

Indo Canadian  
Women's  
Association

## ANNUAL REPORT, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> 2015-MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup> 2016

Prepared by: Manal Alnajjar, Executive Director, ICWA



**INDO CANADIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

*Changing attitudes since 1984!*

9342 34 AVENUE NW EDMONTON AB T6E5X8

PH: 780-490-0477. FAX: 780-490-0478

EMAIL: [INFO@ICWAEDMONTON.ORG](mailto:INFO@ICWAEDMONTON.ORG)

WEBSITE: [WWW.ICWAEDMONTON.ORG](http://WWW.ICWAEDMONTON.ORG)

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## INDO-CANADIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Since 1984, the Indo Canadian Women's Association has unwaveringly supported the rights of women and the integration and settlement of new immigrants in Canada. Our approach to the prevention of violence against women focuses on raising the status of women through dialogue and community mobilization. We believe that an attitude shift in the treatment and portrayal of women is essential. Small modifications in attitudes about women can create an enormous impact in raising the status of women. This is why we are proud to say, "ICWA has been changing attitudes since 1984!"

***Our vision*** is that all new Canadians will achieve a sense of fulfillment and integration into the Canadian culture and society. Everyone will have an equal opportunity to fully participate in Canadian society.

***Our mission*** is to encourage and promote participation by new Canadians in social, economic, and political life in Canada. We are dedicated to promoting equality, opportunity, and protection of rights for everyone.

***Our values*** are equality, opportunity and protection of rights for everyone.

### **The Impact of the ICWA**

The ICWA has served over 45,000 clients since its inception in 1984, and is one of the very few immigrant serving and social services organizations serving the Millwoods area. It has doubled its annual intake of clients and currently serves 85% more clients than expected as per contracts with the core funding agencies. It now employs 12 full/part-time staff speaking 9 languages, as well as 15 full-time and over 50 part-time volunteers.

The impact ICWA has had on Edmonton, Alberta and Canada is well respected locally, provincially, nationally and internationally. ICWA's work as a change agent has reached diverse communities not only in Canada but also abroad.

Most importantly the association has had significant impact on mainstream institutions and government agencies. ICWA has influenced change by impacting the delivery of services amongst front line workers, practitioners and professionals in immigration/settlement, health care, social work, enforcement, law, medicine, education, to name but a few areas.

## **Programs**

The ICWA provides the following programs. **Integration**

### **& Settlement**

- o Referral Service o  
Settlement workshops o  
Computer Literacy o ESL  
functional literacy o Senior  
conversational English o  
Citizenship exam  
preparation
- o Working in Partnership to  
End Violence Against Women  
and Girls

### **Education and Awareness**

- o Women's rights advocacy o Peer mentoring o Daughter's day
- o Projects related to family violence against women, girls and men

### **Community Activities**

- o Youth program o  
Women's Program o  
Senior's Program

### **Outreach**

- o Organizing conferences and workshops to engage and change attitudes among  
mainstream service providers, practitioners and professionals o Collaborating  
and engaging with mainstream agencies

## Celebrations and Special Events



### A) Annual General Meeting

ICWA 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015. Close to 40 members, supporters and special guests were in attendance. Board President Miriam Thomas was a warm and welcoming host. Jagjeet Bhardwaj then introduced guest speaker Amarjeet Sohi, then Edmonton city councilor, now Member of Parliament for Edmonton Mill Woods and the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities in the federal Cabinet. His talk was entitled "Immigrant Women as Pillars of Community Building". He began by showing the 20 pages of notes on the ICWA that his staff had prepared for him, evidence of our activities. Saying he has personal experience of the work that ICWA does, he applauded the vision and courage shown, but lamented that women still have to "bargain" for a position,

equal pay, good income, safety and security. He gave some current Canadian statistics indicating how far women have to go to approach equality, citing additional barriers immigrant women may face, including male dominance. He spoke about a new city initiative to close the "embarrassing" gender gap we have, and thanked the women in his life, and ICWA again for the work we do.

The 2014 AGM minutes were represented by Netta Phillet, followed by President's report from Miriam Thomas who highlighted ICWA's many successful programs and events in 2014-15. Jagjeet Bhardwaj presented the treasurer's report and ended by nominations of board members for 2015-2016.

## **B) Daughter's Day Celebration**



Daughter's Day is presented by Canadians for a Civil Society in partnership with the Indo Canadian Women's Association, which is an annual sponsor of this initiative. Daughter's Day is a community effort seeking to eliminate discrimination against women. Since all women are daughters, this Day honors women who are doing exceptional work against human rights abuses against women.

This year, Daughter's Day was celebrated on August 26, 2015 at the City Hall. The guest speaker was Zarqa Nawaz, an author, broadcaster and a film maker. She is the creator of the CBC 2007 sitcom, "Little Mosque on the Prairie." In 2015, six women were recognized for their work towards gender equality. Yessy Byl is a human rights activist as well as a public educator. Krishna De Guzman is an accomplished musician. Sheliza Kassam founded 'Children's Birthday Miracles'. Malja Najmi-Beauchamp is actively involved in community initiatives. Karen Smith works towards ending sexual violence. Leslie Weigl is a multicultural educator at the University of Alberta.



### **C) Peace Fest**

The John Humphrey Centre and the Gandhi Foundation invited Edmonton groups to hold an event in the proposed Peace Fest from September 21-October 2, 2015.

