



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2009

Green is for Everyone: Eco-Tips Help You Save Money, No Matter What Language You Speak

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA – *Stop ignoring the strange sounds your car is making. If you take your car in for regular tune-ups it will be more fuel-efficient. And guess what? You'll save up to \$132 a year in gas!* This is one of the eco-tips you might hear on the radio over the next few months, in English but also in Mandarin, Punjabi and Spanish. The Multicultural Environmental Education Program (MEEP) at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre (VIRCS), the first program of its kind in Canada, has launched the **Green is for Everyone Eco-tips on the Radio** to make it easy for newcomers and new Canadians to understand the benefits of taking climate action.

The eco-tips were produced by VIRCS volunteers, and the majority of them are visible minority immigrants to Victoria. According to the 2006 Census, visible minorities now make up 20% of Victoria's population compared to about 10% a decade ago. **Green is for Everyone** focuses on making green initiatives accessible and relevant to newcomers, and it starts with speaking with language. Four radio stations in the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island with the most multicultural listeners – CFUV (101.9 FM) and Village 900 CKMO (900 AM) in Victoria and Fairchild Chinese Radio (AM 1470) and Sher-e-Punjab Radio (AM 1550) in Vancouver – are airing these tips as public service announcements over the next few months.

VIRCS is the first immigrant settlement agency in Canada to start an environmental education program for newcomers. "It's important to recognize barriers such as language, cultural differences, economic status and isolation when engaging newcomers in climate action. We try to meet people where they are at – keeping their settlement needs in mind and suggesting actions that save money while improving the health of our families, communities and the environment," says Program Coordinator, Gagan Leekha. "You'd be surprised how engaged people can be if you just take the time to talk to them one-on-one, and provide them with the right resources."

The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society will have a table at FutureFest Victoria, a community event for climate action in recognition of 350.org International Day of Climate Action. The event will be held on October 24, 2009 from 12:00 – 4:00 pm at the Centennial Square in downtown Victoria.

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To listen to our multilingual eco-tips, visit: <http://vircs.bc.ca/environment/media.php>

VIRCS is a non-profit organization founded in 1989 by three former refugees. Our mission is to assist in the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees into Canadian society. Our multicultural staff served 3,000 immigrants, refugees, new Canadian citizens, and visible minorities from all over the world in 2008. We provide our clients with Employment Coaching, Settlement Services, English Language Training, Cultural Bridging Host Programs, Youth and Young Adult Programs, Volunteer Opportunities and Environmental Education to help them integrate into life in Canada.