

The Worker Bs Project

of the
Caribbean Women Network



A 2020 REPORT that tells the story (in words and pictures) of a small group of spirited newcomer women who are doing what it takes to find jobs in Alberta.

“ Its about the chance- giving women a chance to experience new life and hope” I feel the project has illumined this for me”

*Pearl Bennett,
Executive Director, CWN*

In the photo, Ruba seemed joyous at experiencing this chance at her job placement and she signals her hope: “My challenge was using the computer, especially at my work placement because we need to use it to record which children are absent at the daycare. I think I need to take a course on it.” Ruba

Project funded by:

Status of Women



With contributions to CWN from
Operating Grants via the

Community Initiatives
Program



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At COSI (Coalition for Social Inclusion) meetings chaired by Dr. Chiu, she has often described CWN's work in much the same way she speaks of it below. We thank Yvonne Chiu for her support of the project from its inception, and she send us this insightful message as we produce this report:



“ Caribbean Women Network’s approach to supporting racialized minority women’s economic and social integration is thoughtfully done through the building of the missing social capital of bonding, bridging and linking. It is a form of evidence

based practice that often is overlooked by other practitioners committed to social equity and gender equality. As the women come together, they create bonds of safety, mutual learning and a sense of belonging. As they start to volunteer in more mainstream or formal organizations, they develop “bridging” relationships whereby they learn across formal “cultural” divides and become more literate about work place culture in Canada. By sharing the learning from this program with Status of Women, CWN and the women are creating “links”, whereby the lived realities of these women are informing government bodies who have policy mandates...”

Dr. Yvonne Chiu
Executive Director,
Multicultural Health Brokers

“Yvonne Chiu has spent the last decade on the unique struggles & aspirations of immigrant & refugee families in Edmonton, “ (Taken from her

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Why We did Worker Bs - A Foreword

Worker B's Project was a small-scale project in response to the many reported barriers to employment that immigrant and refugee women face when they arrive in their new country. At CWN, we felt that with financial supports and collaborative efforts, the organization had what it

would take to carry out a project that would help women build better lives for themselves, strengthen CWN's capabilities, and contribute in a small way to societal change in Alberta.

It was felt CWN could offer to newcomer refugee and immigrant women a new source of supports where they would feel less socially isolated, while giving them information and helping to build their workplace skills through "mentoring/training" opportunities. The aims were to get the women participants to **begin** their work lives, get motivated to **become** more self-sufficient, and feel a better sense of **belong**(ing) to their new home.

A proposal was submitted to **Alberta Status of Women** in 2018 and in February of 2019, CWN was asked to contract with the Department to carry out **Worker Bs**. What follows on the next pages is the story of what CWN did and how we did it *in words and pictures* as they say. We feature a few of the women's stories, wishing we could show them all, but printing costs prohibit us from doing so. We want to end this foreword by saying this:

"...*Giving women a chance to experience new life and hope of earning a livelihood. I feel the project has illumined this for me*" **Pearl Bennett**, CWN's E.D. said in a briefing to the Board. "It has provided avenues for change within them [the women]." **The women's own voices** give evidence of such changes, and the report gives prominence to their voices. We add that we cherish the unique relationships we built with each participant. They have given us more confidence and a greater appreciation of our approaches-based on building human relationships- as a compelling means of creating change in individuals, the organization and the world around us. And the women were ever so grateful for approaches taken. In her graduation speech, **Sherifah** told us just how appreciative:

We thank you, Sherifah!

*The letter B in the project's name refer to the aims for the project's target group - immigrant and refugee women under 50
"begin, become, and belong."*

*... it [the project] has also assisted us to bond with our sisters from other countries.....We were strangers, this platform connected us and we have built a strong relationship. Together we are growing!..... To the members of CWN, we appreciate this opportunity We say thank you...as we **B**egin work life, **B**elong to this community and **B**ecome an employee in Edmonton*

Inviting Women to Join

The desire to grow and begin the journey to employment and self-sufficiency brought applicants to us. And CWN's desire to support them brought the project to life



Important Step: developing a shared understanding of the participatory nature of **Worker Bs**.

A total of **19** women completed the **Worker Bs**, as sadly, one dropped out due to family issues, and things were too far along for a replacement.

They came from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds from 8 different countries around the world.

Their ages ranged from 21 – 43 years with differing education and English proficiencies-low, moderate, high. **They were newly married with no children; new mothers; or new grandmothers.**



A few of the women from Syria, Mexico and India at a graduation photo with staff, friends and board members - happy to have in hand Certificates showing program completion and hours of much needed Canadian experience.

