

BURNABY WORKPLACE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

In 2012 Burnaby hosted a remarkable program aimed at identifying and addressing some of the problems that immigrants to Canada face in the employment marketplace: the **Burnaby Workplace Ambassadors Program**. The project followed from research and experience with the prior Breaking Down the Barriers program showing that both employers and new immigrants lack a clear understanding of all that's required to support immigrant workforce integration. Employers often have no easy way of assessing experience and credentials acquired in another country, and hold reservations or uncertainty when meeting new immigrants trying to enter the job market. Immigrants sometimes not only lack the networking and communication skills necessary to break into the Canadian workforce but fail to fully recognize how crucial these are.

The program sought to dig straight into problems like these with a unique "ambassadors" approach using both jobseekers and employers as active participants. Thirty five internationally trained professionals (ITPs) new to Burnaby received focussed training and supporting resources on communication and networking, and then were introduced to a professional within their field and a 45 minute meeting was set up. This professional would then introduce the ITP to two more professionals – and so on. The purpose of the meetings was twofold; first, participants exchanged information about their shared occupational field and second, they discussed some of the existing barriers to immigrant workforce integration. The intent of the project was not employment but awareness raising - some of the immigrant ambassadors met with as many as 10 local professionals and most received at least five meetings. At project end, more than 240 employers had been engaged in discussions about immigrant workforce integration, many reviewed and discussed their own recruiting and hiring practices and shared the experience with their colleagues.

Here, in their own words, a few representatives of both types of ambassadors recount their experiences with the program. They are organized into six professional sectors important to Burnaby's economy. As a result of the Burnaby Workplace Ambassador Program, the ball is definitely rolling. The challenge now is to push it as fast and far as possible.

SECTOR OVERVIEW - EDUCATION

From the familiar — school teachers and university professors — to the unexpected and even exotic — driving instructors and tennis coaches — British Columbia's education sector is diverse, growing and surprisingly large. In 2008 the sector accounted for seven percent of the province's workforce, up from less than six in 1990, and growth is expected to continue.



KEY OCCUPATIONS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

- University Professors
- Post-Secondary Teaching and Research Assistants
- College and Other Vocational Instructors
- Secondary School Teachers
- Elementary School and Kindergarten Teachers
- Elementary and Secondary School Teacher Assistants
- Primarily Secretaries, or Administrative Clerks and Officers
- Musicians, singers, recreation program leaders, coaches, dancers and librarians
- Principals and other administrators

Universal trends can take some of the credit. Many careers require more advanced education and constant upgrading; meanwhile, education plays an important role in the search for personal fulfillment. But some factors are specific to the province. High immigration levels in the 1990s boosted the population of school age children and young adults, while Metro Vancouver has become well established as a higher education centre of national and international note. This is true in several fields but especially English as a Second Language, which attracts 90,000 students to the province each year.

In part due to the rise of the ESL industry, private sector employment has tripled since 1990, and part-time employment has doubled. Unemployment rates are lower than for most other sectors, but significant imbalances exist. For example, there is currently an oversupply of school teachers that is not expected to ease until late in the decade. At the same time K-12 teachers now account for only one-third of jobs in the sector, and a large proportion of the education workforce is over 45 and approaching retirement, suggesting that the outlook for job opportunities remains, on the whole, fairly bright.

THE AMBASSADORS

ITP Ambassador - Mary Elizabeth Soriano

I arrived in June 2011 from the Philippines, where I taught classes in history and political science. I had already taken the Skills Connect program at Douglas College and started the Provincial Instructor Diploma Program at Vancouver Community College when I signed up for Ambassadors program in November 2011. The training program there helped me with my resume, networking tips and interview protocol, and between March and July I went for at least 20 informational interviews. The ambassadors program is an affirmation that networking really does work. During the first months I was here I just sent in resumes and never made it to the top. I was just at the receptionist level. I was a little surprised at first because I thought that in Canada it would be all about qualifications, but that doesn't seem to be the case. The program really helped me make connections.

I was already following a track toward the job development field because I was interested in working with new immigrants, and to my surprise two opportunities opened up. In October Vancity Credit Union took me on as a part-time Member Services Specialist. I feel like I'm in the right place.

Employer Ambassador – Joan Anderson, Director of Employment and Language Programs

I'm the Director of Employment and Language Programs so I oversee the programs that help newcomers learn English and find jobs. I had interviews with two people, one who teaches English as a second language, another who didn't have a particular area and was looking for a fit; we ended up talking about the job development field as a possibility. They came with a list of prepared questions, they listened carefully and asked good follow-up questions. I think they were in contact to the people I referred them to.

