



# WELCOMING COMMUNITY NEWS

CultureLink HOST

Volume 1, Issue 5  
March 2010

## Green Settlement™

### A New Idea Takes Root at CultureLink By Kristin Schwartz

Around the world, people are more and more concerned about protecting the environment for future generations. In many countries people practice sustainable ways of life that are respectful of the earth—gardening, composting, recycling, reusing, walking and cycling. At CultureLink we encourage newcomers to retain those sustainable habits and to become leaders in the “greening” of their new home, in Canada. Check out our programs!

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#### Multicultural and Intergenerational Vegetable Garden at the Wychwood Barns:

CultureLink joins the Wychwood Green Arts Barns community, located at 601 Christie Street just south of St. Clair. In partnership with the Stop Community Food Centre we are launching a demonstration garden near Barn 5. There will be seven garden plots, each representing a different cultural group in Toronto. Immigrant youth and seniors will work together to showcase food gardening techniques that can be used in backyard spaces right here in Toronto.

#### Garden Host:

This initiative matches newcomers with more established Canadians who have yard space to share. The matched pair is expected to maintain a relationship over one growing season, about six months. Together, they plan a vegetable garden or other backyard activities. Garden Hosts help newcomers ease the critical transition period in their lives. In turn, the tapestry of their lives is enriched. Garden Host is a joint initiative of CultureLink’s HOST Program and The Stop Community Food Centre.

#### Bike Host

The Bike Host initiative invites Toronto cyclists to share their love of cycling with newcomers. We launch this program in June during Toronto’s Bike Month, alongside the Toronto Cyclists Union. CultureLink’s partnership with the Toronto Cyclists Union was recently honoured with the “Innovation of the Year” award from the U.S.-based Alliance for Walking and Biking.



#### Community

##### Animators for Sustainable Transportation:

June will also feature the launch of our Cyclists’ Handbook in 16 languages (including English). We cover the rules of the road, avoiding common hazards, bike parts and maintenance, dressing for the weather, and more! We are also recruiting home language community animators to deliver cycling workshops based on the content of the Handbook. Animators will be trained in public speaking and advocacy. It’s an opportunity to build networks in Toronto’s green economy.



#### Taking Green Roots

The Newcomer Youth Centre has put together an exciting program of activities focused on learning about the environment.

#### Stay tuned for our first Job Search Workshop focused on Green Jobs & the Green Economy, coming up soon.

#### And also...

#### I Keep Environment Alive

a workshop series emphasizing personal responsibility for protecting the environment and small actions and steps each one of us can take on day-to-day basis.

*“At CultureLink we believe that:*

- Newcomers are critical to Canada’s future;*
- Our staff and volunteers are our organization’s most important resources.”*





## International Women's day

### Girls and Women from CultureLink

Fei Tang

Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 was a sunny and unusually warm day. The sun shined blissfully over two thousand women and men in the International Women's Day rally and the spring-like breeze accompanied them marching along the main downtown roads. Among the women and men with great "March 8th" spirits, here came the bright green T-shirts – CultureLink's women and girls.

From an organization where more than two third of the staff are women, where gender equity is one of the core values and anti-oppression is a common practice, we proudly marched with other women, proudly represented the underrepresented immigrant women and proudly spread the words – Yes, we at CultureLink serve the underserved immigrant women.

In many countries where many CultureLink's female staff members and participants came from, "March 8th" was a "big deal". On that day we commemorate the remarkable achievements of our women pioneers, and remind ourselves of our own responsibility to keep the gender is-

sue alive until the genuine gender equality in opportunity and measurements is achieved. As service providers to thousands of immigrant women and their families, we recognize how challenging it is, even 90 years after the first "March 8th", to help the women access opportunities equally and achieve equitable results due to the fact that childcare and inequitable job opportunity remain major barriers. This is a long way to go. And still, we are marching...

As we marched, it was great for us to meet and talk to



And still we are marching...

women from other grassroots organizations and let them know what CultureLink and the Host Program are all about. We handed out numerous flyers to enthused people – even the policemen on duties could not resist our flyers. We also met our program volunteer Lauren and a Community Representative on Board Committee -Hema Vyas in the march. We were stopped by Olivia Chow, Member of Parliament for Trinity-Spadina and CultureLink's Welcoming

Community Champion, who shot a picture of us—a picture of "CultureLink's women in action". This picture will forever remind us of this International Women's Day - such a sunny, warm and winter-ending day.



CultureLink Host representation.



## Host with the Most

### Jewelry Party hosted by Host Volunteer

Elizabeth Hamulka



With the vast challenges of establishing a new life in Canada, how many refugees were able to see the light at the end of the tunnel in the early days of their settlement? How many of them found the asylum of emotional, mental, economic or social stability in the new country?

