



**North Bay & District Multicultural Centre
Annual Report
2009**





The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program, Host Program and Local Immigration Partnership services from Parry Sound to Temagami, and Mattawa to Verner.

During 2009 we also received funding from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Community Builders program, the City of North Bay, and Coalition for Education.

We thank all of our funders for their support and encouragement.





A Message from the Chair of the Board of Directors

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” Charles Darwin



In our second year of operation as the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre we eliminated some confusion over our previous name of Young People’s Press and incorporated under our new name. This has made it easier for clients, the public, partners and funders to understand who we are and what we do. Our change in focus, precipitated by change in our community, is now reflected in our bylaws.

We received charitable status from Revenue Canada in December and that enables us to issue income tax receipts to anyone generous enough to donate to us and allows us to seek funding from charitable foundations.

Our expansion to the second floor at 374 Fraser Street occurred May 1 and our new meeting room is seeing a lot of activity. I am pleased to see the board tables and chairs donated by Nipissing East Community Opportunities (NECO) being put to good use.

We appreciate the continuing financial support of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and look forward to new funders becoming involved with our projects in 2010. Our first new confirmed funding partner is the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, which has approved funding for two interns who began work January 4.

Felicitas Rodriguez moved away from the city and we regret her loss from our board of directors. Well-known real estate agent and businessman Dennis Mong is her replacement on the board. We look forward to continued service from board members Ainul Ahmed, Joanne Bénard and Gary Gould.

We are looking forward to 2010 as the City of North Bay launches its immigration portal and active recruitment of internationally trained professionals and skilled workers begins. We will have the responsibility of keeping the portal content current, so let us know if you have news items or information to share.





I want to thank our Executive Director, Don Curry, whose capable leadership moves the Centre forward in step with the needs of our region, and our dedicated staff and volunteers. They are the pulse of the positive change that our clients experience. Thank you all.

 **Susan Church**



North Bay & District Multicultural Centre
Staff 2009



Don Curry
Executive Director



Ann Welsh
Program Coordinator



Deborah Robertson
Acting Program
Coordinator



Taslima Ahmed
Settlement Counsellor



Vindra Sahadeo
Host Program



Laura Jane Coté
Newcommer Network
Project Officer



Tara Gillies
Office Manager



A Message from the Executive Director

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.” John F. Kennedy

Change is indeed the law of life and we had our share of change in 2009. Staff member Oweeny De Silva moved to Ottawa and was replaced by Vindra Sahadeo. Vindra was volunteering with us after arriving from Trinidad & Tobago, and is now responsible for our Host program. Ann Welsh left September 1 on an academic leave to pursue her Master's degree at the University of Toronto. Another volunteer, Deborah Robertson, recently arrived from England, replaced Ann on an interim basis as Program Coordinator. Ann returns in May.

Laura-Jane Coté joined us September 1 to coordinate our Local Immigration Partnership project with the North Bay Newcomer Network. Two interns, Cindy Collins and Aaron Fallon, joined us January 4, thanks to funding from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation. Both are bilingual St. Joseph-Scollard Hall and Nipissing University graduates.

Exciting change is on the way in 2010 as the City of North Bay launches its immigration portal in January and our Local Immigration Partnership project with the North Bay Newcomer Network sets the direction we will be taking in the next few years. We will literally be changing the face of the city and area over the decades to come as more immigrants decide to settle here. We have seen changes in the past few years as more internationally trained professionals and skilled workers settle here and Nipissing University and Canadore College ramp up their international student and faculty recruitment efforts.

Our client numbers are rising slowly and we expect to see further increases once the city's attraction efforts begin. Once again this year we worked very closely with the North Bay Newcomer Network, particularly the executive members: fellow co-chair Marla Tremblay from the city; LeeAnne Maillé from Yes! Employment Services; Karen Strang from Nipissing University; Darlene Jamieson from Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Bay & District; and Deborah Robertson and Ann Welsh of NBDMC.

NNN's focus in 2010 will be on creating a welcoming community, newcomer employment and newcomer attraction and integration. Through consultation





with the membership and focus groups we will be setting priorities and developing a strategic plan. We will be working together to improve English language training for newcomers, identify employment opportunities and help newcomers get involved in their new community.

As I said in last year's annual report—Economic growth in Canada is driven by immigration and North Bay is a city that understands and embraces that fact. One challenge for 2010 is to more fully involve our surrounding municipalities.

