



**2020/21**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

- 03.  
About Us
- 04.  
A Brief History
- 05.  
Supporters and Donors
- 06.  
2019/20 AGM Minutes
- 07.  
Meet the Board
- 09.  
President's Director's Report
- 10.  
Executive Director's Report
- 11.  
Programs
- 23.  
Goals for 2022
- 24.  
Photobook
- 26.  
Financial Report





## ABOUT US

VIRCS is a non-profit organization founded in 1989 by three former refugees. VIRCS serves an average of 3000 newcomers (immigrants, refugees, and new Canadian citizens) annually via settlement, resettlement, and adaption services.

VIRCS is governed by a Board of Directors and is made up of over 30 employees across 10 programs.

### MISSION

To assist in the settlement and adjustment of newcomers in Canada, and to provide services designed to increase participation in Canadian society by assisting the newcomer to overcome barriers.

### INNOVATION

VIRCS is a part of the Social Innovation Centre, a non-profit society that owns a building housing other non-profits, including VIRCS, to share administrative supports, collaborative space, and a trauma-informed daycare.

VIRCS acknowledges and respects the lək̓wəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the organization sits and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



# A Brief History

<b>1989</b>	The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) is founded by three former refugees (Viet, Hereity, and Carlos) as a result of two generous donations from the Catholic Foundation of Victoria and Saint John the Divine Anglican Parish.	
<b>1994</b>	5 years after opening its doors, VIRCS is a pillar in the community. The centre receives federal and provincial funding allowing it to establish its Settlement Program, introduce an ESL class (2900 attendees in the first year) and citizenship preparation classes. VIRCS also implements a new federally-funded Settlement Program to assist African newcomers.	
<b>1996</b>	VIRCS connects to the internet! This enables counselors to find more job openings, access employment opportunities, access training, and connect clients to community services. VIRCS organizes a 3-day Latin Music festival that brings in 600 attendees and VIRCS receives provincial funding to produce its TV show, 'Ethnivision', for Shaw Cable.	
<b>2000</b>	By 2000, the demand for settlement services grows immensely and the number of clients served by VIRCS increases by an average of 20% annually, while inquiries rise by 40% to an incredible 50% in 2002. Staffing increases to 20 employees.	
<b>2005</b>	In 2005, VIRCS completes "First Step", a multi-year project funded by Canadian Heritage to promote multiculturalism and anti-racism among children. VIRCS distributes 10,000 children's books and 5,000 parents' books to schools and community organizations.	
<b>2010</b>	By 2010, VIRCS expands to include a program focused specifically on newcomer children and youth (Enable, 2006), a cultural bridging host program, and numerous ESL and employment programs. In 2010, VIRCS moves from its initial location on 535 Yates Street to 637 Bay Street to accommodate the organization's growth.	
<b>2015</b>	In 2014, VIRCS celebrates 25 years by launching an annual scholarship of \$25,000 to sponsor newcomers seeking help with education leading to professional qualifications. By 2015, VIRCS begins a relationship with Paragon Testing to become the first CELPIP testing site on the island and secures funding to start the Welcome Gardens program.	
<b>2019</b>	In 2018, VIRCS joins the Social Innovation Centre at its new location at 1004 North Park, signs an MOU with the District of Oak Bay to provide transitional housing to refugees, and secures two employment service contracts (BC SIS and P2PTE). In 2018, the Social Innovation Centre also secures funding approval for a trauma-informed daycare. At the end of 2019, VIRCS experiences its first pandemic and must adapt quickly to changing Provincial Health Orders and legislation. In Spring 2020, VIRCS closes the centre to clients, but continues to provide services online and via telephone. VIRCS expands previously-existing community Emergency Assistance Resources services and starts an Emergency Food delivery initiative.	
<b>2021</b>	In 2020, the murder of George Floyd Jr. by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, sparks global Black Lives Matter protests and in 2021, Covid-19 fuels anti-Asian racism and xenophobia. As a result, VIRCS organizes a local response. In 2020, VIRCS is selected by the Province of BC to serve as the provincial hub of the Resilience BC Anti-Racism network. The pandemic continues well into 2021; however, VIRCS is able to open to some limited in-person programming and continues to provide critical services to newcomers.	

# SUPPORTERS & DONORS

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We are grateful for the support of the following:

- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizens Canada
- Department of Justice
- Service Canada
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- BC Gaming Commission
- BC Welcome BC
- BC Immigration Policy & Integration Branch
- BC Ministry of Attorney General
- BC Public Safety (Civil Forfeiture)
- BC Ministry of Jobs, Trades, and Technology
- BC Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture
- United Way of Greater Victoria
- United Way Centraide
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Children's Health Foundation
- Victoria Foundation
- Benevity Causes
- GVSCU Legacy Fund
- Telus Friendly Future Foundation
- MOSAIC
- Capital Regional District Wolf's Den Grant
- City of Victoria
- Community Food Centres Canada
- Canadian Online Giving Foundation
- District of Oak Bay
- Corporation of the District of Saanich
- Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
- Vancity Community Foundation
- Andrew D. Beckerman Fund
- Article Furniture
- Orbus Business Network Inc.
- T.D.K. Tory Ltd.
- Khalsa Aid Canada
- Rotary Club of Royal Oak
- Starlight DMH POOL IV LP
- Victoria Imperial Lions Club
- Carpe Diem New Media Publishing Inc
- First West Foundation



# 2019/20 AGM MINUTES

Chaired by: Aaron Hall  
Called to order at 6:07 p.m.

