



Vol. 1 Issue 4 Winter 2007



**AHVNA**

supporting quality  
home visitation programs  
in Alberta

### **In this Issue:**

**Our history of helping new  
Canadians**

**Walking into a booming Alberta:  
uncertain times for newcomers**

**Working in the gaps  
– Multicultural Health Brokers  
Co-operative**

**A tool for cross-cultural  
understanding**

**The quest for home and identity**

**AHVNA members take action on  
cultural competence**

**Putting knowledge into action**

**Resources for Newcomers  
in Alberta**

### **Be Part of the Family**

AHVNA  
9321 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5H 3T7

Phone: (780) 429.4787

Fax: (780) 429.4784

Email: [info@ahvna.org](mailto:info@ahvna.org)

Website: [www.ahvna.org](http://www.ahvna.org)

# connections connections connections

Alberta Home Visitation Network Association

## Our history of serving new Canadians

By Lavonne Roloff



**Alberta's stated vision of immigration is that new Canadian families are "able to fully participate in community life and are valued for their cultural, economic and social contributions."**

The current economic and demographic trends in Alberta are driving a new initiative to attract and retain immigrants in order to bolster the province's workforce today and into the future. Home visitation programs across the province have been providing services to new Canadian families over the past 10 years. On average, new Canadians comprise 26 per cent of the AHVNA member agency caseloads.

New Canadian families benefit from the support and knowledge that home visitors are able to provide new mothers as they navigate their way into community life in Alberta. The benefits include reduced isolation due to the easing of cultural and language barriers, and increased access to medical and early childhood services. We are eager to share some of the valuable wisdom and experience that AHVNA members have gained in serving new Canadians. Please browse this issue of *Connections* for tools, resources and ideas that may be of use to your organization.

Also in this issue, we ask for your feedback regarding our publication. The intention of *Connections* has been to increase the profile of home visitation in the province. We strive to accomplish this by sending it to our allied professionals such as doctors, nurses, social workers, counsellors and other social support agencies. We also use the publication

as a means to provide program technical assistance for anyone who is providing home visits.

The inaugural issue was an introduction to "What is Home Visitation?" in Alberta. Volume two focused on a key aspect of our work—developing partnerships in our communities. Volume three discussed the concept of reflective practice that is integral to the work of home visitation. Our intent is to increase the knowledge and understanding of these key areas and provide insight into the practice of home visitation throughout Alberta. How are we doing? Please take a moment and complete the survey you'll find inside this issue. Surveys can be mailed to the AHVNA office or faxed to 780-429-4784 or emailed to [info@ahvna.org](mailto:info@ahvna.org).

Thank you for your assistance.  
Lavonne Roloff, Provincial Director

# Walking into a booming Alberta: uncertain times for newcomers

By Cheryl Moskaluk

Alberta's Capital Region will face some major challenges in helping newcomers resettle, as the City of Edmonton makes moves to shore up the demands of a booming economy by attracting and retaining more immigrants.

In seeking to reverse a 15-year decline in new immigrant populations in Alberta, the province's cities will need to better co-ordinate their efforts to support an expected surge in newcomers, says Yvonne Chiu, director of Multicultural Health Brokers.

An Edmonton Social Plan report presented to City Council last May, "New Canadians and Visible Minorities" helps to shed light on the larger picture. Canada is currently welcoming the largest number of immigrants in 70 years. In 2005, almost half of Canada's newcomers gravitated to Ontario while another 35 per cent were split between British Columbia and Quebec. The cities and surrounds of Toronto and Vancouver are home to the highest percentages of people from visible minorities, (about three times the national number) followed by Abbotsford and Calgary. Edmonton is fifth on that scale. The city attracted just 2.2 per cent of all immigrants to Canada in 2005. Within Alberta, Calgary attracted 56.5 per cent of all the province's immigrants in 2004, while 29.2 per cent came to Edmonton.

The 5,670 immigrants who arrived in Edmonton in 2005 represent a very complex population. The 2005 statistics also indicate that more than 38 per cent of all the city's immigrants spoke no English or French. And while more than 80 per cent are immigrants by choice, who were able to plan for their arrival at some level, about 12 per cent are

refugees who arrive with little choice, far fewer options and significant health and social needs, says Yvonne.

