Impact Report
April 2020 to March 2021
Helping newcomers reach their goals
CEO and President’s Report

This will be remembered as the pandemic year and COVID-19 impacted our services in myriad ways. From the low numbers of refugee arrivals, to our pivot to virtual services, and wonderful local support for digital literacy and equipment provided for clients.

Thank you to our government funders for their flexibility and support and to local donors for their generosity. As a result, we were able to retain our staff and quickly shift to virtual delivery and then blended virtual and in-person services. As a provider of essential services, we continued to provide client services and staff never wavered in their commitment to supporting clients through this very challenging time.

But there was a lot more than COVID going on. Racism really came into the international spotlight. The Local Immigration Partnership, facilitated by ICA, released a racism report that laid bare the reality that while many non-racialized Victorians don’t see any racism around them, racialized people experience racism on a regular basis in our community. We saw increased support for anti-racism through Resilience BC, Bystander Training, and the development of Tools for Equity, an in-depth curriculum that will help local organizations and businesses build their capacity to thrive through diversity.

In 2018, we started to focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations. This year we continued our work on the Indigenous Journey project and have deepened our commitment to reconciliation and making systemic changes throughout ICA.

In the spring of 2022 we will at long last move into a new, more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive space that will allow us to meet the growing demand for services as our borders reopen to newcomers.

Sadly we recently said good-bye to volunteer extraordinaire, Mavis DeGirolamo, and in her honour we want to thank all of our dedicated volunteers, donors, staff, and funders for making our work possible and for your dedication, flexibility, and determination to turn a problem into a challenge and a challenge into an accomplishment.

We acknowledge the Coast Salish Nations on whose traditional territories we do our work to support immigrants and refugees in the capital region.

We are grateful to live, work and learn here, and we honour the Nations who have always cared for these lands, waters and air and continue to do so today.

Our main office is located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen-speaking First Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. Our services extend into the territories of approximately 20 First Nations in the Capital Regional District.
Through multiple programs including settlement services, English classes, employment services, and workshops, ICA serves more than 2,082 immigrants and refugees annually. Our clients come from all over the world and count on ICA when they first arrive in Canada and often for a few years as they work to establish a new home here. Through these services, ICA ensures that newcomers are able to integrate into the community, build new lives, and contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of the capital region.

*Percentage values have been rounded for graphic illustration.

Connecting with the Youth & Family Services team at ICA gave me a chance to see my future, to see myself in five years. I never felt judged or that I’m not a part of this society. ICA made me feel like a person, a human being.

Seagirl Abuson, ICA Client
Resettling Refugees During a Pandemic

By the end of 2020, the number of globally displaced persons had risen to a staggering 82.4 million. Resettlement offers a lifeline to refugees who reside predominantly in countries neighbouring crises areas. Throughout the past year, ICA stood ready to continue welcoming refugees in both our Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) and Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) programs. We quickly pivoted to making the necessary procedural adjustments to comply with pandemic public health measures, including quarantine requirements. Unfortunately, only a fraction of the refugees destined to come to Canada and to Victoria were able to actually travel. Severe pandemic conditions in their countries of residence; lower processing ability by Canada’s migration offices and their partners such as the International Organization for Migration; and Canada’s border closure, complicated refugee travel.

As a result, the number of resettlement arrivals declined over the previous year, while the number of refugees waiting overseas has continued to grow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsorship Members</th>
<th>Refugees Arrived</th>
<th>Resettled Refugees since 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>66 (GAR/PSR)</td>
<td>720</td>
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Once the border re-opens to a larger number of travelers, we expect resettlement to quickly pick up speed. We are committed to providing high-quality settlement and integration supports to these newcomers after their long wait. In the PSR program, this means working hand-in-hand with hundreds of community members that raise the required funds to support the sponsored refugees during their first year in the capital region.

ICA does not receive any government funding to manage this program and relies mostly on donations for the program’s operation. With the help of our generous community, we continue to welcome new community members, neighbours, and friends who share their rich and diverse cultural, linguistic and professional background.

More than 220 privately sponsored refugees are still waiting overseas to come to Canada through ICA programs.
Settlement Workers in Schools

For families one of the most important goals in coming to Canada is access to a better education for their children, but integrating into a new school system can present many challenges and COVID-19 only increased the barriers to success faced by newcomer students and their families.

This past year, the SWIS team experienced a significant increase in the need for their support services as COVID restrictions affected learning patterns and created some confusion, as well as mental health and behaviour concerns for students from primary school through high school.

Our partnership and collaboration with school districts and school staff became even more important as the schools’ English Language Learning teams, Counselors, Mental Health teams and Early Years teams worked with us to organize several joint ZOOM meetings that allowed us to share perspectives, ideas and solutions on critical needs such as school attendance/absence issues and strengthening early years education.

We know that many behavioural issues for students can be the result of stresses at home and in the family. To better support parents, the SWIS team received additional training from Dr. Alison Miller and the Boys & Girls Club and worked with ICA’s Training Program to offer the Parenting Sharing Hub program in Arabic, Chinese and English. Based on the success and positive feedback received we hope to continue offering these sessions throughout the next school year.

SWIS services have huge impacts on realizing educational goals for newcomer students, which will make big differences for their future life in Canada.

As a district counsellor for SD 61, I work with students and families who have complex needs. To connect families to needed supports, clear communication with a culturally responsive approach is essential. In my work, ICA support is an invaluable resource.