Reducing Barriers

Transportation, child care, lack of money, low English skills, biases against newcomers' dress, at home cultures, accents, race, gender, recently arrived status, the list goes on of what can act as deterrents to immigrant and refugee women finding jobs and delaying their integration into society. The snippet of **Basma's Story** below illustrates how Worker Bs eased hurdles Basma faced in her efforts for a successful life here in Alberta.

Basma's Story: *Driving to Succeed*

When Basma, heard about Worker Bs, she wanted to join but she wasn't sure she should make the decision on her own. The E.D. met with the family at their home to talk about the project. Together, she and her husband decided that Basma would sign up. Support from Ahmad was important for Basma's success.

Transportation and time Basma could spend at the Program were resolved with rides for her, always ensuring she was back home for after-school care of the three children. Basma loved learning everything- from the workshop discussions with the other women to learning to take the bus to Bredin with Cindy (another participant). One day, she gleefully said to the E.D. *"I feel important dressing up and taking the bus downtown."* Basma seemed to be savouring the taste of the bigger world of work and commerce in the city. Asked about benefits of the program Basma answered: *For me, when I stayed at home, I felt depressed, but now I feel positive.* Basma shared her plans for her earned stipend –spending on a few family things, and using it for her Driver's Education Course.

"I now have Class 5 License!" was her proud posting in a text recently-
A practical symbol of her drive to succeed.

While doing her work placement at CWN, Basma organized a segment for the **Health and Happiness Program** – a *Cooking and Culture* Demo. She called it *The Alhafla Party*. With assistance from staff she learnt how to carry out work tasks: *"I learnt to set-up for activities, how to greet people, and how to manage files. Now,for my work placement I learnt how to share the event and what types of activities to put in an event."* This project, she said also: *"helped [me] to improve my English and helped me have the confidence to speak..."*

Photo at right: Basma about to show and tell how to make *Fatoush Salad* using her improved English speaking skills.



Above: Basma begins her demo on "How to tie a Hijab" part of AlHafla.



Sharing knowledge, Learning Together

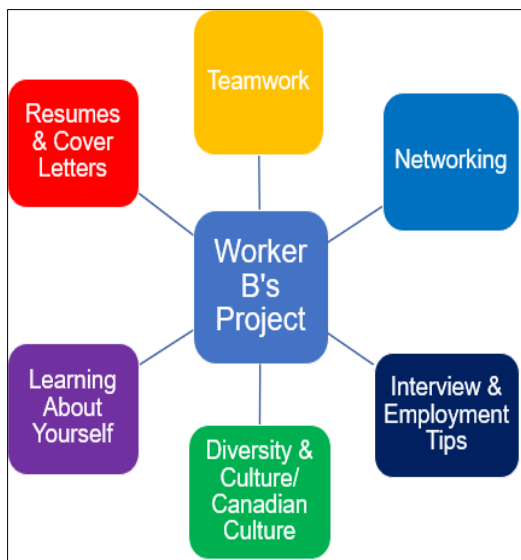
Once a week, for three months, the women came - they took trains, busses, walked, rode bikes, and drove to get to CWN's almost hide-away location. They spent 3-4 hours each time in workshops designed to have them share what they knew and also learn new things together. The workshops offered time and guidance for reflecting on their own interests and talents, their values, and the networks they already have. In the process, the women learned new words, gained better awareness of who they are, knowledge of social problems, and their own personal challenges. Many of them could identify actions to take them forward.



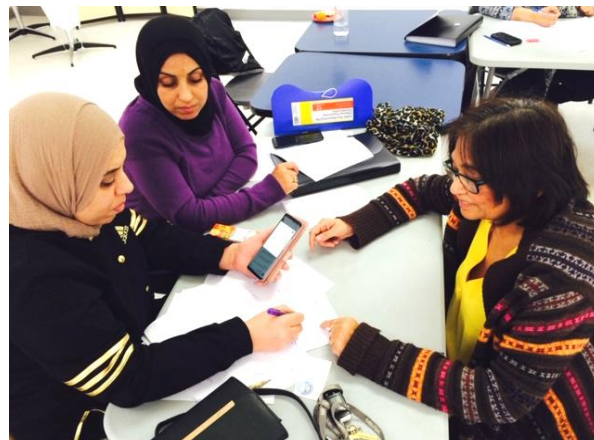
"I found that the workshops different because I have taken so many workshops, but these ones opened so many opportunities to me. I gained information and contacts through talking to so many people, which is really good. So, I suggest to ladies I meet to take workshops." –Ana

Photo: *Dos mujeres* , Cindy and Ana make a list of family, *amigas/os* , neighbours, *y otros/as* for their job search

Each theme (see below) took 2 sessions to cover. Facilitation and one-on-one assistance were done by project staff, participants themselves, as well as invited guests. Interpreters from partnering agencies and volunteers helped to reduce barriers to understanding. The tone, coaching style, the light teasing, eating together; closed any distance they may have felt at the start between "us" and "them". Participants soon felt "at home" - in CWN's kitchenette for example. An atmosphere of sharing and learning infused **Worker Bs**.



