their kids, and they told me about LINC Home Study, and I was very impressed. I have been in the program for just over one year now, and I joined the program for its flexibility in teaching and learning. My English levels are 8-8-7-7. I am working now on my writing, because that's a challenge for me in English – I'm doing my best to improve that skill, and my instructor has helped me a lot with that.

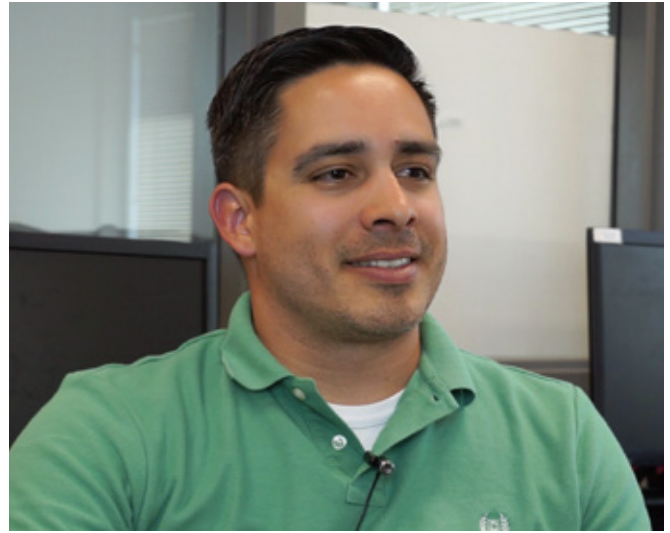
My teacher has taught me how to write with structures, conventions, even with Canadian expressions that are new to me. Informal and formal writing styles, and when I can use them – we're doing business letters and essays now – she's really good on that.

When we first arrived I was thinking about going back to university, but every time I thought about it I became scared and I thought "I can't, I can't!", because if they ask me to write something, I won't be able to do it. What if no one can understand what I am saying through writing? I thought, I must go for the further training that the government referred to us, because they referred many courses – but I got scared every time I thought about it. With my studies though, I'm improving a little bit more, and I feel much more confident – so today I can say yes, I want to train to become a power engineer, and I want to work in that field.



### **Drop-In ESL: Daniel Jose Pallares, *Colombia***

My name is Daniel Pallares. I'm from Colombia, and I've been in Canada for 11 years. I moved from Colombia to Canada in 2006 – I arrived in Quebec, and I lived there for 10 years, working in Olymel. I moved to Alberta last year, for work and for English skills for my kids. I have a wife and three kids – my daughter is 11, my son is 10, and baby is 7 years old.



The differences between Colombia and Canada? Democracy is the big one. Respect, and the difference between poor and rich – and in Colombia, because of big trouble with guerillas, civil war, narco traffic – it's crazy. Canada is an amazing country. A large country. I love the people in Canada, the French people and the Anglophone people too. For work, for students, for families – it's a nice country.

I'm in Drop In ESL at the SE location. I started 7 months ago in the Basic level – after three and a half months, I'm in Intermediate. The program is very good – when I started the English class here, I speak very little – I could order a coffee, that's it. Numbers were very, very dicey.

The Drop in ESL class has nice teachers, and the methodology is very good in the program. The instructor is nice, the pronunciation, grammar, conversations, listening and speaking – it's all nice.

My plan is to finish my English school and start looking for work. I'll try to get my diploma credits recognized [from Colombia]. The work I'd like to do – working with machines and their software, the hydraulics – you need a lot of math. I love math – it's very easy for me. I could maybe teach math, or my other plan, to study power engineering. I know many people work here in this engineering area, and they encourage me to go to school – it's been nice. I read a lot of books on power engineering in English, for the vocabulary. I'd like to get into SAIT – I need a level 8 in English first though. My math and other studies are ok here, it's just my English.

Three months ago I had 5-5-5-4. My very first test was 2-2-2-2. Now I might be 6-something. I speak Spanish, French, English – and I understand Italian and Portuguese. I learned those last two in college.

My experience at CIES has been very important for me, because 8 months ago I couldn't speak English very well. I had to get my nephew, Carlos, to translate for me to get my son into hockey. Now I can understand – it's difficult to explain some things, but I can speak overall pretty well.

