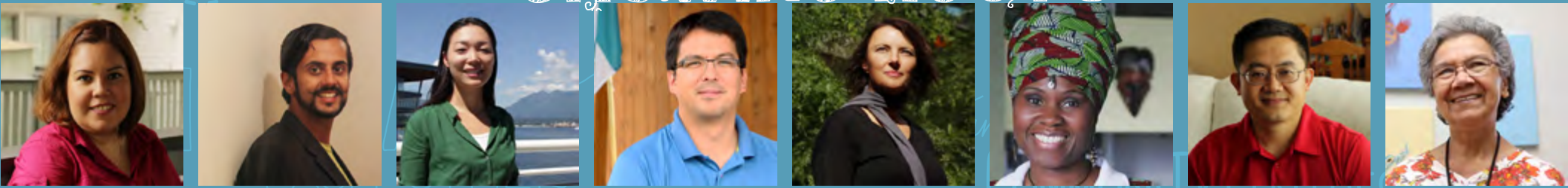


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"If you have
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PICK UP THE
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FIND happiness
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TOGETHER."

GROWING ROOTS



A Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver



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COMMUNITY CENTRES
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Canada 



>WelcomeBC

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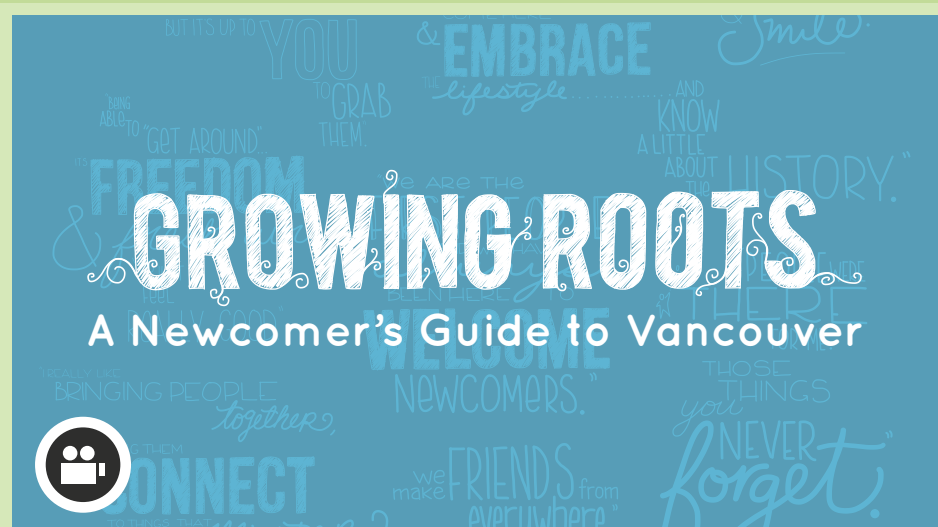
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Introduction

The Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver was developed in response to the diverse needs of people arriving in Vancouver; as an invitation for participation and civic engagement; and as a useful resource for accessing services and welcoming spaces.

The guide features stories shared by newcomers and long-time residents, and highlights resources on a wide range of topics, from getting around the city to obtaining information about key services to finding volunteer opportunities.



VIDEO: INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

youtu.be/TI5EPGNEMtw

Creating the Guide

The guide was created as part of an initiative called Welcoming Communities, which was coordinated by the City of Vancouver in collaboration with community partners. A Working Group guided its development, including gathering input for relevant topics and inviting community members to share their stories.

Inside the Guide

The guide is made of up three chapters (People, Neighbourhoods & Getting Involved, Services & Resources) with videos throughout. The chapters are organized into 31 sections containing interviews, overview summaries, links & resources and media.

Please see [Table of Contents](#) for the full listing.

Interactive Features

Throughout the Guide are clickable links that will take you to different sections within the guide (cross-references) or to external websites (hyperlinks).

For the PDF: cross-references appear in **purple text** and hyperlinks appear in **blue text**. The Table of Contents is also clickable, taking you to different sections of the guide.

For the iBook: bookmarks and hyperlinks appear in **orange text**. Other interactive features include embedded videos, photo galleries, maps and quizzes.

Available Formats

The guide is available on the City of Vancouver website (vancouver.ca/newcomers), and as part of the Vancouver Public Library eBook collection. It is available in the following formats:

- PDF: for computers with Adobe Reader and on demand printing
- EPUB: for computers or devices with eReader software
- iBook: for Apple devices

MAP: CITY OF VANCOUVER

This map highlights Vancouver's community centres, neighbourhood houses, family places, City Hall, Aboriginal Friendship Centre, and major transit routes. It was designed to be personalized (by filling in the blank fields with your local information). You can find a printed version at your local neighbourhood house or [click here](#) to download a PDF version.



If you look at the word community, you'll find 'unity' and that is the core value of our community. The 'unity' is there for everyone to be part of, to be recognized and acknowledged; a welcoming community and one that is built on respect.

– Susan Tatoosh

CHAPTER 1: PEOPLE

Newcomers bring a richness, a presence with them that will enrich this community, because of their unique cultural identity. If you remember this, you can enjoy a more successful life in Vancouver, your new home.

- Jacky Essombe, originally from Cameroon, living in Vancouver since 2001

PEOPLE



VIDEO 1.1: ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES
youtu.be/U4mg5IDKbmg



VIDEO 1.2: PEOPLE
youtu.be/g3MAVguQi-4



1.1 Local First Nations Perspectives



1.2 Urban Aboriginal Perspectives



1.3 Appreciating Diversity



1.4 Engaging Youth



1.5 Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion



1.6 Building Bridges For Women



1.7 Welcoming All Genders & Sexual Identities



1.8 Cultural Mentoring For Men



1.9 Embracing Seniors



1.10 Culture & Heritage



1.1 Local First Nations Perspectives

Wade Grant is an elected Councillor of the Musqueam Nation. He was Co-Chair of the Vancouver Dialogues Project which fostered stronger relations between Aboriginal and immigrant communities. He is a member of the Vancouver Police Board, the Aboriginal Tourism BC Board and the Laurier Institute board, among others. Wade, his wife Maureen and two children, Eli and Isla, live on the Musqueam Reserve.

Welcoming newcomers to our city

I have a direct connection to the welcoming of new immigrants. My father's father was a Chinese immigrant that came to Vancouver in the 1930s, married my grandmother who was First Nations. My grandmother on my mother's side, she was the daughter of two Norwegian-Scot immigrants. I know how difficult it was for them, for people to embrace their marriages to embrace their cross-cultural love. So I know that to get over that, to understand each other's history and culture and to share with one another really lessens the misunderstandings and dampens the mistrust that First Nations have. I think that First Nations interacting with non First Nations, especially new Canadians is important so we all understand each others histories and why we want to make this a better place to live.

The First People

When people come to Vancouver, they come here because of its beauty and its livability. But they do need to realize that for thousands of years, First Nations, the Musqueam people, lived here as well. We travelled all over the territory, from Vancouver to Burnaby to Coquitlam. We use the territory now that is called Vancouver and we lived there up until point of contact. After a number of years we were displaced and now we live in a very small territory, just a fraction of our territory We want people to know that the city of Vancouver didn't just start in 1886, the city of Vancouver has always had people that have lived here since time immemorial.

Welcome newcomers

As a young First Nations, Musqueam leader, I embrace every opportunity to welcome people to our territory. I want people to come here and embrace the lifestyle and know a little bit about the history. We want to welcome people as our ancestors welcomed the



first European settlers. We want people to know they are welcome in our territory and we enjoy letting them know a little about who we are because now our history is now their history as well.

Learning history

I really hope that people take an opportunity to learn a little more about First Nations people. Canada has many different histories and many different ways that it's been told, and it hasn't been told enough or listened enough to the voices of the First Nations people. Our histories have been told by historians that aren't from our communities and I think now is an important time in our history to get those stories out and I hope that people are able reach out and ask questions. First Nations want people to learn, and we want people to understand where we are coming from and why we are here and how long we've been here and I think that's important.

(This is a transcript from the interview with Wade as seen in Video 1.1. Wade was interviewed as a Co-Chair of the Vancouver Dialogues Project.)



1.2 Urban Aboriginal Perspectives

Susan Tatoosh is the Executive Director of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, and a founding member of the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council. She was Co-Chair of the Vancouver Dialogues Project which fostered stronger relations between Aboriginal and immigrant communities. She received the City of Vancouver civic merit award in 2013 for her many contributions to communities, and she is currently a member of the City's Urban Aboriginal People's Advisory Committee.

Urban Aboriginal Community

The urban Aboriginal community makes up about 3 per cent of the Vancouver population. Our community is very diverse. There are First Nations. They are people that have their status, those that don't as a result of the Indian Act, the Metis and the Inuit as well as and the indigenous people that come from around the world and choose to live in Canada.

Cultural values

First and foremost is community. If you look at the word community, you'll find 'unity' and that is the core value of our community. The 'unity' is there for everyone to be part of, to be recognized and acknowledged, a welcoming community and one that is built on respect. Our community is in place because we've recognized the needs that are not met. So we've had to create our own solutions. We've had to overcome all the barriers that were in place for us. Our community has been very innovative in addressing those needs.

The Aboriginal Friendship Centre

Here we're family and we're part of a larger family and that's the friendship centre movement which is right across Canada. Our role is providing a place for our urban Aboriginal people to maintain their culture, to participate in their traditional singing and dancing and to meet people and enjoy the practice of using their own language again and in having their own dialogues in their own language. It's also a place for them to show pride in their culture and in their tradition. And it's also a place that provides an opportunity for sharing of many cultures, languages, songs and dances.



Reaching out

We are the First People and that we have always been here to welcome newcomers and that one of the things that they would have to learn first is to forget the stereotype that they've seen in movie versions and to recognize that they don't know enough about us because there is not enough written about us in the school systems throughout the world. We are barely a mention in history lessons and I would really love the opportunity to introduce them to our community and in sharing where they came from and where we are and where we come from.