"One thing I remember very well is the day we reviewed resumes and many of our resumes were not in order. We learned that we don't have to explain our whole lives on our resumes" - Irene



Fadwa gets tips on writing her first resume- *"let's make it lean"* (like Cindy) we joked, while Ruba translates.

Minding the Gap : Sherifah Oke-Buhari:

Sherifah came to Edmonton, Alberta in 2019 with her young family from Nigeria. Sherifah is filled with the smarts (had a Masters Degree and a budding career in Nigeria), and although, perhaps unaware of that UK subway mantra “Mind the Gap”, she set about doing just that! The story of Sherifah’s short time in Edmonton thus far, is one of volunteering, doing “training” courses and seminars, all intent on filling her void of knowledge about finding a job in her new home. She has been energetic and she has persevered in the face of the **“persistent gap”** researchers have identified between very recent, recent, recent, and established female immigrants and Canadian-born females. So opportunities to gain Canadian work experience eluded her. Thanks to EISA, she found her way to **Worker Bs** doors. She was truly grateful to get into the program, and for the stipends, *“it has been a financial support to us [she and her family], because the \$300 dollars [per month] matters to us.”* Sherifah was happy for a chance to deliver a segment of a **Worker Bs** workshop. She excelled at the task. In her graduation talk, she said this: *“For me CWN was the last place in my search for a job readiness program and it turned out to be the best place....I have been to several settlement agencies in Edmonton but CWN gave me a holistic approach in putting my foot in the door for employment.”* Sherifah’s voice (we can hear her) is a source of inspiration for us.



Sherifah busy processing paperwork at her C5 Hub Work Placement

For Sherifah and others, the project was also a place to meet new people and nurture friendships. At CWN we place emphasis on relationship building as a practice for creating happy moments, for diversity building and generating change in the community. **Worker Bs** helped to enhance CWN’s approaches.



As it is said, change starts at home. **Kamaljeet** extended her learning to her family:

“This project is very helpful to get a job and learn about different culture, like I am sitting with a woman from a different culture... Previous, I was not confident in meeting people, but now I feel confident and I tell my husband, when my daughter growing up, I will tell her to be confident.” **Kamaljeet**

*Connecting and learning in
different ways*

“We did workshop written exercises and they were able to expand our knowledge and practice our situational responses.” – Ana

Two sisters, Alia and Tahmina tackle their written tasks



“The workshops helped me improve my English and get a work placement in childcare.” - Ruba

Participants joined in CWN’s **MARTINI** (Making and Remaking Things that Inspire the Imagination) Program.

Here Mahlet, Ruftana, Kamaljeet and Nataliia bond as they share ideas and prepare an old table for an up-cycling activity.



Helping themselves while helping others



The volunteering component of **Worker Bs** was a smaller but important piece to help foster a sense of **belonging** to our city. Albertans are big on volunteering so it is a key learning for newcomers. It also helps them make friends, build networks, and find out about resources. Through volunteering, participants gained experience and felt a sense of giving back to the community. Tasked with finding their own opportunities to help out, the women were able to develop personal connections to the community and found joy and meaning in their volunteer work. Several of the women even went above and beyond the 20 hours required of them.

Left: Fadwa's volunteers and learns much at the IFSSA 's (Islamic Family and Social Services Association) Food Bank.

"I helped others in my work at the food bank. I also met new people, and learnt how to stock shelves, create food packages, and what kind of food can be donated to a food bank." **Fadwa**

Nataliia's Story of Giving and Receiving

Two years ago, Nataliia moved to Edmonton from the Ukraine with a new husband and a blending family circumstance. Struggling with English and feeling disconnected, Nataliia was becoming disheartened at finding a job, and settling into her new home. She learnt about Worker Bs from the Londonderry Library, and once she was accepted, Natalia worked hard through the Program. While volunteering and doing her work placement at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex, Nataliia met and interacted with many people from the area. "***I became a brave woman***", she said. She got a job reference which led to a job at the St. Michael's Long Term Care Centre. Natalia was **one of seven** people who got jobs at the end of **Worker Bs** – **a 37% job success record!**

"...now I have a job, I can help my husband. My work placement got me a job and I feel connected." – Nataliia

Worker Bs and finding a job have improved Nataliia's outlook. She has been so grateful- she reciprocated with a \$50.00 donation to CWN, and volunteered for the organization's Casino on one of January 2020's coldest nights. She also joined in the **Tea & Chat** sessions to keep in touch with participants while embroidering tea towels for use as gifts. We thank Nataliia. CWN is delighted to have been able to support her during her settlement journey.