I have only studied English at CIES so far, and for 7 months. People, teachers – [they are] good volunteers. Sometimes we don't have the same teacher twice in a row – it's nice for exposure to new accents. [Each teacher uses] different methodologies, which is nice. And the four-hour class time is great, because you can avoid Deerfoot at rush hour [laughs].

**REDI (Refugee Express Drop-In ESL & Integration):**  
**Abdoulfatah Sabouni, Syria**

My name is Abdoulfatah Sabouni, and I come from Aleppo, in Syria. I have been here for a year and a half. My family came with me – I had three kids before I came to Canada, but we had a new baby five months ago. My kids are 12, 11, 8 and 5 months. Three boys, 1 girl.

I'm studying English here at CIES. Before I came to Canada, I didn't learn any English – I studied for only around 9 months. It's very common to learn English in Syria, but my job and my work made me unavailable to study any extra languages, because I was busy all year long.

I joined the REDI program after the first month that I was here. I learned conversational English with people. Now, I am a level 4 in LINC – I like all of the things I'm learning. Month by month, I'm surprised by a new sentence, by new English. I think it's coming very quickly to me now.

I like Calgary and I like the people – they're friendly and give me strength to open my business. It is a natural soap and cosmetics business – I make soap in the traditional Aleppo way, with olive oil and all natural ingredients. It is the most gentle, cleansing and moisturizing soap in the world. There are a lot of people with a love of business here in Calgary, and they all help me. Right now, I think my business is getting better – I'm finding a new place to rent, and I hope after 1 or 2 months I can open. I will sell my soaps first to Calgarians, but I want to expand to all Canadians, and all Americans. There is no limit.

I think I would tell someone, anybody, when they first come to Canada, first, don't be afraid of anything. Keep going to study English first, because understanding how to talk with people is very important, and you know, for their job, study, but don't be afraid. I'd tell them, don't be afraid of anything.



**EASSY (Economic and Social Integration of Syrian Refugees & Other Immigrant Youth):**  
**Abdulwahab Elsarrag, Sudan**

Abdulwahab Elsarrag (Abdul), originally from Sudan, is a new immigrant who came to Canada on September 14, 2016. Abdulwahab has a degree in Mechanical Engineering from his home country Sudan, with previous work experience in Sudan and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Abdulwahab joined the EASSY program's second intake on Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016. He attended eight weeks of group-based employability skills training (GBES), where he learnt how to update his resume, create a cover letter, prepare for a job interview, and learned about Canadian workplace culture. After that, Abdul was placed at Unified Valve for 11 weeks as part of the work experience intervention based on his previous experience and skill set. Abdul proved to be a hardworking, self-motivated individual and an added asset to his host company, such that they offered him full time employment after the completion of his subsidized work experience. Abdul is very thankful to CIES for giving him "the opportunity of a life time" as he calls it and is very keen on sharing his experience with his newcomer friends to encourage and motivate them.



**Breaking the Economic Barriers for  
Immigrants & Low Income People  
(Entrepreneurship Development Training, EDT):  
Liliana Castro, Mexico**

My name is Lili, and I'm Mexican. I came to Canada 8 years ago – it goes really fast! I arrived here in December 2009. We came to Canada looking for more opportunities; my husband was here already and came six months before I did. I found CIES through Google – I was looking for a program because I was in the middle of trying to decide what to do next, and Entrepreneurship Development Training came up.



In Mexico, I was an industrial engineer. As soon as I finished my schooling, I came here, and obviously I couldn't do any engineering after I arrived, so I started doing whatever I could. I arrived with the NAFTA program, which is a skilled workers program. By March I had my work permit, so I started landscaping, cleaning, and soon after that I started my own cleaning business, which I did for a couple of years. Once I saved a little bit of money, my husband was doing construction, and we joined to start a construction business. We figured based on our experience with the cleaning business, if you're honest and you work hard, you're able to make a lot more money. We just jumped in and we learned as we went – it was more like we were just doing it, nobody was telling us what to do.

