



For *People.*
For *Communities.*

DIVERSE*city*
community resources society



Change for **People and Communities**

IMPACT REPORT 2023–2024

Land Acknowledgement

Our work takes place on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), qícəy̓ (Katzie), kʷikʷəłəm (Kwkwetlem), q̓a:ṇəṇ (Kwantlen), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and the scəwaθən məsteyəxʷ (Tsawwassen) First Nations. The knowledge, traditions and ongoing contributions of these communities are significant in providing context to the work we do, and DIVERSEcity recognizes the importance that reconciliation has in building truly inclusive and strong communities.

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ON OUR COVER

Community representation and lived experience matter when it comes to delivering DIVERSEcity programs and services. Alka, Raghujit and Barno (on the front cover) and Shivani with her daughter Adab (on the back cover) are not only immigrants from diverse backgrounds, but they started their journey at DIVERSEcity as participants of our programs. They are among dozens of people who have gone from DIVERSEcity client or volunteer to employee! We are proud of them and the impact they are now making for others.



Upkar Singh Tatlay
CHAIR



Neelam Sahota
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Message from the Chair & CEO

The world is changing. From increased polarization around immigration around the world, to a rise in human displacement, to growing socioeconomic pressures on everyday people and communities, to policy shifts, to climate impact on the planet — change is truly the only constant.

At DIVERSEcity, we have witnessed this firsthand in Surrey, a city whose immigrant population accounts for nearly half of its residents. Since opening our doors in 1978 to the present day, we have responded to the changing needs of the people and communities we serve, as well as the world around us. We understand that evolution is a prerequisite to ensuring we continue to make a meaningful social impact.

Throughout the pages of our Impact Report 2023–2024, you will see that social impact in numbers and stories. The team behind DIVERSEcity has helped thousands of community members navigate change and challenges to achieve their settlement, integration, employment, family and wellbeing goals. From our Board of Directors to our leadership team to our front-line staff, we are changemakers looking to create opportunities to improve people’s lives, and build connected, stronger and healthier communities.

DIVERSEcity’s Strategic Plan 2024–2029 is a reflection of this, providing a hopeful framework for the next chapter in our story as a registered charity.

Our commitment to strengthening communities is unwavering, and we are ready to listen, adapt and grow in order to lead with impact.

We can’t do this without the collaboration of government, community partner organizations, the business sector and Indigenous Peoples. Together, we can be forward thinking and make progress on critical issues like inclusion, racism, housing and labour shortages, mental health, truth and reconciliation and sustainability. Change — particularly meaningful change — is a team effort.

The world is changing. And we, at DIVERSEcity, are listening with open hearts and minds to champion equity, justice and sustainability for a better future. For people. For communities.

Upkar Singh Tatlay

Neelam Sahota

Advancing Change Together

VISION

An inclusive, equitable and regenerative society that puts people and the planet first.

MISSION

Together, we build connected, stronger and healthier communities.

TOP ISSUES WE HELP NAVIGATE

Housing
Employment
Language barriers
Health care system
Food and financial insecurity
Social connection
Citizenship
Legal help

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Upkar Singh Tatlay
CHAIR



Amy Gill
VICE CHAIR



Kam K. Raman
SECRETARY



Sonia Parmar
TREASURER



Jane Shin
DIRECTOR AT LARGE



Jason Wong
DIRECTOR AT LARGE



Susan Wells
DIRECTOR AT LARGE



James Delorme
SPECIAL ADVISOR

THE EXECUTIVE TEAM



Neelam Sahota
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Ian Robinson
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



Meheret Bisrat
DIRECTOR
SETTLEMENT & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Vandna Joshi
DIRECTOR
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Kirsty Peterson
DIRECTOR
CAREER ADVANCEMENT & INNOVATION



Lenya Wilks
DIRECTOR
PARTNERSHIPS & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