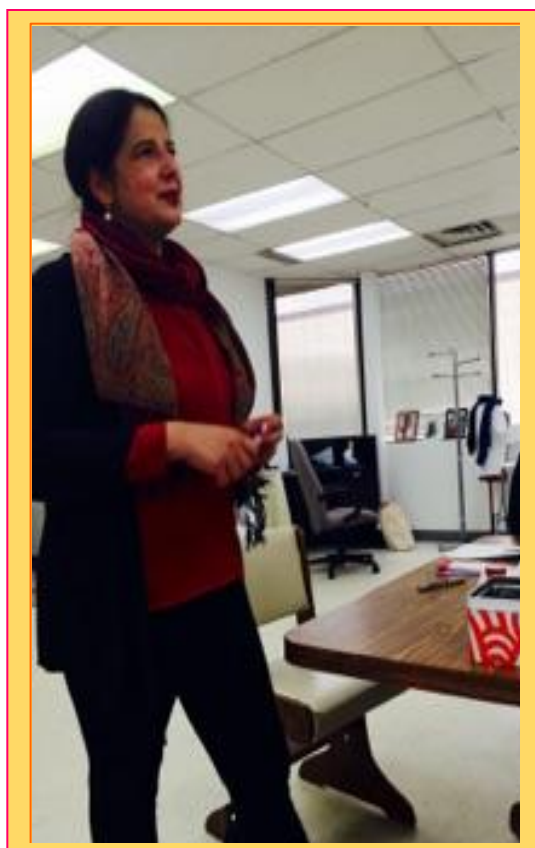
Above: Nataliia smiles as she and a co-worker cater Ukrainian dishes in the community where she lives.

Partnering for Community Good

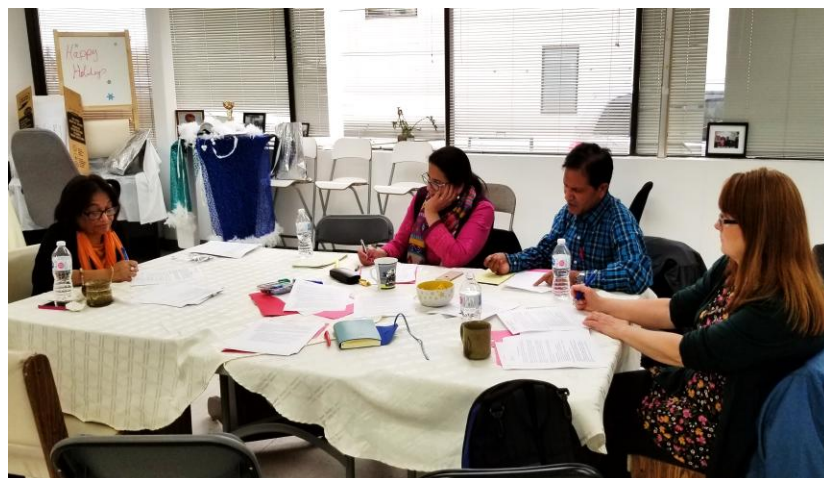
CWN could not have done it without the agencies and businesses joining in to support the project. (The names of all our partners and associates are listed on page 19). A small Project Advisory Committee reviewed plans; shared their knowledge; made participant referrals; and took work placements. Their help enabled CWN to carry out the project as planned and within the time frame to get it done. In this way, CWN as a smaller local women's

organization, gained competencies in forming collaborations, and in the area of work with immigrant and refugee women. It can now be helpful to its partners and other influential organizations about things learnt; and so contribute to other projects that can improve the quality of life for women in this sector.

In the photo below, **Raminder**, was a guest facilitator. But she was more than that- she was an eager and passionate link for the project. She was a source of referrals and spoke of the things she noticed in her clients: ***"I could see how the project improved my clients' attitudes and helped them to settle down faster than other ones who did not avail of this great opportunity."*** When she spoke to the participants, she used her own immigrant



Below: Pearl (CWN), Raminder (CSS), Shambu (MWSA), and Della (P.A.L.S.) discuss briefing notes and new ideas at a committee meeting.

