Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto has spent the past year celebrating its 25th anniversary. Experiencing such a milestone usually means exploring our history and looking forward to our future. We are proud of our grassroots beginnings: started in 1983 by local refugee women and their allies from the community. Today, the organization is proud to serve women in 22 languages in two locations across Toronto.

However, the past year has offered an uncertain economic and political climate and newcomer women are among the many that have been affected by these challenges. And although the last 25 years have brought many victories for women, statistics point us to some of the reasons why our work here at NEW is so important: in 1980, immigrant women were paid 23% less than Canadian-born women of similar ages and education. By 2000, this gap had doubled to 45%. The very real issues of social exclusion, discrimination, poverty and violence remind us to be vigilant in our commitment to equity.

As we embark on a new chapter for the agency, we stand behind our commitment to providing comprehensive and innovative services for newcomer women. The organization is reinforcing this commitment through good governance and high standards of service. Partnering with committed agencies such as JVS Toronto, we continue to build our programs and the agency’s capacity to innovate. As well, new partnerships with local community groups allow us to expand our programming and tap into women’s daily concerns, needs and dreams.

At the end of the day, the strength of this organization is the women behind the agency. The invaluable contributions of staff and program participants keep the agency dynamic. With their skills and energy, NEW will continue to evolve and grow to meet the needs of newcomer women and their families.

Maya Roy        Amanda Barnes
Executive Director (Interim)     Chair, Board of Directors

A THANK YOU TO
OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto (NEW) is a nonprofit settlement organization that assists newcomer women to develop the language, employment-related skills and cultural understanding they need for their successful integration into Canadian society.

Our Funders

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BUILDING OUR COMMUNITY:
NEWCOMER WOMEN’S NETWORK

Every Saturday morning, NEW comes alive with the Newcomer Women’s Network. There are workshops, arts & craft sessions, field trips, healthy cooking classes, storytelling & English conversation sessions. All these sessions and events are designed by the participants and are focused on post-settlement needs and skills development for isolated women.

Participants greatly value the opportunity to improve their English language skills through discussion, listening, and participation in program planning. This, in turn, increases their overall level of personal self-confidence. Even more importantly, women who are isolated in their homes during the week, look forward to meeting and working with other newcomers. Over the years, the group has seen many personal friendships and support networks built while laughing and sharing their experiences.

Workshops and discussions provide valuable information about education, employment, health awareness, parenting and many other topics which assist participants to feel more secure and independent and to become more engaged in the wider community.

We have greatly benefited from the involvement of our volunteers. Their innovative and creative ways of volunteering their time and efforts have made a difference in our program. Many of the volunteers are former program participants, who come back to share their skills and talents. We are going to continue to enhance our existing programs, deliver more practical and effective services and programs as well as strengthen our links with our community partners.
LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:
LANGUAGE INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

LINC At-A-Glance

- 110 women learnt English as a Second Language
- 95% attendance rate
- 297 hours of computer assisted language learning

The LINC program supports women in the tools they need to succeed in day to day life – living their new lives in English. Daily classes from levels 1 to 6 offer women a chance to learn about themselves and explore their new country through rigorous curriculum, skills workshops, guest speakers and field trips. Topics range from the academic to the practical: Canadian history & grammar to HIV/AIDS, parenting skills and money management skills.

Levels 1 & 2

This year found increased classroom attendance with a committed group of students. Weekly tests were held to improve outcome measures as per LINC Curriculum Guidelines and CLBA Reading and Writing Benchmarks. This has resulted in a marked improvement in learners’ grammar. The women are proud of their achievements when they see their test scores improving. These scores enable them to keep track of their performance and they’re encouraged to work harder.

I am from India. I came to Canada on July 12th, 2008, and I started school in August, 2008. I like to study in this school.

My teacher is very good. She understands me very well. I ask a question, she give me answer very clearly. Sometimes we listen to the tape, sometimes we watch movie students can understand. School staff are also fine. I like the workshops and field trips. I see many things and learn a lot.

Aasefa Mahebub Sarkar (Level 1)
Levels 3 & 4
The students are eager to learn about Canada: Canadian culture, government, multiculturalism, social agencies, women’s issues, health and prevention. These themes acclimatize women to their new environment and help them with real life issues. Methods range from group work, individual writing to daily discussions on news items and contemporary issues.

The women are encouraged to feel free and comfortable to speak in the class. Throughout the year, many even overcome their shyness and fear of making errors speaking in front of others. Learners regularly comment on how they enjoy the class and the useful information, as they are adapting to the Canadian life.

Everyday I learn English. I practice my vocabulary that I learned in this school with my classmates. My English is better than before. I thank this school. My teacher is so patient with us. In this school, they have me the opportunity to do a volunteer job, two hours a week. I like the workshops although sometimes I cannot understand all.

