



**Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society  
HR Solutions Project**

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We welcome contributions of articles that related to immigrant workers in the workplace.

Submission may be edited for length. Please email to

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## Managing a Healthy Multicultural Workforce in Uncertain Times

The debacle in today's economic situation will significantly affect workforce. How can you maintain a healthy multicultural workforce? The following tips include the views from Multicultural Advisory Committee members of the HR Solutions Project.

### Retain Productive People

- Educate all staff about cultural sensitivity
- Provide orientation on Canadian work culture while recognizing different cultural norms
- Introduce new workers personally to existing staff
- Offer some flexibility in working hours for the observance of cultural traditions

### Facilitate Open Communication

- Find common ground, but accommodate differences
- Invite and provide frequent feedback to and from employees
- Use plain language for communication, orientation as well as clarifying expectations

### Provide a Supportive Environment

- Create a buddy/mentor system for orientation and exchange of knowledge
- Carry out team-building activities that instill a sense of belonging for all employees
- Support professional development opportunities for newcomers' long-term integration and growth



## Skills Connect Program - Helping employers find professionals

According to the 2006 Census, immigrants made up almost one-third of BC's population. More than half of new immigrants come as a skilled immigrant. Under this category, applicants must successfully pass a point system. Points are awarded for education, language ability, and work experience. Therefore, more than half of new immigrants in BC have a high level of education and English. Yet, the unemployment rate for immigrants is twice as high. Why the discrepancy?

For some immigrants, their credentials and experience must be evaluated by a licensing body before they can start working in their field. Other challenges that immigrants face include inadequate network, lack of labour market knowledge, no "Canadian" work experience and poor job search skills for the Canadian job market.

The BC Skills Connect program started in 2006 as a 3-year pilot project to help skilled immigrants find work in their field. If you are looking for someone with experience and skills in engineering, business and finance, information technology, the trades, and so on, or if you would like to offer your expertise by acting as a mentor, contact Annie at [skillsconnect@vircs.bc.ca](mailto:skillsconnect@vircs.bc.ca) 250.361-9433 ext. 218 or Sarah at [sarah@vircs.bc.ca](mailto:sarah@vircs.bc.ca), 250.361.9433 ext. 222.



## March Multicultural Calendar

### March 1

- Martenitza (Bulgaria) - Bulgarians celebrate spring
- St. David's Day (Wales)- Anniversary of the death of St. David
- Chalanda Marz (Switzerland)

**March 3** --- Hinamatsuri Doll Festival (Japan) - Ceremonial dolls are displayed to honor the daughters in the family.

**March 6** --- Alamo Day (Mexico/USA) - Anniversary of the slaughter of Texans

**March 9** --- Prophet's Birthday (Islamic) - Celebrates the birthday of Muhammad

**March 10** --- Purim (Jewish) - Known as the Feast of Lots.

**March 17**--- St. Patrick's Day (Ireland, USA) - Anniversary of the death of St. Patrick

**March 20** ---Shumbun-no-Hi (Japan, Korea) - Buddhists meditation

**March 21**--- Norooz (Persia) - a celebration of the spring equinox.

**March 25** --- Independence Day (Greece) - Commemorating the independence

### March 26

- Independence Day (Bangladesh)
- Kuhio Day (Hawaii) - A state holiday celebrating Prince Kuhio's birthday.

Adapted from

<http://www.dom.com/about/education/culture/march.jsp>

### Employer's Corner

**We would appreciate your thoughts!**

**What information you would like to see in this newsletter?**

**Questions? Comments?**

**Contact:** Mary at 250-361-9433 ext.244 or email [mary@vircs.bc.ca](mailto:mary@vircs.bc.ca)

**For more information, please visit website:**  
[www.vircs.bc.ca/hr\\_solutions/hr\\_solutions.php](http://www.vircs.bc.ca/hr_solutions/hr_solutions.php)

## Opening Dialogues to Open Doors



Employer/ Employee Advisory Committee Meeting

Immigrants are a new labour pool and they as a whole tend to be very hardworking and dependable employees – Employer interviewee

Immigrants create a more diverse environment for employees and customers – new perspectives and ideas – Employer interviewee

Local employers identified the need “to understand what is expected and try to make sure that what we are communicating is being understood” during Employer/Employee Advisory Committee meeting. They stated that in this time of uncertainty, it is important to ensure a positive work environment and enable employees to be productive to provide the organization with a competitive advantage.

To enhance local employers' capacity in the multicultural workforce, the Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) started the three-phase *Human Resources Solutions Project* (HRSP) in June 2007.

The research in the first two phases provided insight into employers' and immigrants' opinions with 132 local business and 142 immigrant participants. From survey research to interview and focus group, VIRCS teams have pinpointed the key challenges facing employers and employees. And with a clearer idea of the challenges, comes a clearer idea of the solutions.

VIRCS is pleased to announce the third Phase of *HR Solutions Project*, bringing employers and immigrants together in the local workforce. Phase III will create an opportunity to provide local employers with:

- Multicultural workshops
- Employer Resource Guide
- Employer/Employee Labour Market Network forum

Employers will have multiple tools and solutions as well as open dialogue opportunities with immigrants. We are looking forward to your participation!

## Cultural Bridging Host Project



Project Participants

- Considering participating in a buddy program that matches up Newcomers and Canadians for one on one friendship and support? Contact Aviva at 250-361-9433 ext. 242.
- Host program buddies will participate in weekly one on one meetings, monthly social events and monthly educational workshops. A program that brings cultures together, fosters friendships, connects people to their peers and helps create a more welcoming community.
- Young adults 19-30 yrs of age and parents of any age are welcome to participate.