From my point of view, what I liked about the program was that it was very clear-cut and took a limited amount of time. It was easy for me to participate. It was a good experience for me; I hope it was good for them.



MS. MARY ELIZABETH SORIANO

BEST PRACTICES OF WORKPLACE INTEGRATION - EMPLOYERS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In 2012, forty employers across Canada were recognized for their initiatives around recent immigrants as part of the Best Employers for New Canadians list by Mediacorp Canada. Promising practices of best employers in education sectors are summarized and listed below.

Source: <http://www.canadastop100.com/immigrants/>

RECRUITMENT

- Works with community agencies to offer internship opportunities to newcomers, and uses World Education Services (WES) to assess foreign credentials (Humber College, University of Ottawa and McGill University)
- Provides recruitment presentations in association with LASI World Skills, a non-profit organization that supports the integration of new Canadians, in order to raise awareness of the employment opportunities available at the university (University of Ottawa and Humber College)

ORIENTATION

- Provides resources such as second language training (McGill University)

RETENTION

- Offers language courses to further develop the communication skills of employees who are new to Canada (McGill University)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - BEING A GOOD COMMUNITY CITIZEN

- Works with a variety of community organizations, i.e. Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council's (TRIEC), to provide support to new Canadian job-seekers, including the Job Match Network, Mentoring Partnership (Humber College, Humber College and University of Ottawa)



EDUCATION SECTOR IN BURNABY

With its growing population, Burnaby will remain a hub of the education sector, which is expected to continue expanding. The city has an outstanding array of education assets including a strong public school system, two major post-secondary educational institutions, and a variety of private institutions offering career, language and other programs.

Burnaby School District 41 is the fourth largest school district in B.C., with 40 elementary schools and seven secondary schools. The city is also home to two of the province's top five largest postsecondary education institutes in SFU and BCIT. Burnaby also hosts some of BC's largest and most progressive private post-secondary institutions, including Art Institute of Vancouver (Burnaby campus), and the University of Phoenix. The City of Burnaby's Economic Development Strategy 2020 identified the education industry as one of the expanding industries in Burnaby.

NOTABLE EDUCATION EMPLOYERS IN BURNABY

COMPANY	WEBSITE
Art Institute of Vancouver (Burnaby Campus) 3264 Beta Avenue, Burnaby	http://www.artinstitutes.edu/vancouver/about/jobs.aspx
Burnaby School District 41 5325 Kincaid Street, Burnaby	http://sd41.bc.ca/employment/opportunities.htm
British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) 3700 Willingdon Avenue, Burnaby	http://www.bcit.ca/hr/careers/
Brighton College 305-4538 Kingsway, Burnaby	http://www.brightoncollege.com/about-us/
Knowledge Network 4355 Mathissi Place, Burnaby	http://knowledge.ca/employment
Simon Fraser University 8888 University Drive, Burnaby	http://www.burnaby.sfu.ca/jobs.html
University of Phoenix 200-4401 Still Creek Dr, Burnaby	http://www.phoenix.edu/about_us/employment.html
Private Career Training Institutions Agency (of BC) 300-5172 Kingsway, Burnaby	http://www.pctia.bc.ca/

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE FOR IMMIGRANTS IN BURNABY

SKILLS CONNECT FOR IMMIGRANTS PROGRAM

- **Back in Motion**
<http://www.skillsconnect.ca/>
- **Douglas College**
<http://www.douglas.bc.ca/training-community-education/skills-connect.html>
- **Training Innovations**
<http://www.skillsconnectbc.com/>

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES AND PROFILES

- **WelcomeBC's Occupational Guides for Immigrants**
http://www.welcomebc.ca/wbc/immigration/work/occupational_guides.page#Technology
- **Skilled Immigrants InfoCentre – Vancouver Public Library**
<http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/>
- **WorkBC Career Profile**
<http://www.workbc.ca/Careers/Career-Profiles/Pages/Career-Profiles.aspx>

REGULATORY BODIES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- **B.C. Ministry of Education**
www.gov.bc.ca/bced
- **Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB)**
www.bcteacherregulation.ca
- **Independent Schools Association of British Columbia**
<http://isabc.ca/>
- **Federation of Independent School Associations of BC**
www.fisabc.ca
- **Private Career Training Institutions Agency (of BC) – PCTIA**
www.pctia.bc.ca