I have been in the NEW LINC school around 2 years. I would like to tell you something about how I found this school. One day, a friend of mine who was already studying at this school suggested me to come to this LINC school. I thought about it and I decided to come. On the first day of school, I felt so happy and it helped me a lot with English. I was confident with myself. I thought I could do anything in this new life.

I would like to thank all the teachers and my friend who suggested me to this school.

Anila Shameti (Level 3)
Levels 5 & 6

Students are exposed to language that is mostly similar to what they will find in the ‘real world’ and, according to recent standardized testing, the listening benchmarks of the majority of students in the class are higher than necessary for their level. All students are expected (and usually eager) to speak in class on a regular basis.

Complementing the high standards, is the dedication of the students. Because of the positive environment created for and by the students, one can clearly see an increase in confidence and ability to communicate in each student.

I came from India. I am Hindu. When I came to Canada 15 months ago, my English was so bad and I didn’t have confidence to speak in front of people. Then I joined this school at level 3, but now I am in level 5. The teachers are very nice, polite and intelligent. School provides us a good selection of books and teachers and staff help us to solve problems. I am very satisfied with their style of teaching. Now I am working part time in a retail store. Just because of this school, I got confidence to deal with different kinds of people. Still I am working on my English, but I know that with my teacher, I will improve myself very well.

I live at Yonge and Sheppard. When I came here, I thought why don’t I find a school close to my house? Thus, I changed schools, but in there, it was hard for me to stay even one hour. I asked NEW to take me back and they allowed me to come back and I can join them again. I know I will never ever find a better school and teachers than this school.

Shivani Bhatnagar (Level 5)
GETTING SETTLED AND CONNECTED: 
NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT PROGRAM (NSP)

Settlement At-A-Glance

- 1,389 women, families & seniors served
- Most common languages: Mandarin, Bengali, Hindi, Turkish, Urdu, Russian, Tamil, Spanish, & Korean
- 72 workshops & information sessions

“What is an OHIP card? ..... Where do I apply for housing? .... How can I get my children into school? .... How do I leave an abusive relationship? .... Can I become a citizen?”

Women face navigating a complex world after arriving in Canada. The Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) provides settlement and post-settlement integration and employment assistance to newcomer/refugee women and their families. Last year, staff worked with 1,389 new clients to identify their settlement needs, provide up-to-date information and referrals to other agencies.

Through sensitive and confidential support, women get their questions answered in the 22 languages spoken by NEW staff. As well, a diverse range of workshops offer education and skill-building opportunities for agency members. Successful workshops included: Conflict Resolution Skills, Building Self-Esteem, Stress Management, Human Rights and Family Violence Awareness.

A significant number of clients call needing urgent assistance. The agency prides itself on its ability to immediately support women – whether they walk in or the call on the phone. Despite the challenges in trying to match clients with services in emergency situations, staff are innovative and use their networking skills to get women the appropriate services.
Settlement Stories

“The purpose of my visit is progress and help. They really helped me and I have progressed and gotten what I wanted.

Thanks Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto!”

“I wanted to share the good news with you - I have found work as a bilingual administrative assistant. I want to thank you again for the advice you gave me back in November 08 and will make the most of it.”

January 2009 – e-mail from client
Finding employment and career counseling are top priorities among newcomer population and essential part of successful settlement process. NEW offers two programs to get women into the labour market: the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the Newcomer Employment Services Training program (NEST).

EAP
The EAP program provides intensive assistance:

- Provided information about labor market and educational credentials assessment
- Offered assistance in job search, resume preparation and interview skills
- Helped clients in getting information on how to access professions and trades in Ontario, find company information and profiles, and gain better understanding of employers’ requirements
- Organized workshops on various employment topics
- Assisted clients in finding volunteer opportunities and provided volunteer placements at the agency which led to employment
- Provided networking opportunities through job fairs, job postings, information and referral

The pre-employment workshops covered useful material. It was practical to my needs and interests. It was well organized and the activities were effective. The information used was easy to understand. Thank you.
NEST

The NEST program continues to provide newcomer women with intensive pre-employment, customer service and bookkeeping training. The NEST program offers 5 week courses: two days a week women take part in pre-employment workshops. For the rest of the week they study customer service training or Canadian bookkeeping practices. After graduation, women meet weekly with staff for individual support and resume assistance until they find work.

The major challenge this year was the recession. This placed added strain on our employer partners, our job development staff and clients. Women have had to put on hold their dream of securing their ideal job and accepting a survival job until the economy improves. However, even with the economic downturn there are success stories:

I have a J...O...B! A JOB! An interview I had last week....they offered me the position: I am going to be a “Bilingual Customer Service Representative” for... TD Bank!!! Isn’t this great!? I am so happy, so relieved, proud: this is my first (paid) job experience in Canada!! Thank you so much for all your support and ongoing involvement. I appreciated it a lot and I hope we can (still) stay in touch. I am going to celebrate now...just a little!

