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Alberta Association of Immigrant
Serving Agencies

Celebrating 30 Years

AAISA

CONNECTION

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- **A personal story of secondary migration**
- **Building Bridges in Edmonton**
- **Lethbridge and Calgary celebrate the achievements of newcomers**

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Secondary Migration: A fresh start for Rosa

By: Sipiwe Mapfumo

When Rosa decided to move from Ontario to Alberta, she had no family but her 8 year old daughter, no friends and no job. All she knew was that she wanted to move to a bigger city where she might be able to find better employment in her line of training as a journalist.

"I had been working in the health care field as a support worker for over three years. Though the job was an eye opener and in some ways quite fulfilling, it was just a matter of me bringing the food to the table. I still wanted to get back into my field of training. I quit that job and decided to take a plunge and move to Calgary, Alberta. I told myself if I could move continents to come to Canada, I sure can move to another province with no fear," she said calmly.

After a gruelling 32-hour drive across Canada in her small car with her daughter, Rosa finally made it to Calgary after what seemed to be an endless journey of miles and miles of prairie land. "For a while I wondered if I had made the right decision to embark on a secondary migration, but I now know for sure that I had to make the move," she said.

In a city where she knew nobody, Rosa relied on her old laptop and the one instrument she vows is "the most useful technology of the twenty first century ever - the GPS". After securing an apartment and

arranging her daughter's childcare, she quickly hit the streets to the employment agencies to see if she could get a job. "Things were not that simple in a place where I knew nobody," she said. But she had a mission. Her GPS took her everywhere from the food store, to the many interviews across the city, and anything in-between. "That instrument was my friend.

It always took me to the right address. Otherwise I had no idea where to go." Rosa realised that she was back to square one just like when she first arrived in Canada six years earlier.

The only difference was that she had a vague idea of the various services for refugees and immigrants that were available. She also knew that those agencies would serve her immediate needs as a single mother and a whole host of challenges she needed to address. She visited The Centre for Newcomers, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association and Immigrant Services Calgary where she received all kinds of information that she needed to get herself started. They advised her on where to look for a job, where she could find childcare support and where she could access the food bank.

Because Rosa holds a degree in journalism and had spent years working in communications, a mentorship program for highly skilled refugees that she found at a local agency was of great interest to her.

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Upcoming Training Sessions

- **May 2011:** 2K Facilitating Workforce Entry
- **June-July 2011:** 2F Basic Counseling Skills in a Cross Cultural Context
- **September 2011:** 2B Building Understanding of Cultural Communities
- **October 2011:** 3B Advocacy and Outreach
- **Fall/Winter 2011-12:** 2I Needs Assessment and Action Plans

Visit www.aaisa.ca for more information about training opportunities.

The courses and schedules listed here are subject to change.

New Temporary Foreign Worker Program Regulations

New regulations to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) took effect April 1, 2011. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), these new measures aim to:

- minimize the potential for exploitation of foreign workers by employers and third-party agents;
- implement stricter employment monitoring mechanisms;
- reinforce the temporary nature of the program.

In a media release dated March 24, CIC wrote that the regulations ensure that temporary foreign workers “will be better protected” and that “the program continues to be fair to employers and maintain

its focus on alleviating temporary labour shortages.”

The relevant changes cover three main areas of the TFWP:

- The assessment of job offers will be more rigorous in order to determine the genuineness of the offer.
- Employers who fail to meet their commitments in regards to wages, working conditions and occupation as set out in the employer offer of employment will be deemed ineligible to participate in the TFWP for a two-year period.
- A cumulative duration regulation limits the time a worker may work in Canada to four years before returning home.

Temporary Foreign Workers who are experiencing unfair, unsafe or unhealthy working conditions are encouraged to contact the AB Temporary Foreign Worker Advisory office in Calgary 620 7th Ave SW 403.476.4540 and in Edmonton 10242 105 Street 780.644.2584.