(This is a transcript from the interview with Susan as seen in Video 2.1. Susan was interviewed as a Co-Chair of the Vancouver Dialogues Project.)

Go to: [Links & Resources Aboriginal Perspectives](#)



1.3 Appreciating Diversity



Wanting Qu was 16 years old when she moved from China to Vancouver as an international student. Now 12 years later, she is a musical megastar. Her current album is triple platinum in Asia. She's also considered Vancouver's first tourism "Ambassador for Canada." A singer/songwriter in both Mandarin and English, she's committed to bridging both cultures through music.

I first came to Canada

I moved to Vancouver when I was 16, knowing very little English. My mother's mother died at a young age. Mother became an adult right away and became very successful, so she thought I should go to this foreign land and become something and then come back. She felt that it would be good for me too at the age of 16. So I came here and started to learn English. The culture, the way of thinking here and the humour are very different here and it took me a while to adapt.

Holding on to both my cultures

I see myself as half Chinese and half Canadian. I wouldn't have become who I am today if it weren't for the fact that I lived here for over 10 years. It is such a "dream come true" to be a part of both the west and the east; to make a difference and bring good to both countries.

My goals

I want to be that bridge that brings people together. I think a lot of my friends in China like Canada a lot. Not that they didn't before, but a lot of my fans don't get to see Canada like I do. But when I promote Canada and put up pictures they see things through my eyes. They have a greater appreciation for it. And vice versa. I have a lot of Canadian friends who like me as an artist or a friend and they want to know more about China. So I feel like I am doing a good thing here. I want to continue to do that.

My advice

I think there are a lot of Asian kids that come to Canada to go to school. They want to graduate with a commerce degree or a medical degree. That's what my mom wanted me to do and that's what I did. I got a bachelor's degree in business for her. But that was not for me. That was for her. It was not MY dream. I had to give that to her so she could let me do my thing. She's very proud of me today. Now, I want to inspire other kids. If you want to be an artist, be an artist. If you strongly believe that you have that talent in you, chase your dream and become that person you want to be.

(This is a transcript from a video with Wanting Qu and used with permission by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.)

Go to: [Links & Resources](#) [Appreciating Diversity](#)

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1.4 Engaging Youth

Miguel Testa came to Canada from the Philippines at age 17 and is now a student at the University of British Columbia. After taking part in citizenU, a civic anti-racism initiative, he developed an immigrant youth program called Project Buddy.

My first feelings here...

When I first came to Vancouver, I was pretty lonely. I didn't have any friends at all. It was only me and my mom. That's the whole family, we travel light. My mom wanted a better future for me.

How I got involved

I joined a community centre group: Killarney Youth Council. At first it was intimidating. I mean, community centres were a foreign concept to me. They have everything... some even have daycares or swimming pools. You don't have those in all countries. In my case, I wanted to start volunteering. I found that when you don't know any of the people, you might want to jump in but you worry that people will judge you — especially youth. But even though I wasn't talking a lot or interacting, even though I was socially awkward, I felt accepted. Volunteering is such a communal thing because we are working as a team.

Getting involved was easier than I thought it would be. The city's youth initiatives really make this a better place. When the city trusts its youth by putting money in their hands — not just to spread awareness, but actually do something — you take it seriously. And I did. Being an actual mover of the community is what inspired me to go all the way to university. I started becoming more vocal. Project Buddy was my contribution.

My advice to other youth



It's more comfortable to stay in your own shell. But don't be afraid. If you don't explore you don't evolve. When you step out of your comfort zone, you explore, and you immerse yourself: that's a better quality of life. Just take the jump. If you reach out it's there for you. I like my university's motto: "It's up to you."

And now...

I feel so part of the city now: a living breathing part of it. Getting involved in a youth program was the turning point when I realized I was helping build a better city. When you volunteer, when you try to help, you aren't just passively "liking" an issue on a social network. You are the one that will make sure there is something actually done about it.

Go to: [Links & Resources Engaging Youth](#)



1.5 Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion

Originally from Beijing, China, Karl Dai moved to Vancouver 10 years ago with his wife and young son. He was diagnosed with only 40 per cent hearing. But he still went on to graduate with distinction from BC Institute of Technology's (BCIT) Financial Program. He is currently a financial service representative at Vancity Credit Union.

From China to Vancouver

I first came as a visitor and thought "what a beautiful city" - greenery everywhere and people are friendly. So my wife and I researched, applied and within three years we moved! It was a shock. When you are a traveller you just enjoy. It was hard to adjust to a different system, culture and language. I left everything. We had no friends. Also, I didn't know that I had a hearing problem until my doctor here diagnosed me with only 40 per cent hearing. I was upset but I didn't want to let that stop me. I am very strong mentally.

Back to school

In China, I was a financial investment manager. It was my dream career, but my professional credits weren't recognized here. So, I went back to school. However, with my hearing problem, I couldn't always understand the teachers. Fortunately, my school had a resource centre that really helped support me. Every teacher wore a transmitter and they gave me a receiver. I could hear everything the professors said. It was incredible. Despite my disability, I graduated with distinction.

My first job

My school referred me to The Centre for Ability, a local non-profit group which works with people with disabilities. They saw my value and recognized my professional knowledge. They coached me and prepared me for interviews. Two months later I had three interviews with Vancity Credit Union (a bank) and they hired me. I was so excited! I felt that



finally I could continue on the path to my dream career. They were so supportive. They installed a system designed to help members and employees that are hard of hearing, hear. They asked for MY feedback on the technology. They saw my value. I can focus on my job rather than my disability.

Advice to a newcomer with a disability

Don't let your disability inhibit you from achieving your dreams. You need to be resourceful, have a warm heart, strong mind, and open manner. Life is challenging and not always fair but you have to see hope and then give back to others. That is my ultimate intention.

Go to: [Links & Resources Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion](#)



1.6 Building Bridges For Women

Melissa Briones came to Vancouver from the Philippines in 2011 with her husband and two small children. A graduate of Pacific Immigrant Resources Society's (PIRS) Building Bridges program for women, she's now the editor-in-chief of Canada's first nationwide Filipino-Canadian newspaper and a volunteer for Access Pro Bono.

Why we left our country

We came for the children. I have a three-year-old and a 12-year-old. The Philippines is considered a developing economy, although it's a busy metropolis. But Vancouver is a [well established] city. We knew it would afford our children opportunities they would not have in the Philippines. I didn't want them to have barriers or doors they would have to force open. So by moving here we are giving them, and ourselves, new opportunities.

Obstacles

Here, my [Philippine] law degree is [not recognized]. To practice law, I had to get the equivalent of a [Canadian] law degree. I think having the confidence that "I can do this" helps. I knew that I had to have the right mindset because, otherwise, I knew that I would never push on. I'm currently in the process of studying for the challenge exams, and I've enrolled in a family mediation course.

Advice

Education is the key. To resist that is to be foolish. If you really want to move forward, it's one of those things you should consider. I know it's hard and seems almost impossible, but it will help get your foot in the door. I got into a scholarship program from a local private college which gives scholarships every year for new immigrants. If you win the scholarship, then you can select from a variety of courses. I'm taking the Human Resources online course. That [way] I can practice Labour Law. Apply for those scholarships and bursaries. You should not be ashamed, embarrassed or afraid — you are entitled to it.



Just for Women

Three months after I arrived, I did the Building Bridges program at Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS). Now I am president of the University of Philippines Alumni Association in BC. We have professional development programs just for women. I'm a member of Spark Creations. It's a women's empowerment group. We have retreats that help us understand and empower ourselves. Together, we strengthen each other. Next, we are going to be talking about financial education mainly for women. I'm really excited about that.

Personal philosophy

Humility is a big thing in my life. When I came here, that is what kept me sane. If you think you are "up there" then life cannot give you anything more. You should bring yourself to the level where you can receive and become the most of what you can be in this foreign country — and then give back.

Go to: [Links & Resources Building Bridges For Women](#)



1.7 Welcoming All Genders & Sexual Identities

Humanitarian, human rights activist, and leader of not-for-profit groups Rainbow Refugee and LEGIT, Chris Morrissey has devoted a lifetime working for social justice including helping same-sex immigrants and refugees find a safe home in Vancouver and Canada in general. She was a pioneer in the fight to have same sex couples included under Canada's Immigration Law. Recently she was awarded the Diamond Jubilee Medal for her work.

My story

When I came here with my partner, a non-Canadian, in 1989, I had to start looking for ways for us to stay together. That's how I got into this whole arena. In 1992, I filed a suit in federal court alleging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, family, and gender, to enable my partner to stay in Canada. But the case never went to court because Immigration gave her Permanent Residence first. We, along with others, worked politically for 10 years before we got legislation changed to include same sex partners as part of the family class. So since 2002, if one person is Canadian, then the other can be sponsored and become a resident of Canada. That's the law now. We fought to end discrimination against same sex couples in the immigration legislation. And we won.

Vancouver's current scene for LGBTQ

Over the years I think there has been huge recognition in how big a part we play in the city of Vancouver. I think it really came home when we had the Gay Games here in 1990. That really began this sense of awareness on a bigger scale. It feels fabulous. We have the freedom to be who we are and walk down the streets with our partners, to have displays of affection. But we still have a long way to go. There is still violence against members of our community, but we also have the right to file a police report, which is enormous for many people



For those seeking refugee status

There is a way that LGBTQ people who are in Canada and who are afraid to return home] can stay. It's critical that before they go to an immigration office to seek refugee status they either contact us at Rainbow Refugee, or they contact legal aid to get a lawyer, or they contact local agency such as Settlement Orientation Services . Because, under the new legislation, the timelines [to file a claim] have been shortened so significantly that it's important for them to get basic information as soon as possible. Once someone has made a refugee claim, the process goes quickly.