## 1. Approval of the AGM Minutes 2019, Financial Statement, & Financial Report

"I move the adoption of the Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting as presented."

Moved: Jim Wallace / Seconded: Liza Sehic

## 2. Approval of the Business Agenda

"I move the adoption of the Agenda for the 2020 VIRCS AGM."

Moved: Jim Wallace / Seconded: Liza Sehic

## 3. Acceptance of the Executive Director, President's report

"I move the acceptance of the 2020 Executive Director & President's report."

Moved: Jim Wallace / Seconded: Jane Hurtig

## 4. Acceptance of the Treasurer's report

"I move the acceptance of the 2020 Treasurer's report."

Moved: Jim Wallace / Seconded: David Lau

## 5. Board Membership Term

Motion from floor to restrict Board membership to a maximum of six years tabled.

## 6. Appointment of Accountant 2021

This motion was forgotten; however, the same accountant who completed previous years' financial statements was used in 2021.

## 7. Appointment of Directors

Re-election of BOD 2020/21 Nominees

Moved: David Lau / Seconded: Liza Sehic

## 8. Approval to adjourn the Annual General Meeting 2020

"I move the adjournment of the business section of the 2020 Annual General Meeting."

Moved: Jim Wallace / Seconded: Patti Grey

Meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.



# MEET THE BOARD

**OSARO** joined the VIRCS board in 2017 and currently serves as the board president. As a current public servant for the province of British Columbia, Osaro continues to assist the delivery of technology solutions to British Columbians in her role as a Senior Team Lead in the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's Information Services Division.

Osaro, a first-generation immigrant who came to Canada in 2012 to pursue a master's degree at Royal Roads University, faced the challenges and hardships that come with being a newcomer to Canada. Osaro continues to remain grateful for the privilege of living and working in the traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples with her spouse and two children.

**LIZA** has extensive experience across government departments. She has an M.G.M. (Royal Roads University), a B.A. International Studies (Simon Fraser University), and a B.A. Economics (Simon Fraser University). She has worked on projects that range from regional economic development to international export development. With her passion for working with newcomers, she led the Foreign Qualification Recognition program at the Government of B.C.

Liza looks forward to promoting diversity and multiculturalism through her involvement in the community.

**YE** joined VIRCS in early 2020 as a board member and has served as Treasurer since early 2021. She came to Canada in 2001 to pursue post-secondary education. She has started working in Accounting since 2007 and has worked in public and private sectors. She is a Chartered Professional Accountant. As an immigrant, she understands the journey is not easy for new Canadians and is committing her time to help those who need help.



**OSARO EZOMO**  
President



**LIZA SEHIC**  
VICE PRESIDENT



**YE LI**  
TREASURER

**BRUCE** is Professor of Sociology at Vancouver Island University. He is also the former Executive Director at Family Services of Greater Victoria, founder of the Victoria Social Innovation Centre, and former Senior Policy Advisor and Manager of Policy with the BC Provincial Government. Bruce started his working life working with youth at risk at North Shore Family Services in the 1970s.

As a sociologist and as a descendant of refugee settlers in Canada he is committed to welcoming new Canadians and creating an environment in which they prosper and contribute to Canadian society.

**AARON** lives in downtown Victoria with his wife and three children. Both Aaron's parents came to Victoria from the United Kingdom as children. He grew up mostly in Fernwood, and spent his high-school years in Colwood. He has worked as a real estate agent since 2008 and enjoys volunteering for a variety of different organizations in the community. In the past, Aaron also worked as an Aquaculturist in and around Fanny Bay and as a West Coast Commercial Fisher. Aaron was interested in volunteering as a VIRCS Board member as it provided him with an opportunity to use his professional and local knowledge to help guide the organization in creating policy to help VIRCS achieve its mandate.

**PATTI** studied at the New York School of Interior Design, and has had her own Interior Design company for 23 years! Prior interior design, she worked on Real Estate launches and she also has a background in the Film and Television business.

Over the years, Patti has volunteered in the community; however most of it has been around using her Design skills with set-up and props. Two years ago, Patti spoke to a friend asking where she could once again get involved in her community, and her friend promptly introduced her to VIRCS.

Patti does not shy away from learning new skills, leans in with her heart, and embraces new opportunities, especially around helping others.



**BRUCE MCGUIGAN**  
SECRETARY



**AARON HALL**  
CO-SECRETARY



**PATTI GREY**  
MEMBER AT-LARGE

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



*On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am delighted to welcome you to our 2020/21 AGM. It is incredible to think about how much we have accomplished over the past year despite the challenges of COVID-19.*

*Despite the unprecedented circumstances, I am incredibly proud of how the agency has continued to adapt quickly to deliver existing programs, develop new programs and source additional funding. The commitment and dedication of staff and management to the agency's goals has been exceptional, and for that I am grateful. This past year, we have not only increased year-over-year funding, but we have also served 3200 clients across ten programs.*

*As we begin to prepare for the next year, the board is committed to supporting agency staff, building relationships, and most importantly, supporting programs and service delivery models that support VIRCS' mandate.*

*To VIRCS staff, volunteers, managers, leadership, and the board, thank you for your efforts and contributions over the last year.*

*Osaro Ezomo*

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



*Over the past year, VIRCS has undergone a transition in both staffing and service delivery.*

*With a grateful heart, I officially joined the VIRCS team as Executive Director in September, 2021. While I am new to the role, I am not new to the organization, as I completed my practicum here seven years ago, worked as a Case Manager in the Settlement Program six years ago, and have supported VIRCS to secure funding for base programs over the past five years.*