AAISA member agencies offer services for Temporary Foreign Workers across the province in Calgary, Edmonton, High River, Okotoks, Red Deer, Banff, Brooks, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie and Lloydminster. Visit www.aaisa.ca for agency details. For more details on these new regulations, visit www.cic.gc.ca.

Through this program newcomers are paired with a professional mentor in the same field of training. The mentor helps the mentee along as they adjust to the city and the new work environment. "This was very helpful. My mentor was a woman journalist who had come to Canada from China and had received a Masters Degree at the University of Calgary and had worked her way up to the position she holds with one of the television stations in the city."

"Initially I was a bit sceptical but as the weeks went by, I realized that I was learning a

lot. She showed me how to work a winning resume and how to emphasize the qualities that the employer was looking for. Within 2 months, I landed a job in communications with a non profit organization and I am ever so grateful for this program," said Rosa.

Rosa could not stop singing praises of the services that these agencies provide, and advised other newcomers to take advantage of them. "One has to put all you have into it and do most of the work yourself. These agencies show you the ropes and what one can do. Nobody is

going to do the ground work for you but the various agencies will give you the leads. A lot of times it takes a little while before things fall into place, but I would urge newcomers to hang in there and keep knocking at the doors because something will give. If you are new in the city and you have nobody to help you pull the ropes, your only bet is to visit the many settlement agencies. Their work is enormous because they deal with people who have different needs and are from different countries. But above all as newcomers we have

somewhere to fall back on," she emphasized.

Rosa has made many new friends through her work and her daughter is in a childcare centre close to her workplace. To her "the sky is the limit and I am happy that I made the move." She continues to volunteer with some agencies and says, "It's just the little that I can offer to others because I received so much more."

Building Bridges at EISA

By: Kristina De Guzman

On March 26, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA) hosted Building Bridges: Celebrating Cohesive Communities in Edmonton, an event that explored ways of increasing intercultural and interfaith understanding between both established and newcomer communities in the city.

The day consisted of various activities including a drumming circle, an opening speech from an Aboriginal Elder, a performance by the Karen community, a film viewing on Muslim and Jewish relations in the city, and roundtable discussions on the issues of Canadian identity, civic responsibility, social cohesion, and community.

"I thought the conversations were the best part of it," remarked participant Kristen Rumohr. "We had some really interesting conversations."



Rumohr, who has lived in Canada her whole life, shared a table with a diverse group and admitted that she hadn't really spoken with people from different cultures before the event.

"It was actually kind of cool to

see how much we did relate to one another even though we came from such diverse backgrounds," Rumohr commented.

Event organizer Oliver Kamau, hopes that "people start to think about engaging seriously with each other across cultural differences, across religious differences, across political differences, and other differences. And beyond the conversations, hopefully action steps, so that people start working with each other on common projects, with a similar goal of ensuring that we are talking about a solid cohesive entity rather than a fragmented community."

RECOGNIZING NEWCOMERS IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA

LETHBRIDGE: 2011 IMMIGRANT ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

By: **Brenda Hunik**

Now in its second year, the Lethbridge Family Services - Immigrant Services Immigrant Achievement Awards brings awareness of the valuable contribution of immigrants within our community. The Awards recognize one business or community organization that has made diversity and inclusion a priority, and six individuals in the areas of Arts & Culture, Business, Community Service, Distinguished Professional, Outstanding Youth, and Sports.

All 16 finalists in seven categories were announced at a press conference held at the LFS - Home Services Office on Feb 24, 2011. On Saturday March 19, the Lethbridge Family Services - Immigrant Achievement Awards were handed out at the Coast Hotel. The event started with a reception at 5:30pm; an international buffet began at approximately 6:15pm and the awards ceremony followed, interspersed with entertainment and greetings from the Mayor and MLA.

Event sponsors were invited to introduce the finalists and hand out the awards to the winners. 150 guests were on hand to recognize eight individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution to our community. This year, one of the finalists stood out as an example of the generosity and selflessness that we all aspire to. Therefore, a special award was presented to Wilma Mulder, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Year of the Woman.