Monique Moore, School District 61
District Mental Health Team/District Counsellor for Middle Schools
70% increase in services during COVID in Greater Victoria School Districts 61, 62 + 63 for Settlement Workers in Schools

16% of ICA clients are under 24 years of age and registered in our Youth programs

663 students improved their English language skills in virtual and in-person LINC classes

2,082 Individual Clients Accessed Services

16% newcomers registered in our Employment Services programs and workshops

500+ newcomers registered in our Employment Services programs and workshops

120 active volunteers gave more than 1,700 combined hours of time.

680+ participants in virtual Community Partnership Network events to continue working with members

11,633 up 8% over previous year Direct Client Services

Intakes : Assessments : Orientations : Referrals : Employment Services : Workshops

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50 Years Working Together

From the inaugural International Fun Fair in 1971 and FolkFest in 1974, ICA has been working for fifty years to promote a truly diverse, equitable and inclusive community where everyone can thrive. FolkFest and Luminara were features of the Greater Victoria community for decades.

In 1977, we were contracted by the federal government to provide a small range of services to refugees fleeing Vietnam. From there ICA has grown into the largest settlement agency on Vancouver Island with a broad range of support services for all classes of immigrants. Our refugee support services grew significantly in 1999 in response to a wave of Chinese migrants and refugees from Kosovo and again in 2015 with the Syrian refugee crisis.

As we look ahead, Canada’s increased immigration and refugee support targets mean that the demand for services will continue to grow. Having outgrown our current offices, we are excited about our upcoming move to a new location that will once again bring ICA’s services together under one roof in a central downtown location.

In April 2022, we will open our doors to clients and the community at 808 Douglas Street. This new location will allow us to expand services to newcomers as well as our commitment to lead active anti-racism work throughout the Capital Region.

I’m really proud of being a part of ICA, especially from the early days. I’ve watched ICA grow from a little organization without much financial means. We did a good job and started getting recognized for it.

Alan Yuen, Past Board Member & President
Community Engagement

Engaging the community has been a hallmark of ICA’s 50-year history. There’s no magic formula to building strong communities. It’s about being committed for the long haul to create genuine, trusting, deep relationships throughout the community and building a collective vision for the Greater Victoria we want to see.

Our cultural initiatives helped share the wealth of talents, creativity, ideas and commitment to building a strong community to the capital region. In partnership with local organizations, businesses and individuals, we create innovative programs designed to reflect the strengths of newcomers.

Even during a pandemic, ICA did not stop building strong networks, organizing diversity training and anti-racism initiatives, and working to create systemic change.

ICA informs and inspires the community to become engaged and invested in welcoming newcomers.

We do not work alone. We work closely with residents and over 500 community partners to create an environment where immigrants and refugees are valued and can actively contribute to our community. Most people recognize ICA’s work through our Community Partnership Network (CPN), and Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership (GVLIP) and community education. But there is also a lot of work that often goes unseen within the community to build strong relationships.

COVID-19 strengthened ICA’s sense of agility and our ability to quickly find creative solutions to maintain services and we are ready to face whatever challenges come our way. One of the biggest challenges will be to prepare the community for an increase in newcomers in the coming years – newcomers will bring fresh ideas and energy and will also need our support at times. Community is stronger together.
We arrived in Canada from Kosovo in May 1999 and after a few months in Trenton, Ontario were able to come to Victoria. ICA helped me and my family so much! Grateful for the support we received we would volunteer in youth and childcare programs. The staff always made things like birthdays feel special and it’s these things that help you feel at home.

Artor Gashi, ICA Client, owner at Brother’s Barbershop, Victoria
ICA's ability to bring consistency and stability while also being able to adapt to changing situations abroad is remarkable. When the Syrian refugee crisis hit, ICA did not hesitate to step up to help refugees come to Greater Victoria. ICA's willingness to act with compassion and immediacy is a hallmark of this important organization in our community. I wholeheartedly support ICA and encourage others to do the same.

Linda Lee, ICA Donor & Past Board Member

You Can Make A Difference

If the pandemic taught us anything, it is the importance of working together in the face of adversity. We know that by working together with people like you, we will be able to face any challenge the future brings. When you give to ICA, you support a more inclusive, diverse and welcoming community where we can better serve immigrants and refugees in a dynamic and thriving capital region.

ICA has two major roles: first, we provide critical housing, health, education, and employment services for newcomers. The other role we play is to ensure Greater Victoria is ready to welcome newcomers into the community through education, anti-racism training and by working with hundreds of volunteers as part of our private sponsorship of refugees program.

By supporting ICA, you help ensure we have the resources needed to fund ICA's important programs. Your contributions directly support ICA's community building programs that foster a greater understanding and strengthen cross-cultural connections, while providing immigrants and refugees with the essential services they need to succeed. Your donation helps build a vibrant community and is a strong statement of hope and opportunity for all people who call the Capital Region home.

Ways you can help:

- Make a one-time or monthly donation today
- Donate through your donor advised fund
- Name ICA of Greater Victoria in your will

To make your tax-deductible monthly or one-time donation, you can give online at www.icavictoria.org or use the enclosed envelope.

Thanks to support from people like you, ICA can continue to serve as a helping hand, a listening ear and a tireless advocate for immigrants and refugees throughout the Capital Regional District. To learn more about ICA, receive email updates, or ask any questions you may have about our work, please contact us by email.

Email: development@icavictoria.org
Together we can build an inclusive and equitable future for everyone.

icavictoria.org