The Indo Canadian Women's Association's participation in the Peace Festival of Edmonton was a forum celebrating Women's Contribution to World Peace on October 28th, 2015. The tone of the discourse was set by the opening remarks of the President of the Association, Mrs. Ratna Basappa. She affirmed that peace begins with the family. In the past, women were expected to contribute to harmony and tranquility in the home. The majority of women still live in conflict, war, oppression and exclusion. Citing the 3 women laureates of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, she emphasized the need for more organizations to ensure participation in peace building process.

Three panelists guided the discussion. They were Dr. Amrita Mishra (ICWA), Ms. Karen Farkas and Ms. Renee Vaugeois (John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights). Amrita's talk "Disturbing the Peace" celebrated the efforts of "women like Bhanwari Devi, Mukhtar Mai, Sophie Scholl and Hind Hussein who refused to play by the rules. These change leaders were unafraid and unashamed to make a scene and fight for their right to do so, even with huge odds against them." Ms. Karen Farkas concentrated on her personal participation in a number of community initiatives aimed at ending war and conflict and promoting solidarity with different women groups to help the victims of war in non-violent ways. Ms. Renee Vaugeois focused on flagrant contemporary instances of inequality and injustice in Alberta and abroad. She mentioned the efforts made by deeply committed individuals who privately and via organizations stand up to denounce injustice and help survivors take control of their life situation.

### **D) International Day of the Girl Child**

On October 15th, 2015, Canadians for a Civil Society and IndoCanadian Women's Association partnered to hold a public screening event for Leslee Udwin's film "India's Daughter." To mark the United Nation's International Day of the Girl Child, the film was screened for the first time in Edmonton at the Art Gallery of Alberta. The collective aim of the function was to increase



awareness of violence against women and to renew dialogue towards a stronger public resolve to take steps for safety and freedom of women.

More than 100 people including supporters, donors, local organizations, and volunteers attended the event. The film paid tribute to the inspiring though tragically short life of the 23-year-old medical student called “Nirbhaya” (fearless one) by the Indian media. The film documents the brutality of the gang-rape that took her life in New Delhi, India, in December 2012. The film also examined the mindset of the rapists and exposed the violent attitudes and behaviors against women. It also highlighted how the crime sparked unprecedented protests and riots throughout India and led to changes in mindset.



After the screening, Leslee Udwin joined the gathering via Skype and answered questions from the audience. Ms. Udwin confirmed that the main cause behind all violent behaviors against women is the lack of respect for the female gender. She also described how, following the production of her powerful film, she started her advocacy of an “Equality Studies Global Curriculum” in partnership with the United Nations’ Human Rights Council.

Ms Udwin’s passionate statement on early intervention to promote equality-oriented thinking was followed by a panel discussion with Ms. Meital Siva-Jain and Mr. Matt Woodley. Ms. Meital Siva-Jain, a public educator at the Sexual Assault Center of Edmonton, has immense experience with working with victims of sexual assault. Mr. Woodley is a high profile media lawyer in Canada, with a specialization in freedom of expression, as well as constitutional and administrative law. During the discussion, the participants emphasized the importance of working collaboratively on eliminating domestic violence and increase gender awareness in the Canada communities. Another topic of energetic discussion, led by Mr Woodley, was India’s ban on, “India’s Daughter.”

"So many of our people grow up thinking that a girl is less important than a boy is. Because she's less important, you can do what you like with her." - Sheila Dixit, Chief Minister of Delhi (1998-2013).

## E) Family Violence Prevention Month

On November 28, 2015, as part of Family Violence Prevention Month, the Indo-Canadian Women's Association organized a screening and audience discussion of *Provoked*, a 2006 English-Hindi-Punjabi film with the theme of spousal violence in a British Asian household.

*Provoked* is based on the story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, an Indian immigrant woman who moves to London to marry a man named Deepak. Slowly, a darker and abusive side of Deepak is revealed. Kiranjit, after years of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, sets fire to her husband in his bed and is charged for murder in 1989. After initially being convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison, Ahluwalia's conviction was overturned on grounds of inadequate counsel and replaced with voluntary manslaughter. She successfully pleaded the partial defense of diminished mental responsibility after prolonged abuse. *R v Ahluwalia* redefined "provocation" in cases of battered women in the United Kingdom.



The screening was organized at the Welcome Center for Immigrants and 35 people attended the event. It was preceded by commentary by the ICWA Board about the prevalence of family violence in Alberta. After the screening, attendees participated in an open discussion about the film's themes and how these related to them on a personal level. Manal Alnajjar, Executive Director of the ICWA, moderated the discussion.

The film screening and audience engagement were the ICWA's successful effort to promote awareness of the complex dynamics of family violence. The film and the related conversations highlighted the ways in which patriarchal violence intersects with women's lack of education and life chances, low rights awareness, and overall socioeconomic weakness. Some women discussants stated that the film strongly resonated with their own experiences of spousal abuse. To the end of the screening, ICWA shared its related information brochures and its publication 'Family law guidebook for recent immigrants' and encouraged the audience to take copies in the language (English, Punjabi, Hindi) of their needs.

## **F) Grand Multicultural Celebration**

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association (ICWA) held its annual Grand Multicultural Celebration on the evening of December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The event, organized at the ICWA office, was a big success with its more than 50 guests, including Members of the Legislative Assembly, donors, local organizations' representatives, community members, ICWA board, staff and members.



The evening was full of group songs, conversations and activities that highlighted the immense value of inter-cultural understanding and community diversity in an inclusive and respectful society.

