

## ***Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families***

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22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce the opening of the *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families*, in Burnaby.

The *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families* is part of the unique Early Learning Refugee Pilot Project. Bridging the gap in accessing services within the community and shortening the pathway between arrival and integration, the *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families* provides children with a platform for success in school and life in Canada. The overall goal of this pilot is to determine how best to enable high needs refugee children in select communities in the region to gradually transition into mainstream services and resources, such as StrongStart BC, Early Learning centres, and to facilitate the children's successful transition to school and future academic success. This pilot is being carried out in six communities in the lower mainland including Langley, Richmond, Surrey, the Tri-Cities and Vancouver.

The *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families* opened its doors on 15<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 to young children and their families who have arrived in Canada as refugees. The *Centre* is a place where young children (aged between 0-6) are nurtured, where adapting to life in Canada is made easier, where parents and caregivers can share experiences, ask questions and spend time with their children, and where together, they can feel connected to their community.

### **Why refugee children?**

A refugee is person who seeks refuge in a foreign country because of war and violence, or out of fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. As part of its international humanitarian commitment, Canada selects Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) from abroad to arrive in Canada as permanent residents. Between 2003 and 2006, 875 of the GARs that arrived in the Greater Vancouver Regional District were children under the age of 14, each child an individual with their own hopes and dreams. Access to early child development/Early Years programs that are tailored to meet their individual needs are essential in providing refugee children with the foundation to succeed in their new lives in Canada. Research shows that for every dollar invested in high quality child care, at least two dollars are saved by reduced social costs and increased work productivity. For children in high risk situations, the payback can be as high as \$7 for every \$1 invested.

The *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families* is a project aimed at bridging the gap that refugee families may experience in accessing services in accessing services within their communities and shortening the pathway between arrival and integration. Services include:

- ✚ Parenting and family settlement support
- ✚ Early childhood development focused programs
- ✚ Early childhood development information and education
- ✚ Initial health/child development screening
- ✚ Information and referrals
- ✚ Volunteer opportunities for parents
- ✚ Outreach service and community bridging

The main languages spoken by primary families are: Dari, English, Arabic, Somali, French, Tigrigna, Spanish, Russian, Farsi and Kirundi. *Centre* staff speak many these languages. If language is a barrier, skilled interpreters will be provided.

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The Early Learning Refugee Pilot Project was developed in partnership with various funders and partners including; Immigrant Integration Branch (IIB) of the Ministry of Advanced Education & Labour Market Development, Ministry of Children and Family Development and United Way of the Lower Mainland. The *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families* also has collaborative funding partner representatives from the following organizations: MOSAIC; Fraser Health Authority; City of Burnaby: Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services/Eastburn Community Centre; Burnaby School District #41; Burnaby Public Library; S.U.C.C.E.S.S.; Immigrant Services Society of BC; Pacific Immigrant Resources Society; Burnaby Family life Institute; South Burnaby Neighbourhood House; Family Services of Greater Vancouver; and, Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services.

MOSAIC is the lead organization for the *Newcomers' Centre for Children and Families*. MOSAIC is a multilingual, non-profit organization dedicated to assisting immigrants and refugees with settlement and integration needs. Through a variety of programs and services, including translation and interpretations, employment, family support and settlement, MOSAIC helps clients to fully participate in Canadian society. Since its beginnings more than 30 years ago, MOSAIC has grown into one of the largest immigrant-serving organizations in the Lower Mainland. For more information about MOSAIC, visit the website: [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com) or phone: 604 636 04712 (Burnaby office) or 604 254 9626 (main Vancouver office).

The *Newcomer's Centre for Children and Families* is located at 7009 Kingsway, Burnaby, between Salisbury Ave and Griffiths Street. It is open Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Should you have any questions about the project or services, please do not hesitate to contact me, by telephone at: 604 636 0120, extension 106 or by email: [jrgreenidge@mosaicbc.com](mailto:jrgreenidge@mosaicbc.com)

Sincerely,  
Janice Greenidge, Manager.

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