Right now we're to the point that we have been doing the construction business for six years now, and we are trying to jump into something new, something more challenging – I think we can definitely grow it more, but it's not what we want to do for the rest of our lives. So we thought, let's start learning and preparing ourselves for the next step. I was just doing some research on the internet and I read the description [for the EDT program] – I went, this is perfect, this is going to be good. I really enjoyed the program, it was really good, and all the people that were involved: the instructor was really good, but many of the things that they teach us or that they spoke about, we had already learned the hard way. I think it was really good for me to see "oh, ok, I understand now, that's why I do this", or "that's what we're doing now".... we made many mistakes but I think many of them would be hard to teach, because you don't understand until you're there, doing it.

The instructor really showed me how to analyze yourself to get to your strengths and weaknesses, and it helped me to decide what to do with the next phase of my career. I applied some of the knowledge I acquired in my current business, and it is helping, and it also reinforces a lot of things that I already knew. My instructor reinforced and explained certain business practices, as well as why it had to be done that way. I'm an organized person in general, so it was confirmation that what I was doing was right. I will apply some of these tools on the new business for sure. I think this is a valuable program that teaches you a lot about yourself and determines whether you're ready to take the challenge.

I understood this was like a pilot program, so I really hope they keep running it. The instructor was really good, he's really passionate about it. He stayed after class was over to explain concepts to us and share experiences, and that was really helpful.

I think fear plays a big role in opening a business, in that it stops you from jumping into it. Fear is an obstacle, and I've found that most of my classmates were frozen by fear. When I got here it was – I don't think I had that luxury, so I think I just had to do it. That's the thing with entrepreneurship – you just have to do it and once you're there, it'll happen. I think fear is an obstacle that is going to stop you from being your best. I still feel fear, but I think I can manage it. I think I have the confidence to say "It's gonna be ok."



### **Accounting Skills Programs: Linda Jimenez, *Mexico***

My name is Linda Jimenez, I'm from Mexico, and I came to Canada five years ago. I came sponsored by my brother, who owns a franchise, and he sponsored me along with my family. I was totally happy in Mexico, but two things made me come to Canada – first, my brother is already a citizen and has been here for 10 years, and he wanted me to come to keep our family together. The other reason is that unfortunately, while Mexico is a great country and has all the possibilities to be a first world country, however, the corruption and insecurity drove me away. My father was assaulted twice and almost died, so we decided to come to Canada for safety reasons.



I was doing lots of things in Mexico! I was working for the electoral board institute during federal campaigns, I helped organize them; I have a bachelor's degree in international affairs, and I love studying. That's one of the reasons I decided to take on the accounting certificate with CIES. I had decided to study French here as well, as well as Mandarin and Italian. My degree [from university in Mexico] was so different from accounting, and I struggled with it in the beginning – it was totally foreign to me. I wanted to do it because I wanted more professional growth.

Something in me felt like I wanted to learn something that I had never learned before. I'm just like that. I think accounting is like the underlying language of the world – all the time we are dealing with money. You have to know how it flows, how it's going to be budgeted. I thought this might be a good fit for me, because my time is so busy and I don't have the time to go and take a longer certificate, even if I want to. So I saw this program and its short duration seemed like a good fit. I liked that the program was just the basics. During the program I realized that most of my classmates had some knowledge of accounting, and I'm a kind of person that's very competitive, I'm like, "no one is going to beat me", I'm going to make this happen.

With CIES, going on Saturdays was really good for me. I'm so busy with [my personal translation and interpretation] business. I did this program at the same time as Clerical Training – you get all the problem-solving skills from both programs. The teacher was really nice; she was really funny, but really knowledgeable. With Excel, the program really helped me to remember a lot of things that I had forgotten. I'm using [what I learned from] both courses right now, and it has helped me with my translation business. I need to keep my business organized, and I seriously believe that this program improves your analytical and problem-solving skills. Since I took the program I feel more organized and I can take advantage of Excel and its more advanced functions.

Career wise, I love my job. My job can be kind of stressful sometimes though, because I could be working 130 hours in one cycle – it's too much. My job can also slow down though – so I've thought, should I change career paths? I think right now, I'm going to continue where I am, and maybe in the medium to long term, I'll pursue further skills in terms of, not exactly accounting, but something more related to administration. But right now, I'm not going to change, I really love what I do.