MLA Christina Gray, the host speaker, emphasized the important role of ICWA in serving immigrants in Millwood. MLA Gray also stated that she looked forward to ICWA's continued collaboration with her office to provide better services to the Millwood community.

## **G) Valentine's Day**

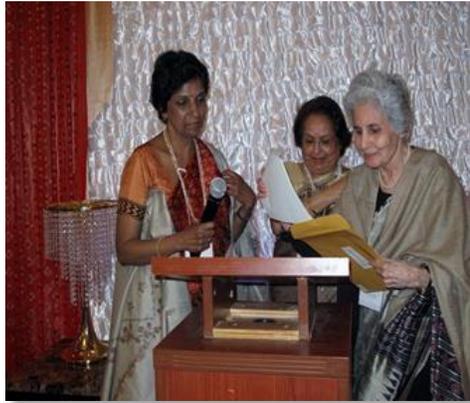


Valentine's Day (February 14, 2016) was the occasion of a warm and laughter-filled afternoon with a Valentines' High Tea Party at the ICWA office. Over tea and snacks in a room decorated with festive pink balloons, around 35 guests exchanged stories of how they had met their significant others.

Representatives from local organizations, community members, ICWA board, staff and members greatly appreciated the chance to come together for shared reminiscences.

## H) International Women's Day

Each year International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on March 8. Across the world, governments, charities, educational institutions, women's groups,



corporations and the media celebrate the achievements of women. The 2016 theme for International Women's Day is a call for the world to wake up and Step It Up for Gender Equality. To achieve Planet 50-50 by 2030.

On March 30th, 2016, the Indo Canadian Women's Association held their 32nd annual International Women's Day celebration at Maharaja Banquet Hall in Mill Woods. The ICWA renewed its call for gender equality for

social justice in an inclusive society. More than 220 people attended the event. Attendees included community members, Syrian refugees, advocates, activists, MLAs, community leaders, professionals and academics who support the work of the ICWA to promote gender justice and end violence against women. Mrs Ratna Basappa, President of the Board of Directors of the ICWA welcomed the participants and thanked them for their continuous support for ICWA's continuing programs to encourage and promote participation by the new Canadians in social, economic and political life in Canada. Councillor Banga brought greetings from the City of Edmonton.

Our guest speaker for the evening was Christina Gray, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and Minister of Labour and Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal. She gave an empowering speech on ending violence against women. Minister Gray mentioned the high rates of violence against women and girls in Alberta where Indigenous women experience sexual assault three times as often as non-Indigenous people. She emphasized the role that ICWA plays in helping immigrants, who face many barriers.



She appreciated the ICWA efforts in building an inclusive society by working to change attitudes towards women. She also described steps by government in giving leadership roles to women. She concluded with the thought that the work to achieve equality never stops. The audience then enjoyed the multicultural buffet dinner as well as some traditional Indian performances.

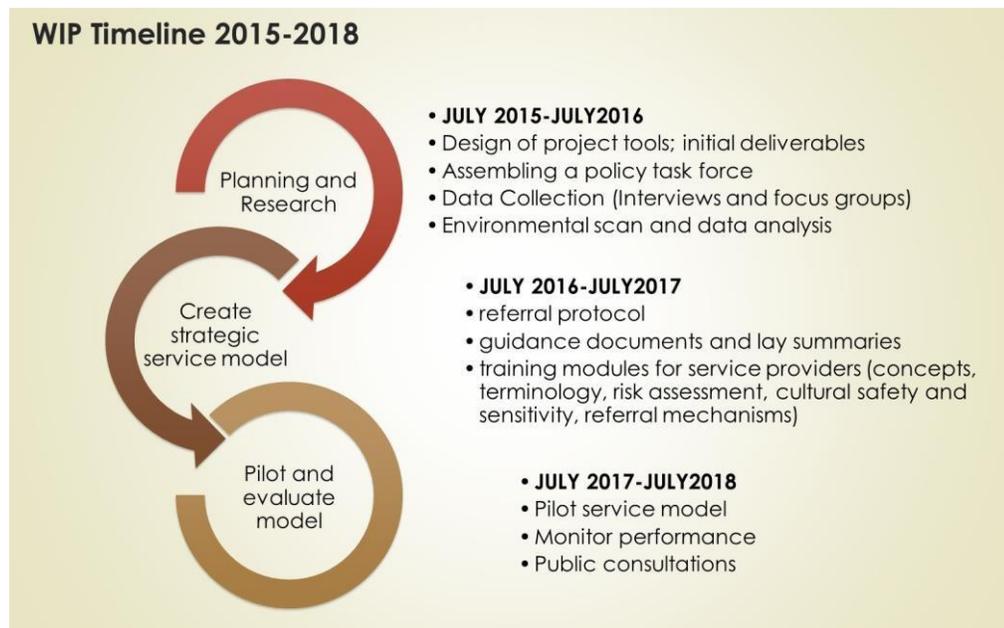
## Projects

### 1) Working Together: Engaging Communities to end violence against women and girls

“Working Together” project (Link: <http://bit.ly/1WCzOIY>) was completed in April 2015. This project identified barriers in efforts to prevent family violence against women in immigrant communities, including cases of ‘honor-related’ violence. Siloed services and a lack of culturally competent outreach and case-assessment training were consistently reported challenges. These themes had also emerged in ICWA surveys of participants in a 2012 Edmonton conference ‘In the name of honour’. Additionally, the ICWA has been successful in working with their partners, YWCA Edmonton, Today Family Violence Help Centre and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights to educate youth, facilitate meeting between police, shelters and other organizations working on this issue and train Edmonton service providers to better understand the topic.