My advice

There are many layers to Vancouver's community. A good starting point is Qmunity (BC's queer resource centre). They can help steer you towards finding your specific community, culturally, politically and spiritually.

Go to: [Links & Resources Welcoming All Genders & Sexual Identities](#)



1.8 Cultural Mentoring For Men

A 69-year-old mechanical engineer, Ashok Puri emigrated to Canada from Kashmir, India in 1969. He loves travelling and volunteers at MOSAIC to help new immigrants adjust to the culture. He is now retired.

My new immigrant experience

I worked for two years in India and then I came to Canada. I stayed with my brother's friend. He was like a mentor. I went to an employment agency to apply for a job. I went on a Friday — this was my second day in Canada. I was scared. I had only \$5 when I came and only \$2 left at that point. One of the clerks called me over and said, "You son of a gun." I was shocked. Is this how they talk in Canada? He said, "You are so lucky! I was going to post this job, but it matches what you are looking for. Go right now. I'm calling right now." I went there and started on Monday. I worked there for two years. I'm lucky. But positive thinking helps. Then things will happen.

My volunteer work

I provide cultural mentoring. I take people to hockey games, take them to concerts... local events and outings. People who aren't from here sometimes expect all Canadians to be white. Within a short time, it sinks in that Canada is not all white. We open up their minds and increase their confidence that "I am one of them." For example, I'm Chinese but I am also Canadian. I show them that their culture also exists here.

The Canadian family

At home, men and women in Canada share the daily chores. I see a family doing things together: the husband is barbecuing and the wife making the salad. Equal rights as far as job and home is concerned.

My Vancouver

Vancouver represents immigrants from around the world. And we can proudly be called Canadians. I am part of Vancouver. This is who I am. Multicultural and ethnic... we are all independent in our views about religion and culture. Vancouver is a land of opportunities — but it's up to you to grab them.

Go to: [Links & Resources Cultural Mentoring For Men](#)





1.9 Embracing Seniors

Clemencia Gomez came to Canada 17 years ago from Medellin, Columbia and is now Executive Director of the South Granville Seniors Centre. She's passionate about helping seniors find their way in Vancouver.

My story

When I first came to Vancouver from Latin America, I was a single mother and felt very isolated. The language was a huge barrier, so the first thing I did was go to an immigrant-serving agency and I enrolled in an English as a Second Language course. For me this was a beautiful personal experience; to see people from all over the world who were learning just like me, who were homesick like I was. This made me realize that, as human beings, we are all the same. I also realized how much of a struggle it was for the seniors in my class to learn a language amongst classmates who were much younger.

What we do

Our Seniors Centre has a program for immigrant seniors once a week. We provide computer classes, ESL classes, and exercise classes. After lunch we dance, we sing, we have parties or we talk. We also help them find information on medical support, and home support. If they need more information — about housing or how to get a bus pass, for example — we help them with that, too. It can be scary for these seniors so we try to make the transition as smooth as possible. That's why we are here.

The senior newcomer's experience

It can be hard when you come from your country as 'somebody' and then have to start over by learning a whole new language and culture. If seniors' classes are offered at a pace that is suitable for them, going slowly, they can learn without the pressures of a big English class. It's just more friendly.

Seniors in Vancouver

Vancouver is a beautiful city offering many opportunities for excursions and activities, but we all know how expensive it can be, especially on a limited or low income. Many com-

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munity groups provide recreational activities for the seniors at reduced rates.

The challenges

Finding housing for seniors is hard because it's costly and many seniors live on a low monthly income. Most come and live with their family, which isn't always ideal. Often we try to help them apply for social housing, which is housing subsidized by the government. Right now those seniors pay just 30 per cent of their income, but there are many people on the waiting list.

My advice

If you're new, look for people from your community first. You can find out about services this way and find support from people that might have more experience than you. By finding peers who support you in your own community, you can then go on to integrate more easily in the larger society.

Go to: [Links & Resources Embracing Seniors](#)



1.10 Culture & Heritage

Originally from Cameroon in central Africa, Jacky Essombe arrived in Vancouver in 2001. A teacher and performer, she works passionately to help others experience connection and community as she knows it through African dance and music.

When I first arrived in Vancouver

I was greeted with a “welcome to our country” and “thank you for choosing Canada to make your home.” I was shocked! In Europe where I was living, I was used to having to wait while they triple checked my passport because I am a black person. When they said “welcome” I cried. I was so happy. I did not realize how much it meant to me to be greeted warmly somewhere, until this happened.

My mission

When I came to Vancouver, I made a commitment to myself that I was going to share my culture: the African culture. At first I did it to undo the many misconceptions about African people and African culture. But the longer I was here the more I felt a sense of isolation and separation so common in the west, which we do not have in a village setting. There, life is made by everybody getting together. You need everyone together to create the whole. So through singing and dancing together, I want to give people the opportunity to experience that and to feel that connection and community.

What African dance and music can offer

I believe that when we dance we are in a vulnerable place. You really cannot hide who you are when you are dancing. It is an act of trust and a gesture of peace to have the courage to dance with other people. That is the sense we feel in a village. As a teacher, I don't care if you can do the step or not. That is not the point. At the end of the day we are dancing to the same music and feeling the same energy. In a village, everyone is together and not everyone dances the same way. We gain from each other because everyone has something to contribute. To me that is the experience of “community”. Not just sharing



the same space, but interacting with each other and “being” in the presence of each other. When I say “being” I mean dropping your defenses long enough for our energies to mix. When we dance together, when we sing together, we drop our shields and feel the energy that unites us all.

Hold on to your culture!

As newcomers, especially African people, we may think we have to let go of who we were before and completely embrace the western way of life. I believe that is not true. You have to maintain your own identity while you are immersing yourself in this new culture. For me being at home is not just being in Africa, it is more about what I carry within my heart. I've created a sense of home wherever I go through dance and bringing African culture to others. My advice to you is: come and bring what you have from your own culture and share it here. Do not lose yourself in the process of embracing a western lifestyle. Newcomers bring a richness, a presence with them that will enrich this community, because of their unique cultural identity. If you remember this, you can enjoy a more successful life in Vancouver, your new home.

Overview: Culture & Heritage

There are many opportunities to learn about, participate in, and contribute to the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Vancouver.

Many cultural communities have established centres in Metro Vancouver. Some are large dedicated centres such as the [Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Vancouver](#), [le Centre Culturel Francophone de Vancouver](#), [Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver](#) and [Vancouver Italian Cultural Centre](#). Members of different cultural communities also gather in smaller centres or more informally at local businesses, community centres, neighbourhood houses and places of worship.

Maintaining and strengthening connections to one's cultural heritage is important to many Vancouver families. Many arts and recreation groups, community and cultural centres, libraries, places of worship, post-secondary institutions and schools have community education programs offering classes in arts, cooking, language and other cultural practices. These may also include opportunities to participate in cross-cultural and intergenerational exchanges.

Vancouver has a vibrant arts and culture scene to enjoy and contribute to – at different levels, from amateur to professional. Cross cultural programs and experiences are regularly offered by arts and culture organizations such as the [Cinematheque](#), [The Dance Centre](#), [Museum of Vancouver](#), [UBC Museum of Anthropology](#), [Vancouver Asian Heritage Month](#), [Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra](#), [Vancouver International Film Festival](#) and many others.

The City of Vancouver also hosts annual cultural celebrations and commemorative events at city hall including: Lunar New Year, Black History Month, International Women's Day, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, International Refugee Day, National Aboriginal Day, Eid, Diwali Festival of Lights, Christmas, Pride Week, and the International Day of People with Disabilities. These, and many other cultural events and festivals, are increasingly multicultural with people from diverse cultural communities taking part and contributing.

Links & Resources

For additional information, please see [2.10 Organizing Events & Connecting Communities](#).



Links & Resources Aboriginal Perspectives

City of Vancouver

First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers
vancouver.ca/newcomers

City of Vancouver - Related Initiatives

- www.vancouverdialoguesproject.com
- vancouver.ca/people-programs/aboriginal-communities
- vancouver.ca/your-government/urban-aboriginal-peoples-advisory-committee

Musqueam Nation
www.musqueam.bc.ca

Tseil - Waututh Nation
www.twnation.ca

Squamish Nation
www.squamish.net

Metro Vancouver
www.metrovancouver.org/region/aboriginal

Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council
www.mvaec.ca/about/members

Return to [1.2 Urban Aboriginal Perspectives](#)



Links & Resources Appreciating Diversity

Government of Canada

- canada.ca/en/services/culture
- www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome

Province of British Columbia - Welcome BC

www.welcomebc.ca
www.gov.bc.ca/mit

City of Vancouver

- vancouver.ca/people-programs/diversity-and-multiculturalism
- vancouver.ca/your-government/multicultural-advisory-committee

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA)
www.amssa.org

Most Neighbourhood Houses and Settlement Service Organizations also offer support and programming. Click to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information.

Return to [1.3 Appreciating Diversity](#)



Links & Resources Engaging Youth

City of Vancouver - Recreation programs for youth
vancouver.ca/people-programs/recreation-programs-for-youth

VancouverYouth.ca - Directory of youth programs and organizations
www.vancouveryouth.ca

Vancouver Public Library - Programs and services for teens
guides.vpl.ca/teens

Vancouver School Board
www.vsb.bc.ca/programs

- District Reception and Placement Centre (DRPC)
- Engaged immigrant youth program
- Multicultural liaison workers
- Settlement workers in Schools
- Community School Teams

Vancouver Coastal Health
www.vch.ca/your_health/youth

Most neighbourhood houses, community centres and settlement service organizations also offer support and programming for youth. Click through to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#), [2.9 Community Centres](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information.

