

# Effective Employment Bridging Programs for Mid Literacy and Professional Immigrant Women

Presenters:

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**CIWA**  
*Calgary Immigrant Women's Association*

# OVERVIEW

- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) background
- Type of resources and unique approaches
- Best practices
- Effective bridging programs
- Conclusion

# Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

CIWA was established in 1982 to address the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women, youth, children, and families in Calgary. We are proudly celebrating 35 years of service this year.

## **Vision**

Empower immigrant women. Enrich Canadian society.

## **Mission**

To engage and integrate all immigrant women and their families in the community.

## **Values**

Integrity. Equity. Inclusiveness. Innovation. Leadership.

# CORE SERVICES

CIWA provides a broad spectrum of services to immigrant women and their families and dedicated to the empowerment of immigrant women to become active and contributing members of Canadian Society

- Intake, Settlement and Integration Services
- Literacy, Language Training and Childcare Services
- Family Services
- Employment Services

# CIWA FUNDERS

Canada



Alberta  
Government



- Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour
- Human Services
  - Calgary Region Child & Family Services
  - Family Violence Prevention and Homeless Support
  - Community and Business Service
- Innovation & Advanced Education
- Culture
- Gaming & Liquor Commission



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Scholarship Fund

# CLIENT PROFILE

In 2015-2016, CIWA served over 18,000 clients through individual and group services.

Immigration Categories	Top Countries of Origin	Top Languages Spoken
Economic 35.22% Citizen 21.61% Refugee 14.62% Live-in Caregiver, investor and others 7.94% Refugee Claimant 0.83%	Philippines China India Pakistan Iran Ethiopia	Filipino/Cebuano/Tagalog/ Ilocano Arabic Mandarin/Cantonese Spanish Amharic/Tigrinya/Oromo Persian/Farsi

# PROFESSIONAL VS MID LITERACY IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Professional Immigrant Women	Mid Literacy Immigrant Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women who possess post secondary education and professional experience from their home countries and are fairly proficient in English</li></ul> <p>In 2015-2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 68% of CIWA clients served fell under this category</li><li>• Majority of clients came to Canada under the economic immigration category</li><li>• Top five professions from their home country: accountants, administrators, doctors, nurses and teachers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Women who are college or high school graduates with little or no professional experience from their home countries</li></ul> <p>In 2015-2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 36% of clients served fell under this category</li><li>• Majority of clients came to Canada as refugees</li><li>• Work experience from their home country: homemakers, housekeepers or cleaners, students, sales clerks, kitchen staff</li></ul>

# SETTLEMENT BARRIERS FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN

PROFESSIONAL IMMIGRANT WOMEN	MID LITERACY IMMIGRANT WOMEN
<p>Professional immigrant women face the following barriers/challenges:</p> <p>Unique barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of Canadian experience</li><li>• Lack of access to equitable employment</li><li>• Recognition of foreign credentials and experience</li><li>• Unemployment/underemployment</li></ul> <p>Common barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of access to affordable childcare in order to work</li><li>• Role reversals leading to family violence</li><li>• Lack of understanding of Canadian workplace culture and expectations</li></ul>	<p>Mid literacy immigrant women face the following barriers/challenges:</p> <p>Unique barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge gap with Canadian practices</li><li>• Lack of English language skills</li><li>• Limited academic competency, essential skills and interrupted schooling</li><li>• Pre-migration trauma for refugees</li></ul> <p>Common barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of access to affordable childcare in order to work</li><li>• Role reversals leading to family violence</li><li>• Lack of understanding of Canadian workplace culture and expectations</li></ul>



# HOLISTIC SERVICES

CIWA's female-centered holistic services for immigrant women include:

- Basic needs support services
- First language support
- Childcare (free of charge)
- Cross-cultural parenting support
- Emergency housing supports
- Civic participation
- Legal services
- Tax clinics
- Family, individual and youth counselling
- Scholarships

# TYPE OF RESOURCES

- Staff members
- Infrastructure
- Technology
- Guest speakers
- Host employers
- Community partners
- Volunteers
- Mentors