*For as long as I have been connected to VIRCS, I have been in awe at the ways in which the organization and staff excel in even the most difficult times and/or circumstances. This year was yet another example of this. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, VIRCS excelled as an organization - filling service gaps with new programming like the Emergency Food & Supply initiative, securing additional funding to expand and support existing programs, and supporting the Social Innovation Centre to prepare to open the Little Phoenix daycare - a trauma-informed Daycare. VIRCS also organized a response to local instances of anti-Asian racism and xenophobia fueled by the pandemic. VIRCS staff consistently adapted to meet new challenges posed by the pandemic, including filling service gaps resulting from other community organizations operating at reduced capacity and supporting clients through increased legal complications (tenancy issues, separation and divorce), housing, and job loss. VIRCS staff also facilitated access to COVID-related education and awareness by translating available information. While the pandemic continues, VIRCS was able to open to some limited in-person programming in September, and continues to provide critical services to newcomers in-person, online, and by telephone.*

*As we look ahead to 2022, we look forward to strengthening our organizational and community capacity and working collaboratively with the Board and staff to develop a cohesive and consistent organizational profile. We also hope to enhance our technology infrastructure to respond to the increasing technological needs of staff and clients and our social media presence to strengthen our outreach and recruitment capacity.*

*I am grateful to the Board, staff, volunteers, and community partners and community members that continue to support VIRCS to provide essential and critical settlement services.*

*Karen Hlra*



# PROGRAMS

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# 2020/21 PROGRAMS



Newcomer Wraparound Support Program



BC Settlement & Integration Services



Pathways to Professions, Trades, & Entrepreneurship



Newcomer Women's Projects



Resilience BC Hub



Enable Child & Youth Program



Welcome Gardens



ESL / CLBPT Program



Volunteer Program



Oak Bay Welcome House

# NEWCOMER WRAPAROUND SUPPORT PROGRAM

## DESCRIPTION

The Newcomer Wraparound Support program supports newcomers facing overwhelming or complex barriers towards settlement and integration in Greater Victoria. Services are client-driven and holistic, and programs are designed to provide 360 degree of support services so that newcomers can find meaningful integration into a new community. Services are provided through individual, family, and/or group setting. We provide personalized, holistic settlement support for newcomers by creating individualized life plans and providing information and referral services to various community partners and resources.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 340 needs assessments completed
- Over 90 workshops delivered on various topics (food skills, digital literacy, healthy lifestyles, parenting, employment, education, transportation, citizenship, etc.)
- Some group information sessions were offered on understanding COVID-19 and health related information, finding credible resources and information about vaccination. Some clients did not have internet access or information technology infrastructure or were sharing a cellphone/laptop with their entire family. For them, COVID-19 information was inaccessible at the beginning of the pandemic. We were able to provide translated information to our clients with the support of trained multi-language VIRCS staff.
- Created weekly educational and community resource information for clients who are receiving emergency food and supply hampers to reduce social isolation and obtain information about emergency phone services including health line (online and via trained multilingual staff at VIRCS).

## FUNDER

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

## STAFF

Asuka Hirai  
**Director of Settlement**

Haixia Liu  
**Intake Coordinator**

Angela Gallentes  
Alejandra Mendez  
**Adult & Families Case Managers**

Iman Skati  
**Arabic Case Manager**

Hana Peterson  
**Youth Case Manager**

Heleina Dahlias  
**Enhanced Youth Worker**

Saurabh Joshi  
Karinna Vasquez  
**Practicum Students**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Continue to address the needs of newcomers via timely, client-driven/centered, service provision.
- Work with community partners to increase community capacity.

# BC SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION SERVICES (BC SIS)

## DESCRIPTION

BC SIS targets newcomers who are not eligible for federal settlement services, specifically, Temporary Foreign Workers, Provincial Nominees who are awaiting their permanent residency approval, post-secondary International Students, Refugee Claimants, and Naturalized Citizens.

BC SIS staff assist eligible clients to navigate immigration processes; meet settlement needs; connect to the community; access labour market information; and support and upgrade English language proficiency where appropriate. All services are free of charge and are delivered by VIRCS staff with cultural sensitivity and confidentiality.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 1500 clients served
- Approximately 150 workshops delivered, averaging 3-4 per week on various topics (conversation, grammar, immigration application support, English Language Training (ELT), language proficiency test information for skilled immigrants, resume clinic, English at work, computer literacy, idioms and phrasal verbs, law clinic, etc.)
- Approximately 1200 clients participated in the above workshops
- Provision of numerous COVID-19 specific settlement services (income supports, government benefits, one-on-one settlement assistance, immigration application support, etc.)
- Client referrals to and from/collaboration with over 60 service providers
- Attendance at over ten events and committees
- One part-time teacher hired

## FUNDERS

British Columbia -  
Welcome BC

Immigration Policy &  
Integration Branch

Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs

## STAFF

Nasim Hamed  
**Program Manager**

Serena Lee  
**Employment  
Counselor**

Jayanthi Rajkumar  
Natasha Pakula  
**Settlement Workers**

Kamala Pilgrim  
**ELT Teacher**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Increase hours of Settlement Workers (SWs) to full-time and secure funds to hire more SWs
- Increase staff wages to be in alignment with others in the industry
- Strengthen connections in Sooke and Sidney locations

# PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONS, TRADES, & ENTREPRENEURSHIP (P2PTE)

## DESCRIPTION

P2PTE supports the social and economic integration of newcomer youth by providing employment services to newcomer, Indigenous, and disabled youth between the ages of 18 and 30 who face multiple barriers to employment through the provision of employment skills training and quality work experience.