"Immigrants and refugees who come straight to Alberta from their home countries, traditionally arrive with formal eligibility for some government-funded services and support. But our current reality is that because of the economic boom, we are seeing an influx of immigrants from other Canadian cities. We are not hearing good things about many of these families. Because they have already settled in Canada and are now moving across provincial borders, formal support and resources do not follow them. The local communities and service systems are not formally prepared to support them."

"Despite the healthy job market in Alberta, these families don't immediately find work and it's hard to find a place to live. They often still have cultural and language barriers as well as obstacles in transferring to different provincial health care, social assistance and education systems."

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative is currently operating a home visitation program that is the only one of its kind to adopt a cultural approach—matching the linguistic and cultural background of home visitors to clients. With research funding from the Early Childhood Development Committee in Edmonton, MCHB Co-op has also partnered with ASSIST Community Services Centre, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Darcey Dachyshyn from the University of Alberta in researching and mapping the life experiences of refugee and immigrant families with young children.

Recently, MCHB Co-op supported a community consultation process within the local immigrant and refugee communities to provide grass-roots input to a set of initiatives the City of Edmonton is pursuing. City Council has put forward a plan to better attract and support immigrants to Edmonton, says Yvonne. But she foresees a huge challenge in being able to meet the needs of a new wave of immigrants.

"The development of structures and proactive efforts to meet those needs can't come soon enough. None of us (in non-profit, municipal and provincial social service, health and education sectors) is really prepared and the ripple effect is that sometimes our efforts are not co-ordinated. The impact is mostly felt at the grassroots level. We're caught at this moment trying to work with families without the infrastructure in place."

*Connections Editor Cheryl Moskaluk is a freelance writer in the Edmonton area.*



# Working in the gaps – Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative

By Yvonne Chiu

It was almost 15 years ago that some of the founding members of the Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB) came together for the first time within a pilot project of the former Edmonton Board of Health (currently Community Health Services of Capital Health). These immigrant women had personally experienced being in the gap when formal systems overlooked the unique circumstances of individuals and families encountering language and cultural barriers. We made a promise then to work together to build bridges between the people in their communities and the public systems. Our goal was to ensure health and family support services are truly accessible to all.

With that promise, these 14 immigrant women created the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative and began the work of linking immigrant families with perinatal health resources and services. With the support of Capital Health, the MCHB started to design and deliver culturally and linguistically relevant pre-natal education and post-natal outreach support to families within five communities.

Fifteen years later, the work has formally expanded to nine communities, reaching up to 1,200 families each year (10 per cent of the births in this region). Informally, families from several other emerging communities approached the MCHB for similar support. The Co-operative now provides training and community development support to the natural leaders within those communities to address the needs and

aspirations of families. Guided by the circumstances of the families, the work continues to naturally unfold to involve other areas of health, early parenting, family support, community mobilizing and policy advocacy.

In 2000, the MCHB Co-operative was fortunate to have been given the opportunity to join the Intense Home Visitation program within Edmonton and Area Children Services to provide culturally and linguistically relevant home visitation. This opportunity provided the MCHB with a chance to illustrate the positive impacts of intense home visitation provided by a home visitor who shares the same life experience of being an immigrant, the same cultural background and first language as the parents. By 2001, additional Early Childhood Development funding from Children Services provided the MCHB additional resources to partner with two local immigrant-serving organizations— ASSIST Community Services and Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers—to provide broader early parenting and early childhood education support to eight more communities.

Despite the efforts of the past decade and the collaborative support of many committed organizations within the sector that serves children and families, we are still struggling to bridge the “systemic gaps”. The majority of the families with immigrant and refugee backgrounds still struggle with poverty and social isolation and encounter barriers as they approach most systems for services.