Return to [1.4 Engaging Youth](#)



Links & Resources Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion

Province of British Columbia - Ministry of Social Development and Innovation
www.eia.gov.bc.ca/pwd.htm

Community Living
www.communitylivingbc.ca

City of Vancouver
vancouver.ca/people-programs/accessible-city
vancouver.ca/your-government/persons-with-disabilities-advisory-committee

Vancouver Coastal Health
www.vch.ca/home

BC Coalition for People with Disabilities
www.bccpd.bc.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association (BC)
www.cmha.bc.ca

Most neighbourhood houses and settlement service organizations also offer support and programming for people with disabilities. Click to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information.

Return to [1.5 Disability, Accessibility and Inclusion](#)



Links & Resources

Building Bridges For Women

City of Vancouver

- vancouver.ca/people-programs/women
- vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/facilities-and-schedules

Vancouver Coastal Health
vch.ca/your_health/women

Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS)
pirs.bc.ca

Minerva Foundation
www.theminervafoundation.com

Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
www.bigsisters.bc.ca/en/Home/aboutus/default

BC Women's Enterprise Centre
www.womensenterprise.ca

YWCA
www.ywcavan.org

Most neighbourhood houses and settlement service organizations also offer support and programming for women and their families. Click to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information.

Return to [1.6 Building Bridges For Women](#)



Links & Resources

Welcoming All Genders & Sexual Identities

Government of Canada
www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome

City of Vancouver
vancouver.ca/people-programs/sexual-orientation

Qmunity
www.qmunity.ca

GAB Youth Services @ Qmunity
www.qmunity.ca/youth/gab-youth-services

Out in Schools
www.outinschools.com

Vancouver Coastal Health
www.vch.ca/your_health/lesbian_gay_bisexual_transgendered_twospirited

HIM: checkhimout.ca

Rainbow Refugee Canada: www.rainbowrefugee.ca

Legit Canada: www.legit.ca/contact

Return to [1.7 Welcoming All Genders & Sexual Identities](#)



Links & Resources Cultural Mentoring For Men

City of Vancouver – Recreation, social, cultural programs and facilities
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/facilities-and-schedules

Vancouver Public Library (VPL) – Man in the moon program
vpl.ca or call 604-331-3603

Vancouver Coastal Health
vch.ca/your_health/men

Big Brothers
www.bigbrothersvancouver.com

MOSAIC - Connecting fathers program
www.mosaicbc.com/family-programs/family-programs/connecting-fathers

Most neighbourhood houses and settlement service organizations may offer support and volunteer opportunities for men. Click to [2.4 Be A Volunteer](#), [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information

Return to [1.8 Cultural Mentoring For Men](#)



Links & Resources Embracing Seniors

Government of Canada
www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome

Province of British Columbia - Seniors BC

- SeniorsBC.ca
- Seniors' Guide: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=442A501304294470A793668B377B32C3
- Resources for seniors: www.servicebc.gov.bc.ca/seniors

City of Vancouver

- vancouver.ca/people-programs/seniors
- vancouver.ca/your-government/seniors-advisory-committee

BC Housing: www.bchousing.org/Find/Senior

Vancouver Coastal Health
www.vch.ca/your_health/seniors

Further Community Resources For Seniors, Seniors Centres And Groups

- 411 Seniors Centre: 411seniors.bc.ca
- Kerrisdale Seniors Centre: www.kerrisdalecc.com/seniors-centre
- South Granville Seniors Centre: www.southgranvilleseniors.ca
- South Vancouver Seniors Hub: www.theseniorshub.org
- West End Seniors Network: wesn.ca

Most neighbourhood houses and settlement service organizations also offer support and programming for seniors. Click to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information.

Return to [1.9 Embracing Seniors](#)

CHAPTER 2: NEIGHBOURHOODS & GETTING INVOLVED

“We encourage each other to live up to our potential and find happiness in being together. To not just live here, but embrace this new country. And to contribute! We encourage each other to do better.”

- Juvy Ebrano, originally from the Phillippines, moved to Vancouver four years ago

NEIGHBOURHOODS & GETTING INVOLVED



VIDEO 2.1 - NEIGHBOURHOODS & GETTING INVOLVED
youtu.be/7nRpwgb53v8



2.1 Getting Oriented



2.2 Exploring Vancouver



2.3 Getting Around (transportation)



2.4 Be A Volunteer



2.5 Food & Community Gardens



2.6 Parks & Beaches



2.7 Vancouver Public Libraries



2.8 Neighbourhood Houses



2.9 Community Centres



2.10 Organizing Events & Connecting Communities



2.1 Getting Oriented

Overview

When you move to a new city, it takes a while to get used to things and find your local services and shops. Vancouver is famous for its beautiful natural setting and more than 190 parks. It's surrounded by water on three sides, with a mountain range to the north. Looking for the mountains is the easiest way to figure out where you are.

There are countless online and in-person resources you can use to get oriented, even if you don't speak English. Don't be shy to ask people questions. English and French are the country's two official languages, but you'll hear people speaking all sorts of languages here, because almost half of the people living in Vancouver are immigrants.

The City of Vancouver is 114 km², with a population of 603,502 (in 2011). Metro Vancouver, which includes Burnaby, Surrey, North Vancouver and Richmond, is made up of 22 municipalities altogether, one electoral area, and one treaty First Nation. This larger area is also known as the Lower Mainland. Metro Vancouver is 2,877 km² in size and is home to 2,590,921 people (in 2011).

Canada's third largest city, Vancouver is consistently rated one of the world's top cities. Because of its location on the Pacific Ocean the temperatures here are milder than most Canadian cities. It seldom snows in winter or gets extremely hot in summer. This also means it rains a lot in winter. Newcomers from hot countries may benefit from using extra full-spectrum lights in their homes and offices.

Sites such as the totem poles at the University of British Columbia and in Stanley Park and the Maritime Museum on Kits Point can teach us about the origins of our city, its First Peoples, and the ways in which the settlers changed the local ecosystem and landscape. Now, Vancouver's many multicultural centres and festivals teach us about the global community that continues to enrich Vancouver's culture and help to make it a world-wide destination for travel, business, and immigration.

Links & Resources

Province of British Columbia

- www.welcomebc.ca
- www.hellobc.com/british-columbia

City of Vancouver

vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/geography

Metro Vancouver

www.metrovancouver.org

MAP: METRO VANCOUVER



LIONS BAY

ELECTORAL AREA A

BOWEN ISLAND

WEST VANCOUVER

NORTH VANCOUVER DISTRICT

ANMORE

NORTH VANCOUVER CITY

BELCARRA

COQUITLAM

PORT MOODY

PITT MEADOWS

MAPLE RIDGE

VANCOUVER

BURNABY

PORT COQUITLAM

NEW WESTMINSTER

RICHMOND

SURREY

DELTA

LANGLEY CITY

LANGLEY TOWNSHIP

TSAWWASSEN

WHITE ROCK



LEGEND

- Urban
- Industrial & Mixed Use
- Parks, Agricultural & Rural
- Major Roads



2.2 Exploring Vancouver

Overview

It's no secret that Vancouver is a rainy city. It was built in a temperate rainforest ecosystem and might rain anywhere from six to fourteen days a month. Fortunately summer is usually warm and sunny. That's when people get outside to enjoy festivals, live music, restaurant patios, and free outdoor movies.

No matter what the weather, it's a shame to stay inside with so many cultural activities and events available. You can watch buskers perform on Granville Island; go shopping on Main Street or in Gastown; have chai and sweets at the Punjabi Market or dim sum in Chinatown; explore Commercial Drive or the West End; or, play beach volleyball at Kits Beach or swim at Spanish Banks.

Countless amazing day trips are possible, both inside and outside the city limits: art galleries, museums, beaches, parks and mountains. Catch a ferry north to the Sunshine Coast or west to the Gulf Islands. You can ski, swim and sail all in the same day. There's so much to do for everyone.

Once you have a Vancouver Public Library card, you can borrow a Vancouver Inspiration Pass, which gives you free family admission to popular attractions, museums, heritage sites, gardens, fitness facilities and musical performances.

Event listings can be found in newspapers, magazines and on tourism websites, but local blogs like [Vancouver is Awesome](#) and [Scout Magazine](#) report on exciting things that are beyond the tourist destinations.

Links & Resources

City of Vancouver

- vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/areas-of-the-city
- vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture

Province of British Columbia - Hello BC

- www.hellobc.com/british-columbia/things-to-do
- www.hellobc.com/vancouver

Tourism Vancouver

www.tourismvancouver.com

Vancouver Public Library

- Cultural Access Pass
www.vpl.ca/events/details/cultural_access_pass
- Inspiration Pass
pwp.vpl.ca/inspirationpass

Granville Island

granvilleisland.com

Bored in Vancouver

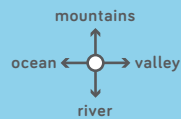
www.boredinvancouver.com



MAP: VANCOUVER'S NEIGHBOURHOODS

Note: For planning and statistical purposes, the City of Vancouver has historically divided the city into 22 local areas, as shown on this map. However, some neighbourhoods do not correspond to these boundaries, and are therefore not shown, such as the Downtown Eastside, Yaletown and Champlain Heights.

- Vancouver, BC - Neighbourhoods



LEGEND

- Vancouver City Hall
- Parks & Gardens
- Urban & Industrial
- Major Streets
- SkyTrain
- B-Line Bus
- SeaBus

Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Geographic Boundary Files, 2011 Census.



Exploring Vancouver

Favourite things to do on a rainy day...



Juvy Ebrani, from the Philippines

I like to [hike] the Grouse Grind. The rain doesn't stop me, it's nothing compared to the Philippines. It's fabulous to be outside in the rain.



Miguel Testa, from the Philippines

I'd take a date to Gastown to have a coffee somewhere. The not so fancy coffees will cost you less than \$10 for two.