### 2) Working in Partnership to End Violence Against Girls and Women

Currently, ICWA is helming a 2015-2018 project to devise cohesive strategies to prevent and intervene in cases of honour-based violence (HBV hereafter). The project “Working in Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls” (WIP hereafter) is funded by Status of Women Canada.



To implement the project aims, the ICWA is partnered with YWCA Edmonton,

Today Family Violence Help Centre and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights. The initial phase of WIP has been successfully completed between January-May 2016. This was the participatory action research for the needs assessment and network creation during year 1 of the project. Edmonton service providers working against gender and/or domestic violence participated in a series of interviews designed and conducted by the Project Director Dr. Amrita Mishra. The John Humphrey Center for Peace and Human Rights, signatory to an MoU with ICWA, co-organized and facilitated the focus groups held over March-April 2016 across Edmonton.

The following sections describe activities of WIP data collection and network development:

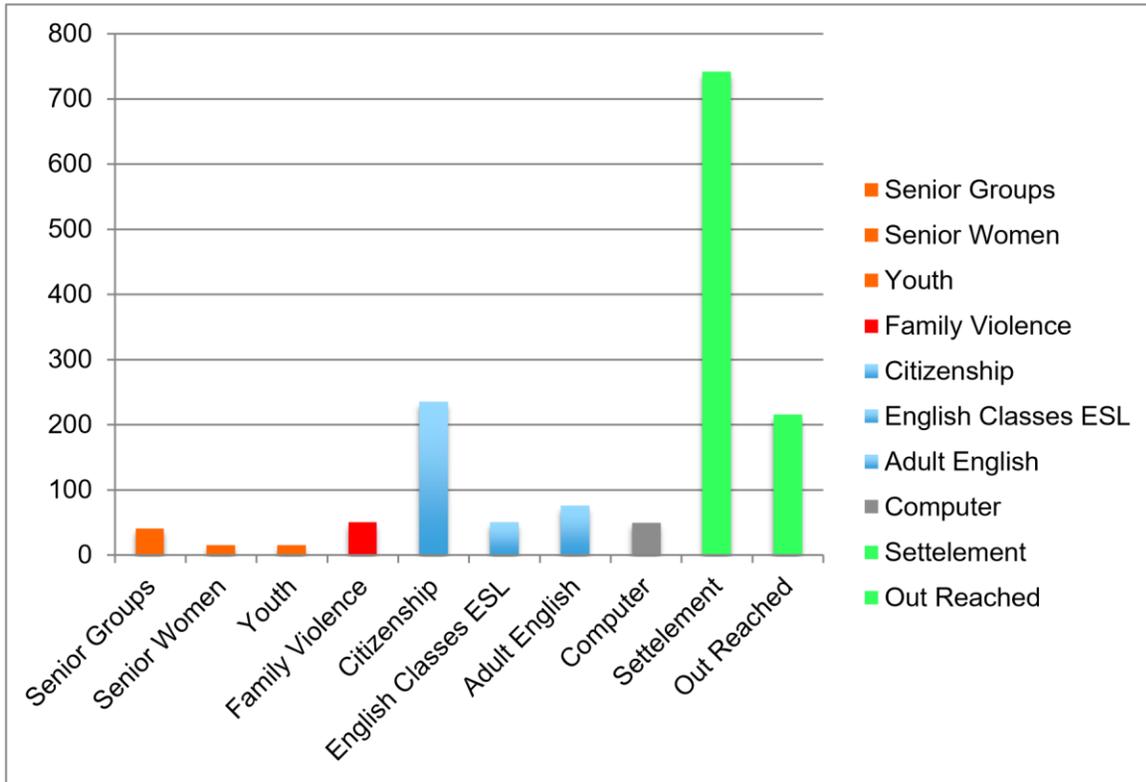
Between January-May 2016 Amrita Mishra conducted 26 in-depth interviews with team leads and senior frontline staff at Edmonton service agencies supporting women and men undergoing domestic violence. The interview guides were informed by research on the social, ethical legal and technical, issues of preventing, intervening and rehabilitating HBV. Guides were reviewed for depth and breadth of coverage by experts in the fields of clinical psychology, gender studies, and domestic violence. While interview guides were specific to the stakeholder groups, the central themes were unmet needs with managing HBV cases and the way forward to the cohesive inter-agency strategy against HBV.

Amrita is currently analyzing ('coding') interview data for core themes via a qualitative analytical method of 'constant comparison.' This method involves an iterative reading and comparison between transcripts to identify common themes ('codes') and relationships between early interviews and themes that require further exploration in subsequent interviews.

Over March-April 2016, ICWA conducted 8 focus group-style workshops with service providers (front line workers and guidance counsellors) working in the area of family violence. The focus groups were organized and conducted by ICWA and the project partner John Humphrey Center. The workshops were delivered in Edmonton Public Library locations across the city.

Amrita, Tripat and volunteers are putting together an e-library, an online repository for providers to access relevant literature. This will offer research papers, factsheets and position statements from university, government and nonprofit sources, as well as our own guidance documents and summaries of policy forum discussions. This repository is now under development and will serve as a consolidated and curated source of policy-relevant information on HBV. The purpose of the repository is informing a knowledge-sharing community, that is, inform case sharing and discussion via on a restricted-membership (but free) electronic forum to be conducted in Year 2 of WIP. This forum will provide a platform for Edmonton service agencies to engage in collaborative knowledge exchange i.e., start sharing and comparing relevant case experience concerning HBV. Such dialogue will help agencies identify commonly experienced challenges and potential solutions in HBV prevention, intervention and rehabilitation.