We have come to realize that we will all be working in the gaps for decades to come if we don't experience a holistic set of changes in our communities and province. They include:

- a comprehensive set of proactive policies that address social and economic inclusion of immigrants
- resources that support equity-based programming and services (i.e. funding to provide services according to the needs and capacities of different populations).
- accumulation of deep knowledge and principles of practice that truly drive culturally responsive parenting education and early learning



We have come to believe that these changes will only happen if we build a collective voice with immigrant families and communities and have this voice be heard, understood and acted upon by decision-makers in the area of policy, funding and program design. Otherwise our collective dream of a multicultural and just society remains a dream.

*Yvonne Chiu is Director of Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative in Edmonton.*



# A tool for cross-cultural understanding

By Lynn Lema

The culturagram tool, developed by Early Head Start-E4C in Edmonton, is used to learn about another culture. This tool is useful for anyone who has a relationship with someone from another culture (a friend, colleague or client). It is all about relationship building and increasing understanding, and it could be adapted by your agency. Suggested questions in each of the areas might be as follows:

## Family members

Who is part of their immediate family? In some cultures “immediate” includes aunts, uncles and grandparents. How do family members play a role in raising children?

## Time in community

How long have you been here? This helps a worker understand where the family is, as far as integration and barriers. What have been some of your challenges? What has been helpful?

## Reason for immigration

What was the reason for immigrating?

## Legal status

It’s important to ask if the client is a landed immigrant, refugee or sponsored individual. This helps to determine what supports and benefits might be available

## Cultural community connections

Are you involved in your community? Why or why not?

## Education and work values

What are their beliefs around education? What are their work values? In their home country, their level of education makes a good life possible but in Canada they may not find work.

## Health profiles

It’s important to want to know what their values are regarding medical treatment: i.e. eastern traditional vs. western. Do they have health coverage or benefits? Is this important to them?

## Holidays and special events

What do they celebrate and honor? How? And when? Do they celebrate Canadian events?

## Language spoken in home

What is your mother tongue? Are you able to maintain your language within your home?

What is it like for a parent when a child doesn’t want to speak that language? A worker needs to know the answers, so that resources can be shared in a way that is meaningful to the family.

*Lynn Lema is with Early Head Start- E4C in Edmonton.*



## Now I am not alone

New Canadians talk about what they receive when home visitors come to their door.



"I found out the program is useful. I missed many think/knowledge of community resources, child development and so on, but when my HV started to visit me I learned a lot. Because the system in Canada is different than the one in my country, I was able to learn about child welfare and other services. In addition, child discipline and parenting skills I gain more knowledge and courage in this area because in my country many people will help but here I am alone and it is hard."

"I am very new in Canada. I am a house wife. But I am very lucky because I find (Home Visitor). She is very sincere with her job. She tell me about everything. Because of (HV) I came to know how can I survive in this new country. Her way of talking is very friendly. She try her best to help me.... I think now I am not alone here, because of your program."

"The program has helped support a lot where there was none. It helped by having someone to talk to. It is a great program to have when your family does not live in the province."

# The quest for home and identity

An Edmonton research team opens a door to understanding by mapping the life experiences of refugee and immigrant families with preschool children

By Darcey M. Dachyshyn

One might assume that the journey to and arrival in Canada is an experience filled with hope and possibilities. While this is true, it is only part of the experience for some newcomers. The following excerpts are from my report *Mapping the Life Experiences of Refugee and Immigrant Families with Preschool Children*, with emphasis placed on the circumstances of refugee families.

Refugees are persons in need of protection due to fear of persecution, or are at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. Refugees are almost certainly people who had not intended to leave their country of origin; whereas immigrants have given the decision due consideration and have had time to physically and emotionally prepare for resettlement.

Stresses associated with being a refugee include losing one's home and possessions, being witness to the atrocities of war, and not being able to envision one day returning home. Stresses particular to children of refugee and immigrant families include:

- disruption of one's accustomed way of life
- differing cultural expectations at home, school and work
- adopting the role of language and cultural interpreter for their parents
- racism and discrimination
- developing a sense of self (identify)

### Settlement issues

Newcomers to Canada are dealing with many settlement issues.