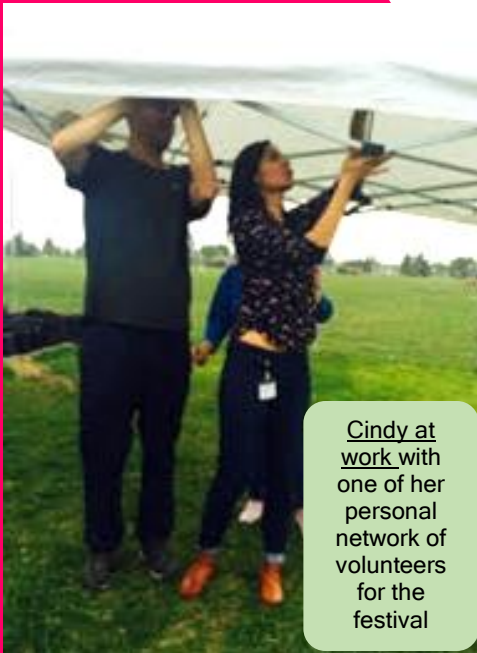


experience, as an example for the women - how she started by taking small jobs, and volunteering. She advised them on how important it is to get the support of their families while on this journey. **As a Settlement Counsellor with Catholic Social Services**, Raminder said she ***"was very impressed"*** with the project, as she thought it ***"a definite ego booster and confidence builder for women"***. Upon searching through e-mails and meeting notes we found a few other gems she imparted to us:

"For immigrant women, the small group sessions in Worker Bs provide a learning and supportive place and brought a feeling of belongingness that is hard to find....." and at a graduation –

"Supporting this project has been a gift to me. I am waiting for the next batch to begin and already have clients in my mind to refer. It is rewarding to see my clients getting mentored so well by you."

Thanks Pearl and Worker Bs for the support I feel personally and professionally."



Cindy at work with one of her personal network of volunteers for the festival

Help and appreciation from a City Councillor:

Pearl, *It was a delight to work with Cindy. I wrote her a letter of reference. If there is anything else that I can do, please let me know..... I would be happy to have other interns in the future”*

Jon

Cindy had the opportunity to work with **City Councillor Jon Dziadyk**. He put her to work organizing a soccer festival in the Castledowns district of his City Ward. Cindy described her placement like this

“I learnt a lot of things, I never learnt how to coordinate an event, and during my work placement had to coordinate people. I took it from one step to the next, I made a schedule and I thought very hard about the process and what to do. I was passing on information to different people, it was difficult, but now I can manage information and communicate instructions clearly. I really utilized my network and also networked during my placement.”

Definitely great skills for Cindy’s future!

“I was kind of scared to do a women’s circle (for holistic health) in English during my volunteering, but it was good. If I didn’t participate in this program then I wouldn’t have pushed myself to do more out of my comfort zone.”- Irene

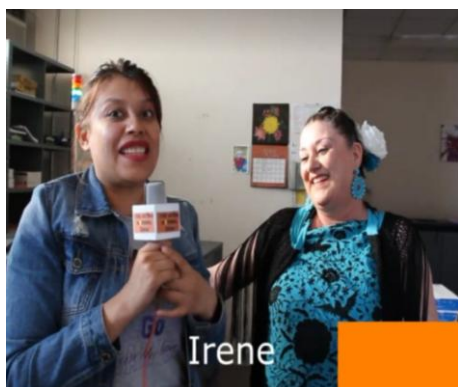
Irene Garcia: Pushing Herself

Irene (a newcomer from Mexico) holds a Degree in **Mass Communications**, but her *soulful calling* is Yoga and other holistic therapies. Irene engaged us in some stimulating yoga stretches during breaks. Irene connected with a women’s circle for volunteering, and with the **Latino Morning Show** for her Work Placement.

“I learnt to just do it and not to be too conscious of my accent. I learnt to be more confident, especially in my various language skills (English, Spanish, and French). I learnt just to do it [interview Eskimos’ Head Coach] and not question self or be afraid.”



Irene with a Mexican player at Commonwealth



Left: Irene interviews a Spanish Guitarist – the Latino Morning Show

Participants total got the essence of volunteering and works placements, for they told us”

“as a community member I was also able to stat helping others and they were also able to help me”

“ We [the participants] are supporting the community and community building through participating in their programs and receiving their support/supporting them”

Community Connections Shaping Lives



Above: **Alia** learning about beauty products at **Kuki Beauty Parlor** which later hired her !



Above: **Ahleli's** work at **Adaptabilities**, led her to a receptionist job in Leduc.