Rachna Katariya
DIRECTOR
FINANCE

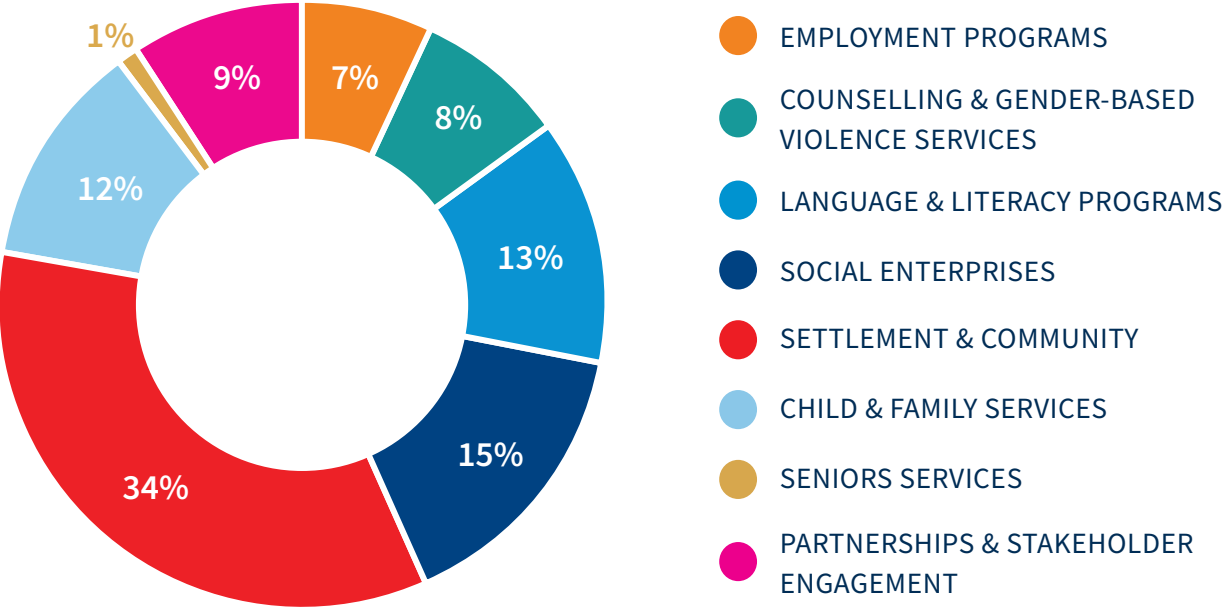


Praneet Sandhu
DIRECTOR
PEOPLE & CULTURE

Our Funders & Partners

Helping people and strengthening communities is our goal, but it can't be done without the support of our funders and numerous community and business partners, along with countless other supporters, speakers and event sponsors.
We thank you for your commitment and collaboration.

FUNDING OVERVIEW



FUNDERS & PARTNERS

Federal Funders

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Employment and Social Development Canada
Health Canada
Public Health Agency of Canada
Public Safety Canada (via City of Surrey)
WAGE Canada

Provincial Funders

Ministry of Advanced Education Skills & Training
Ministry of Attorney General
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Corporate Funders

Coast Capital
RBC Foundation
Vancity Community Foundation

Funding & Service Partners

Ace Community College
Archway Community Services
ASPECT BC
BC Family Hearing Resources Centre
BCFED Health & Safety Centre
BC Society of Transition Houses
Burnaby Association for Community Living
Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
Canadian Women's Foundation
Canada Revenue Agency
CDW Canada Corp
Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
Centre for Child Development
Chilliwack Community Services
City of Delta
City of Surrey
Commonwealth Canada
Community Action Initiative
Community Living BC
Danford Consulting

Discovery College
Dignidad Migrante Society
Ending Violence Association of BC
Family Education & Support Centre
Fraser Health Authority
Foundry
ICBC
ISSofBC
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langley Community Services Society
Migrant Workers Centre
Milieu Family Place
MOSAIC
Mothers Matter Centre
Muslim Food Bank & Community Services
Options Community Services
Pacific Community Resources Society
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
Paragon Testing Enterprises
Progressive Intercultural

Community Services (PICS)
Quintessential Research Group
School Districts (Surrey, Coquitlam, Delta)
Sher Vancouver
ShEvaluesco
Simon Fraser University
Sources Community Resources Society
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Surrey Board of Trade
Surrey Libraries
Surrey Women's Centre
Umoja Operation Compassion Society
University of British Columbia
Vancouver Community College
Watari Research Association
United Way BC
UNITI
Vancouver Foundation
WorkBC
WorkSafe BC
YMCA of British Columbia
YWCA

For People.
For Communities.