### Decreased socioeconomic status

"People back home think now that we are in Canada, they are looking for our help. They

always send letters saying, 'Help us, help us, help us.' Here we are just living with this money, to have enough to eat for today; we do not have any money to put in the bank or something like this." (Sudanese parent)

### Lack of community and family support

"Here people are isolated and lonely, and it is very difficult for newcomers to integrate. They expect the same closeness with their neighbor just like it is in Africa, but it is not the case." (Congolese parent)

### Unfamiliar childrearing practices

"In Africa, we teach our children respect and moral values. It can always happen that a child does not listen, but this is rare, and his dad or any member of the tribe or close relative will punish him." (Eritrean parent)

### Changing roles and responsibilities of family members

"In our culture, fathers have to keep some distance. To compare with here, there is a gap. The father is the chief in the family, even when playing with his children there is a gap." (Burundi parent)

### Dealing with racism and discrimination

"My daughter was told by one of the children at school, 'Your mom is ugly and she is always dressing up like Halloween.'" (Somali parent)

### Coping with mental health issues

"Right now, we do not know where exactly our family members are, we do not know whether they are alive or have been killed. At times when that comes back to mind, it brings sorrow and pain." (Djibouti parent)

*continued...*





### Maintaining home language and culture

"When my daughter first started school she did not speak much English, but now she wants to only speak English. I really want her to keep speaking Khmer otherwise I cannot talk with her." (Cambodian parent)

### Adapting to the Canadian education

"Here they put children in the class with the children the same age even if they do not even know the English alphabet. The children are given assignments and the parents are expected to help even if they are not educated. Then if children do not do well in school the parents are blamed, which is not their fault." (Afghan parent)

### Concerning mental health

Negative public attitudes, separation from family and community, inability to speak English or French, and failure to find employment are among the most powerful causes of emotional distress. Persons whose pre-immigration experience has been traumatic, women from traditional cultures, adolescents and the elderly also are at high risk for experiencing difficulties during resettlement.

### Language

Language must be recognized as one of the most significant human resources; it functions in a multitude of ways to affirm, contradict, negotiate, challenge, transform and empower. For refugee and immigrant families, resettling without knowledge of either English or French leads to numerous challenges. Assisting

newcomer families in the maintenance of their home language and culture, results in their home language becoming a source of dignity and respect, rather than humiliation and shame.

### Early years care

Two reasons why refugee families may have a need for early years care are the lack of informal support (extended family) and school readiness. While being in greater need, refugee families are among the least likely to receive the pre-school support they need. Causes for this lack of access to preschool care include a lack of information about preschool services; unwillingness to place children in the care of people they do not know and who do not speak their home language; the high cost of services including transportation to get the children to preschool; meagre finances; inability to secure suitable jobs; and high mobility due to inadequacy of housing.

### Attachment and culture

Research by Health Canada found three key factors that affect attachment between immigrant and refugee parents and their preschool children. The first is personal factors including the parents' own experience of being parented (learned cultural and societal parenting norms, religion, intuition) core beliefs and values (respect, independence, freedom) and best practices of day-to-day parenting (feeding, carrying, sleeping, showing affection, listening). The second set is migration and resettlement, which include reasons for migrating, age at migration, place of birth of children, fluency in host country language, and presence of social network in Canada. The third set is the impact of migration and resettlement such as loss of home, family, language, status, trauma, culture shock, and adaptation/accluturation. Barriers to maintaining effective attachment include racism, economic difficulties, unrecognized indigenous parenting, and family stress. Support strategies for maintaining attachment include creating inclusive and supportive environments, providing a sense of home and presence of outreach support.

Darcey Dachyshyn is a Ph.D candidate at the University of Alberta. Her 2004 report on *Mapping the Life Experience of Refugee and Immigrant Families With Preschool Children*, was produced through the Multicultural Family Connections Program in Edmonton, an ECDI partnership between Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, and ASSIST Community Service Centre.

For copies of the complete report, visit the web-site [www.emcn.ab.ca](http://www.emcn.ab.ca) in the research section or for more information, contact Darcey M. Dachyshyn at: [dmdach@telus.net](mailto:dmdach@telus.net).