When I came to Canada, I faced so many obstacles – not only in terms of work, where I had a good job back home, and I started working here at Shoppers, and it made me feel ashamed because I knew I had the capacity for so much more. However, many immigrants face the conundrum that they have to study something other than their original careers – we have to take advantage of all the opportunities that Canada can offer. Things can happen, if you really fight for it.

### **Clerical Training: Ruthchel Castro, *Philippines***

My name is Ruthchel; I am originally from Philippines. I came here in 2011. I just got my Canadian citizenship last year – yay! – and recently I got a job based on my experience. I attended Clerical Training at the SE branch, and I'm so happy that I got a job from that program.

I enjoyed the class, and I enhanced my Microsoft Office, Excel, Power Point, resume writing, and interviewing skills – it was about getting you ready for applying to and finding a job.

Yes, I did have experience in computers and clerical before – I worked as an admin assistant in the university [back home]. I have a four-year degree back home too. When you come to Canada it's really hard to find a job in your line right away. I had been working little jobs for survival. One day my friend told me about CIES, and I said what's that? She recommended it as I might be interested for upgrading or learning new skills. So I went there and I enrolled in Clerical, and I had fun, I learned, I enhanced my skills, then luckily I got a job.

My teacher was fantastic – she had lots of patience; it's not easy to train students! She's kind, she gets along with the students, and if she wasn't so nice we wouldn't learn so well. I found that the courses at CIES are really helpful with the new immigrant mothers especially [Ruthchel has a four-year-old son]. You have this small toddler with you, and you also have a part time job – the schedule is the best. You can take it on the weekend or on the weekdays even – the flexible timings are really, really good.

Right now I work in immigration services – we help people coming to Canada under sponsorship. My job is assigning to consultants which clients they serve, and I do incoming and outgoing calls, I do marketing as well, social media, advertisements, making platform contents – it's very interesting. This wasn't my line [of work originally] but it was such a good opportunity that I thought I'll do it. Yeah, it's fun! When the clients come and they tell their stories, it's really interesting. I know what they feel as immigrants – not knowing anything about Canada or Calgary, how the transit works, etc. Sharing feels so good. When you're new you feel like “oh, I'm scared to go”, you don't know what to do, so I'm glad I could do this now.

I would like to share that if you're a new immigrant, I know it's hard to make money right away. If you want to think smart, I think this type of program is really – can give benefit to all the immigrants, because for me, I saw myself here. I really use what I had by taking the course from this institution. My advice is – they should try to come here, enquire, take courses, and then they can see for themselves.



## **Volunteer Program: Pooja Malik, *India***

Hi, I'm Pooja Malik, and I'm from India. I came in October 2016, last year.

This year in January I was in LINC classes for three months [Pooja is a CLB 6], then in April I got into the Youth Employment Program (EYE), which I'm still in. I asked my teacher, Kevin, and he told me about going for volunteering. [He said] it will be good for you, and you will gain some Canadian experience here.

I'm in the HR department, I work as an HR volunteer. I update all of the employee data in the Timestation tool, and I do the filing system also. Sometimes I have to order books, need to check the prices on everything, and I have to scan, I have to print; sometimes I need to shred the documents that we don't need anymore. Last month I stored the data for the last seven years for all of our employees. It was a lot of data – it took me the whole month to work on that project.

It's great working with the staff here – I started volunteering in February, so I'm really enjoying my volunteering here. All the employees are really frank, and I really enjoy office work. It's a very nice experience. I made many friends here also. Everyone in the HR department was very nice, they helped me a lot, and I'm still in touch with people who've left. Whenever I ask questions, everyone helps me. I do volunteering in HR, plus I've worked in Childminding and with the LINC Coordinators.

[In Delhi] I worked for more than four years at a telecom company; I was a team lead. I was in IT for 8 months, then changed my field, when I got a chance in telecoms. I found it very interesting so I stayed for many years – I was handling a team of more than 15 people.

I think volunteering is a good start when we come from different countries, to gain the experience, to know about culture, the work culture – I think it's important. I've learned many things from my volunteering experience, such as Excel and office organization – so I've learned some new skills here. I haven't upgraded my education in Canada yet, but I would like to go in the clerical direction [with my future career].





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*Photo taken at January 2017 CIES staff meeting.*

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