 **Don Curry**





A Message from the Acting Program Coordinator

“Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”
Buddha

It was with great enthusiasm that I become the Acting Program Coordinator for the North Bay & District Multicultural Centre in August this year. As a previous volunteer for the centre and an immigrant myself, it is a privilege to be able to use my knowledge and firsthand experience to build on the solid foundations already created in the past year.

ISAP (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program) and Host programs have strengthened considerably, the ISAP Program alone serving 67 clients during a total of 449 visits. This figure represents an incredible number of return visits, a sure testament to the quality of settlement service our clients receive.

As it grows and evolves, the Host Program continues to benefit from the dedication of our volunteers. It is becoming more and more evident that our volunteers not only touch the lives of individuals via the one-on-one matching, but contribute significantly to the success of integration within the community at large. Their commitment and energy has played, and will continue to play, a vital part in creating a welcoming environment for newcomers.

This past year has seen an increase in our outreach and promotion initiatives. We have successfully increased the knowledge of our services in the areas surrounding North Bay and anticipate that the need for our services within these outlying communities will continue to grow. Expansion brings new challenges, as we now work toward providing sufficient transportation for clients who wish to attend the centre, but reside outside North Bay.

Building community partnerships remains a focus of the centre as we strengthen our place within the community. We continue to work hard to increase awareness of our services and to build successful relationships with other service providers, enabling us to effectively refer our clients and better serve their needs.

With not only the numbers but also the diversity of clients increasing, we must continue to be flexible and inclusive as we expand and mould our programs to meet the needs of all newcomers to the community. Given the incredible amount





already accomplished in a relatively short time, I am excited about the scope of what can be achieved during the years to come.

 **Deborah Robertson**





A Message from the HOST Program

“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” Albert Pike

This program recruits, screens and trains volunteers from the community to serve as friends/mentors/ tutors to our newcomers, helping them to adjust to life in a new country and become participating members of Canadian society as early as possible. Through the interactions of our staff, clients, volunteers and other community members Host aids in building a welcoming and inclusive community.

The Host program was modeled after very successful community-led programs designed to help refugees from Vietnam during the late 1970s. Based on the success of these programs Citizenship and Immigration Canada introduced the Host program in 1985.

For the year 2009, the first full year of operation, our Host program had 31 active matches of clients and volunteers, 46 group activities and 14 training sessions, representing increases of 107%, 40% and 180% over the previous year's figures. Program promotions and number of volunteers remain fairly consistent with last year's statistics. Most of the matches have progressed into great friendships as both our newcomer clients and our volunteers truly enjoy each other's company.

Our Host program has been very vibrant with activity for this past year. We started out the year with a “Fun in the snow” afternoon where we introduced our newcomers to sledding, snowshoeing, tobogganing and cross-country skiing. Our volunteers were amazing in their efforts to gather equipment and their patience in teaching much needed skills.

On an ongoing basis we have two English Conversation Circles per month, where clients and volunteers meet in a friendly informal atmosphere to practice English conversation and share cultural experiences. On any one night we usually have between 20 to 30 people engaged in small group conversation so deep that it is with a heavy heart we break them up at the end of the night. Most of these sessions are held in the North Bay Public Library auditorium. Both





our clients and volunteers look forward to coming out and meeting their friends and some lasting friendships are in the making.

Another ongoing activity is a monthly women's potluck brunch, where we meet on a Saturday morning for two hours and share food from different countries. This has been quite successful and may soon lead into a cooking club as the need to learn to cook these exciting dishes is becoming greater.

During the summer months we responded to an urgent need from clients to provide English as a Second Language and our volunteers selflessly gave of their time and knowledge for two months of ESL classes at the centre when the class at Chippewa Secondary School closed for the summer. We also hosted an end of summer beach picnic that drew 42 clients and volunteers for an enjoyable afternoon at Birchaven Cove.

In December we celebrated our volunteers with a volunteer appreciation evening attended by both clients and volunteers. It was a memorable evening for all. We have approximately 30 active volunteers who serve in various categories such as Host, English Conversation Facilitators, English tutors or general helpers. We presented them with certificates of appreciation and a small token. We also hosted a wonderful Christmas brunch complete with Santa and presents for all.

All in all 2009 was a very successful year for the Host program and we look forward to a fun and fabulous 2010.

 **Vindra Sahadeo**





A Message from the ISAP Settlement Counsellor

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.” Maria Robinson

The North Bay & District Multicultural Centre experienced another year of growth and diversification of services. With the economic recession, ISAP is valuable to our community, city and country. We faced challenges and some disappointments. We are satisfied with our accomplishments and take pride in calling year 2009 a successful year. Citizenship classes, job search workshop and ESL night class were our big undertakings.