Sources for information in the above excerpts include: the Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees. (1988) *After the door has been opened: Mental health issues affecting immigrants and refugees in Canada*; Semali, L. M. (2002) The case of repressed native or indigenous languages. In L. D. Soto (Ed.). *Making a difference in the lives of bilingual/bicultural children*. New York: Peter Lang; Rutter, J. (1998). Refugee children in the early years. *Multicultural Teaching*; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (1996) *Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees*; Fantino, A., & Colak, A. (2001) Refugee children in Canada: Searching for identity. *Child Welfare League of America*; Health Canada, *Attachment across cultures*. Ottawa: Health Canada Health Promotions and Programs Branch.



# AHVNA members take action on cultural competence

Editor's note: AHVNA member agencies have an abundance of experiences when it comes to the challenges and rich experiences of serving families who are arriving in Canada from a wealth of cultural backgrounds. In preparation for this issue of Connections, we asked AHVNA agency member agencies to share their news and ideas about how they incorporate cultural competency and diversity into their practices and partnerships. Here are a few ideas we heard about.

## Promoting cultural learning through literacy

Here at Parents as Teachers in Lethbridge, we have put together a library of children's books that are representative of a variety of cultures, including some that have been published in other languages. We use these books both for home visits, as well as our Literacy & Parenting Skills group for ESL families. Often these books spark conversation that leads to a wealth of learning for the parent educator as well as the family.

Every home visit plan in the Parents as Teachers curriculum offers information to parent educators about which topics being covered may be culturally sensitive, and how parent educators can be supportive to a particular family.

An entire home visit plan has also been designed around valuing differences. The plan can be used with all families to talk about cultural diversity. Some of the great children's books we use during this home visit are: "The Color of Us" by Karen Katz, "Black is Brown is Tan" by Arnold Adoff, and "All the Colors of the Earth" by Sheila Hamanaka.

Finally, we offer a Rhymes Around the World group once a month where families from many cultures come together and share rhymes, songs and conversation.

—Deborah Josuttes, Program Manager, Parents as Teachers, Lethbridge

## Building partnerships to better serve new Canadian families

Through our Families Matter Initiative—Families First Edmonton, we have a partnership with Multicultural Health Brokers. We work with their brokers on a fee-for-service basis to assist with interpretation and cultural brokering with families. We also contract with them to provide training on cross-cultural practice. Perhaps most significant is that we have been very deliberate about hiring diverse staff teams that are inclusive of workers of different ethnic backgrounds, among other forms of diversity. Within this staffing framework we utilize reflective practice to ensure that the richness of a diverse staff team is captured and fully utilized in our work.

Through our Family Ties Program, we have developed partnerships with three different immigrant/refugee serving agencies to extend our services to these communities

and share our strengths between organizations. This project is pending funding approval.

—Scott Smillie, Manager, Family Programs, Enterprise Centre Branch, YMCA of Edmonton

## Accessing practical resources in many languages

Something we do is use the New South Wales Health website for translated documents and resources about women's health and infant care in a multitude of other languages. It includes topics like breastfeeding, depression and play. Here's the link: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au> and find Quick Links>Multilingual Resources.

—Holly Crone, Program Supervisor, Healthy Families; Salvation Army Community Services, Calgary



# Putting knowledge into action

Research deepens community knowledge about the struggles of refugee and immigrant families

By Darcey M. Dachyshyn



Two research studies undertaken with funding provided by the Early Childhood Development Initiative provide valuable insight into the circumstances of refugee and immigrant families with preschool children living in Edmonton. The Multicultural Family Connections Program, a partnership between ASSIST Community Service Centre, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, and Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative provided the research populations for both studies.

The first study, *Mapping the Life Experiences of Refugee and Immigrant Families with Preschool Children*, provides ethnographic information about the lived experiences of Afghan, African French speaking, Cambodian, Eritrean, Kurdish, Somali, Sudanese, and Chinese families. The second report, *Examining Culturally Appropriate Assessment Practices in Early Childhood Development Programs*, highlights the issues associated with early childhood assessment practices when utilized with newcomer families.

Recently, members of the research teams for both projects met with staff members from the three settlement agencies involved in the research to disseminate the results. We considered together the impact this research has upon the work of frontline staff as well as discuss what future avenues of research would be beneficial to both staff and newcomers.