## Programs



Program Clients Number	
Senior Groups	30
Senior Women	15
Youth	15
Family Violence	50
Citizenship	235
English Classes ESL	50
Adult English	75
Computer	49
Settlement	741
Out Reached	215

Total	1475
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## ECALA Program:

### A) English as a Second Language (ESL)

**Objective:** Help students to develop the ability to use oral and written English for daily needs, acquire basic conversation skills and vocabulary, and use simple sentence patterns. Help students adjust to their new cultural setting and utilize their skills to function in the new environment.

Our English as a Second Language (ESL) Adult Literacy Class is coordinated by Chouaib El Bouhali. In order to serve the maximum number of students, program enrolment is continual. We aim to help our students to obtain basic English language skills such as speaking, reading, listening, grammar and writing. Our class is in high demand due to our teaching methods based on active learning as well as our accessible location at the Welcome Center for Immigrants. We elicit the feedback of our students in order to choose the times and content that work best for them.



This year, about 50 students have attended our ESL classes (about 44 classes); most of the students are women. The members of the highly diverse student body hail from Chile, India, Pakistan, Colombia, Somalia, Korea, China, Poland, Haiti, Burundi and Nepal.

### Success Story

Angelica, one of the ESL students, arrived in Canada in 2015. She had very limited English and was initially too shy to converse in the language. Now, on completion of the program, Angelica is able to ask questions, make sentences and communicate clearly in English. She gained confidence to speak in English with the teacher and with her classmates with other first languages. She is able to connect with peers who can provide her with more resources for an easy life in Edmonton.

Angelica said, *“I improved my English, now I understand my teacher; I feel good in the class because I understand English and I meet new friends. I feel good that I can do shopping by myself; I can take the bus and I can go to downtown by myself. My teacher is very nice; he loves students and helps them to learn English.”*

Recently, Angelica started working in a business that helps her improve her income and be independent. This student is happy and motivated to come to the class and to

learn more; she is always the first student to come and the last one to leave the class. She is always asking when the class will start next year!

### **B) Adult Literacy Class**

**Objective:** Provide students with English language skills to ensure smooth transition and settlement for newcomers and allow them to seek employment, remain social and become active members in their communities.

Our Adult Literacy class language Learners are funded by ECALA. Taught by Farah Fatima, conversational skills are enhanced in these courses with an emphasis on speaking, grammar and comprehension. The friendly, supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere of these courses allows students to strengthen their reading and writing skills. Class enrolment was 75 students, with 50 women and 25 men. The students are mostly from Asia and Africa.

### **C) Citizenship Preparation Class**

**Objective:** to aid immigrants to complete their Citizenship Exams. We teach the voting process, Canadian history, symbols and basic government processes and geography. We educate students on duties of citizens and on constitutional rights and guarantees in the Charter of rights and freedoms.

Our Citizenship preparation Class is instructed by Paul Kalsi, who provides students with essential information to fully understand their rights, responsibilities and values as Canadian citizens. The Class caters to people from multiple walks of life.

The instructor spends considerable time ensuring that his students get the best possible experience with unique study material and efficient instruction. In total, this class served 235 students, half of which were women. This class had a 92% success rate. The students were of diverse backgrounds - Argentinian,

Portuguese, Indonesian, Cuban, Fijian, Moroccan, Sudanese, Egyptian, Finnish, Tanzanian, Chinese, Russian, Australian, Bolivian, Pakistani and Indian.



### **Success Story**

The ICWA received the following email from Dr. M. Qasim Jan, one of our citizenship clients.

*“Because of Citizenship Instructor hardships and commitment, it was possible for me and my wife to pass the citizenship test by just attending the two classes only, as we had few days left for the test to appear. Actually, we got the letter from CIC very late and I was very stressed because I heard from the people that this test is very difficult and many people fail. I did not want to lose this opportunity because I was*

*flying overseas next day of the test date, so I book an appointment with Mr. Paul and he helped us to learn in the classes. As a result, I got 100% and my wife got 90% marks. We are very excited.”*

#### **D) Computer Class**

**Objective:** to aid students to advance their careers. Typing and basic computer skills help to ensure immigrants will receive higher positions and therefore achieve greater economic status. They also aid seniors to access information on their own and communicate via email.

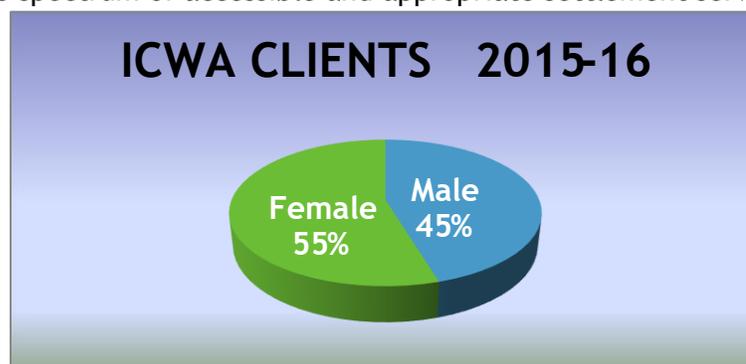
Our Computer Literacy classes, instructed by Jaya Saxena, are offered at two levels: basic and intermediate. These classes are attractive to the adult population because they enhance employability. The classes equip our students with the confidence to apply to higher positions and advance in their careers. With the skills acquired from our classes, students are better able to integrate into the Canadian work environment. An improved socio-economic status gives our students independence. The ICWA gratefully acknowledges the funding of the ‘Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association’ for successfully running these classes.