P2PTE offers employment skills training to youth facing barriers to employment. For 6 or 8 weeks, participants study in class to learn about employment related skills and career exploration while being paid a living allowance. At the end of this training, they have the opportunity to complete a work experience which can lead to permanent, long term employment.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- 32 youth participants served
- Nine of nine participants employed in first cohort
- Of 13 participants in the second cohort: nine secured employment, one is self-employed, and one returned to school
- There are currently 10 participants enrolled in the third cohort
- 17 weeks of full-time employment skills classes have been delivered to date
- Two sessions of entrepreneurship training have been delivered to eight participants to date
- We expanded our employer list by 15 new employers who have participated in training our participants.
- We secured additional training for four participants at Cambria College to study the Medical Office Assistant program and the Health Care Assistant program. These seats in the programs have been fully funded.
- In September, the program received \$600,000 additional funding through Fall Economic Statement (FES) to deliver employment services and work placements to 40 additional participants over a 16 month period.

## FUNDER

Service Canada

## STAFF

Jennifer Rawlinson  
**Program Manager**

Amrik Thind  
**Program Assistant**

Shazia Rashid  
**Intake & Outreach  
Coordinator**

Samira Wanas  
Kamal Panesar  
**Employment  
Coordinator**

Dallas Posavad  
Brennan Crabb  
**Instructor &  
Employment  
Coordinator**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Increase community awareness of our program through community outreach and partnership building
- Develop employer relationships in key sectors of the economy
- Expand our recruitment and outreach

# P2PTE SUCCESS STORIES



## Mahdi Terani

Mahdi Terani is the founder of Segan, a company pushing the boundaries of the fashion industry and introducing true natural luxury products while respecting its core values: Sustainability, Ethical Manufacturing, Gender Equality, Activism and Nature.

It all started more than two years ago Mahdi sold his bed to make space for a working desk, with a goal to make the first-ever plastic-free vegan fashion products which made everyone around him laugh (and feel sorry a little)! Mahdi knew this would be a bone-tiring and challenging path, but he was okay with shooting that high, knowing if he achieved his goal, he could have an opportunity to leave the world a little better than I found it.

*"There's never a class or organization that can make you reach all your goals, but there are ones that can help you a lot in the process, and one of them is VIRCS. I have participated in their P2PTE program and found it very interesting and beneficial in my path."*



## Gaby Al-Botros

Gaby Al-Botros came to Canada in 2019 on a Music Fellowship at the University of Victoria. After being in Canada for one year, Gaby joined the Pathways to Professions, Trades and Entrepreneurship program at VIRCS. In this program, he attended employment services training.

Gaby is a classical guitarist, music composer, and arranger. He nurtures his passion for guitar by playing Flamenco, Jazz, Celtic, Folk, and Middle Eastern music. His performances include solo concerts, baroque ensembles, orchestras, and the main focus on guitar ensembles. Creating a unique and fascinating fusion influenced by distinctive Middle Eastern melodies, Gaby has composed for solo guitar, guitar quartet, string quartet, and many other chamber ensembles.

Gaby is now successfully employed as an Administrative Manager at The Canadian Arabic Conservatory of Music in Ontario.

# RESILIENCE BC HUB

## DESCRIPTION

The Resilience BC Hub provides support to members of the Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network who operate in communities across the province. The network sees a society free from racism and hate. They are bringing communities together to do the hard work and make that vision a reality.

We recognize the impact of systemic racism and the damage it inflicts everyday. We educate to understand each other, our histories, and contributions to society. We work to break down systems that perpetuate prejudice, discrimination, inequity, and exclusion. We recognize that each person in our community has a role to play in eliminating racism and hate; from the person in a position of power, to the bystander who witnesses an incident of hate. Everyone is responsible and everyone must be accountable.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- In January of 2021, The Hub provided technical, organizational and financial support to the Cowichan Valley and Nanaimo/Ladysmith network members as they organized an online panel discussion on the anti-Indigenous racism faced by members of the Cowichan Tribes during the pandemic. The event preceded a COVID-safe community car rally organized by the network and attended by supporter from throughout the region.
- Weekly emails to 36 network members sharing upcoming events, new resources and new about anti-racism activities across the province
- Monthly Network Meetings with guests from across the province and country.
- Five internal network workshops
- Three provincial panel discussions
- One leaflet template
- One two-page Community Response Protocol template
- 3600 buttons and 36 poster stands
- One website with an interactive map to connect the public with their local Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network member, learning resources, information on reporting an incident of racism or hate and community stories about network members.
- One partnership with Simon Fraser University which includes the launching of the Taking Action! lecture series.

## FUNDERS

BC, Ministry of Attorney General

Victoria Foundation

## STAFF

Jane Hurtig  
**Manager,  
Multicultural & Anti-  
Racism Programs**

Avigail Olarte  
**Hub Manager of  
Communications &  
Outreach**

Jamison Schulz-Franco  
**Hub Social Media &  
Events Coordinator**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Present, in partnership with SFU, the second and third province-wide Taking Action! lectures.
- Support Network members to offer community workshops and discussion groups to normalizing conversation about racism and building targeted plans for action.