Regarding the usefulness of the completed research, participants in the dissemination project shared these comments:

- Present research results reinforce what the frontline settlement workers experience.
  - Present research is informative, especially regarding refugee families.
  - Knowledge gained from the research will increase mutual understanding between Canadians and newcomers.
- Suggestions for future research include:
- Clear links need to be made between the lived experiences of families and existing government policies that impact resettlement.
  - There is a need to document the effective practices of the Multicultural Family Connections Program as a basis for policy development.
  - Research is needed as a resource for use in advocacy with funding agencies.
  - Ethno-cultural demographic information is needed about all refugee and immigrant communities.
  - Research is needed that examines how the values and practices of newcomers are maintained and integrated into the fabric of our communities.
- Meetings with researchers, front line staff, and representatives of funding agencies are scheduled to discuss further research possibilities.
- For more information, contact researcher Dr. Catherine Caufield, at: [c.caufield@ualberta.ca](mailto:c.caufield@ualberta.ca)  
Phone: 492-7283.*
- Majority culture institutions and individuals lack knowledge about the complex issues faced by newcomer families. The research documents can bring this information to them.
  - The research already completed shows common issues being expressed across agencies and across ethno-cultural groups.
  - The research has been a catalyst for work with other agencies.



## What are culturally appropriate resources?

In choosing materials that are culturally appropriate, the purchaser should strive to ensure that all materials would help create a climate of respect and understanding. Select books, posters, videos, toys and other materials that portray various

- income levels, (possessions, types of home, transportation)
- ages
- abilities
- minority groups
- family groupings
- types of occupations

### When purchasing or using materials, ask yourself:

Do the materials contain stereotyped portrayals? (e.g. gender)

Are the materials older? (more likely to have inappropriate content)

Are certain values or religious beliefs presented as a single correct view?

Does the material present any communication difficulties?

Are dolls, puppets and figures reflective of various peoples?

Is an effort made to provide food from a variety of cultures?

Is an effort made to use storytelling from a variety of cultures?

Is an effort made to use music from a variety of cultures?

—Laurie Lafortune, AHVNA board member.

# Resources for newcomers in Alberta

The following agencies offer services to newcomers in: English as a second language, child care and parenting, housing and food security referrals, resettlement and training programs. Home visitors are encouraged to become familiar with the range of community-based services that are available for newcomers in their communities. To access detailed information about programs and services in Alberta visit [www.rosenet-ca.org](http://www.rosenet-ca.org)

## Calgary

**Calgary Catholic Immigration Society**  
(403-262-2006)

**Calgary Immigrant Aid Society**  
(403-265-2006)

**Calgary Immigrant Development and Education Advancement Society (IDEAS)**  
(403-235-3666)

**Calgary Immigrant Women's Association**  
(403-263-4414)

**Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers**  
(403-569-0409)

**Calgary Multicultural Centre**  
(403-237-5850)

**Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment – Referral Centre** (403-262-2656)

**Jewish Family Services** (403-287-3510)

**Bow Valley College** (403-297-4901)

**Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth**  
(403-230-7745)

**Calgary Family Service Bureau** (403-205-5294)

**Calgary Police Services –Cultural Resource**  
(403-268-8399)

**Catholic Family Service** (403-233-2360)

**Immigrant Language and Vocational Assessment – Referral Centre** (403-262-2656)

**YWCA: English in the Workplace** (403-750-2521)

## Camrose

**Catholic Social Services** (403-672-1304)

## Edmonton

**Catholic Social Services** (780-424-3545)

**Changing Together – Edmonton**  
(780-429-7873)

**Edmonton Centre for Survivors of Torture and Trauma** (780-423-9698)

**Edmonton Chinese Community Services Centre** (780-429-3111)

**Edmonton Immigrant Services Association**  
(780-474-8445)

**Indo-Canadian Women's Association, Millwoods Centre for Immigrants** (780-490-0477)

**Mennonite Centre for Newcomers**  
(780-424-7709)

**Multicultural Health Brokers** (780-423-1973)

**Edmonton Immigrant Services Association**  
(780-474-8445)

**ASSIST – Edmonton** (780-429-3111)

## Fort McMurray

**YMCA Newcomers Settlement Office**  
(780-743-2970)

## Grande Prairie

**The Reading Network** (780-532-8857)

**Peace Area Settlement Service Society**  
(780-538-3232)

## Lethbridge

**Lethbridge Immigrant Settlement Association** (403-327-5333)

*continued...*

## Medicine Hat

SAAMIS Immigration Services (403-504-1188)