Awards winners pictured above from left to right are:

IAA Winners: Sara Ortiz Ospina - Outstanding Youth, Thomas Fox of Amnesty International - Workplace Diversity, Thao and Louis Luu - Excellence in Business, Anine Vonkeman - Arts & Culture, Bertil Johansson - Sports, Special Guest Mayor Rajko Dodic, Wilma Mulder - Special Achievement, Daniel Zopoula - Distinguished Professional, Troy Nickle of Amnesty International - Workplace Diversity and Ian McKenna - Community Service.

CALGARY: 2011 IMMIGRANTS OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

By: **Katie Clancy**

On March 18, 2011 nearly 600 people gathered at the Westin Calgary for a common goal: to unmask the diversity of Calgary at the 2011 Immigrants of Distinction Awards presented by Immigrant Services Calgary. Members of diverse communities were in attendance, and the night ended with fun, laughter and international cuisine as people networked and made new connections at the post-awards reception.

The gala was attended by The Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs; The Honourable Thomas Lukaszuk, Minister of Alberta Employment and Immigration; His Worship Naheed Nenshi, the Mayor of Calgary; and many other distinguished members of

“...working hard to recognize the distinguished accomplishments of immigrants and the many positive contributions they have made to the city and province.”



Above: Patti Wang, Youth Scholarship Recipient, accepts her award.

the community. Once again, talented TV personalities Nirmala Naidoo (CBC News Anchor) and Erin Strate (Anchor/Producer - Shaw TV Calgary) were the Masters of Ceremony.

For 15 years, the Immigrants of Distinction Awards have been drawing together Calgary's many communities in celebration; working hard to recognize the distinguished accomplishments of immigrants and the many positive contributions they have made to the city and province. The awards are presented to outstanding individuals and organizations in the areas of Arts and Culture, Business, Community Service, Organizational Diversity and Distinguished Professional. The Youth Scholarship presentations highlight the achievements of immigrant and refugee youth. The

Hadassah Ksienski Distinguished Service Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated leadership, innovation, dedication and compassion in the area of immigrant services.

For information on award recipients and nominations for the 2012 awards, please visit www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca.

Latest News and Upcoming Events

- **RISE Recognizing Immigrant Success in Edmonton** Presented by the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, these awards celebrate the achievements and success of immigrants and the individuals and groups that support them. Nominations are due **May 13** and the Gala will take place at the **Tucker Amphitheatre on June 8**. For more information visit www.emcn.ab.ca.
- **A New Home for CCIS** Calgary Catholic Immigration Society will be moving to a new building this summer - 1111, 11th Ave SW. The Grand Opening Ceremony will take place in July. For more information visit www.ccis-calgary.ab.ca.
- **AAISA 2011 Provincial Conference** Planning has begun for the 2011 AAISA Provincial Conference to be held October 26-28 at the Radisson Hotel South in Edmonton. For more information, please contact Leanne Hullick-Reyes at leanne.hreyes@aaisa.ca.



RISE 2010

Recognizing Immigrant Success in Edmonton

AAISA Staff 2011-12

AAISA would like to welcome back Leanne Hullick-Reyes from maternity leave.
Welcome back Leanne!



From left to right:

Monique Greenwood Santos,
Project Coordinator

Emese Zakradnik-Csorgo,
Administrative Assistant

Leanne Hullick-Reyes,
Provincial Manager

Patrick Hanlon,
Project Coordinator

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AAISA members include:

ASSIST Community Services Centre.
Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth.
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society.
Catholic Social Services.
Calgary Immigrant Educational Society.
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association.
Central Alberta Refugee Effort (C.A.R.E.) Committee.
Centre d'accueil et d'établissement du nord de l'Alberta.
Centre for Newcomers.
Changing Together: A Centre for Immigrant Women.
Edmonton Immigrant Services Association.
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.
Immigrant Services Calgary.
Immigrant Settlement Services/GPRC.
Indo Canadian Women's Association.
Jewish Family Service Calgary.
Lethbridge Family Services-Immigrant Services.
Saamis Immigration Services Association.
YMCA Wood Buffalo-Immigrant Settlement Services.

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