1,140 Hours

Gaining strengths, skills, and knowledge in the fields of:

- Event Planning**
- Beauty**
- Disabilities**
- Language Interpretation**
- Adult Literacy**
- Child Care**
- Multicultural & Immigrant Services**
- Seniors**
- Reception**
- Community Development**
- Accounting**
- Food Services**
- Social Services**
- Radio & TV**



Ruftana gets acquainted with **P.A.L.S** Volunteer programs



Above: **Ramandeep** on her computer at **Whitehall DayCare** where she got hired!



Above: **Kamaljeet** increases her knowledge about Seniors at **Mill Woods Seniors Centre**



Above :**Carmen** organizes documents for filing at **Multicultural Health Brokers** .



Amandeep calculates the numbers using her high level accounting knowledge at **Harpreet Sandu Professional**

Supporting Each Other & Building Relationships

Practicing Teamwork

Learning to work together to accomplish a goal is crucial to success in the workplace and in the community. As a skill it is better learnt through experience. After a mini workshop on Team Building, our Worker Bs got to planning and organizing their special projects - two up-cycling activities *creating a rug out of scraps of old saris and chunnis, and re-painting old tables*. *Fostering camaraderie through the group projects was an approach taken to help them get to know, trust and support each other.*



“People need support and you do not know where to go, that is the first point and then you meet these women-friendships-when you stay at home you are isolated-social connections-support groups”

Participant

Above Across: Participants measure and cut strips collaboratively

Below: Worker Bs practice teamwork and forge new bonds while they talk and laugh together creating something new

The evaluation show *100% of those surveyed either “agreed” or “strongly agreed”* that the activities helped them learn how to work successfully with others and helped them build good relationships with each other.



Sukhpreet's Story of her Joy Encouraging Others

When we met Sukhpreet, she had just moved to Edmonton after a few years in Toronto. Originally from India she was looking for a new start (again) as she was now a single mother surviving personal trauma. Sukhpreet's experiences moved us. When arrangements we had made with a child care service fell through (Sukhpreet had said she would like to open a child-care business) she decided she would like to do her work placement at CWN. Having observed her caring nature and empathetic listening, a job was crafted for Sukhpreet, to include peer supports through language interpretation (for Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi speakers at the workshops; informal texting and telephone communiqués to the same women; and assisting with activities. Sukhpreet's outgoing nature and her infectious smiles captivated everyone. Her help with interpretation and other things was an asset to us and this along with the relationships she nurtured, improved Sukhpreet's mental and physical well-being dramatically. She would wear make-up and come nicely dressed to CWN. She donated her delicious home-made Indian sweets to us. Even after her placement ended, Sukhpreet volunteered at CWN's Casino, and helped out with the embroidery *Tea and Chat* sessions. Motivated by her desire to open a daycare centre, Sukhpreet is doing courses towards that.



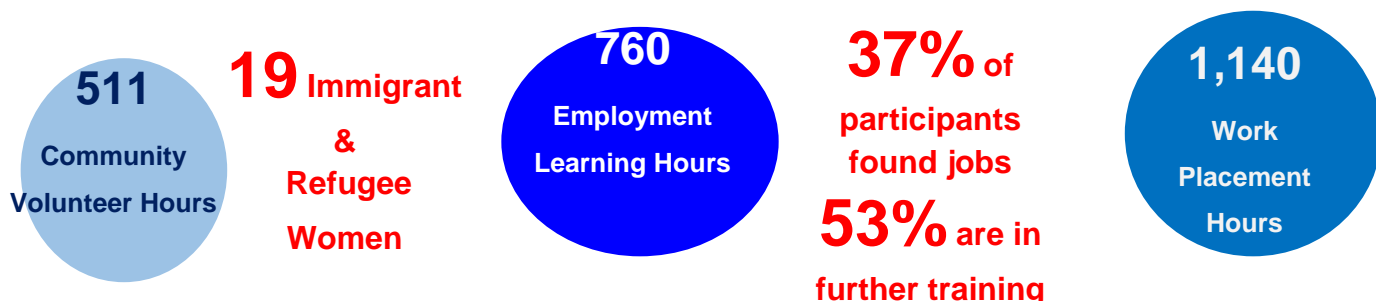
“Because of the project my self-confidence built-up, and I reached out to more people...I like coming here [CWN] because everyone is nice and helping people makes me feel happy and I feel better myself.” –

Sukhpreet

Photo: Sukhpreet with Nataliia (in yellow) Antoinette, Raminder and Project Assistant Laura Zhu.

