

June 2009

ISSofBC interview in Vancouver Sun lands newcomer first Canadian job



When the Vancouver Sun contacted ISSofBC's Ines Montoya for an interview, she had no idea that the story would be directly responsible for landing one of her clients a job. The Sun was investigating the effects of the recession on immigrants' employment. Ines offered to bring a few clients along for the interview, and Yogita Panchal happened to be one of them.

A lawyer and artist from Mumbai, India, Yogita was one of many recent immigrants struggling to get hired amidst increasing challenges in the current labour market.

"Chances were tough," says Yogita. "Though I knew I would get a job, the timing was uncertain on when that would happen."

Her luck was about to change. The day the article was published, a local lawyer seeking a new legal secretary phoned Ines for more information. Less than a week later, Yogita was scheduled for an interview.

"I felt very excited", says Yogita. "I did not expect to come across my interview or a job opportunity in this fashion."

At the end of her interview, she was hired.

"I am very pleased and happy," remarks Yogita. "Especially to land up with a job in my related field. I am thankful to Ines from ISSofBC who gave me an opportunity for this interview."

[Click here to read the original Vancouver Sun article online.](#)

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Announcements

ISSofBC and Vancouver Community College partner to improve community initiatives



"New Faces" photo exhibit showcases diversity



Over 200 people attended the opening of ISSoBC's New Faces of Vancouver photography exhibit last May 15th at Centre A. The exhibit celebrated Vancouver's multiculturalism through photography by local artists.

Ewa Karczewska, ELSA Coquitlam and New Westminster Manager, and Hank Bull, Director of Centre A, welcomed the visitors, highlighting the importance of such an event in the city.

Attendees included Nick Noorani, founder of the Canadian Immigrant magazine and representatives from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development.

The event's organizing team included Adrian Bailon, Helen Rotonen, Chelsea Hug and Clifford Bell.

To view the final 32 photos selected by a panel of judges and displayed at the exhibit until May 16th, visit www.issbc.org/newfaces/gallery/

The Canadian Immigrant featured the exhibit in the July edition of the magazine: [Click here to read it!](#)

Community spirit welcomes new families at ISSoBC's refugee children's party

Volunteers and community contributors worked together to welcome refugee families to a day of activities on Saturday, June 6th at Edmonds Community School in Burnaby.

Children of refugee families took part in crafts, face painting and even a drumming circle. This year featured the Welcome to Canada book launch, with authors of the book, aged 10 to 14, reading their contributions to the newest arrivals.

The May 20th career fair at VCC marked the beginning of a new partnership between ISSoBC and the community college. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Clifford Bell, for ISSoBC, and Rob Henderson, Interim VP, Human Resources & Student Affairs of VCC.

The formal agreement aims to facilitate expertise and information sharing, the organization of joint events and the support of community based initiatives.

Over 1,500 people attended the career fair featuring 20 employers.

More ELSA classes in Richmond

ELSA Richmond will serve students through a new location at Cedarbridge Way this September.

The new Literacy to Level 3 program will offer seven classes: three full-time and four part-time.

ISSoBC's new location will ensure that more newcomers will be able to access English language classes in Richmond.

In Brief

ISSoBC sponsors citizenship ceremony



Community involvement was a key ingredient to the party's success. Along with ISSofBC staff who volunteered their time, Lynn Valley Church donated funds for food, Highland Elementary School students put together 300 goody bags with personal Welcome to Canada cards, and students from Pacific Academy decorated invitations.

Laura Davies and Romanda Simpson co-chaired this year's successful event.

ISSofBC helped celebrate the citizenship of two new groups of Canadians on June 19th at Citizenship and Immigration Canada's downtown office. With cookies and refreshments, as well as Welcome to Canada books for the children, ISSofBC was able to greet the 120 newly certified Canadians.

Pat Lee, Kay Fabre and Tessie Madayag were responsible for setting up and making the day all the more meaningful to Canada's new citizens.

Housing report paves way for improvements

Struggling to meet basic household costs, living in overcrowded apartments and difficulty finding community resources. This is the shared experience of many refugees living in Surrey, according to a report by ISSofBC's Community Settlement Program Manager, Kathy Sherrell.

"Large families in particular are experiencing severe overcrowding as they struggle to obtain housing of sufficient size given limited budgets", says Kathy, the primary researcher of the project.

Through interviews and focus groups with Karen and Sudanese refugees, as well as community organizations and representatives, Kathy assessed the current housing situation and the needs of this community.

"There is such a deep need for assistance in obtaining employment, finding housing that is adequate and affordable, and navigating the challenges of integration", says Kathy. The most immediate needs of this group are financial assistance and better access to information. "While information may be available, people do not always know where to begin looking for it."

The City of Surrey approached ISSofBC to conduct research into the issue.

ISSofBC services promoted at Philippine Independence Day



ISSofBC programs and services got a huge boost at the Philippine Independence Day celebrations held last June 12th at Slocan Park.

ISSofBC staff across the organization assisted visitors, including some city politicians, with inquiries on ISSofBC's settlement and employment programs.

Mentoring Connections competes at the 2009 Plywood Cup

"The City of Surrey has been very proactive," says Kathy. "I see this as a very positive development and hope the report will provide the impetus for increased discussions about, and changes to the provision of assistance to refugees in Surrey."

[The full report "At Home in Surrey? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Surrey, BC" can be accessed by clicking here.](#)



Mentoring Connections staff participated in the 2009 Plywood Cup, an annual fundraising event whose proceeds go to Special Olympics BC and Small Talk Society, and in the process raised the program's profile among the spectators.

The event's goal was to build a seaworthy boat to race across False Creek using only two sheets of plywood, an 8'2"x2' piece of lumber, a yardstick, a hammer, a small bag of nails, 10 metres of duct tape and a handsaw.

Despite having no engineering or boat building experience, Jericho Bundac, Veronica Heringer, Catherine Rana and Romanda Simpson created a boat and paddle in 90 minutes! After some challenges, they were able to send their first mate Romanda off in the race.

The team's unique design won them the prestigious Titanic prize of "First to Sink" and lots of attention from the cheering crowd.

Mentoring Connections celebrates first year



Mentors and mentees shared inspirational stories at an event celebrating Mentoring Connections' first year, held at Nikkei Place in Burnaby on Thursday, June 11th.

Among the mentees was Carmina Aurora, a physiotherapist from the Phillipines. Carmina arrived in 2004 under the Live-in Caregiver program with goals of finding employment in her field. In December 2008, she was matched with a mentor who showed her the ins and outs of the local labour market.

"My mentor helped me gain insights and acquire more detailed knowledge of the physiotherapy industry," says Carmina. "He was always there to guide me and give me encouragement."

Carmina now works as a Rehabilitation Assistant and has further goals to acquire Canadian certification as a Registered Physiotherapist.

The event's examples of success showed the program's ability to help newcomers connect with local professionals in their field and better understand and navigate through the Canadian Labour Market.

Green Tip

Think before you toss

Is that item you're about to put in the trash recyclable?