

Celebrate!

Spring Issue 2008

The President's Message

Spring has sprung! Or has it? Looking out the window, and seeing the mountains of snow, I can't help but have serious doubts about the season we are supposedly enjoying at the moment. But although the weather may not represent the season, ANIW is certainly enjoying a bustle of Spring activity.

In March, we welcomed our NOIVMWC (National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada) sisters to Calgary to help us with the next phase of one of our projects – An Aspect of Racism Seldom Discussed. With the help



Cindy Tong - President

of Ms. Tina Lopes from Toronto, we tested a learning tool that will enable immigrant and visible minority women to address an aspect of racism that is seldom discussed – 'Internalized Racism'. It was a great and challenging day! I have to admit, it was a very uncomfortable conversation that we had to go through but I firmly believe that the only way to move forward is to address those uncomfortable topics. We can't continue to sweep them under the carpet. Tina was a great facilitator and was able to lead us through the exercises extremely well.

Overall, we learned a lot about ourselves, each other and the project itself.

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ANIW
Breaking Barriers
Building Bridges

In March, NOIVMWC welcomed a new board and executive. On behalf of ANIW, I would like to extend a round of applause to outgoing President Monica Buchanan for the excellent work she has completed during her term as president.

Congratulations are extended to the new board and the new president Eva Pakyam from Toronto. ANIW is a proud member and supporter of NOIVMWC. It is Alberta's voice on the national stage. Thank you to Linda Thomson, past president of ANIW for representing Alberta on the board of NOIVMWC for the past few years.

Right after this meeting, ANIW held its launch for the Capacity Alberta Occupational Profiles publication. We had a great turnout, over 70 people attended and I think it was a great way to spend a lunch hour. I am always amazed at the passion and the stories of people whenever I attend these functions. The challenges that are faced by persons who are trying to get their foreign credentials recognized sometimes seem astronomical. Thank you Pat Firminger, Senior Manager Community & Business Services

- Alberta Government for her presentation that seemed to shed some light at the end of the tunnel. Kudos to our Project Coordinator, Eunice Mahama for

her work on this project. Please contact our ANIW office, if you have any questions, stories or concerns related to the Capacity

Alberta project.

It seems that we have a lot on the go and we do. What I have talked about is merely the tip of the iceberg. These are exciting times for the Network and I greatly appreciate the support and work that has gone into our association from our staff, our board members (both individual and associations) and members at large. Without all of you, we would not be so successful.



SPOTLIGHT ON TIBET CANADA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The journey of an immigrant, whether they be a woman or a man is never an easy one. It takes bravery, resourcefulness and faith in a better tomorrow to leave your nation of origin and move to a different place to begin life anew. Thankfully today, immigrants never have to make this perilous and difficult journey alone. Many of the organizations affiliated with ANIW make an effort to lend their services to help new immigrants adjust to life in Canada.

The Tibet Canada Women's Foundation is one of these organizations. Its president Tseden Dhogonpa, is the recipient of the 2006 Calgary Immigrant Aid Society – Immigrants of Distinction Community Service Award. She and the Foundation are examples of the people and organizations that make the journey immigrants living in Canada face an easier one.

Part of the immigration journey involves new immigrants spending hours filling in forms and dealing with legal issues. This can be a daunting task for anyone and is made even more difficult when someone does not fully understand the English language. Yet, immigrants face these challenges everyday. One of the things the Tibet Canada Women's Foundation does to

help new Canadians is to provide translation services and help with filling in legal forms.

*All human beings have
the same feelings.
All want happiness and
good things.
-Tseden Dhogonpa*

Dhogonpa and the Foundation have helped many new immigrants, irrespective of their race, culture or religion, settle into their lives in Canada this way. "I never reject anyone, whoever approaches and needs help, I will help them" says Dhogonpa.

The Foundation also helps new Canadians acquire some of the basic goods they need to have a decent quality of life. They assist with job searches, grocery shopping and with medical appointments. "All human beings have the same feelings. All want happiness and good things" says Tseden Dhogonpa. To that end, Sleep Country has authorized the Foundation to give used mattresses to people who need them. In addition the Women in Need Society works with the Tibet Canada Women's Foundation and provides them with vouchers worth up to three hundred dollars that can be exchanged for used clothes, furniture and kitchenware.