# NEWCOMER WOMEN'S PROJECTS<sup>18</sup> (NWP)

## DESCRIPTION

Newcomer women often stay in or return to abusive relationships because they are unable to access services in their language, are not connected to culturally competent resources, and feel further oppressed or discriminated against by service providers. Therefore, the Newcomer Women's Project (NWP) collaborates with community partners to provide accessible information to newcomer women in Victoria on issues related to women's physical and mental health, as well as their safety, wellbeing, and legal rights as they relate to their relationships with both their spouses and their children.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

### Safe at Work Project

- Collaborated with project partners across Canada
- Conducted online focus groups with 24 newcomer women
- Created initial draft of workshop curriculum

### Healing, Wholeness, and Home

- 28 participants representing 12 immigrant communities attended online and in-person workshops (family dynamics, the role of elders, child rearing, and the various methods used by different cultures to address difficult family issues)
- Participants learned directly from members of local Indigenous communities in a final outdoor in-person event

### COVID-19 Response Project

- 225 clients served
- 4 workshops delivered: Baking for Mental Health, Movement and Mindfulness, Employment, Health Care terminology and Vocab for ESL learners
- Delivered open house/ office hours sessions (BC housing website, tax resources, Service BC Website)

## FUNDERS

Department of Justice

BC Civil Forfeiture

Canadian Women's  
Foundation

## STAFF

Asuka Hirai  
**Program Manager**

Cleia (Nadia) Sangster  
**Program Coordinator**

Amarjit Bhalla  
**Project Facilitator**

Yoko Izawa  
**Administrative Support**

Melissa Najafi  
**Housing Support Worker**

Natasha Pakula  
**Community Support  
Worker**

Fiona Henderson  
**Curriculum Developer**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Continue to build connections to resources for long term housing for women leaving precarious situations
- Continue to support women to find resources to alleviate financial stress

# ENABLE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN<sup>19</sup> AND YOUTH

## DESCRIPTION

The Enable Program plays a vital role in providing services to newcomer children, youth, and young adults ages 6 to 25. The program supports and empowers young individuals in their academic, social, and emotional settlement needs as they transition to their new lives in Canada. A holistic, client-centered approach is used to meet young people in their lives and provide them with opportunities to increase their sense of identity, belonging, and community within their environment. The Enable Program aims to reduce settlement-related barriers for immigrant and refugee children and youth by increasing access to education, employment, resources, services, and recreational opportunities, and has successfully provided services for the last 24 years. Programming includes: Homework Club, Youth Activity Night, Youth Strides Summer Camp, Adjustment Support Groups, and SPARKS program.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- Over 100 newcomer children and youth served
- Over 100 in-person and online workshops, as well as one-on-one online weekly tutoring support delivered
- Built partnerships with community over 15 community organizations
- A group of newcomer youth created self-care hampers to pass on to other newcomer students and support their mental health during the pandemic, a time of increased isolation and loneliness. In collaboration with Enable staff, youth applied for the Wolf's Den Youth Leadership Grant, conducted outreach with high schools in Victoria, helped brainstorm ideas for the hamper contents, created a recipe book, and drafted beautiful messages of resilience and hope to pass on to other newcomer youth
- Provided 10 brand new laptops to newcomer families and youth supported with digital literacy workshops
- Six newcomer youth participated in Ready, Set, Engage! A youth-led Leadership development program aimed to empower newcomer youth participants to become strong leaders

## FUNDERS

United Way

BC Gaming

Children's Health Foundation

Victoria Foundation

GVSCU Legacy Fund

Telus Friendly Future Foundation

Capital Regional District Wolf's Den Grant

## STAFF

Jenn Rubin  
**Program Coordinator**

Brittany Dunstan  
**Program Facilitator & Youth Worker**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Increase capacity through a hybrid online and in-person program delivery
- Enhance program evaluation methods
- Increase partnerships with research-based and community building organizations to improve programming
- Streamline volunteer recruitment process and boost volunteer opportunities

# WELCOME GARDENS

## DESCRIPTION

Welcome Gardens is a VIRCS settlement service program. Designed to battle food insecurity and help newcomer and vulnerable populations to overcome barriers to their wellbeing. The program provides the necessary tools and resources for newcomers and senior community members to grow nutritious, affordable, and culturally-preferred foods together while fostering intercultural collaborations that strengthen Victoria's social, environmental, and economic resilience.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- 105 clients served, with an average of ten clients per workshop
- 32 weekly hands-on gardening workshops delivered at six Welcome Gardens sites; five virtual workshops on Vancouver Island Gardening Techniques delivered; and six multicultural food workshops delivered
- Distribution of 30 gardening supplies packages and seedlings to allow newcomer families to start gardening in their homes.
- 10 to 20 weekly pounds of fresh vegetables produced in our gardens with our program participants and volunteers, and distributed during the growing season of 2020 and 2021 to more than 30 newcomer families along with educational materials.
- Creation of temporary Victory over COVID garden at the Government House in collaboration with Allan Murr (aeroponics pyramids inventor)
- Boulevard garden implementation with native, pollinator, edibles plants and educational signs with the mentorship of Capital Region Hub Community and Farm to school.
- Renovation of new community native and edible garden in Franklin Green Park in collaboration with the North Park Neighbourhood association
- Renovated the Refugee Community Garden in the Oak Bay Welcome House, increasing the space and number of raised bed that allows cultivating more crops to be distributed to newcomer families suffering from food insecurity.
- Provided three gardening spaces for newcomers on the Yates Community Garden.

## FUNDERS

Service Canada - New Horizons Seniors Program

BC Gaming and Enforcement Branch

City of Victoria

Victoria Foundation

## STAFF

Asuka Hirai  
**Program Manager**

Cenit Munoz  
**Program Coordinator**

Baraa Daoud  
**Summer Student  
UVic, Software  
Engineering**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Increase the number of garden plots targeted for newcomers at already established community gardens managed by other organizations.
- Support 20 newcomer families to add a new veggie crop that is easily accessible to grow in Greater Victoria to their dietary menu.

# ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE & CANADIAN LANGUAGE BENCHMARKS PLACEMENT TEST

## DESCRIPTION

At VIRCS, we have been delivering quality English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to the community for more than 30 years. Our beginner, intermediate and advanced classes are taught by a TESL certified instructor. Additionally, we have partnered with the Greater Victoria Public Library to offer evening conversation classes at several branches in Victoria. Our program focuses on a communicative approach to language learning and we are open to everyone in our community through the generous funding from BC Gaming.

VIRCS is also a licensed Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT) site. We offer both remote and paper based testing for clients and private individuals. We have two trained and certified assessors on staff to provide this service to our clients and to the community.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS - ESL

- 35 students served
- 147 classes delivered
- 40 new language resources developed

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS - CLBPT

- 80 CLBPTs administered for Health Care Assistant applicants for Spratt Shaw and Cambria College.
- 45 CLBPTs administered for VIRCS clients (BCSIS)
- Throughout the pandemic, VIRCS has delivered CLBPTs to health care assistant applicants, so that they could prove they had met the language requirements for their program. This has enabled both Spratt Shaw and Cambria College to train and graduate health care assistants, which have been desperately needed in our community over the last two years.

## FUNDER

BC Gaming and Enforcement Branch

CLBPT is regulated by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

## STAFF

Jennifer Rawlinson  
**Program Manager**

Maya Pereira  
**ESL Instructor**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Increase the number of students to pre-pandemic levels (15-20) for registered and regularly attending
- Increase number of classes to include one evening class at the library and a weekend class.
- Utilize our volunteer base to offer one to one ESL support at VIRCS and the community
- Increase overall number of CLBPTs to generate revenue for ESL program.

# VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

## DESCRIPTION

The volunteer program is a vital, dynamic part of the larger VIRCS portfolio of activities designed to meet the specific needs of individual newcomers, their families, and the wider community with targeted, client driven services.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- Eight volunteers supported the Emergency Food Initiative program
- 15 clients were served by two volunteers of the Income Tax Clinic during tax season
- We provide a volunteer staffed Law Clinic with pro-bono services provided by lawyers and consultants
- We have provided over 27 furniture deliveries to clients

## FUNDERS

BC Gaming and Enforcement Branch

## STAFF

Amarjit Bhalla  
**Volunteer Coordinator**

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Revamp the program with a strengthened outreach and recruitment strategy
- Increase program budget by 30%

# OAK BAY WELCOME HOUSE

## DESCRIPTION

The Welcome House initiative was established in 2018 by VIRCS, in partnership with the District of Oak Bay. The initiative includes two homes which are used as transitional housing for recently settled refugees.

## 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS

- The homes housed one single family of four as well as four individual residents
- VIRCS continues to provide ongoing settlement services, including general information and referral services to various social service providers internally and externally. Additionally, the residents are given opportunities to learn about Canadian culture and environment and food sustainability
- VIRCS has been working with Oak Bay Rotary Club volunteers to provide community connections and general support services.

## PARTNER

District of Oak Bay

## 2021/22 GOALS

- Strengthen fundraising efforts to complete a number of repairs on both homes
- Increase volunteer opportunities

# 2021/22 ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS



## 01. Strengthen Sense of Belonging for Newcomers

Work with other community partners to increase community capacity to create diverse and multicultural community where everyone feels like a member of the community.



## 02. Increase Community Awareness of VIRCS Programs

Enhance and strengthen community outreach, promotion, and partnership building to increase community awareness of VIRCS programs.



## 03. Increase Employer Partnerships

Develop employer relationships in key sectors of the economy (health services, technology, personal services)



## 04. Expand Recruitment and Outreach

Expand our recruitment and outreach through partnerships with organizations that serve youth such as schools, post secondary institutions, faith based organizations, recreational services, and cultural centres)



## 04. Develop a Five Year Strategic Plan

Work with an external consultant to support VIRCS leadership, staff, Board, and community partners to develop a five year Strategic Plan that will advance the organization's mission and identify measurable goals.



## 04. Raise Funds for Key Areas

Collaborate with media, local businesses, and community to engage in fundraising efforts for three key areas: (1) updating technology infrastructure, (2) completing repairs at both Welcome Houses, and (3) supporting administrative costs



## 04. Increase Networking Opportunities

Increase networking opportunities with individuals, public and private sector, and community organizations to discuss collaborative initiatives to address rapidly shifting challenges and needs.

# THIS IS US!





**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Index to Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

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	Page
INDEPENDENT PRACTITIONER'S REVIEW ENGAGEMENT REPORT	1 - 2
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	
Statement of Financial Position	3
Statement of Changes in Net Assets	4
Statement of Revenues and Expenditures	5
Statement of Cash Flows	6
Notes to Financial Statements	7 - 11



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## INDEPENDENT PRACTITIONER'S REVIEW ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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To the Members of Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society

We have reviewed the accompanying financial statements of Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (the Society) that comprise the statement of financial position as at December 31, 2020, and the statements of changes in net assets, revenues and expenditures and cash flows for the year then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

### *Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements*

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO), and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### *Practitioner's Responsibility*

Our responsibility is to express a conclusion on the accompanying financial statements based on our review. We conducted our review in accordance with Canadian generally accepted standards for review engagements, which require us to comply with relevant ethical requirements.