Ruth Suarez, from Mexico

I read, watch TV, or go to the mall. Or I like to do something with the kids. Often we go to a community centre. There is always something to do [there]. They like the arts.



Ajay Puri, from Manitoba

I like going to annual art events like the 'Eastside Culture Crawl' and 'The Drift' on Main Street. Go to all the art galleries and see what happens...



Agnes Tsang, from China

I like swimming if it's not raining too heavily. Many people in Vancouver like to walk in the rain. Kensington Park is my favourite park. Even the rainy days when you feel sad, why not? Treat it like any other day? Might as well get out.



Valeria Mancilla, from Mexico

My son loves to paint rocks. We pick them up when it is raining. I came from a hot city. My son, because he is growing up here, doesn't care about rain. He wants to go out. He takes me to outdoor markets so that I can still feel a piece of my country.



AERIAL VIEW OF VANCOUVER





2.3 Getting Around (transportation)

Ileana Costrut immigrated from Romania with her parents and brother when she was 13. She now works at the University of British Columbia (UBC) helping to integrate sustainability into academic programs. She's "one" with her bike and loves to find different ways of getting around town — including bringing it on public transit.

Why we immigrated

Romania used to be a communist country. Right after the revolution in 1989, my parents had high hopes that things were going to change but not very much changed in the country. My dad was very disappointed. As a ship's captain, he was one of the few people who could leave the country during the communist regime. He could see how people lived in other places, and wanted better opportunities for my brother and me.

My relationship with transit

When we lived in Romania, we didn't really have a car. It was kind of a choice my parents made. So when we came here we eventually got a car but we only used it for long distance trips. In the city we used public transit. It was very easy for me because the transit system here is so nice and organized. In Romania the trolley buses were packed! Here, everyone is so nice. You can ask people directions and not worry that you are going to be robbed on the bus. Here you don't really have to think about those things. Also, transit arrives on time.

My first bike

When I was going to university, my mum bought a bike at a garage sale. This one only had two gears. Since I didn't know anything about bikes, other than how to ride one, I didn't know it wasn't a good bike. Eventually, my bike was stolen and a friend gave me his old one. This bike was amazing because it had gears. Going up hills was such a different experience and I loved it. Now I bike everywhere. I can take my bike on transit easily, and the bike routes are awesome. I really like having the BC Transit foldable map. I like trying



out the different routes just for fun. It's very easy to get around Vancouver by bike. I think it's one of the most bike-friendly cities that I've been to. Even the drivers are nicer and understanding. They don't honk at me if I am taking part of the lane or taking a bit longer.

Favourite bike routes

I love Ontario Street because of the views. You see all of the mountains and the heritage homes with a lot of gardens. I also love 37th between Main and Victoria. It has little hills and sidewalks that are only open to cyclists. Flowers are grown in these [boulevards]. It's really beautiful.

Being local means

Being able to "get around". It's freedom and fresh air - you just feel really good. My favourite part of the day is my commute. I love to feel the seasons change. It's so easy to get around. Anything I need to do, I can get there. There are many ways to get around the Greater Vancouver Area (GVA).



Overview: Getting Around

People here like to walk as much as possible; it helps the planet and is an excellent form of exercise. If you do, be sure to pay attention to traffic and obey pedestrian crossing signs, especially at night. Wearing dark colours makes you hard to see. Always cross at an intersection — anywhere else is illegal.

Cycling is a great option because of Vancouver's extensive bikeway system. Use the websites to plan routes with the least amount of traffic or elevation gain. A bicycle route map is available for free at Vancouver City Hall.

Read up on the rules and regulations before riding. For example, it's illegal to ride on sidewalks and to ride without a helmet. Warn pedestrians when you're passing them and be cautious in traffic — it's hard to stop in the rain and electric cars are nearly silent.

Public transit is an excellent choice. TransLink's integrated system includes buses, SkyTrain, SeaBus and the West Coast Express, a commuter rail service. Paper schedules are available around town, or online through TransLink.bc.ca. This site offers a wealth of helpful resources such as schedules, fares and route information, but it also explains how to request a stop, transport a bicycle, or have proper transit etiquette (manners).

To drive in Vancouver you must have a valid BC Driver's Licence, but you don't necessarily have to own your own car. Car sharing companies like car2go, ZipCar and Modo rent them out by the hour or day.

For both passengers and drivers, carpools and ride shares are available throughout the city. It's also a good idea to keep the number of a local taxi cab company with you, just in case you ever need to get somewhere as soon as possible.

Vancouver's Taxi Saver Program provides a 50 per cent subsidy towards the cost of taxi rides to seniors who are registered for HandyDART, TransLink's door-to-door shared-ride service for people with disabilities.

You don't need a car to get out of town and explore nature. Brian Grover's Car-Free Outdoor Guidebook offers information about more than 90 trips in Southwestern BC.

Links & Resources

TransLink - Transit system for Metro Vancouver
www.translink.bc.ca

Translink Videos
youtube.com/user/translink

HandyDART - A service for passengers with physical or cognitive disabilities
www.TransLink.ca/en/Rider-Guide/Accessible-Transit/HandyDART

ICBC - Drivers licences and car insurance
www.icbc.com/driver-licensing/moving-bc

City of Vancouver - Transportation information
vancouver.ca/streets-transportation

UBC - Cycling routes in Metro Vancouver
www.cyclevancouver.ubc.ca/cv

Car-Free Outdoor Guidebook
www.car-free.ca



2.4 Be A Volunteer

Ruth Suarez emigrated from Mexico in 2001. She's a domestic abuse survivor who now volunteers at the crisis line at Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS). Previously she helped with other domestic violence groups at Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, where she still volunteers. She also volunteers at Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House. Ruth and her husband have two young sons.

Moving to Canada

I finished my bachelor's degree in tourism and studied English in Mexico, but it wasn't very good so I thought, 'I'll go to Canada and practice my English.' I stayed because I fell in love. I got married. It was very hard to adjust because my English wasn't very good and my education in tourism was not recognized. I didn't have any Canadian experience. I had no local contacts and no back up. I was on my own, I had to start all over.

Volunteering opened doors for me

I know how it feels to be in that situation when you have no friends and it seems like the end of the world. Last year I volunteered with a group at Kiwassa for women dealing with domestic violence. I also volunteer at Battered Women's Support Services. I just finished my training there and started my practicum for the crisis intake lines. People were there for me. Those things you never forget. So, I felt the need to give back to help other people like I was helped.

Vancouver appreciates its volunteers

Every year there is a big dinner at the neighbourhood house and they make you feel so special. Every neighbourhood does it. You can invite your family. They treat you like a guest. They recognize you in front of everyone and they give you a gift. Everyone is so thankful and hugs you. When I received my volunteer diploma, my kids were so proud of me. It's very rewarding.



Advice to newcomers

Don't feel lonely. There are a lot of amazing people out there at neighbourhood houses and community centres. You can go there and volunteer. Volunteering is the best way to get to know the system. People are going to get to know you. You're going to get Canadian experience and learn how things are supposed to be done here.

Looking back

Now I feel strong and happy. I feel I am in the position where I now can help others. That's why I volunteer.



Overview: Be a Volunteer

Do you want to get more connected in your community? Do you have interests or talents you want to develop or share? Would you like to build your skills or experience to be better able to find employment?

Volunteering is an important part of Canadian life and culture and has many benefits. These benefits include:

- satisfaction and pride in helping the community,
- opportunities to make new friends and to learn more about what's going on, and
- training, work experience and possible references for future paid employment.

Community organizations throughout Vancouver welcome volunteers and are looking for someone just like you. People of all ages, cultures and backgrounds are making a difference as volunteers. Contact your local community organization and ask about volunteer opportunities. You might feel shy at first, but you will meet many people just like yourself and your help will be much appreciated.

Most neighbourhood houses and settlement service organizations also offer opportunities for volunteering. Click through to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#) and [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) for further information.

Links & Resources

City of Vancouver – Volunteer opportunities
vancouver.ca/people-programs/volunteering

Volunteer BC
www.volunteerbc.bc.ca

Volunteer Canada
volunteer.ca

Get Involved
www.getinvolved.ca

- Get Involved Quiz
www.getinvolved.ca/vquiz/english
- Testimonial Compilation
qmediasolutions.com/file/gi12-102_compilation4-1/



2.5 Food & Community Gardens

Maximo Morales moved to Vancouver from Guatemala 17 years ago. He works full time and enjoys gardening at his family's community plots around the city in the evenings or on weekends.

Gardening keeps a heritage alive

We've been working the Mayan Garden at the University of British Columbia for almost 10 years. They give us an acre of land to work with other families on the weekends. We love working in the garden and we want to plant our own traditional Guatemalan vegetables - corn, beans, squash - because we can't find them in the stores here.

There's one you can use as a medicinal plant, the hierba mora. You can cook it, you can use for salad, and this one has lots of calcium. There's one you call Ruda in Spanish. We have rosemary. We plant sage, too. We go and get them from Lillooet. We use some of them for Mayan ceremonies; we burn them.

We have a garden in Collingwood and one in our neighborhood at Grouse Point. We like this one because it's close to our home. It doesn't matter where. The thing is, we love working in the garden. We love working with the soil.