In early 2024, we held the second annual edition of DIVERSEcity's new signature event Black in BC: Celebrating Black Excellence during Black History Month.



Also in its second year, the DIVERSEcity x Minerva Women's Leadership Forum brought women together to elevate and celebrate each other through dialogue, celebration, food, networking and movement!

Impact at a Glance

We are here for people, for communities.

“Welcome to DIVERSEcity. What can we help you with?”

These are the first words a person may hear upon visiting DIVERSEcity in Surrey, BC, followed soon after with: “**We are here for you.**” Our impact as a registered charity is seen in the difference we make for people every day. We are their guide in their journey, as they navigate systems, overcome challenges and build the lives they want, creating a stronger community for all.

15K+

people supported through
DIVERSEcity’s programs
and services over the year*

74K+

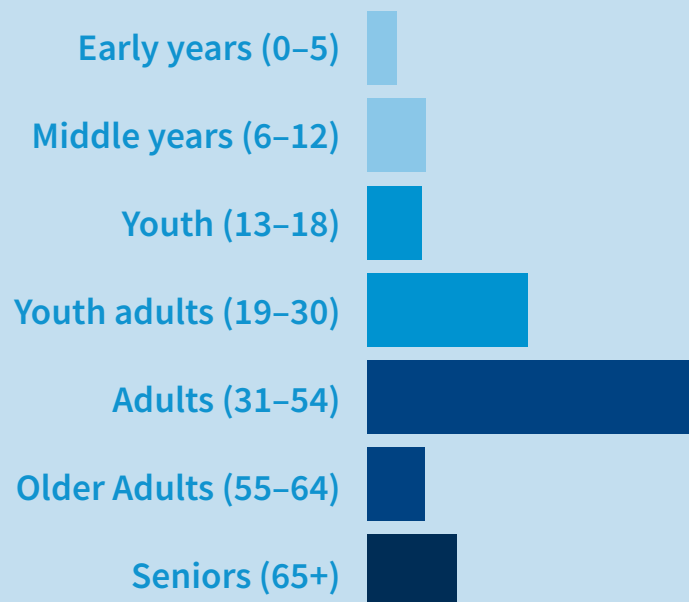
services
delivered



89%

of the people we serve are born in
another country. Here are their top 10
countries of origin and languages.

Ages of the people we serve



*Based on data collection of DIVERSEcity’s free programs and services including a proportional amount of services delivered in collaboration with partner organizations for our C.A.R.E. for Migrant Workers Program.

India	Punjabi
Afghanistan	English
Syria	Arabic
Canada	Dari
China	Spanish
South Korea	Pashto
Colombia	Mandarin
Eritrea	Hindi
Pakistan	Swahili
Mexico	Ukrainian



Dream to succeed

The Canadian dream can feel out of reach for newcomers after encountering the myriad challenges of settling in Canada. So, when we at DIVERSEcity help someone reach their goals, their success becomes a celebration of the impact we make for people and for communities.

We feel that way about Ingrid!

The experienced IT project manager and professional actress from Guadeloupe and France graduated from our Diverse Entrepreneurs Business Incubator ready to plan, launch and grow her business, Griottes Polyglottes.

“After coming to Canada, I worked as a temp, going from shift to shift. I then got a contract in my field for one year. When it ended, I just wanted to start to do my own thing as an entrepreneur,” Ingrid says.


With a desire to improve her English language skills and confidence — and recognizing that same need among many other newcomers and temporary residents — she launched Griottes Polyglottes as a side hustle.