The tea towels were hand-embroidered during the Tea and Chat Sessions

A bit of the numbers story and some thoughts



19 out of 20 Worker Bs participants completed **2400 +total project hours**. Close to 50% of those hours accounted for **\$17,100.00** of earned stipends by the women, while the partnering agencies and the community at large benefitted from **1,651 ‘work’ and ‘volunteer’ hours**. It is interesting to note there was **30% more** volunteerism than was planned for the project. We could go on analysing the numbers, but it is not the focus of this report. What we do want to note is that the investment of time and money in Worker Bs has resulted in easing the financial pain for immigrant and refugee women and their families—for some short term, and for others for a longer term because **37% of them found jobs**.

We know that **Worker Bs** was a smaller-scale short-term project; that to assess long-term effectiveness, a program like this should stretch over a longer period. However, the results are worth noting not just from a “money well-spent” standpoint, but from the changes in the lives of the women themselves, of which they spoke over and over. One can’t help but take them to heart. They surely do present a case for the continuation of a program like this at the agency – small though it may be.

Even the CWN’s small Centre itself seemed to have also contributed to the successful interactions among participants; for peer teaching/learning; and to a feeling of safety.

“I think finding a place where we can receive support is important and we can share that with others and become friends with each other. This is a safe environment to share and become part of the community.” - Irene

Every second or third workshop session, we would have an inspirational quote and we’d chat about it’s meaning together. One such was this from Mother Teresa:

“None of us including me, can do great things. But we can do small things together with great love and together we can do something wonderful.”

For the financial help for the women and for the social impacts as shown through the images and the stories in this report, we say *thank you* to the Project Funder:

Status of Women



/Special credit is due to staff at the Department with whom we worked- **Sharon Wadi, Michaela Biley, and Jasleen Sekhon** - first, for not rejecting CWN's bid for Worker Bs, and for advancing the promise it held. We thank you for understanding we couldn't have all the partners in place upfront, that some would have to come in as the project progressed. Your support and encouragement has boosted CWN's confidence as much as the project has for the women, and we feel an incredible sense of pride in Worker Bs. *Again, we thank you.*

We also thank others who encourage us:

"I have seen the programs for immigrant women administered by the Caribbean Women's group and as the current co-chair of EndPovertyEdmonton's task to end poverty in Edmonton am well aware of the barriers and challenges immigrants—particularly immigrant women face. I was impressed from the beginning sessions to the end - the growth in language skills; adaptation to an employment situation and self-confidence. I realized that the work of the Caribbean Women's Group was successful for each and every woman who participated.

In my earlier career with the Provincial Government was manager of Settlement Programs in Alberta and among the first to recognize the importance of funding programs for immigrant women as a key to successful family adjustment in Canada and a chief means for the immigrant family to avoid poverty. "

Michael Phair
Co-chair, EndPovertyEdmonton

Michael Phair is also a former Edmonton City Councillor, and past Chair, U of A Board of Governors.



And:



“It was a pleasure of attending the Worker Bs Project graduation ceremony, which was a truly joyous event, filled with smiles, laughter, hugs and applause.

The wonderful thing about this event was that the graduates were celebrating not only their own accomplishments, but those of the other women in the program, with whom they had established strong bonds of friendship. They went from being isolated in their homes to having friends, working and being active volunteers in their communities. They spoke with such honesty and passion about how much the program meant to them, and the changes it had made in their lives. It was clear their self-confidence and pride in their performance have really grown. All in all, it was a very moving event.

I am particularly impressed that the program combines paid work and volunteer work, since good citizenship involves not only providing for oneself, but reaching out and looking after the needs of the broader community. I am also bowled over by the statistic that 7 out of the 19 women in the program secured employment, which I think is a pretty solid result. Kudos to CWN. I think the success of the program can be partially attributed to the fact that it is small, and the women received a lot of personal one-on-one attention from CWN Executive Director Pearl Bennett.”

Wendy Koenig

Wendy Koenig is a former award-winning investigative journalist with the Edmonton Journal during which period she uncovered many injustices in the social services sector. She also worked with the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Our youngest participant-21-year old Sahiba (in red) was equally as moving at the Graduation:

“I gained so many experience during this program. If I didn't join this program it would have taken me one year to gain this amount of experience.”



And some other words of thanks to:

The very special women – Bravo! Needless to say Worker Bs would not be without you! In much the same way you have been motivated we too have been encouraged by your words and your voices.

Thank you

Ana, Cindy, Sherifah, Irene, Nataliia, Sahiba, Alia, Sukhpreet, Ramandeep, Basma, Ruba, Fadwa, Sarbjeet, Amandeep, Alheli, Kamaljeet, Carmen, Ruftana, & Mahlet.