There were 10 sessions in total of which 7 were for Basic and 3 for Intermediate computer classes. The sessions included 49 adults who gained basic knowledge and 21 who opted for intermediate level. Many basic students wanted to go further to the Intermediate level but either undertook higher studies or got good jobs and did not continue. Ten of those who completed the Intermediate course undertook higher studies and two who were already working got promotions. Women numbered 90% of the students; the remainder were men. Most students hailed from India. Others were from Burundi, Nigeria, Philippines, Puerto Rico, China and Pakistan.

## ISAP Program

#### **A) Settlement Counselling**

**Objective:** to meet the diverse settlement needs of newcomers in Edmonton by offering a wide spectrum of accessible and appropriate settlement services.



The settlement and counselling services are designed to welcome newcomers to the community and provide them with the necessary resources to integrate into Canadian society. The consultations not only convey valuable information to newcomers at a single forum, but also offer them with an opportunity to mingle and network with other immigrants from different parts of the world. All in all, these programs offered by the ICWA provide participants with valuable exposure and experience with the diversity that marks Canadian society.

The Newcomer Settlement Orientation program lays a strong foundation for a settlement plan for newcomers built upon one-on-one sessions or family sessions. Clients are asked to think about and discuss their reasons for choosing Canada as their new home. This is followed by a discussion of their expectations of life in Canada. Finally, they are asked to keep both these elements in mind while charting out their goals to keep a clear focus and eliminate undue stress. This program is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). ICWA provides the Settlement Programs and Services from the Welcome Centre for Immigrants located in the Millbourne Mall of Millwood neighborhood. There are two Full Time Settlement Counsellors hired by ICWA to provide settlement and integration services to new immigrants. 24 settlement work Shops were conducted for 332 Newcomers. One on One Sessions were provided for 409 Newcomers. A total of 741 clients received services through ICWA’s Settlement Program.

<b>ICWA CLIENTELE BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN</b>		
Afghanistan	8	1%
Bangladesh	10	1.5%
African Countries	94	11%
Caribbean Islands	14	1.5%
India	352	47%
Korea	8	1%
Pakistan	142	19%
Philippines	35	5%
South America	28	3%
Sri Lanka	8	1%
Central America	9	1%
China	5	1%
Europe	10	1.5%
others	18	2%
<b>TARGET</b>	<b>660</b>	

TOTAL	741	100%
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### **Success Story**

Chandani Shah is a newcomer to Canada with multiple barriers of language, culture and lack of skills for the Canadian labour market. Chandani was referred to ICWA Settlement Counsellors by family and friends who were clients of ICWA. ICWA Settlement counsellors performed a Need Assessment, in which the counsellors determined that with her language barriers, Chandani would remain confined at home and withdrawn from the society. She was referred to attend the settlement orientation session. Chandani has a young son who is attending high school in Edmonton and she had difficulty in communicating with the school for admissions and for understanding the educational system. ICWA Counsellors accompanied Chandani to her son’s school and facilitated the process for mother and son by communicating the Alberta Education requirements for high school.

Chandani was referred for English Language Assessment and was guided to attend English Language Learning School. Chandani was also referred to Women’s Resiliency Program conducted by ICWA and to I-WIN program by Edmonton Mennonite Center for Immigrants for maximum exposure to Canadian values and systems. Chandani was provided services in her ethnic language. ICWA staff provided her with individualized service and gave her referrals as required. Chandani is making rapid progress and has found a part time employment through ICWA referrals. ICWA counsellors continue to orient and support her in her journey.

### **B) Outreach**

**Objective:** to provide support to new hard to reach immigrants and provide them information/orientation and refer them to appropriate services.

There are two Outreach staff working for the ICWA under the Immigration and Settlement Program to support newcomers living in hard to reach communities and have multiple barriers such as Language, Socio-economic, and mobility. The ICWA Outreach team regularly visits designated areas for Outreach presentations and meetings and also coordinates events to spread awareness among newcomers, as well as for the publicity of ICWA Settlement Services. 215 clients were outreached by the two outreach staff.

## **Community Programs**

### **A) Youth Development Program**

**Objective:** provide young immigrants a platform where they can discuss their problems, look for solutions and engage in various activities.

The Indo Canadian Women's Association (ICWA) has been running its Youth Development Program for the past decade. This program was developed to integrate young people into the Multicultural communities of Canada. It assists young people by providing them with a platform to discuss their issues and concerns in regards to dislocation from their home country into Canadian society. We aim at helping these youth function as productive citizens of Canada. Most of our activities emphasize the roles of youth in civic, education, global citizenship and leadership. The Youth Sessions run monthly and are conducted by our Office Coordinator. Each session is based on a specific topic, depending on the requests from the participants. We look forward to having more youth be involved in these sessions. Please contact the Indo Canadian Women's Association if you are interested in joining.

## **B) Seniors Program**

**Objective:** to make seniors self-reliant, healthy and secure.



Seniors are often house bound due to language and mobility challenges. They find it hard to learn winter sports and have little desire to go for a walk or any exercise. Consequently, most remain isolated, especially in the long winter months, and feel bored, sad and depressed. Community based supportive counselling helps to alleviate these problems.