“What pushed me to become an entrepreneur was I noticed that I really lacked confidence when it comes to speaking in English. I wanted to find

a place where I could improve my confidence speaking English through theatre and improvisation. I wanted it to be different and really fun. I am an actress and storyteller in French so I know how being on stage helps with confidence and how it’s fun. But unable to find such a place I decided to create it for myself and other immigrants. I worked hard, learned quickly to find ways to combine improvisation to help people speak with confidence.”

Ingrid started by offering improv workshops and interactive storytelling for English and French learners. She then expanded her offerings beyond the focus on language to support public speaking, job interview skills, anti-racism, anti-bullying and corporate teambuilding.

“My goal is to help people learn through fun and to gain confidence to speak up. It’s interactive. I get them to roll up their sleeves and dip into the action,” says Ingrid, adding that the Diverse Entrepreneurs Business Incubator, now supported by TD Bank, was pivotal in her entrepreneurial journey.

To other newcomers who have their own Canadian dream, Ingrid says, “Just go do it!” 

Settlement & Community Development

A journey made stronger together

As DIVERSEcity welcomes people from around the world, our Settlement and Community Development department is the first stop in their journey to build the life they want in Canada. Our newcomer support workers have walked the same path as the people they serve and use that experience to support and guide them in their first language and with cultural humility.

Starting with creating a settlement plan together, we connect permanent residents and refugees as well as temporary residents, international students and refugee claimants to essentials like housing, schooling, health care, employment programs and

language classes. In cases where needs are greater or more complex, we provide intensive, tailored case management and mental health support to overcome trauma, violence and marginalization. Our wraparound approach empowers newcomers for their entire resettlement journey.

As their path forward in Canada solidifies, we connect them to programs that encourage community connection and wellbeing for the whole family — from children and youth to seniors, as well as LGBTQ+ newcomers. Our impact is seen in their daily lives as they become more independent, confident and joyful.



“

I was struggling with a lot of things as a newcomer until I came to DIVERSEcity, and then everything became easy. My caseworker has been a pillar of support for my family.”

— REFUGEE YOUTH IN OUR RISE PROGRAM



3,500 newcomers

supported at DIVERSEcity through our newcomer settlement services, including permanent residents, refugees or temporary residents

237 refugees

helped after coming to Canada from Afghanistan and Syria, as well as Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Honduras, among others

India • Afghanistan • Syria • China • South Korea

5 top countries of origin of the newcomers and refugees we help

908 diverse seniors

helped through Better at Home, Seniors Navigation and Peer Support and other seniors services

188 youth

took part in our DIVERSEyouth and RISE Youth programs

A mother’s hope

Imagine you’re a single mother, fleeing to Canada with your two children, aged 11 and 16, in an effort to escape the Taliban in Afghanistan. This is the story of Fatima* (name changed for privacy).

She came to Canada in 2023 with more questions than answers, but was grateful for the chance to start a new life. That life started in a women’s shelter in BC, as housing through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for newcomers was not immediately available.

With little English, she was connected to a Dari-speaking case specialist at DIVERSEcity, who helped her enrol her children in school. After five months of no schooling, it felt like a victory for her family.

“Fleeing persecution and facing systemic barriers created complex challenges requiring comprehensive support for her,” says Abeer Saeed, Senior Manager, Settlement & Community Development.

DIVERSEcity support workers then helped Fatima secure stable housing, while providing the emotional support she needed to stay resilient through the emotional challenges.

“Before coming to DIVERSEcity, I felt completely lost and alone,” shares Fatima. “I feared for my children’s future and felt powerless to change our situation. But with the unwavering support of our case specialist, I have found strength and hope. My children are back in school, and we have a safe place to call home. I am learning English, and my children have been connected to lots of programs.”

Abeer adds: “Our holistic approach transformed the family’s immediate circumstances and laid a secure foundation for their future.”





Employment & Language

Supporting success, boosting the economy

Building a successful life in Canada generally starts with good language skills and a good job. By helping people improve their English literacy, upgrade their education and career skills, navigate credential recognition and learn how to search for a job, DIVERSEcity empowers newcomers, youth, women and others to create the lives and careers they want.