A review of financial statements in accordance with Canadian generally accepted standards for review engagements is a limited assurance engagement. The practitioner performs procedures, primarily consisting of making inquiries of management and others within the entity, as appropriate, and applying analytical procedures, and evaluates the evidence obtained.

The procedures performed in a review are substantially less in extent than, and vary in nature from, those performed in an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion on these financial statements.

### *Conclusion*

Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the financial statements do not present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society as at December 31, 2020, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with ASNPO.

(continues)

Independent Practitioner's Review Engagement Report to the Members of Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society *(continued)*

*Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements*

As required by the Societies Act (British Columbia), we report that the accounting principles in Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Shgrove". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Victoria, British Columbia  
June 9, 2021

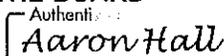
CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Statement of Financial Position**  
**December 31, 2020**

	2020	2019
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 295,288	\$ 174,198
Accounts receivable	143,320	182,424
Prepaid expenses	340	-
GST receivable	1,719	1,372
	<u>440,667</u>	<u>357,994</u>
PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT (Note 3)	<u>92,516</u>	<u>106,920</u>
	<u>\$ 533,183</u>	<u>\$ 464,914</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 32,959	\$ 20,551
Wages payable	36,160	999
Employee deductions payable	26,345	19,304
	<u>95,464</u>	<u>40,854</u>
DEFERRED REVENUE	413,620	277,982
DUE TO RELATED PARTIES	81,826	185,944
	<u>590,910</u>	<u>504,780</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Operating fund	(44,656)	(41,199)
Capital fund	(13,071)	1,333
	<u>(57,727)</u>	<u>(39,866)</u>
	<u>\$ 533,183</u>	<u>\$ 464,914</u>

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

Aaron Hall

Authentisign  


Director

6/11/2021 5:27:25 PM PDT

Director



Director

Director

See notes to financial statements

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Statement of Changes in Net Assets**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

	Operating Fund	Capital Fund	<b>2020</b>	2019
<b>NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>				
As previously reported	\$ (41,200)	\$ 1,333	\$ (39,867)	\$ 71,638
Prior period adjustments	(7,292)	-	(7,292)	(1,034)
As restated	(48,492)	1,333	(47,159)	70,604
Deficiency of revenues over expenditures	(10,568)	-	(10,568)	(110,471)
Amortization of tangible capital assets	14,404	(14,404)	-	-
Amortization of deferred contributions	-	-	-	-
<b>NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ (44,656)</b>	<b>\$ (13,071)</b>	<b>\$ (57,727)</b>	<b>\$ (39,867)</b>

See notes to financial statements

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Statement of Revenues and Expenditures**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

	2020	2019
<b>REVENUES</b>		
Operating Grants	\$ 1,599,508	\$ 1,306,725
Gaming	64,611	74,750
Capital Project Grant	-	79,158
Donations	61,545	41,755
Training	22,886	45,262
Rental	16,379	17,869
Social Events	1,543	5,142
Interest Income	805	2,781
Amortization of deferred capital asset contributions (Note 6)	-	437
	<u>1,767,277</u>	<u>1,573,879</u>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Amortization	14,404	14,961
Building Occupancy	135,788	172,215
Capital Project Grant	-	79,158
Direct Program Costs	200,486	102,083
Office and Supplies	17,902	23,443
Professional Fees	36,403	8,010
Miscellaneous	831	-
Recognition, Training and Recruiting	1,138	10,530
Travel and Transportation	3,445	3,664
Wages and Contracted Services	1,367,448	1,270,286
	<u>1,777,845</u>	<u>1,684,350</u>
<b>DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES</b>	<u>\$ (10,568)</u>	<u>\$ (110,471)</u>

See notes to financial statements

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**  
**Statement of Cash Flows**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

	2020	2019
<b>OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Deficiency of revenues over expenditures	\$ (10,568)	\$ (110,471)
Items not affecting cash:		
Amortization of property, plant and equipment	14,404	14,961
Interest	-	(437)
	<u>3,836</u>	<u>(95,947)</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Accounts receivable	31,811	(13,728)
Accounts payable	12,408	(3,254)
Deferred revenue	135,638	217,208
Prepaid expenses	(340)	-
GST receivable	(347)	(95)
Wages payable	35,161	999
Employee deductions payable	7,041	1,937
	<u>221,372</u>	<u>203,067</u>
Cash flow from operating activities	<u>225,208</u>	<u>107,120</u>
<b>FINANCING ACTIVITY</b>		
Advances from (to) related parties	<u>(104,118)</u>	<u>70,842</u>
<b>INCREASE IN CASH FLOW</b>	<b>121,090</b>	<b>177,962</b>
Cash (deficiency) - beginning of year	<u>174,198</u>	<u>(3,764)</u>
<b>CASH - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 295,288</b>	<b>\$ 174,198</b>

See notes to financial statements

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY****Notes to Financial Statements****Year Ended December 31, 2020***(Unaudited)*

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**1. DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION**

The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society is incorporated under the Society Act of British Columbia as a not-for-profit organization and is a registered charity under the Income Tax Act. The purposes of the Society are to assist in the settlement and adjustments of immigrants and refugees in Canada and to provide services designed to increase the newcomers' participation in Canadian society by assisting the newcomer to overcome barriers.

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**2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES**Basis of presentation

The financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNFPO).

Fund accounting

The purpose of each fund contained in the financial statements is detailed as follows:

Operating Fund - accounts for the Society's program delivery and administrative activities. This fund reports unrestricted resources and restricted operating grants.