Seniors group is facilitated by Rajbir Kharod and is very popular with the seniors. Each meeting is attended by 2025 men who discuss various issues. During the sessions, attendees are informed about recreational activities available to them in the city, and to supports such as Alberta Seniors Benefit.



## **Success Story**

Mr. Harjinder is 65 years old and used to serve on the Indian police force. In his younger years, he lacked access to higher education. His work involved a great deal of movement between locations and posts. He eventually rose to the rank of subinspector where he was in charge of a local police station. Life and social stress led Mr Harjinder to alcohol dependency. When he was in his mid-50s, things took a turn for the better, when his daughter, who lived in BC, sponsored him to come to Canada in hopes for healthier and better lifestyle. In BC he worked in the farming sector for a few years.

Soon after he chose to go and live with his son in Edmonton, where he was subjected to domestic stress and maltreatment that triggered a relapse of his alcohol dependency. He was forced to leave his son's house.

Fortunately, one day his friend brought Mr Harjinder to the Welcome Centre for Immigrants where he joined the ICWA's seniors group. Mr. Harjinder found purpose and sense of acceptance around his peers at ICWA. He began to go on walks with his friends, communicate and sit in parks with his peers playing cards, and began to take part in activities such as yoga.

Along with these, ICWA also helped Mr. Harjinder to work on his diet, manage his blood pressure, take his medicine on time and learn basic English. He also continued to volunteer at local Sikh temples, or *Gurudwaras*. The ICWA settlement counsellor helped Mr. Harjinder find a position as a security guard - a job that would connect him with his roots from back home. The ICWA counsellor also helped him get old age security benefits and to settle into a low rent town home where he could live independently. Mr. Harjinder thus obtained a fresh lease on life.

### **C) Women's Resiliency Group**

**Objective:** to help newly arrived women to settle down in a new country and provide social and cultural support to ease their transition.

The Women's Resiliency Program is a means of support to newcomers. In these two hour bi-weekly sessions, we have had a steady attendance of six to ten women per session. A variety of activities and workshops were designed to facilitate the processes of integration into Canadian society.

The WRP activities and workshops included:

1. Health sessions: women's health issues, breast cancer awareness
2. Sewing classes
3. Outdoor activity
4. Information sessions: seniors benefits in Canada, nutrition, family sponsorship, coping with depression, promoting leadership among girls, running small business
5. Christmas and New Year party

### **Success Story**

Chetna Patel, 45 years old, was a participant in the Women's Resiliency Program (WRP). She has two children, 5 and 10 years old. Chetna was an unskilled worker with limited English. Her husband works outside the city and comes home every 2 to 3 months. With limited professional and language skills, as well as mobility issues, she was housebound most the time with her two young children. When she was contacted by ICWA WRP

coordinator, she was suffering from depression. Chetna said “I feel isolated and I am crying most the time”.

The ICWA coordinator encouraged Chetna to join the WRP to learn new skills, to join a social network and to develop her language skills. Chetna learnt sewing skills in a volunteer-teacher led group for teaching dress-making skills. Chetna was a very fast learner and enjoyed her sewing classes. After she completed her sewing classes, Chetna bought a sewing machine and started her own business from home. Her new-found financial independence greatly improved her spirits. In her own words: “I am not depressed any more, I feel happy and productive. Now I have many friends to hang out with.” Indeed, The ICWA WRP coordinator met Chetna several times at the mall and noticed that her English was stronger. She was more able to communicate with people and had an easy time navigating the task of shopping. She looked much more confident and independent.

## **Other activities**

### **Domestic Violence**

ICWA handled 50 cases of women facing domestic violence. The ICWA board members and staff members supported the women and gave them appropriate referrals to legal aids, shelters, community program support, police services and so on.

### **Casino Fundraising**

This year’s annual Casino Fundraiser was held on February 2nd and 3rd, 2016. With the assistance of thirty-three volunteers, we are able to raise funds to support the following programs and events

- Women’s Program (Aimed at Hard to Reach Women)
- The Seniors Program
- The Youth Development Program
- Events celebrations

## **Trainings, conferences and presentations**

### **A) Rotary Club’s Presentation - Honour Based Violence**

On February 24, 2016, ICWA was invited to be the key note speaker at the Rotary Club’s Luncheon meeting. The meeting took place at the Derrick Club. ICWA president Mrs Ratna Basappa thanked the Rotary Club for their generous donation to ICWA efforts against family violence. Project Director Dr. Amrita Mishra gave a 20 minutes presentation on the topic of ‘honour-based’ violence.

Dr. Mishra opened her presentation with a description of ICWA's ground-breaking work against family violence in the Edmonton immigrant community. She then provided the audience with an overview of the definitions, triggers and causes and types of honour-based violence. She explained the ICWA's participatory action research model - working alongside service providers to create policy solutions. Post-presentation feedback was positive. Many attendees said that they appreciated the information about a form of violence that is not well-understood and affects many women worldwide.



### **B) Resource Fair**

On January 8, 2016 ICWA participated in Millwood's Resource Fair at Millwoods Seniors and Multicultural Centre. The event was focused on informing the residents about the resources provided by Government of Alberta, show casing the local service agencies and sharing with constituents the role of their MLA and local constituency office. Twenty six organizations participated in the event.

ICWA participated in the City Hall Resource Fair on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2016, a public event with 150 attendees. ICWA had a display table for the International Women's Day at City Hall. Councillor Bev Esslinger and Dr. Cristina Stasia spoke about Gender Parity.