Building connections through gardens

When we first moved here we thought we would never have the same closeness to mother earth that we had in Guatemala, that it would be lost to the city life. For exam-

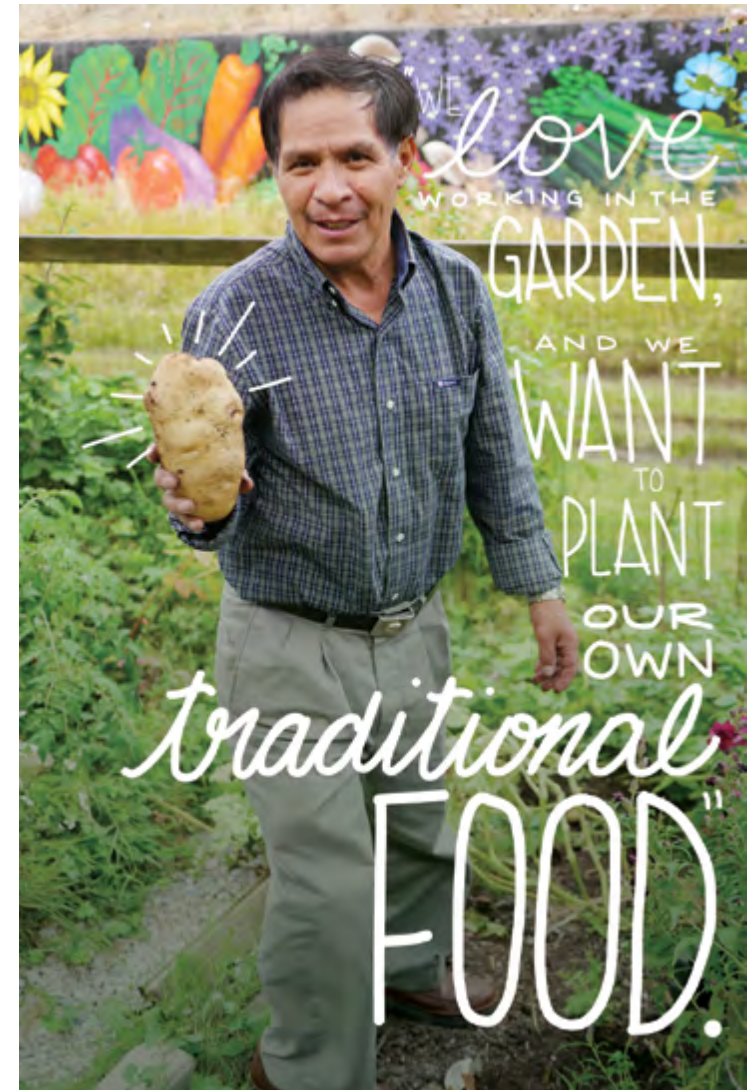
ple, we thought we would be buying all our vegetables instead of growing our own. We never expected to have this land. Now, we feel a part of community with others as we share knowledge through planting and harvesting seasons. We've met like-minded people who come to escape the stress and busyness of the city and find peace with the land. Sometimes when we are there we forget we even live in a city.

Advice for newcomers

You have to be patient. Sometimes you'll want to do something but you can't. At first I was looking for a job — and there were jobs, but you have to speak English to have a job. So first of all you have to learn the language.

I felt local when...

I think after a few years. Now sometimes we don't think about our country as much. Of course, at the beginning, we had problems adapting to the new culture and the new climate. After several years, we were OK. But the beginning, it was very hard for us, especially because we couldn't speak English. That was one of our problems... to communicate with people in Canada.





Overview: Food & Community Gardens

Newcomers often like to find foods they're familiar with. Luckily, Vancouver is extremely culturally diverse and offers many wonderful ethnic stores and restaurants. Foods from around the world are readily available, but you may have to explore different neighbourhoods to find your favourites.

Some people use the local community gardens to grow some of the fruits and vegetables they loved back home. Urban farming is a big focus here, and there are many resources available to help you get your own plot or grow container gardens on your balcony.

If you have enough land, you might even consider getting permits, renting a booth at a local market and selling your products to the public. People in Vancouver love shopping at local farmers' markets. That way they know the produce is fresh, and often organic. Plus, they prefer to support the local farmers directly.

Non-profit groups like Neighbourhood Food Networks (NFN) and Village Vancouver support Vancouver area food producers and help provide access to information, social gatherings and land.

For people in need, the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society provides staples like canned food and dry goods for up to 25,000 members each week.

Links & Resources

City of Vancouver

- vancouver.ca/people-programs/food
- vancouver.ca/people-programs/growing-food
- vancouver.ca/people-programs/community-gardens

Vancouver Farmers Markets

www.eatlocal.org/markets.html

Foodbank

www.foodbank.bc.ca

Village Vancouver

www.villagevancouver.ca

City Farmer

www.cityfarmer.info

Vancouver Urban Farming Society

www.urbanfarmers.ca

UBC Farm

ubcfarm.ubc.ca/teaching-learning/indigenous-initiatives

Video: Tourism BC - Farmers' Markets in Vancouver,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=we9bhj-GkMY



2.6 Parks & Beaches

Berenice Freedome is a writer who moved to Vancouver in 2008 from Calgary, via Ontario. (She took the scenic route).

Favourite things about Vancouver

I love the coast and the way the city is integrated with nature. There's always free outdoor entertainment including music and cultural festivals, great buskers performing for tips on Granville Island, and free movies in the parks. Plus, you can get on the seawall and bike or walk or run for hours, but you're almost always beside the ocean or in the forest so it's absolutely breathtaking every step of the way — even in the rain, if you're dressed for it.

We're lucky to have so many wonderful off-leash areas like Trout Lake, where dogs—and dog owners—can socialize.

Discovering nature

I've recently discovered trail running. It's so much more fun to get exercise in a gorgeous natural setting. The air out there smells wonderful. I'm a big fan of Pacific Spirit Regional Park and Stanley Park.

I felt local when...

I started making more friends and having dinner parties. For shy people like me, it's not easy to establish friendships here, but once you do, everything seems to open up.

A few highlights

Vancouver offers gorgeous beaches, nature walks, incredible restaurants, and world-class



yoga. Going to my Saturday morning class overlooking False Creek is one of the highlights of my week. Some of the parks provide free basketball or tennis courts, baseball diamonds and even beach volleyball. There's no excuse for not getting outside. During the summer, the drum circles on the beach can be quite fun. You can go for a dip in the ocean to cool off, then dance until you're dry. The circles are inclusive and welcoming and the beach setting in Stanley Park or at Spanish Banks are idyllic. Even just relaxing on a park bench can be a nice way to meet new friends.

Advice to newcomers

Wear natural fabrics in layers and get a lightweight raincoat you can roll up and keep with you. Carry around a water bottle and reusable grocery bags, too. Plastic bottles and bags are unpopular in this eco-minded city.

We're blessed to live in such a safe city, but it's still important to be mindful of where you're going and aware of what's happening around you, particularly in parks and dense urban areas.



Overview: Parks & Beaches

Vancouver is an active city built on a coastal temperate rainforest so its parks get very busy. Even in the rain!

There are over 200 City-run parks, beaches and cultivated gardens where you can relax, play, picnic or just appreciate the flowers, trees and wildlife. Vancouver's most famous park, Stanley Park, is a 1,000-acre landmark where you can enjoy stunning views of Burrard Inlet. Other destination parks are Queen Elizabeth Park and Hastings Park (this is where the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) is located). For destination/cultivated gardens, visit the VanDusen Botanical Garden, Bloedel Conservatory or the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Gardens.

Many parks offer children's playgrounds or water spray parks. They also offer a variety of recreational areas such as soccer fields and tennis courts. Family events happen at various times throughout the year. Throughout the summer people enjoy the beaches, free outdoor movies, weekly drum circles, or live music events like the annual folk music festival.

A public seawall path runs alongside the ocean so you can enjoy walking, running, rollerblading, or cycling with a scenic view — and sometimes even catch a glimpse of wildlife such as seals or herons.

Vancouver's beaches are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. They all have their own character. Visiting Vancouver's beaches is a must. Check out English Bay, Jericho Beach, Kitsilano Beach, Locarno Beach, Second Beach, Spanish Banks, Sunset Beach and Third Beach. These are great destinations to go swimming in the summer, go for long walks and fantastic places for family outings. Many places are set up so that people can enjoy picnics and barbecues. You can also explore and enjoy the fantastic watersport opportunities that Vancouver has to offer.

Vancouver has three public outdoor swimming pools located at the waterfront - Kitsilano pool, New Brighton pool and Second Beach pool.

Links & Resources

Province of British Columbia – Provincial Parks
www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks

City of Vancouver

- vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture
- vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/things-to-do

Metro Vancouver – Regional Parks

www.metrovancouver.org/services/parks_lscr

Tourism BC

www.hellobc.com

APPS – Park-finder

cfapp.vancouver.ca/parkfinder_wa



2.7 Vancouver Public Libraries

Three years ago, Frances Huang moved to Vancouver from China with her eight-year-old son. She's currently studying accounting and is a part-time ESL teaching assistant through Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS). She loves sharing her passion for books with her son and her students.

Arriving in Canada

I came to Vancouver to start a new life for my son and me. When I first got here, it was good. It was like people said it would be: a honeymoon period. Then all sorts of challenges came up. As a single mom, it was hard to balance finding a job, improving my English, learning technical skills as well as looking after my son without any help at first. It was very hard.

My first step forward

I've always loved books, so when I arrived here I searched to find the nearest library to my home. Fortunately there were two. Within a week of landing in Vancouver, I applied for a library card for me and for my son. We were so happy. I called my parents and told them about all kinds of books you could borrow. Instantly, the library felt like a second home.

ESL book club

I joined the library's ESL book club. There were other newcomers from all over the world. We all had different perspectives on the books because of our different backgrounds. It was really nice. Gradually, I improved my English. A year later, I joined the regular English-speaking book club. It was quite amazing and quite a challenge. In the meantime, my son participated in the children's summer reading book club. He loves reading too.

Other ways to use the library

From the library, you can find all kinds of resources. I found out about the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. I joined their YWCA Single Mother's Support Group. I also joined a job readiness program and learned to write resumes and cover letters. It's totally different from China, so I needed to learn a new way. My son and I also received the Inspiration Pass through the library. It's a free pass to see many Vancouver sights that would otherwise be too expensive for newcomers. My favourite place was the Museum of Anthropology.