# UNIQUE APPROCHES

- Tools and processes used to assess clients' needs
- Providing a safe, welcoming and supportive environment
- Flexible/accessible service delivery
- Employment readiness training and workshops
- Updated curriculum as per current labor market trends
- Use of technology in the classroom
- Community and/or business partners support
- Regular review, evaluations and appraisal of programs and services
- Continuous outcome measurement and reporting
- Compensation for childcare and transportation costs
- Additional support/referrals to other services to fulfil clients' needs
- Collaboration with multiple partners and agencies

## BEST PRACTICES- Recruitment and Assessment

- Widespread dissemination about the availability of services
- Recognizing the diversity of needs and experiences
- Assessment of the needs, expectations, goals and priorities of the clients
- Incorporating flexibility into programs and services in order to allow them to adapt to changing needs
- Recognizing the importance of the family and cultural sensitivities
- Curriculum tailored & aligned with labor market needs
- Offering programs and services leading to employment and career advancement

# BEST PRACTICES- Training

- Employment readiness training and job search support
- Incorporating life coaching in the training & assistance creating a long-term career plan
- Occupational and business language development training
- Intensive one-on-one tutoring based on individual learning styles
- Computer and Pronunciation instructions
- Accounting fundamentals and Quick Books training
- Assisting the clients in making contact with potential employers, obtaining voluntary placements to gain Canadian experience
- Networking breakfast meeting & job fairs

# BEST PRACTICES- Post Program Support

- Job search support after graduation
- Job retention support
- 3 and 6 months follow up
- Referrals to additional training and workshops
- Invitation to the agency conferences/events to share their experiences with stake holders
- Scholarships awarded to help selected clients to pursue their professional careers

# EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES FOR CIWA CLIENTS

PROFESSIONAL IMMIGRANT WOMEN	MID LITERACY IMMIGRANT WOMEN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 247 women served through our professional bridging programs</li><li>• 100% graduation rate</li><li>• 95% -100% attendance rate</li><li>• 80% - 85% employment rate at 6 month follow up on average</li><li>• \$42,000 to \$48,000/year average salary upon completion</li><li>• 209 business partners hosted work placements, mentoring, workplace orientations, and networking opportunities</li><li>• 24 professional mentors supported CIWA clients every year</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 646 mid literacy immigrant women received employment support</li><li>• 87% of clients found employment</li><li>• \$12.20 to \$15.00/hour average wage upon completion</li><li>• 60 business provided work experience opportunities, tours, etc.</li><li>• 6,975 volunteer hours provided by clients in their workplace</li></ul>

## PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT BRIDGING PROGRAMS

- Accounting Software Training offered since 2007
- Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants offered since 2008
- Links to Success:- Skills Enhancement and Internship program offered since 2008 including one time Links to Success for Syrian Refugee Mothers
- Office Administration Program for Immigrant Women offered since 2010
- Labour Market Bridging for Volunteers: Interpretation and Translation Clinic offered since 2012 hosts the only community interpretation testing site in western Canada
- Career Focus Program offered since Feb, 2017



# OVERVIEW OF LINKS TO SUCCESS PROGRAM

This 24-week fulltime program offers:-

- Pre-employment skills building workshops
- Canadian work experience through entry level office job
- Employment counselling and individualized career planning support
- Mentorship from a professional immigrant woman
- Compensation for childcare and transportation costs
- Financial support to eligible clients

# MID- LITERACY EMPLOYMENT BRIDGING PROGRAMS

- Childcare Training Program offered since 2008
- Employment Preparation for Retail Industry Program since 2011
- Food Service Industry Project offered since 2014

# OVERVIEW OF CHILDCARE TRAINING

- Language and occupational skills training to acquire and retain employment in the field of childcare
- Familiarity with basic needs, caring and meeting the emotional needs of children through volunteering and work placements in a childcare center
- Child development and working with others
- First Aid & CPR, Canada Food Guide, menu planning, food safety, health and safety
- Program planning using an emergent curriculum model
- Circle time, songs, games, finger plays, art etc.



# CONCLUSION

In summary, CIWA's approach to delivering Employment Bridging Programs for immigrant women works because:

- Programs are designed specifically to train professional and mid literacy immigrant women for employment
- Labor market needs are addressed while ambitiously helping the clients
- Clients are enabled to bridge the barriers and secure meaningful employment within a short period
- Strong collaboration with partners is incorporated which increases the capacity for all

# THANK YOU



## CIWA

*Calgary Immigrant Women's Association*

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