I do not know if any statistics would capture these aspects. What I do know is that Brizzy, a newcomer participant at CultureLink found her harbor in the Host match with Izabela, a Host Volunteer,

On March 7th, I had the privilege and enormous pleasure to attend a jewelry party that Izabela hosted at

her house for Brizzy, a refugee and a talented artist from Colombia. It was amazing to see all the ladies, who came to the party, chatting and encouraging Brizzy to continue making her artistic creations. It was also an amazing feeling seeing all the ladies bought Brizzy's jewelry. One of them even offered organizing another jewelry party for Brizzy. Here I should mention that Izabela and Brizzy have known each other for only 2 months and are already doing all kinds of wonderful activities besides practicing English.

Then, who is Izabela?

Izabela is the founder of the EELI Group Inc., a business

design and change management consulting firm working for a number of telecommunications and health industry service providers. In her busy schedule she also found time for volunteer jobs. She is a

board member for two not-for-profit organizations.

In her invitation, Izabela wrote: "Recently, I became a Host for one of the Newcomers to Canada. ... A Host is a volunteer who spends at least two hours every week with the assigned Newcomer and assist them in establishing themselves in Canada. ... Brizzy is currently learning English and is trying to launch a career here as a designer of hand crafted jewelry made out of primarily natural items such as beads, wood, etc. ... Let's make it a great afternoon get together and show Brizzy how hospitable Canadians can be!"

The jewelry party went so well that Brizzy told me with the money earned that day, she now could afford to buy material for more jewelry and pay some bills ...

This is only one of the many Host stories showing how our Host Volunteers and Newcomers enrich each other's lives.



Brizzy and Izabela posed behind the lovely jewellery display



## New Workshop

# Communication Across Differences

The Welcoming Community Initiative project is bringing you one more tool to prepare you as a Welcoming Community Change Agent, a Host Volunteer or better said, a culturally competent friend.

Starting February 2010, HOST Program is offering an innovative workshop “Communication Across Differences” as the Part Two of the training series Change Agent for Welcoming Communities.

Participating in this training series is not only beneficial for people who are currently a settlement worker or plan a career in settlement sector, it is also surprisingly helpful

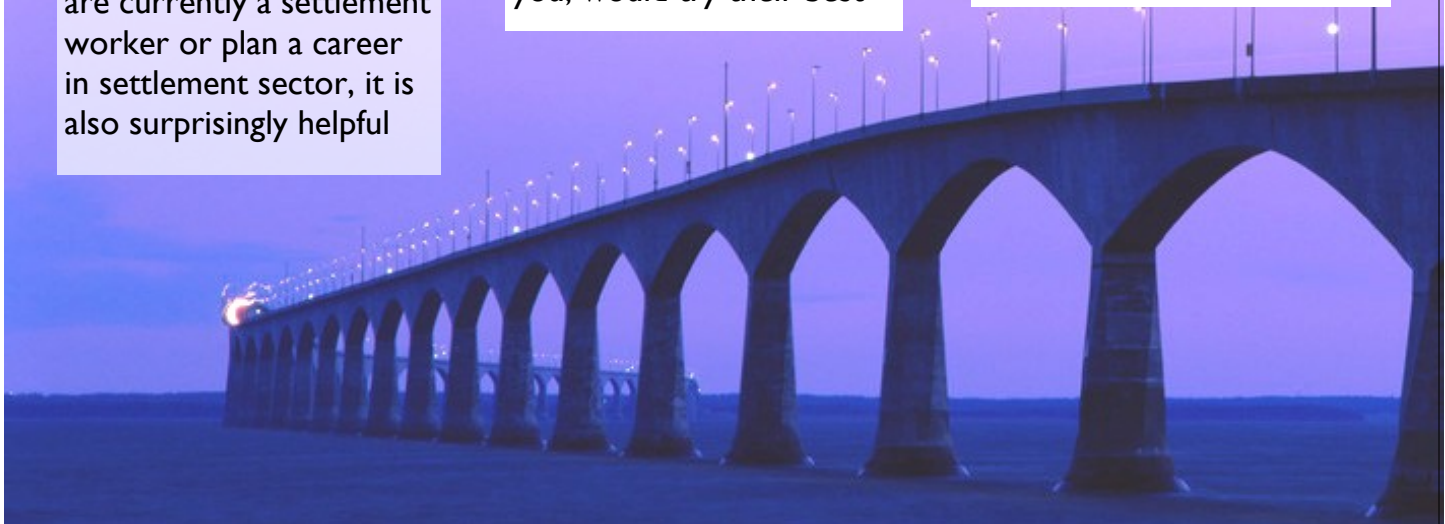
for you in your everyday interaction with people from all walks of life in such a multicultural community.