"They don't mind used clothes or furniture. They have no money to buy these things" says Tseden Dhogonpa.

In addition to helping new immigrants begin their lives in Canada, the Foundation works to promote awareness of Tibetan women's situation and help preserve Tibet's ancient culture. The Foundation recently held the Tibet Canada Women's Foundation Annual Fundraiser Dinner and Silent Auction on March 15th 2008.

This event was attended by the Honourable Jason Kenney, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity). Participants of this event were treated to a night of sumptuous food, traditional dances and music.

All proceeds from the dinner went towards funding the humanitarian aid projects the Tibet Canada Women's Foundation supports.

One of the challenges the Tibet Canada Women's Foundation faces is acquiring the funds needed to support their many humanitarian projects. Despite this, within Canada and over seas, the Foundation works hard in order to help those who need it the most and will undoubtedly continue to do so for years to come.

Rosa Bruno - Jofre **Where is she now?**

ANIW has the fortune of working with many exceptional women who make remarkable contributions to both the Network and society at large. These women often continue to work towards creating a better and more equitable society in Canada even after the time they spend with ANIW comes to an end.

One of these exceptional women is Rosa Bruno-Jofre. She is currently a professor and Dean of the Faculty of Education at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario a position she has held since the year 2000.

Bruno-Jofre is a scholar who is actively involved in history and education research in addition to issues regarding citizenship. Her work and position in academia has given her the opportunity to become involved in many important events. One of these events is the 2005 Global Forum; The Broad Convergence held in Brussels Belgium. At that event, Rosa Bruno-Jofre presented her paper: Situating the Integration of Information Technology and Convergence Issues in the Context of Teacher Preparation and Educational Aims. Bruno-Jofre has participated in the Global Forum for six years and provided a critical voice as an educator whenever possible.

Rosa Bruno-Jofre was born in Bahia Blanca, a province of Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has been working and studying at universities in North and South America all of her adult life and completed her Ph.D. at the University of Calgary. After completing her doctorate, Bruno-Jofre became involved with ANIW while working as a sessional instructor.

Bruno-Jofre learned about the many challenges facing immigrant women in Canadian society and the exceptional women who are a part of ANIW affiliated groups in her first meeting with the Network. At that meeting, she became Chair of the ANIW. Of her first meeting with ANIW Bruno-Jofre says, "I committed myself with a passion to the organization. The women there were extraordinary. We were all different, but inhabit the same space. Many of us were professional women, some of us had gone back to school and completed degrees and were trying to make sense of our new lives and find a job in our areas. Others were struggling to understand the complex reality of their teenaged children." She goes on to talk about the difficulties some immigrant women experience in Canada which has very different values when compared to their nations of origin. "I will never forget the fear of the women in the ninth month of pregnancy. They were so afraid of giving birth to a girl. They were not good enough. And it was her fault!"

One of the most important reasons Bruno-Jofre became involved with organizations like ANIW is that she wanted to be involved in voluntary work with women like herself. She talks about Kamal Sehgal as one of the exceptional women she worked with. "Her contribution to immigrant women and to the development of an open environment has been invaluable. She had professional wisdom while being a caring person. She actually knew how to work across differences while academics kept talking about it."

Despite the fact that her involvement with ANIW has largely ended, Bruno-Jofre still describes her time with the Network as being an experience that has shaped her life. "My tenure as Chair of ANIW represents the most important part of my professional life in Canada. It gave me a bridge of love, experience and wisdom that I badly needed in my new journey in Canada." She goes on to add, "The ANIW played a mediating role between my experience and education and Canadian politics and bureaucracies. Yes, it was a great learning experience, one that is with me when I do my work as Dean."

Bruno-Jofre's journey from being an international student to the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University has been a long but fulfilling one. There is no doubt she will continue using her skills for the betterment of all society.

The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women's projects stem from discussion with women at the grassroot level, from which issues are researched and recommendations are built into projects. These projects aim to build stronger communities and full participation in the economic, political and social fabric of Alberta, the province of their choice.