Giving back

I also joined two programs at PIRS. They needed an ESL outreach worker [teacher's assistant]. I applied for the job and they gave me a chance! I was so happy because people have helped me and I wanted to help people too. We take our students on field trips to the library so they can apply for library cards. Once they have a card, they can have access to all the many resources and books available to ESL students - everything from learning English to job hunting. I feel very fortunate that I can combine my passion for the library with my work helping other newcomers.

A fun way to see Vancouver.

Two years ago, I decided to take my son to visit all of the libraries. There are 22 branches in Vancouver. They are like tourist sites. After our visit to the Kitsilano library, we bought donuts, then sat on the beach and read the books we'd borrowed from the library. A great way to get to know the city!



Overview: Vancouver Public Libraries

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is an excellent source of free information and support for newcomers.

The 22 library branches throughout the city loan out books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, and eBooks, and also offer a wide range of online resources and programs. For example, the Vancouver Inspiration Pass will give you and your family free access to cultural and recreational opportunities throughout the city for a two-week period.

Library staff can help you find information in many different languages on almost any topic. Your library card will let you access more than 2,200 digital newspapers from 97 countries in 54 languages. For those who can't read well, the VPL website can even read the newspaper to you.

Children of all ages enjoy story times and other events like the award-winning Man in the Moon early literacy program for toddlers and their dads or male caregivers.

Plus, the library offers free classes such as basic computer or job search skills. Free library tours can teach you how to make the most of the library's services for specific searches such as English language training.

Visit the [VPL website](#) to find out how to get a library card and read about the many outstanding library services and programs. Learn how to get started (now available in eight languages).

Links & Resources

Vancouver Public Library (VPL)
www.vpl.ca

- Branches
www.vpl.ca/branches
- ESL Resources
guides.vpl.ca/content.php?pid=173284&sid=1457916
- Skilled Immigrant Info Centre
skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/index.php/infocentre
- Inspiration Pass
pwp.vpl.ca/inspirationpass
- Cultural Access Pass
www.vpl.ca/events/details/cultural_access_pass
- Calendar of Events
www.vpl.ca/calendar

Province of British Columbia - New to BC - Library Link for Newcomers
NewtoBC.ca



2.8 Neighbourhood Houses



Originally from the Philippines, Juvy Ebrano moved to Vancouver four years ago from Toronto, where she lived for three years. She's now a part-time program assistant at Kiwassa Longhouse Out of School Care.



The biggest adjustment moving here

The weather. In the Philippines, we don't have winter so we're not used to the harsh climate. Also, I don't have family here to anchor on, so becoming part of a community was very important.

Enter Kiwassa Neighbourhood House

A neighbourhood house is like a mother, it helps you explore and spread your wings. I always consider it a place of great possibility. It helps you anchor to what you can become and how you can be of help to yourself and others. You can train to be a better person and contributor to the community.

There are a lot of resources here. It's an amazing place! For example, there are programs for seniors, Internet access, child care, ESL, and so much more. If you want to meet up with friends and do crafting or cooking you can do that here! It's like a big living room. People are very welcoming and very helpful. I first came to the neighbourhood house to volunteer in the food program, then the child care program and the front desk. It's a wonderful opportunity to meet people and have a meaningful experience. I now work here and I'm very proud to be part of the Kiwassa Neighbourhood House family.

Juvy's neighbourhood house experience

There are a lot of workshops for you to take here. The neighbourhood house helped me to explore my potential. Three years ago they had a leadership workshop — I was one of the participants. It helped tremendously. I learned how to apply for a grant. I learned everything from planning, creating, organizing with others, and how to prepare an application before an event. It was hands-on and a real springboard for me.

How I help my neighbourhood

Immigrants like to stick together like family as we all integrate together into Canadian society. To help with this, I created a group called "Caregiver Connection" for other caregivers in the community three years ago.

And with the skills I learned from the Community Leadership Program, our group got a grant from the Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grants to host a Halloween Costume Party. We don't celebrate Halloween back home. So, for most of the participants, it was their first time wearing a costume and was a fun way to learn Canadian culture. The grant helps people come together and learn new things. We encourage each other to live up to our potential and find happiness in being together. To not just live here, but embrace this new country. And to contribute! We encourage each other to do better.

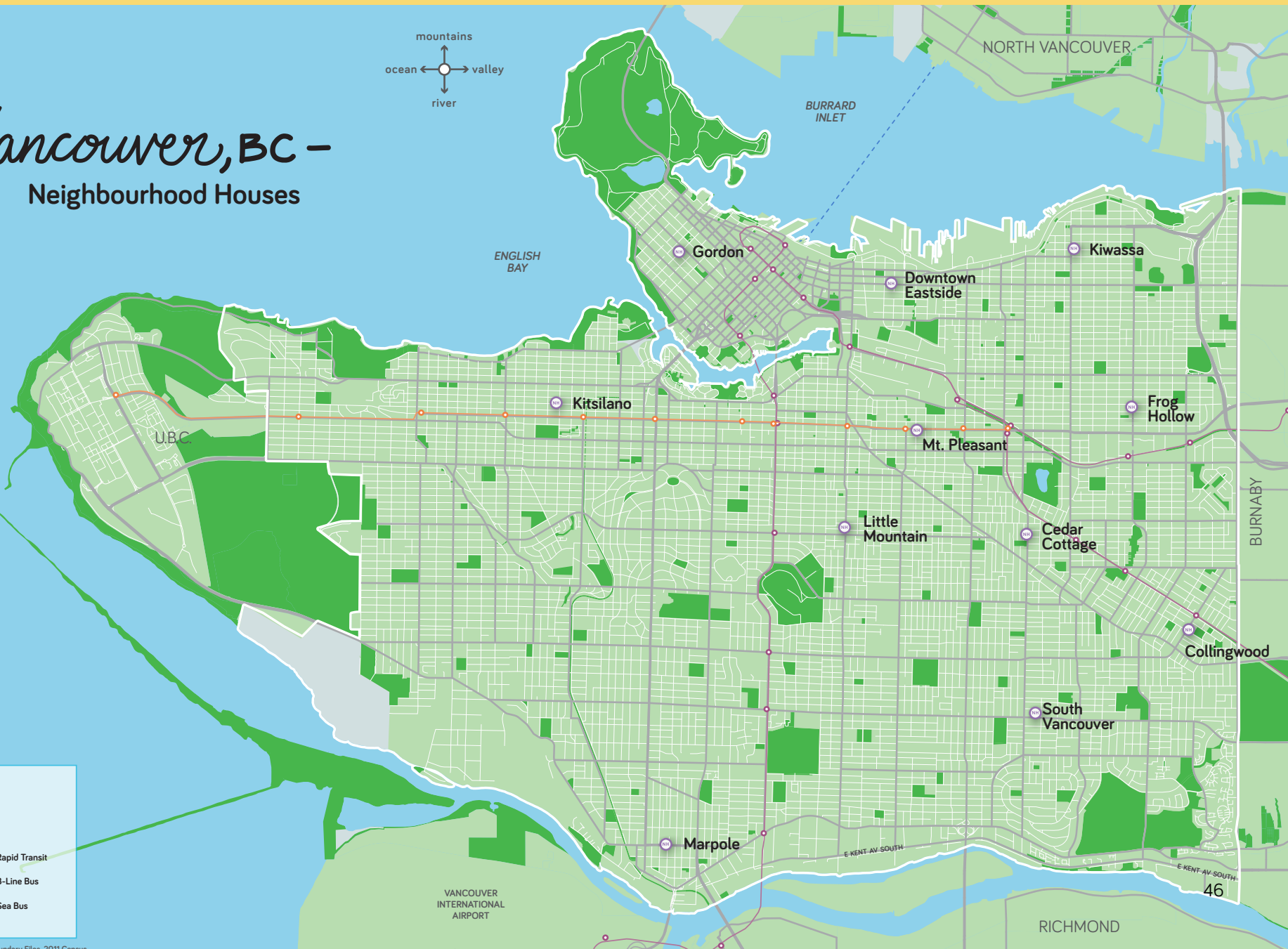
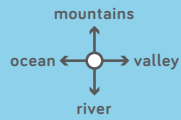
My advice

Have a role model in mind. Be near to those people who you want to become and talk to them and see how you can become like them. The success of a neighbourhood depends on how involved the people in the community are. It's important to go out and help the community to grow for the better.



MAP: VANCOUVER'S NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

- Vancouver, BC - Neighbourhood Houses



LEGEND

- Neighbourhood Houses
- Parks & Gardens
- Urban & Industrial
- Major Streets
- Rapid Transit
- B-Line Bus
- Sea Bus

VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

RICHMOND

46



Overview: Neighbourhood Houses

Canada prides itself on being a peaceful nation that's welcoming to people from all over the world. A great way to get to know Canadian culture is to learn about Vancouver's other ethnic cultures, and find ways to contribute to community life.

A neighbourhood house is a welcoming place where you and all area residents are invited to drop in, get information, participate in programs, and spend time sharing ideas. They're non-profit agencies that offer a broad range of free or low-cost services and programs for families and people on their own.

Their programs offer something for everyone in your family. There's a playgroup for young kids, homework help and social events for children and youth, child care and parenting help for mom and dad, and social activities for seniors.

Some of the houses' events include community breakfasts, game nights, cooking classes, or multicultural drop-in nights — even fresh food and clothing exchanges. Join in for monthly potluck dinners and family nights.

Neighbourhood houses also offer settlement services for new Vancouverites. Go in and ask about ways to study or practice English, get help finding employment, or register for volunteer or leadership training.

You're always welcome to go in and ask questions, or get referrals to other Canadian services. The staff and volunteers at your local neighbourhood house speak many languages. Many of them are immigrants themselves and know how to make the most of a new life in Canada.