## Red Deer

Catholic Social Service (403-346-7055)

CARE (403-346-8818)

## Alberta-wide

ACCESSING ESL Services for Home Visitation Families

To access information on English as A Second Language, Parenting, Personal Development courses contact your local Community Adult Learning Association. Search for locations and services in Alberta @ [www.communitylearning.info](http://www.communitylearning.info)

Alberta Human Resources and Employment For Newcomers

Organizations that are funded by Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide employment readiness programs for new immigrants:

## Edmonton

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (780-423-9685)

Bredin Institute – Centre for Learning – (780-425-3730)

Personal Support and Development Network (780-496-9220)

## Calgary

Bow Valley College (403-297-2555)

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (403-262-2006)

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (403-263-4414)

Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (403-569-0409)

# What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is the ability to think, feel and act in ways that acknowledge, respect and build upon ethnic, socio-cultural and linguistic diversity. A culturally competent professional performs in a manner that meets the expectations of a particular cultural group and acknowledges that group's values, beliefs and practices. (Lynch & Hanson)

**The five dimensions of cultural competency**  
(Campinha-Bacote, 1999, adapted.)

### Cultural desire

The motivation and interest we need to be able to work effectively within the cultural context of clients we serve. It's about the "wanting to", instead of "having to."

### Cultural awareness

The examination of our biases and assumptions, including our cultural and professional backgrounds and how they affect the way we interact with others who are culturally different.

A genuine sense of humility and openness, flexibility and willingness to respect differences.

### Cultural knowledge

A process of gathering cultural relevant information about life circumstances, pre-migration factors, cultural influences and perspectives of the people we help.

Gaining knowledge about differences in worldviews, expectations and beliefs.

### Cultural skills

The ability to use a range of approaches in making cultural assessments that inform practice and service delivery.

To communicate across cultures, negotiate differences and resolve conflict.

### Cultural encounters

A commitment to seek out opportunities to interact with people of diverse cultural backgrounds outside of a formal work or volunteer context.

Making personal experience with cultural diversity a priority in our life-long learning.

—Information supplied by Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative in Edmonton



## Home visitors tell us!

New Canadians comprise an average of 26 per cent of AHVNA member agency caseloads. Here's what some of our home visitors have to say about the experience of supporting these families.

"Our program provides services to a rural community that has many new Canadians. About 40 per cent of our families are New Canadians in that community. Our home visitors need to understand what the issues are for new Canadians so they can begin to ask the right questions, plus they need information about resources that would be helpful."

"I am very concerned about the situation with some of our new Canadian families. Due to their isolation, their children are at great risk for gang involvement. We must begin to pay attention to the new Canadian family and parenting needs or many of these children will have very difficult futures."

"Unless home visitors speak the language of the parents it is extremely difficult for the family to really tell of their experience, struggles and challenges. Refugee families will be very careful not to share information as they often come from countries where authorities have much different powers than we do. Their old fears and suspicion may prevent some families from getting the help they really need. While these families may present on the surface with only language and cultural difficulties, there are often many other issues under the surface."

"Newcomers do not know how to navigate the community resources. We see a need with these families; we need to respond."

"I would estimate that 95 per cent of the new Canadian families we work with are working up to three jobs. Many of our families are struggling with basic needs issues such as food, clothing and shelter."

## A cultural treasure hunt

Discover valuable cultural skills and knowledge within your agency – By Laurie Lafortune

At Family Services of Central Alberta, we have created a diversity committee to help all our staff to provide culturally competent services, and to provide innovative services for an increasingly diverse population in the Red Deer area. First we identified community agencies that provide cultural services and promote diversity, but we also asked ourselves what knowledge and skills might be right in our own building. The committee created a short open-ended voluntary survey and asked all the staff to share this information if they wished.

