

## Exceeding Expectations with the IMMPowerBC/Skills Connect Program

As a newly arrived immigrant, Humberto Mendoza expected that it would take some time to find a professional job. Educated as a mechatronic engineer, he was committed to finding work in his own field, but he had no network and was unfamiliar with Canadian job search procedures. Since he needed a job right away, he hit the streets of Victoria, looking for any kind of work.



Within a week, Humberto was working in a restaurant. Although it helped pay the bills and provided some stability, it was not a career. For him, the worst part of this “survival job” was not the low wage or being underestimated by customers and co-workers, but “knowing that I can do something way more productive for this country other than running food... it is about the skills and abilities that I know I have and I'm wasting them doing those kind of jobs. Nothing is bad about those jobs but, at least in my case, I like to put in practice what I have studied in my country, do what makes me passionate in my job and use my short professional experience. In simple words...do what I know how to do and do it well.”

One day, by chance, he saw a sandwich board advertising job search help at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS). Humberto kept his eye on his goal and continued to work with his IMMPowerBC case manager, Annie Shum. His long work hours at his job prevented him from attending the weekly workshops at VIRCS, but he came to the centre during his breaks and received one-on-one assistance. He gained knowledge of the local labour market and kept up-to-date with current job openings. Determined to get out of his dead-end job, he revised his cover letter and resume and applied for several jobs.

Shortly after joining the IMMPowerBC program, Annie introduced Humberto to Clayton Morris, the job coach of the Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP) on Vancouver Island. Through Clayton, Humberto was recommended for the position of project manager for a large, multinational company. Keeping in mind some of the tips he had learned, Humberto impressed the interviewers and was offered the job. Within 10 short weeks, Humberto went from being unemployed, to underemployed, to employed in a high-profile position in his field. It was one of the shortest periods of job searching for him.

Humberto is currently doing very well in his work and has just applied for the Engineer in Training designation with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia.

Putting immigrants' skills to work – that is the goal of the Skills Connect program and at VIRCS. By accessing his case manager's network, getting personalized assistance, finding information about associations and licensing, and being informed about the local labour market, Humberto was able to quickly transition into a job as an engineer.