If you find yourself puzzled by your latest communication with your newcomer neighbor, a parent of your children’s classmate who is a recent immigrant, or just someone acted and thought differently from you, let the workshop help you build the bridge across the gulf of vast differences and enhance your communication. Moreover, you will have a chance to meet new people who are like you, would try their best

to make Toronto a more welcoming and inclusive community for newcomers. Together with them, you can move mountains.

During this training you will explore how people differ when communicating with each other, you will be able to identify pitfalls in communication across differences; last but not the least, discover effective tactics to communicate cross-culturally.

How can you get register for this workshop? Simply call 416-588-6288 ext. 210 or email [bgomezova@culturelink.net](mailto:bgomezova@culturelink.net)





## Host with the Most

### Updates from a newcomer.... to our case worker

I haven't really had the chance to update you. I just like you to know that we and the "hosts" continue to have regular meetings at least once every two weeks.

Sometimes Mat and I get together, just the two of us, for a coffee to break the daily monotony. I believe that Mat is also learning from us. Krista, his wife, is a very warm person that my family and I respect a lot. Mat always comes up with words of wisdom every time I feel a little down from my job searching. I must say, I am certainly learning more from Mat than the other way around.

We were able to meet last month to attend a play at the theatre. This month we met again to celebrate Family Day together. We've actually obtained free passes for both families from the Toronto Public Library so we can someday get together at the Bata Shoe Museum .

In fact, this Saturday evening, Mat and I will meet for a drink to discuss my continuing difficulty to crack the labour market. I actually began working for a kitchen

supply company this year. It is a very good company and it can provide a lot of benefits for part time employees after working for 3 months with them. I enjoy the work and my boss likes me and that's important to me.

However, the job is not related to what I am really good at and I am getting minimum pay while I seek full time opportunities. I was a highly paid professional before I ventured into what became a family business prior to coming to Canada so I am not used to it. I got this job through networking and is finally accepting the fact that I need to do more than how I did in more than 7 months here to achieve my initial goals.

I am hardly a success here but I am writing to you simply to let you know that your HOST program and your effort to bring our families together is highly successful to us. We do not take this lightly and we appreciate it a lot. Mat and I are good friends now. Our families are good friends now. There is so much I gain from this program that words can hardly ex-

press. Your program has given my family an incredible friendship that we believe can last.

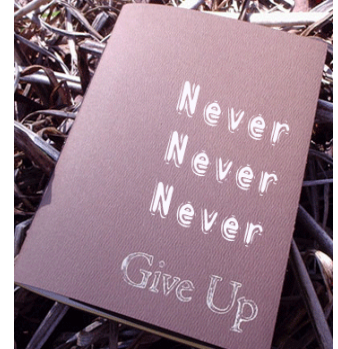
My wife is more successful than I am as she was able to get a job the first month we were here. Subsequent applications gave her opportunities for her next job from several employers . She lost the job in January but in February, big companies began to offer her work [].

I continue to be hopeful with all the intentions to work even harder to give you one day the best news I can: through the HOST program, even though it's not meant to be, I am able to achieve my goal in my initial years in Canada.

I wish you all a great weekend

Phil

*(Names of volunteers and newcomers were changed as well as some life circumstances for privacy concerns.)*



"Never, never, never, never give up."

- - Winston Churchill

*"I am hardly a success here but I am writing to you simply to let you know that your HOST program and your effort to bring our families together is highly successful to us."*



...get together for a coffee to break the daily monotony....



## CultureLink HOST



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**VOLUNTEERS, NEWCOMERS  
FILL OUT OUR ONLINE REGIS-  
TRATION FORM, AT:**

<http://www.culturelink.net>

CultureLink is a settlement agency located at Bloor and Dundas West in downtown Toronto. For twenty-one years, we have upheld our mission:

**CultureLink** is dedicated to facilitating the independence and full participation of newcomers in Toronto's diverse community. CultureLink works within an anti-discriminatory framework to ensure a respectful, safe and inclusive environment.

We hope you have enjoyed Volume One, Issue Five of our CultureLink Host Newsletter, and that you will enjoy future issues.

**KNOW SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO JOIN  
CULTURELINK'S HOST COMMUNITY?**

**HAVE THEM SIGN UP!**

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The Host Newsletter invites you, the members of the CultureLink Community to share your story with us. Please send your story, comments and thoughts to:

[bgomezova@culturelink.net](mailto:bgomezova@culturelink.net)

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