We asked, "Do you have knowledge or experience working with other cultures?"

"Do you have any specific skills or knowledge about other cultures? Do you speak or write another language, have specific knowledge of cultural practices? Do you know how to sign?" And finally we asked, "Would you be interested in participating on a committee to enhance culturally supportive practice?"

The responses to the questions were very enlightening. We found we didn't know our co-workers as well as we thought. One pleasant surprise was to discover that we had staff members who could speak two languages other than English. We also learned that two staff members had lived in eastern Asian countries for extended periods of time. We learned more about staff members who follow traditional Aboriginal spiritual practice and we discovered staff members who know signing.

So, try asking your staff, and you may find all sorts of hidden skills and talents that will help your program to provide better services to new Canadian families.

*AHVNA board member Laurie Lafortune is program coordinator of the Healthy Families program for Family Services of Central Alberta.*

## Memoriam



Shauna Seneca-  
April 3, 1957 to December 14, 2006

Shauna was an inspiration to many in the social service sector especially to all of us in home visitation. She was known for her passion, big heart, integrity and beautiful smile. She devoted her life to helping others, touched many hearts and affected change in many lives. Shauna will be missed by all those who knew her.



## On the Home Front

- Home visitation is recognized in the Alberta Child Welfare Act Review (2002), as "a voluntary program that enables lower-risk families to access prevention and intervention services without formalized protection services."
- Approximately 10,000 Albertans participate annually in home visitation programs that provide services to families with children newborn to six years old.
- The long-term outcome of home visitation services is to create family and community environments that are nurturing, safe and support the development of the child.

### Hearing From You

Connections is published quarterly by the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association. We welcome comments, questions and feedback on this newsletter. We especially direct your attention to our survey regarding our first year of publication, inside this issue. Please direct any additional correspondence to: Lavonne Roloff, AHVNA Provincial Director, at 780-429-4787 or email: [info@ahvna.org](mailto:info@ahvna.org)

**Editor:** Cheryl Moskaluk  
**Contributors:** Lavonne Roloff, Cheryl Moskaluk, Yvonne Chiu, Connie LeMay, Laurie Lafortune, Lynn Lema, Holly Crone, Deborah Josuttes, Scott Smillie, Darcey Dachyshyn.

**Photography:** Judith Paquin and Marianne Symons

**Design & Production:** P40 Communications

### Contact Us At

AHVNA  
9321 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5H 3T7

**Phone:** (780) 429.4787  
**Fax:** (780) 429.4784  
**Email:** [info@ahvna.org](mailto:info@ahvna.org)  
**Website:** [www.ahvna.org](http://www.ahvna.org)

## Meet our board!

Over the next few issues of Connections, we thought we would give you a little friendly face-to-face information about the dedicated people serving on the AHVNA board, past and present.



**Bev Moylan** has been involved with AHVNA since it started and has enjoyed serving on the board since 2001. She has been a representative of home visitation programming in northern Alberta. She started the Healthy Families program in Grande Prairie to the point where they are serving six communities in Region 8. Bev has appreciated being involved as AHVNA has grown to be a strong advocate for its member programs. She feels it is through the association's strong commitment and leadership role, that programs have become more standardized. It is with regrets that Bev has resigned to take on a position as the Community Health Services Manager for Peace Country Health.

**Bev Parks** has been Executive Director of the Norwood Child and Family Resource Center in Edmonton for eight years. Her background includes past positions in research and community development for Edmonton United Way, and as executive director for Terra Center for Pregnant and Parenting Teens. Bev serves as vice-chair for AHVNA and chairs the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations as well as the Regional ECD Advisory Committee. Her other committee work includes the Success by 6 Council of Partners for Children and Youth, Interagency Head Start Network and the Advisory Committee for MacEwan Bachelor Health Science Administration. Bev is a mother of two teenage daughters, and on that note she stamps "family is a priority" on her resume.



### Donations & Memberships

Want to become more involved? AHVNA is a registered charity. We welcome your support for the association through donations. Call our office or visit our website for more information about membership.