This is all done with a supportive approach that recognizes the multiple barriers that may be standing in the way of their goals — from trauma to mental health to discrimination. Everyone deserves the opportunity to improve their lives, be self-sufficient

and find meaningful work. This inclusion creates a diverse and dynamic workforce while helping address labour market shortages in critical sectors such as health care, education and trades.

DIVERSEcity's **Employment Programs** for youth and multi-barriered adults, as well as **English Language Programs** for permanent residents, namely Language Instruction for Newcomers in Canada (LINC), are important stepping stones to success for the people we serve, helping them overcome complex barriers, build networks and integrate more fully into the community they now call home.

1,023
students

in **24** Language Instruction
for Newcomers in Canada
(LINC) English classes

59
children

of LINC students supported
through our early childhood
education program

168

employment
program
participants

99%

program completion rate
across all Youth Employment
and Supported Employment
programs

84%

of participants
attained work or entered
higher education that aligns
with their employment goals

Early childhood education • Health care • Trades

Top career fields of our employment program participants



“



I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the invaluable support and resources your organization has provided to professional immigrants like myself. As an international physician who arrived in Canada five years ago, I quickly became aware of the challenges and obstacles that lay ahead in pursuing my medical career in this country. The pathway to licensing for physicians in Canada is undeniably competitive, demanding and often financially burdensome, requiring years of dedication and multiple exams.

I am immensely grateful to have had the privilege of being supported by DIVERSEcity and Coast Capital throughout this journey. Your organizations not only empower immigrants, but also offer vital resources and financial support to help us pursue our career aspirations to succeed in Canada. I can proudly say that I am one of the beneficiaries of your assistance, and you were a part of my success story. I am thrilled to successfully match in family medicine residency last year, and a few weeks ago I started practising family medicine in Canada. I am living my dream now!”

— **DR. SARA KHATAMI, PARTICIPANT IN COAST CAPITAL CREDENTIALING PROGRAM FOR NEWCOMER WOMEN**

Families & Wellbeing

Thriving as individuals, families and communities

Family is the foundation of society — it's the first place you belong. Family shapes the way you feel and see the world. For newcomers, the importance of family is a common thread in their diverse lives and journeys. At DIVERSEcity, we approach our early years, middle years and parenting programs with a family first approach, ensuring their needs are met as individuals and as a family as a whole. Through our **Family First Early Years Program**, **Multicultural Outreach Program for Families** and **Home Instruction for Parents of**

Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program and more, we create spaces and places for children and parents to learn and grow together.

This empowerment-based approach is mirrored in our **Mental Health and Substance Use Services** and **Gender-Based Violence Counselling**, framed by our innovative Roots of Safety approach.

In everything we do, we take a compassionate and culturally safe approach to support people's wellbeing and healing journeys.

DIVERSEcity's **Roots of Safety** safety planning framework has been recognized for its unique, culturally safe and trauma-informed approach in supporting gender-based violence survivors. In addition to using the framework in the delivery of all our gender-based violence services, DIVERSEcity trains other service providers in this framework to meet the needs of the growing immigrant population in Canada.



515
families helped through
our early years programs

438
children supported
302 early years (aged 0–5)
136 middle years (aged 6–12)

98
mothers
empowered to prepare their toddlers
and preschool children for success in
school through the HIPPY program

A family's fresh start

Khadija and her husband left Pakistan to seek asylum in Canada in 2018, seeking a better life for their children and family. She was seven months pregnant at the time, and they had two other children, 7 and 2.

"We were on social assistance for two to three months, and we wanted to be on our feet as soon as possible. My husband started off as a mobile technician and now drives Uber," she says. "But this meant I was all alone at home with children in a system that was completely new to me."

Khadija felt lonely and isolated. "It was hard to make friends or talk to others. If I told anyone that we are refugees, people would treat us differently — I could see it on their face. They think refugees are taking their jobs and living off their taxes — my landlord reminded us of this every chance he got!"

Khadija found her way to building community and

Helping with top issues like:

Service gaps for children with special needs • High cost of living • Impact of intimate partner violence on children



282
people

helped through our Mental Health, Substance Use and Gender-Based Violence counselling services with **84** people on the waitlist for services



friendships in Canada through programs for her children, namely the Family First and HIPPY programs at DIVERSEcity.