- NEST Client
A THANK YOU TO
OUR VOLUNTEERS & PLACEMENT STUDENTS

We had a wonderful group of volunteers working for us this year.

During 2008 – 2009 a total 429 volunteers, contributed 4,155 hours to our organization.

We have different volunteer positions at NEW: Outreach Assistant, Receptionist, Childminder’s Assistant, 1-on-1 English Tutor, workshop facilitators, General Help, Program Assistant, and Bookkeeping Assistant.

Our volunteers come to NEW for many reasons and through different sources. Many women come to gain skills or complete volunteer hour requirements. We work to provide them with opportunities to develop and practice a variety of skills and experiences. At the end of the day, we have the privilege of working with dynamic and committed women who want to support their peers.

Our volunteers make an important and valuable contribution to the community and to NEW. We thank them for their invaluable contribution and support.

Janice Babcock – George Brown College
Hui Ping Zhang – George Brown College

Johanna Hilger
Matuli Mazamay
Nusrat Malim
Pamela Inam
Ira Paina
Umida Tursunova
Shaheda Hussain
Lourdes Rivas-LLosa
Jenny Scott
Kenise Kilbride
Karyn Swaffield

Amanda Barnes
Sheila Berzitis
Sarah Valair
Michaela Charette
Katie Gibson
Edlynne Laryea
Gabriela Polanco-Sorto
Allison Pond
Karen Goldenberg
Rowshan Ara
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MAYA ROY
ANITA SAMUELS
MARILYN SANDERS
DHURATA SINANI
KIRA TOKAREV
SELVINA WILLIAMS
The Catharine Parr Traill Awards are named in honour of a courageous newcomer mother and author who arrived in Ontario from England in 1832 along with her husband, Thomas Traill. In keeping with Catharine’s courageous spirit, these Awards celebrate five newcomer women who demonstrate qualities of determination and resistance, and are role models for others.

Veronica Fynn is a former war child and advocate of human rights for vulnerable women and children in Africa. She is currently studying for a PhD at Osgoode Hall Law School. She is the Executive Director of EV Research Inc, the founder of the first ever Journal of Internal Displacement, and blogs on the Rights of Women in War.

Veronica recently launched a partnership project, Computer Literacy Program for Children in Post-war Countries, with the aim of reducing global ITC gaps in post-war communities. As a former refugee student sponsored by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), she an avid supporter and mentor to WUSC at York. In her spare time she volunteers and plays sports, including basketball, and is training for a half-marathon in November 2009.

Dianna Jiang moved to Canada from China 8 years ago. Upon her arrival, she enrolled in English classes and then for a marketing course at Ryerson University. She successfully completed a women’s business edge program at the University of Toronto.

When her daughter Sophia was diagnosed with autism, Dianna began to take courses to better understand how to support her daughter. To enable others to learn through her experiences, she became involved with workshops and support groups for families of children with special needs. She volunteers her knowledge and time at Surrey Place Centre for People with Developmental Disabilities and an organization called Community Matters.
**Natalia Eileene Petite** is a Trans advocate and activist born in Mexico. A promoter of social justice and human rights for transsexual individuals, Natalia contributed to the creation of the website www.disforiadegenero.org, designed to provide resources for transsexual Spanish speaking people. She advocated for the Trans community to lead Mexico City’s pride parade in 2006, to gain visibility and promote a federal law which would promote access to public health for Trans peoples.

In Canada, Natalia directed a short film regarding the discrimination experiences she has suffered in Canada and factual reasons of hatred against Trans people in Mexico. The film was screened at the 2009 Inside Out film festival.

**Farzana Zaman** was born and raised in Bangladesh. Farzana was in love with another girl but she and her sisters had marriages arranged by their parents. In 2000, Farzana came to Canada with her husband and son. Her husband was unable to find employment in Canada so the family moved again, this time to England. When tensions against Muslims rose after September 11, 2001, Farzana returned to Canada.

Farzana struggled alone in Canada until she met her partner, Maggie. Their relationship has been met with resistance from Farzana’s family, but they continue to be hopeful that things will slowly change. Farzana has volunteered at the Cross Cultural Learning Centre for the past 2 years. She is also training to be a social worker and will be completing her education in a year.

**Annie Kashamura** Zawadi came to Canada from South Africa in 1999. She arrived with her five children, in search of a better life. Drawing on her lived experiences, Annie founded Arising Women in 2000. The charitable organization, which at first operated out of her living room, was created to help end violence against women and young girls who are being abused or who have been abused.

Annie has received her specialist degree in gender and women’s studies and an honours degree in political science. Her thesis on violence against women in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo is taught as part of the curriculum in a gender and neo-liberalism course at the University of Toronto. She has also written her memoir, entitled Foi:1999 and in 2008 she published I Can Testify, her book of autobiographic poems.

Our 25th Anniversary celebrations were made possible through the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration through the Ontario Community Builders program.
Support Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto

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Tax receipts will be issued for any contribution of $10 or more

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