The challenges faced by newcomers have started to shift with the economic downturn, and our services are responding to ensure the successful settlement of newcomers as they search for employment and a new place to call home. These are the first stepping stones to achieving their personal and career goals in Canada, and we believe in working together with newcomers to lay this foundation for a successful future. Through the diverse range of services offered through ISAP, the agency is well positioned to offer support in all areas of settlement as well as referrals.

As the targeted level of immigration to Canada is met annually, and as we see an increase of newcomers to our region, ISAP will continue to evolve to help meet the needs of those settling in North Bay and area. The successful transitions that we have made over the last year show that we have the capacity to continue to meet new challenges. We envision a North Bay that works together to build our economy stronger than ever before. Our services are helping make this a reality for newcomers and their families who are committed to becoming beneficiaries and contributors in Canadian society.

ISAP is vital in the lives of our clients. We served a client who has been in Canada for several years prior to getting involved with our services. When we met her, she was unemployed and homeless. She now has her own place to live, a job, and the capacity to significantly improve the quality of her life.

As we face the future with confidence, we will continue to create positive changes in the lives of newcomers.

 **Taslima Ahmed**





A Message from the North Bay Newcomer Network (NNN) LIP Project Officer

“Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.” Mattie Stepanek, Author and Poet

I began my work effective September 1, 2009 with the North Bay Newcomer Network as the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Project Officer. This staff position has enabled NNN to move another step closer to achieving its mandate of attracting and retaining new immigrants to the area.

Since coming on board I have met with a wide range of service providers related to skill development and job readiness for newcomers in our community, worked on adapting an Employers' Guide for hiring newcomers in the North Bay area and met with two established immigrant employment groups. The Toronto Regional Immigration Employment Council (TRIEC) and the Waterloo Regional Immigrant Employer Network (WRIEN) have been very helpful and will serve well as models for the development of our own Employers Council.

A new initiative, the North Bay Connector Program, has been established in partnership with the North Bay-Nipissing Rotary Club. This program focuses on helping newcomers build their professional networks through a simple but effective referral process. Through ongoing referrals with local people in their field of expertise the newcomer experiences quicker integration and introduction into the professional community. This results in stronger use of our newcomers' skills and encourages permanent settlement in our community.

Over the coming months, through the LIP project, NNN will seek input and feedback from multiple stakeholders to develop a coordinated, comprehensive and strategic approach to immigration and integration that fits the needs of our local community. Ultimately, the LIP implementation plan will expand upon our current broad-based coordinating mechanism for settlement and integration to result in:

-  Improved access to and coordination of immigrant integration services (settlement, language training, labour market integration).
-  Improved labour market outcomes for immigrants. This may include initiatives such as engagement of local employers, mentorship initiatives, coordination of local employment services and non-paid internships.





 Strengthened local awareness and capacity to successfully integrate immigrants.

As we embark upon a new decade there is work to be done to ensure that North Bay continues to lead the way in attraction and retention of new immigrants to the North. It is this leadership that will ensure that North Bay remains a strong community that is economically viable and rich in diversity.

 **L-J Côté**





The Year in Review—2009

Strategic Planning

We held a facilitated strategic planning retreat in February that examined our organization and what it may look like in 1,000 days. We are well on our way working through the 15 identified strategic priorities. Board members, staff, clients, volunteers and a North Bay Newcomer Network executive colleague participated in the day-long event.

Anti-Racism Lending Library

Our anti-racism lending library became operational in 2009. Check our website for a list of resources by grade level. This service is free to all teachers and organizations in Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts. Funding was from Ontario's Community Builders program, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. English and French resources were selected by a panel including representation from all four district school boards.

Brochure and Transit Signs

The second part of our 2009 Community Builders grant enabled us to produce a colour brochure in both official languages and purchase exterior and interior advertising panels on North Bay city buses. Look for our colourful signs when you see a bus go by.

Second Floor Expansion

We grew again in 2009, this time to the second floor at our 374 Fraser Street location. We now have a very bright location for meetings and office space for our growing contract staff. Thanks to board chair Susan Church and NECO's Pat Aspin for the board room furniture!

Immigration Portal

Our staff and clients were active participants in the formation of the North Bay Immigration Portal, led by the City of North Bay. We are looking forward to the launch January 11 at a North Bay Newcomer Network event and our role





maintaining the huge site. After January 11 you can check it out at www.northbayimmigration.com.