Through its project on the Equitable Treatment of Immigrant/Visible Minority Women as Employees and Volunteers in the Alberta Voluntary Sector, ANIW documented the experiences of immigrant/visible minority women working in this sector, identified human resources issues, and discussed the possibilities of solutions to the human resources issues within the non profit sector. ANIW is addressing the recommendations made in this research and developing them into full projects.

Each project has an advisory committee; members for the committee are selected for their expertise and for their commitment to issues. The Network sincerely thanks all committee members for their dedication and hard work.

The following are the current ANIW projects.

Our Dignity in Our Hands

(Funded by Alberta Law Foundation)

This project focuses on knowing one's rights at the workplace. An employment law handbook and a workbook have been developed. ANIW facilitates workshops for women to learn about their rights in the workplace and how to address unfair treatment at the workplace, as well as employers who may not be following the law.

Current Publication:

Know your Rights at the Workplace

An Aspect of Racism Seldom Discussed

(Funded by Citizenship & Immigration Canada)

This project addresses issues of internalized racism - how to recognize it, and what one can do to empower themselves to overcome it. ANIW has held discussion groups to identify the content of an educational tool that will assist women in addressing internalized racism.

Current Publication:

Learning Tool (under edit)

Immigrant and Visible Minority Women: Mentors of Today and Tomorrow

(Funded by Status of Women Canada)

The aim of this project is to increase awareness and opportunities for women, and particularly immigrant/visible minority women, to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life of Canadian society and to find new impetus for

strengthening that participation in the workplace and/or community organizations.

Capacity Alberta

(Funded by Canadian Heritage, Multiculturalism Program)

This project builds the capacity of internationally educated/trained professionals, who have been most affected by the lack of recognition of their credentials in Canada.

The project is building community and individual capacity for an informative and effective dialogue with all stakeholders in creating tangible solutions.

On March 20, The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women successfully held a launch for the publication of its Capacity Alberta project - Occupational Profiles for internationally educated/trained dentists and engineers.

Held at the Kahanoff Centre in Calgary, the launch over the noon hour was attended by over 70 individuals from Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton, and included representatives from assessment bodies, educational institutions, employment assistance agencies, ethno-cultural organizations, funders, government representatives, City of Calgary, immigrant settlement agencies, internationally educated/trained professionals, and interested community members.

It also featured Pat Firminger, who is the senior manager of Community and Business Services at Alberta Employment and Immigration. Firminger spoke on the Alberta labour force strategy and the government's 10-year plan that includes integration of skilled immigrants to address the labour shortage and build a more sustainable and welcoming province.



From the left to right - Cindy Tong, Pat Firminger, Eunice Mahama

In developing the Occupational Profiles, the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women is able to assist internationally educated/trained dentists and engineers in Alberta to better understand the process to licensure, but most importantly, the Occupational Profiles outline the policy barriers and resolutions in progress with regards to foreign credential recognition, as well as the role of licensing bodies in this process.

Current Publication:
Occupational Profiles for internationally educated/trained dentists and engineers

ANIW Staff

Kamal Sehgal - Executive Director

Eunice Mahama - Project Coordinator, Capacity Alberta

Keiran Gibbs - Project Coordinator, Mentors of Today and Tomorrow

ANIW Board Members

It is with pleasure that I am beginning my second term as President of ANIW. On April 26th, 2008 we welcomed our board for the 2008-2010 term. I look forward to working with all the directors for the next two years.

Thank you,

Cindy Tong - President

Board Members for the 2008 - 2010 term

Linda Thomson, Past President
Cindy Tong, President
Papiya Das, Vice President
Minh Le, Secretary
Ajike Oladoyin, Treasurer

ANIW Directors

Jehan Wassef
Halima Ali
Pilar Silva
Elaine Lupul
Beba Svirgir
Barbara Smith
Hina Thaker
Rispha Tremblay
Lan Chan Marples

ANIW Member Organizations

- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association- Calgary.
- Making Changes Employment Association of Alberta – Calgary.
- Tibetan Women's Association – Calgary.
- Changing Together: A Center for Immigrant Women – Edmonton.
- Indo-Canadian Women's Association - Edmonton.
- Worlds of Women Together – Medicine Hat.
- Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association – Red Deer

Editor's Message

Starting next issue the Celebrate newsletter will explore some current news headlines and how they affect ANIW and its affiliated organizations. Keep reading and please feel free to send me comments or suggestions!

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