Capital Fund - reports the assets, liabilities, revenues and expenditures related to the Society's capital assets.

Revenue recognition

Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions.

Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Restricted contributions for the purchase of capital assets that will be amortized are deferred in the Capital Fund and recognized as revenue on the same basis as the amortization expenditure related to the acquired capital assets. No such deferral is recognized until ownership is approved by the contributor.

Interest revenue is recognized on a time proportion basis.

*(continues)*

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## VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY

### Notes to Financial Statements

Year Ended December 31, 2020

*(Unaudited)*

#### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES *(continued)*

##### Donated services

The Society benefits greatly from donated services in the form of volunteer time for various committees. The value of donated services for donated time is not recognized in these financial statements.

##### Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment is stated at cost or deemed cost less accumulated amortization and is amortized over its estimated useful life at the following rates and methods:

Furniture and fixtures	30% declining balance method
Leasehold improvements	10 years straight-line method

The Society regularly reviews its property, plant and equipment to eliminate obsolete items.

Property, plant and equipment acquired during the year but not placed into use are not amortized until they are placed into use.

##### Financial instruments policy

The Society's financial instruments consist of cash, accounts receivable, operating grants receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities and deferred operating grants. Unless otherwise noted, it is management's opinion that the Society is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risks arising from these financial instruments. The fair value of these financial instruments approximate their carrying values, unless otherwise noted.

#### 3. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	Cost	Accumulated amortization	2020 Net book value	2019 Net book value
Furniture and fixtures	\$ 248,842	\$ 248,189	\$ 653	\$ 933
Leasehold improvements	140,931	49,068	<b>91,863</b>	105,987
	<b>\$ 389,773</b>	<b>\$ 297,257</b>	<b>\$ 92,516</b>	<b>\$ 106,920</b>

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**

**Notes to Financial Statements**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

*(Unaudited)*

**4. DEFERRED REVENUE**

Deferred contributions represent funds received during the year which relate to the subsequent period.

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
BC Gaming	\$ 21,906	\$ 6,250
Canadian Heritage	-	117,605
Canadian Women's Foundation	16,414	-
Children's Health Foundation	13,000	12,000
City of Victoria	590	9,500
Community Food Centres Canada	910	-
Department of Justice of Canada	13,344	60,137
Ministry of Attorney General	-	15,000
Ministry of International Trade	-	7,500
Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness	12,475	7,990
Ministry of Public Safety	24,733	-
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture	95,356	-
Service Canada	135,605	6,000
Second Harvest Food Support Committee	6,580	-
Telus	12,088	-
Third party donation	2,740	-
United Way of Greater Victoria	6,380	6,000
Vancity Community Foundation	5,688	-
Victoria Foundation	45,811	30,000
	<u>\$ 413,620</u>	<u>\$ 277,982</u>

**5. DUE TO RELATED PARTIES**

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
<u>Victoria Social Innovation Centre Society</u>		
BC Gaming	\$ 81,826	\$ 110,944
Victoria Foundation	-	75,000
	<u>\$ 81,826</u>	<u>\$ 185,944</u>

The Society applied and received the above funding on behalf of Victoria Social Innovation Centre Society. The amounts due are non-interest bearing and are due on demand.

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY**

**Notes to Financial Statements**

**Year Ended December 31, 2020**

*(Unaudited)*

**6. DEFERRED CAPITAL ASSET CONTRIBUTIONS**

Deferred contributions reported in the Capital Fund relate to the unamortized portion of contributed capital assets. The changes in the deferred capital asset contributions balance for the fiscal period are as follows:

	2020	2019
Balance, beginning of year	\$ -	\$ 437
Restricted contributions	-	-
Amounts amortized to revenue	-	(437)
	\$ -	\$ -

There are no restricted contributions in the year.

**7. OPERATING GRANT REVENUES BY CONTRIBUTOR**

	2020	2019
HRDC	\$ 311,676	\$ 433,533
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	401,236	338,437
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training	308,017	275,010
Foundations including Provincial Employess Community Services Fund and Victoria Foundation	106,665	122,307
Service Canada and Department of Justice	199,123	84,185
Other Ministries	227,925	37,990
Miscellaneous other grants	40,866	11,321
Employment Program of BC	-	3,943
Ministry of the Attorney General & Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism	4,000	-
	\$ 1,599,508	\$ 1,306,726

Ongoing operations of the Society depend on the continued support of these contributors.

**8. DONATION - VICTORIA FOUNDATION**

The Society invested \$40,000 in the Victoria Foundation in order to establish the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society Legacy Fund for Newcomer's Integration. The Victoria Foundation is bound to hold the funds in trust, in perpetuity, for the benefit of the Society while the Society retains the right to income in perpetuity, from the fund and additions thereto. Since the Society only receives income and has restrictions to access the capital balance of the funds, the endowment is not shown as an asset on these statements.

**VICTORIA IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CENTRE SOCIETY****Notes to Financial Statements****Year Ended December 31, 2020***(Unaudited)*

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**9. LIABILITY INSURANCE**

Liability insurance has been purchased for directors and officers to mitigate the cost of any potential law suit of action.

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**10. STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN CASH RESOURCES**

The statement of changes in cash resources has not been presented as it is not material to the understanding of these financial statements.

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**11. COMPARATIVE FIGURES**

Some of the comparative figures have been reclassified to conform to the current year's presentation.

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## Contact

Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS)  
1004 North Park Street, Social Innovation Centre  
(250) 361-9433

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