"They were my window to the outside world, and I owe these programs my confidence," she says. "No matter how low I felt, my motivation was to provide the best chance at life to my children. And that is why I went out, even when lonely, rain or shine, and took the buses, took the trains and walked with three kids ... but I made it. That motivation shaped my resettlement journey for the better."

Khadija says she is in awe of the services DIVERSEcity has offered her family and is now looking ahead to find ways to actively contribute to Canadian society once her youngest starts school. ❤️

Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement

Collaborating for a better future

DIVERSEcity's Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement department is dedicated to collaborating with community partners to create a future where immigrants thrive in a society that values reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusivity.

For starters, we lead the strategic co-ordination of the award-winning **Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)**. We bring 30+ Surrey LIP council members as well as immigrant and youth advisory tables together to create inclusive opportunities for newcomers, youth, employers and more, and opportunities to build relationships with Indigenous communities in Surrey. We amplify this work across BC and Yukon through our Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing Initiative for LIPs.

Over the last two years, DIVERSEcity's **Refugee Readiness Teams** addressed the challenges of the

influx of refugees and displaced Ukrainians in the South Fraser and the Cariboo North regions. The now-completed project inspired dialogue with community partners and created resources for refugees' successful integration.

A similar partnership approach is the focus of our **Collective, Advocacy, Rights and Education (C.A.R.E.) for Migrant Workers** program, which deals with advocacy, emergency support, social inclusion and education for migrant workers in the South Fraser, Okanagan and Vancouver Island.

Finally, the **BIPOC Unified, Inclusive, Leading Organization Development for South Fraser (B.U.I.L.D.S.) Project**, was an innovative initiative to support grassroots BIPOC organizations in expanding their funding, services and impact in the community. DIVERSEcity's impact amplified!

International students' needs • Health care access • Anti-racism efforts • Housing crisis

Key issues in the community highlighted by Surrey LIP members that require community collaboration and advocacy to find solutions



Thriving together

Solomon Iwegim is the executive director of Thrive4Blacks Community Services Society, one of the organizations supported by B.U.I.L.D.S. Project (Solomon is third from right in photo above!)

"Our journey has been a significant one. We incorporated in 2020 and began active operations in 2021, but one of our biggest challenges has been capacity building," he says. "Over time, we engaged in self-learning and connected with various people, and when the opportunity with B.U.I.L.D.S. arose, it was a clear choice for us to participate."

He says the skills, knowledge, experiences and resources provided by B.U.I.L.D.S. were incredibly helpful. "For the first time, we applied for a major grant and we are very hopeful."

He has paid the learnings forward, by assisting another small non-profit organization in applying for a grant — which they were awarded!

"We cannot express our gratitude without acknowledging DIVERSEcity. They have been like big brothers to us, always extending a helping hand. For that, we are deeply grateful."

DIVERSEcity's Sumaiyyah Adam, Project Manager, says: "As we wrap up the B.U.I.L.D.S. project, we are excited to leave a legacy of online information, webinars and resource guides to continue to inform and empower BIPOC grassroots organizations." ♥

14,429

migrant workers

supported through C.A.R.E.'s one-on-one case management, group sessions, events, counselling, English classes and more through DIVERSEcity and nine migrant-serving organization partners

334

displaced Ukrainians

found housing in Prince George, BC, through the RRT's partnership with local housing providers

79

community partners

collaborated with through RRT and C.A.R.E.

Photo above: Celebration of the B.U.I.L.D.S. organizations including: Hibret Cultural Schools Society, Sisters in Canada Society, Mainland Community Services, Kingdom Acts Foundation, International Refugees Support, LOVE Organization, Career Mode Ally, LA PATH LIFE Project, Foundation for a Path Forward, Great Zimbabwe Cultural Society of BC, Latincoover Cultural & Business Society, Great Light Healing Community Services Society, Dignidad Migrante Society and Thrive4Blacks.