### **C) Thought Leaders Dialogue**

Manal Alnajjar, ICWA's Executive Director, and Amrita Mishra, Project Director, participated in the Thought Leader's Dialogue And Action on Family Violence, an event organized by the Ministry for Status of Women, Alberta Government. Kim Armstrong (Deputy Minister, SWC Alberta) and David Morhart (Deputy Minister, Human Services) provided opening remarks. Topics covered included Context and scope of family violence in Alberta; realities and drivers of family violence; current response and efforts to (1) better understand the root causes of family violence? (2) change the way

we speak about family violence with Albertans (3) collaborative efforts to prevent and act on family violence and (4) measure impact of efforts.

#### **D) Settlement Training Courses**

- Settlement Counsellors Farah Fatima and Sudha Nayak and Outreach Worker Shazia Ambreen, attended AAISA Settlement Conference on October 22 - 23, 2016. The Conference was on developing a resource hub for settlement practitioners in consultation with service providers. The discussions sought to determine how well existing services meet the needs of this population in Edmonton and make recommendations for enhancing existing services.
- Farah Fatima and Shazia Ambreen attended a 14 hour AAISA training on Multiculturalism, Human Rights and Anti-Racism. The training took place on November 9 - 10, 2015. Topics of discussion included policies of Multiculturalism, Human Rights and Anti-Racism, and their relevance in Canada.
- Sudha Nayak attended a training day on Effective Workplace Communication on January 29, 2016 at NAIT. The training focused on developing communication skills to improve workplace interactions and productivity.
- Farah Fatima and Outreach Workers Shazia Ambreen and Rajbir Kharod attended a 21 hour training on Race and Racism at Centre for Race & Culture. The training took place on February 12 and 26 and on March 11, 2016. The training focused on (1) the visible and invisible barriers such as those related to race, culture, and language in our society (2) solutions to lower or remove those barriers.
- Farah Fatima and Sudha Nayak also attended a 14 hour AAISA training on March 14<sup>th</sup> and March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The training was on Managing Practitioner Stress and Burnout.
- Farah Fatima, Sudha Nayak and Shazia Ambreen attended a 1-day training on March 31, 2106 on Clear and Concise Writing at NAIT.

#### **Publicity, Promotion, and Networking**

- Our quarterly newsletter has been a successful means to reach our community. We have used it to announce our programs, services and events. We send the newsletters out to our members, the women's groups, and other ethnic, mainstream, government and non-government organizations to promote awareness of our initiatives and activities. The newsletter is also our potential tool to discuss issues related to women and immigrants, integration and multiculturalism.
- In April 2016, Amrita submitted to the *Millwoods Mosaic* an op-ed examining social, technical and policy factors underlying sex-selective abortion in Canada, as indicated in studies published in 2016 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

This paper “Skewed male-female ratios amongst immigrants in Canada: A critical examination of the factors and issues” has been published in the May 2016 issue of the *Millwoods Mosaic*. The opinion piece was written after Amrita had joined public debate on the causes of and possible steps against sex selective abortions by Indian immigrant families in Canada. The op-ed outlines Amrita’s viewpoint on the linked issues of son preference, the social-technological-legal landscape of prenatal sex determination in Canada and social change via long-delayed regulatory controls around provision of fetal sex information and via gendersensitive social messaging.

## Administration and Governance

### The Board of Directors

The Indo-Canadian Women’s Association is managed by a volunteer board that looks after its finance, governance, policy-making, project-supervision and day-to-day administration. All members of the Board and the invited members-at-large are dedicated women with expertise and distinction in various walks of life. They dedicate their valuable time and services in many different ways. They also help with writing funding proposals.

<b>ICWA BOARD MEMBERS</b>
<b>Ratna Basappa</b> President
<b>Miriam Thomas</b> Immediate Past President
<b>Dr. Zohra Husani</b> Vice President
<b>Jagjeet Bhardwaj</b> Treasurer
<b>Avau Fast</b> Secretary
<b>Nisha Bhatia</b> Director
<b>Netta Phillet</b> Director
<b>Navneet Kiran</b> Director
<b>Suneeta Jobanputra</b> Director
<b>Rashmi Jyoti Mita</b> Director
<b>Das</b> Director

<i>Board committees volunteering hours</i>	
Board Meetings	30 hours
Executive committee	500 hours
Standing committee work	800 hours
Program & project work	1800 hours
<b>Total hours volunteered by Board</b>	<b>3130 hours</b>

<b>ICWA STAFF</b>
<b>Manal Alnajjar</b> Executive Director
<b>Dr. Amrita Mishra</b> Project Director
<b>Tripat Kaur</b> Office & Project Coordinator
<b>Farah Fatima</b> Settlement Counsellor; Adult English Instructor
<b>Sudha Nayak</b> Settlement Counselor
<b>Shazia Ambreen</b> Outreach Worker
<b>Rajbir Kharod</b> Outreach Worker
<b>Paul Kalsi</b> Outreach Worker—Citizenship Instructor
<b>Jaya Saxena</b> Computer Instructor
<b>Chouaib El Bouhali</b> English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructor

**Acknowledgements**

## Sponsors

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- James Brown & Associates
- Rotary Club
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- Rohit Group of Companies
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- Shorie Bhatia LLP
- Bhatia Khurana LLP
- Edmonton Raga Mala
- Rajiv Malhotra Lawyer
- Ranjan Agarwal

## Agency & Organizational support

The ICWA especially thanks the following agencies and organizations for their continuous support for our projects and programs:



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

Edmonton  
Community  
Adult Learning  
Association



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
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