Host Program Events

English Conversation Circles, women's brunches, picnics and special events were all part of our Host program in 2009. At any given time we have 25 to 30 active volunteers either matched with a newcomer as a mentor or involved in leading Host activities. A Volunteer Appreciation event was held in December at the North Bay Public Library. Demand for ESL classes didn't go away when the Chippewa Secondary class stopped for the summer months, so the Host program ran its own classes at the centre using volunteer teachers.

Citizenship Classes

Our ISAP program had its first series of Canadian citizenship classes in 2009 and its first employment workshops. Both proved popular and will become part of our regular programming. Client numbers were up in 2009 over 2008 and we expect further increases in 2010 with the launch of the city's immigration portal in January.

North Bay Newcomer Network

We continue to be active as a leader in the North Bay Newcomer Network, a group of 28 organizations in the city working together to attract and retain newcomers. Active committees during the year worked on settlement services, creating a welcoming community, and employment issues. We employed our first staff member, Laura-Jane Coté, in September when a Local Immigration Partnership project was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. A strategic planning event for the 28-member organization is scheduled January 11.

Settlement North

We are also active in a pan-Northern Ontario organization, Settlement North. This group involves settlement agencies and municipal representatives from North Bay, Timmins, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and Kenora. We





meet three times a year to work on newcomer attraction and retention issues common to Northern Ontario.

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Another organization we are involved with is the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. Two of our staff members served on OCASI committees in 2009. One was to

develop an organizational standards web-based tool and the other was the advisory committee for the settlement portal, www.settlement.org. OCASI organizes an annual Executive Directors Forum and a professional development conference for staff.

International Food Festival

We enjoyed assisting Nipissing University with the organization of its annual International Food Festival in February, and look forward to the 2010 event February 6. All proceeds go to support refugee students at the university.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

We were the lead organizer for the 21st annual International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination March 25 at Ecole secondaire catholique Algonquin. It was very well attended and we look forward to the 2010 event March 24 at Ecole secondaire publique Odyssee. We rotate the event through the four district school boards and Nipissing University has expressed interest in hosting the 2011 event.

Canadore Student Placements

We were pleased to have two students from Canadore College's Social Service Worker program complete work placements with us. We hosted one first-year student and one second year and enjoyed their productivity with us.





North Bay in Immigration Demonstration Project

North Bay was named as one of three cities in the provincial government's CIRRO project (Community Immigration Retention in Rural Ontario) along with Brockville and Chatham-Kent. Sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the project has an Ontario Public Service intern, André Dukhia, working from our offices from January through June 2010.

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Interns

We received funding from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation for two interns, Cindy Collins and Aaron Fallon, who started with us January 4 on 12-month contracts. Both are bilingual graduates of St. Joseph-Scollard Hall and Nipissing University.

Nugget Articles

To date we have had nine staff-written articles on local immigrants published in the North Bay Nugget. The articles put a face and story to individual newcomers and help counteract stereotypes and misinformation. We thank Nugget staff members Steve Hardy, Jim Hutchison and Maria Calabrese for their support.

Canada Day

A Canada Day storm wiped out our waterfront multicultural celebration and international soccer game this year but we're hoping for better weather July 1, 2010. They are North Bay Newcomer Network events that we help organize.

Immigrant Employers' Council

Four members of the North Bay Newcomer Network, including two of our staff, attended the ALLIES conference in Vancouver in June. It spread the word about existing immigrant employer councils across Canada and stirred us to investigate launching one in North Bay.





ESL Registration Way Up

Due largely to our registration efforts the number of students in the English as a Second Language class at Chippewa Secondary School increased substantially this year to more than 30. Demand was so high a night course was added, with 21 students. We will be pushing for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) funding support in 2010 to augment the ESL class and bring more formalized English classes to the city.

Nonprofit of the Year Nomination

We were very pleased to be nominated as Nonprofit Organization of the Year through the North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce. We didn't win, but being on the shortlist and having a video on our agency shown at the awards dinner was an honour.

Olympic Torch Relay

We were part of the organizing committee for the hugely successful Olympic Torch Relay that came to North Bay December 30 and stayed overnight for a terrific outdoor celebration at Discovery North Bay Museum. It was great to see the thousands of people lining the streets in North Bay to see the torch go by and viewing the cauldron being lit during the two-hour celebration.

Charitable Status

We received confirmation from Revenue Canada in December that we now have charitable status. This enables us to issue tax receipts for donations and apply for funding designated only for charitable organizations.