Our partners and

associates – *Mill Woods Seniors;*

Catholic Social Services; Project Adult

Literacy; Multicultural Health Brokers;

Edmonton Immigrant Services

Association; Adaptabilities; EMCN and

partners at C5Hub; Harpreet Sandu

Professional; Whitehall Day Care;

Seed Experience Daycare; Islamic

Family and Social Services –Food

Bank; Ukrainian Youth Complex; Kuki

Beauty Services; Councillor Jon

Dziadyk; The Latino Morning Show;

and Days Inn. You provided

opportunity, supervision and moral

supports to the workers. We mention

Raminder, Shambhu, Yvonne, and Della,

for the phone conversations; email &

meeting discussions; keeping up with

minutes; & all the practical help you

gave us.

We acknowledge that funds received from the **CIP Operating Grant, Gov't of AB. & the City of Edmonton CIOG** were also used to support this project. CWN depends on operating grants to pay for staffing to help carry on its day to day business. Suffice it to say that without this support, Worker Bs would likely have not been given the green light.

Project Staff

For CWN staff, it has been a privilege. During the graduation ceremonies, we heard what our support meant to the participants in this period of their growth. Pearl has been mentioned a few times in this report, but we must not overlook the assistance provided by **Laura Zhu**. When the first person hired for the position did not work out, Laura came in, learnt quickly and committed to seeing the project through with CWN. She helped one-on-one as in the photo, maintained files; and other documentation –photos, notes, etc., made follow-up calls; organized the embroidery sessions; helped the women organize their portfolios; and generally worked pleasantly with participants & volunteers.

Thank you Laura for your good and hard work!



Laura tries to catch up 2 participants who had had to miss a workshop

And, not to forget

CWN Board and Members have provided approval, their ideas, their moral and physical supports to Worker Bs. *We thank them all* for their sensitivity to the issues faced by immigrant and refugee women.

One of the women, when asked if she would recommend the program to others, answered:

“ Yes, because we know the struggles and experience of being an immigrant to Canada.....”



Well, all of CWN's board, its members and friends also know the struggles of being immigrants to Canada, or know of the issues through their work. They are open to addressing the challenges faced by immigrants and refugees during their settlement in Canada. Again we appreciated their input. We especially thank **Asma, Zobeda, Tony, Antoinette, Michael, Nafeesa, Reina, Geeta, Safia, Summaya, Wendy D; Wendy K;** and all who attended activities of the project, and volunteered when needed. **Below** is a little story about a Board member's experience with the program:



“I was at CWN one day when a young couple walked in. They were from India and had heard about the program, were very recently married, and the young woman recently arrived in Edmonton. Her English skills were weak and since I could speak Hindi I became a Language Interpreter on the spot, so to speak. As I translated to her what Pearl was saying about the program and translated back to Pearl what she was saying. I could see the eagerness in the young girl's eyes, her readiness to get started - any day any time! Being the Treasurer at the time, I felt proud of how warmly this couple was received; the work we were doing to support newcomer women with the Worker BS Project; and to see first-hand how the project excited this person.”

Asma Burney, Immediate Past Treasurer of CWN

Asma recently moved to B.C. where she spends time sketching and painting. She is a retired union representative for Canada Post Workers, and a long-time member of CWN

A word of thanks also go to, **Anna Jaricha** for the work she did evaluating the project for CWN. Thank you Annah for coming to grips with Worker Bs, getting to know CWN, and the women.

A closing comment

Worker's Bs premise was building fairness, and fairness was in its manner and means. On so many fronts, it was found to be beneficial- at the individual level the women gained capacity in how to look for work, in finding work, and in making plans for their futures. The numerical results show the value of a holistic program like this. The project helped meet participants' families' financial needs, and so eased the worry and stress of living with low incomes. It also helped to promote the social, economic, and cultural integration of newcomers to Canada, an area of concern for all levels of Government in Alberta and Canada. It benefitted its partners who exchanged their time and support with "labor value" from the women. And it benefitted CWN, as the organization built its ability to support immigrant and refugee women through a work readiness program, a learning that can be applied to further the organization's work in the field. It's hardly surprising then, an advisory member suggested so hopefully: *"Pearl, please write the project again."*

Now last, but definitely not the least, are Sherifab's "famous" last words:

"I come to class everyday with high spirit and looking forward to learn new things. The journey would not have been this lovely without the efforts and passion displayed by the amiable Executive Director, Pearl and Laura, myself and colleagues say a big thank you for the love, knowledge, guidance and enabling environment which has increased our confidence and now we have acquired all it takes to soar..... we promise to be good ambassadors of this great organization."

”

Again, thank you Sherifab!



The colorful fragments of used chunnis and saris intermingle beautifully as if to suggest as *Cindy* (our “in-house” artist) said:
“the connecting of our hearts and minds”.



Caribbean
Women Network

*creating community
where everyone belongs*