Social Enterprises

Filling a gap in service for people and partners

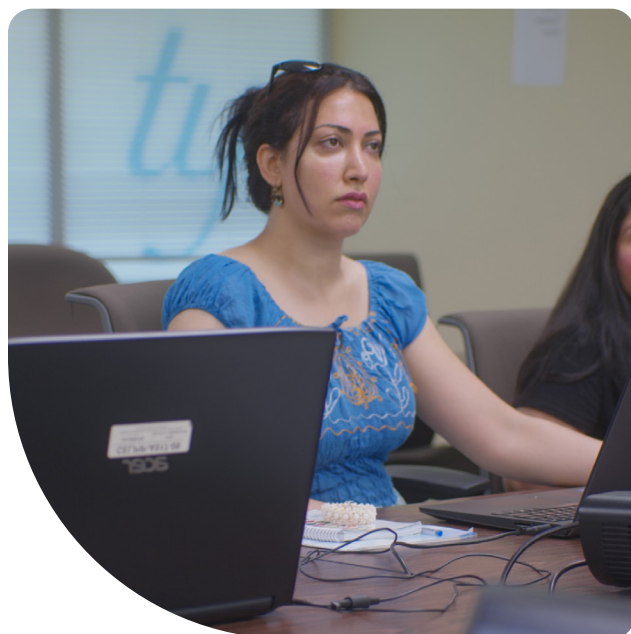
DIVERSEcity has built innovative social enterprises to help supplement its operations with unrestricted funding, while meeting a gap in services in the community.

DIVERSEcity Interpretation and Translation Services connects experienced and professional interpreters and translators with people and organizations, helping them communicate across vast cultures and languages.

DIVERSEcity Skills Training Centre has proven there is a growing need for its short-term, job-ready skills training courses that teach people the workplace essentials they need to propel them into the workforce.

And our **CELPPIP Language Testing Centre** continues to support thousands of newcomers achieve their permanent resident and citizenship status with proof of their language proficiency.

Over the last year, we have focused on expanding our social enterprises to make us even more nimble, including the introduction of fee-based English classes that meet the needs of non-permanent residents who are not eligible for federally funded English programs for newcomers. Work is currently being done to expand our social enterprises even further.



1,200

DIVERSEcity Skills
Training Centre learners

helped to achieve job-ready skills
through 7 courses, preparing them
for success in the workforce

2,810

total CELPIP test takers
with 141 tests administered



“

I took DIVERSEcity’s Essential Computer Skills for the Workplace training as a WorkBC/YWCA client last year and totally loved it! I was hired as a case manager at ISSofBC because of this course!

— SHANNON ENNS, LEARNER AT DIVERSECITY
SKILLS TRAINING CENTRE

3,500

interpreting hours
per month

42,000

interpreting hours
per year

421,000

words translated
in 200 projects

Bridging across cultures

Faced with employment barriers, many newcomers start their careers in Canada with freelance work. Interpretation and translation work allows them to utilize their language skills to earn money while making an impact in the community. It can also be a good side hustle!

Harpinder Malli started working as an interpreter in 1994, supporting newcomers who couldn’t speak English at hospitals and in the social services system. Harpinder eventually pursued another career path, but after retirement, returned to DIVERSEcity to serve as an interpreter part time.

“I connected with Kiran Sanghera, Assistant Manager with the department, whom I knew from my earlier days and showed my interest in coming back. I am in debt to DIVERSEcity for giving me this great opportunity to come back as a freelance interpreter,” Harpinder says, who

enjoys the flexibility the role provides.

“I feel immense satisfaction in the role I play bridging language barriers and facilitating effective communication across diverse contexts and cultures. One of the most rewarding aspects of this job is the ability to facilitate meaningful interactions between individuals who would otherwise struggle to communicate, making sure all the parties involved can express themselves clearly and be understood accurately.”

Harpinder calls the work not just a job, but a fulfilling vocation. “It allows me to make a tangible difference in people’s lives.” ❤️





For People.
For Communities.


DIVERSE*city*
community resources society



Work with us
dcrs.ca/joinourteam

Volunteer with us
dcrs.ca/volunteer

Donate to DIVERSEcity
dcrs.ca/donate

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