Links & Resources

Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC
www.anhbc.org

Vancouver Family Connections - Links to most programs and family places
www.vancouverfamilyconnections.org

Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
www.cedarcottage.org

Collingwood Neighbourhood House
www.cnh.bc.ca

Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
www.dtesnhouse.ca

Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
www.froghollow.bc.ca

Gordon Neighbourhood House
www.gnh.vcn.bc.ca

Kitsilano Neighbourhood House
www.kitshouse.org

Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
www.kiwassa.ca

Little Mountain Neighbourhood House
www.lmnhs.bc.ca

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
www.mpnh.org

Marpole Neighbourhood House
www.marpoleplace.ca

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
www.southvan.org



2.9 Community Centres



Heather McCrae is a freelance writer/director and mom of twins Rupert and Nathaniel. She and her husband Neil have lived in Hastings Sunrise since 2010. They both moved from Alberta.



I felt local...

When I became a mom. Because I was able to meet other moms and other moms made me feel like I could get out. There is so much to do with your kids, and when you go and take your kids places, you meet other people. That's how I felt welcome in Vancouver and made a network for myself. My community centre was the start. There are age-appropriate things to do at every level from newborn to toddlers to adolescent to adults. There's dance, music and art, they learn to think outside of the box. It's all affordable and a great way to meet other families.

Favourite things to do at the community centre

Regularly, we drop in on the parent and tot gym program. It's so much fun for them and me. There are cars and blocks and miniature houses they can play with. On the weekends, some have blow up bouncy castles to jump in. I've watched my kids go from shy little guys to outgoing confident toddlers. It's great to see them learning to

share with others and socialize. As for me, we've gone so much that I look forward to going because, chances are, I'll know some of the parents there and we can catch up. It's a great feeling of community that's building in and around my children's needs.

Favourite things to do with my kids around Vancouver

I love to go to the parks and explore the different plants with them. My kids, before the age of two, can talk about rosemary, poppies, fennel, sage, lavender. This grows wild in the parks and neighbourhoods. I love that.

My advice

Find out where your local community recreation centre is and sign up for things that interest you. Vancouver's community centres are the heart of every neighbourhood. Meet and make friends while learning pottery, salsa dancing, swimming. Or maybe host a family reunion or a party in their common room.

Overview: Community Centres

Vancouver's community centres and recreation facilities are great places to stay active, learn new skills and meet people. They're City-owned facilities where people can meet for social, cultural, or recreational purposes.

Vancouver's 24 community centres, 13 indoor and outdoor pools and eight rinks offer a broad range of services for all ages and interests. Many community centres have fitness centres. You can even find a climbing wall or pottery studios in some community centres. With facilities conveniently located across the city, you can swim, exercise, skate, practice martial arts and yoga, learn ballroom or Bhangra dancing, play a new instrument, or be inspired by a range of creative arts programs, all in your neighbourhood.

Register for a program or enjoy some classes on a drop-in basis. These facilities provide a great place to meet, mingle and celebrate with friends and family for all occasions. Many also provide childcare options and activities for busy families.

Many community centres offer subsidized programs/events for children, youth and/or seniors. Community centres usually offer after-school programs, day camps or childcare activities as well as family programs.

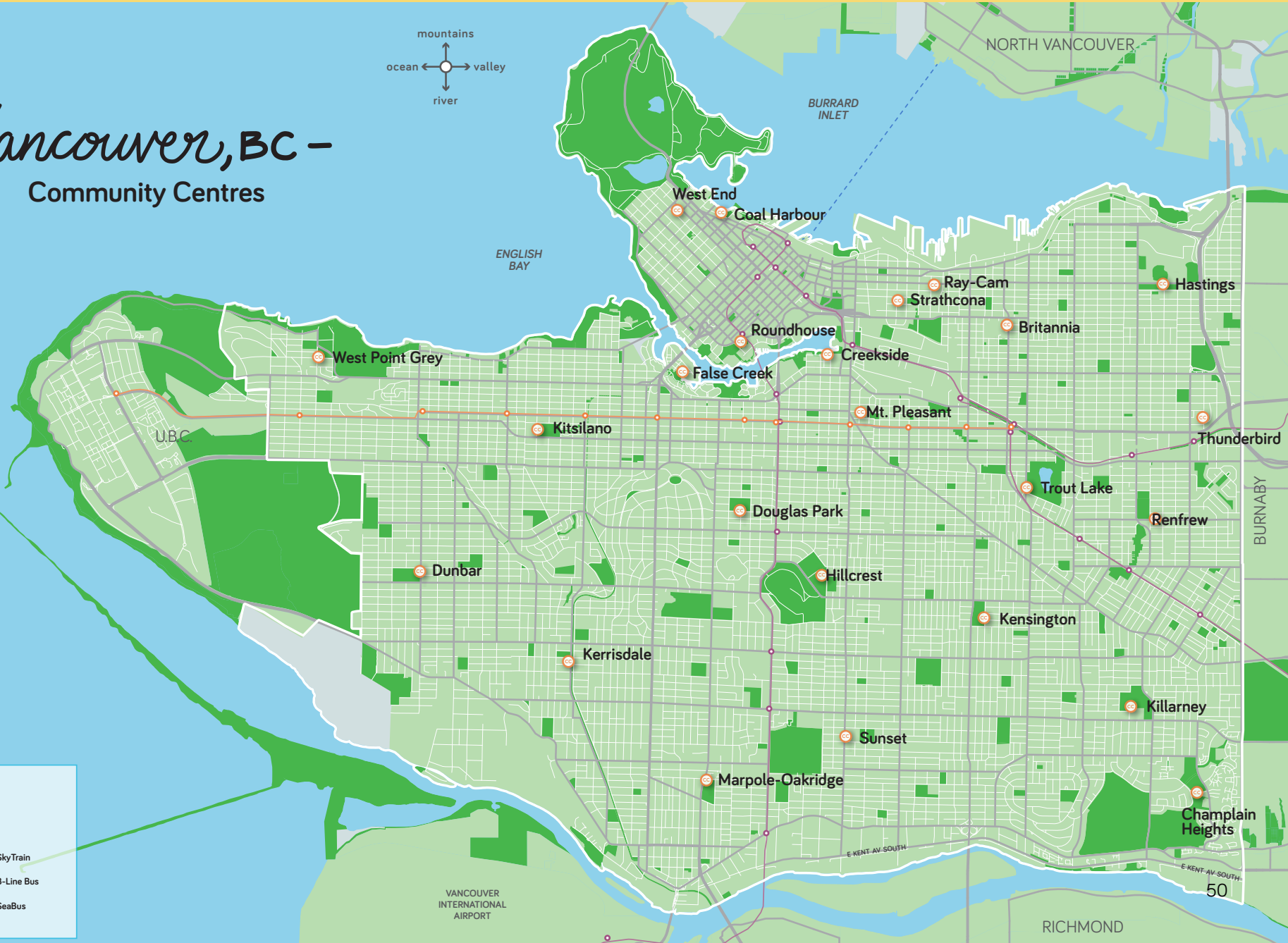
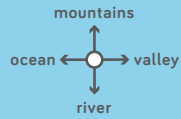
People of all ages are getting active and enjoying universal access to recreation programs and services in Vancouver with the Park Board's OneCard system-wide pass. The customizable pass is available across the Park Board network at all rinks, pools and community centres throughout the city at no cost. The OneCard can be loaded with a 10-visit pass or Flexipass options, and includes a built-in 50 per-cent Leisure Access Program subsidy for qualified Vancouverites with financial barriers.

Community centres provide newcomers the opportunity to meet new people, experience new activities and make new friends.



MAP: VANCOUVER'S COMMUNITY CENTRES

- Vancouver, BC - Community Centres



LEGEND

- Community Centres
- Parks & Gardens
- Urban & Industrial
- Major Streets
- SkyTrain
- B-Line Bus
- SeaBus

Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Geospatial Boundaries Files, 2011 Census



Links & Resources

City of Vancouver

Follow this link for a comprehensive directory of all Community Centres and Recreation Facilities
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/community-and-cultural-centres

Facilities and schedules
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/facilities-and-schedules

Leisure Access Program
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/leisure-access-card





2.10 Organizing Events & Connecting Communities



Ajay Puri came to Vancouver from Manitoba 16 years ago and has ancestry from Kashmir, India. Being in a city as beautiful and as diverse as Vancouver for half his life has really grounded him and he has been able to create several networks including co-founding #EastVanLove, Changemakers Night Out, Rangichangi Roots and the event listing guide of the Vancouver Observer, Bee Vancity.



Initial feelings about Vancouver

We were newcomers as a family of four. It was really hard because we were new to the city and coming from 'friendly Manitoba' where we were very integrated with the local and South Asian populations there. We didn't really know anyone here except for my father's brother. Not only was it much more expensive to live here, it also somehow seemed colder, and thus was harder to truly connect with people.

Volunteering to connect to the new city

I started volunteering at a local community center when I was 16. A youth worker got me into basketball coaching for immigrant youth. Even though the youth came from differing situations and all parts of the world, I felt teaching them to play as a team and working together, connected us to each other and our neighbourhood. This showed me that if you can organize people to work together you can not only connect but empower local communities.

From volunteering to organizing events

I enjoy facilitating dialogue to create change. As an example, I co-founded Changemakers Vancouver to bring people from the various sectors (government, academia, non-profit and for-profit) together, to discuss what a healthier and happier world could look like and the actions we need to take to get us there.

What I love

I really like bringing people together and helping them connect to things that matter to them - basically creating welcoming spaces where people can connect, share ideas and learn from one another. When people say "Vancouver isn't any fun or there isn't anything to do in the city," my response is to expose them to all the amazing things (and people) in the city. You could say that my passion is to introduce others to this energy as it in turn brings out their inner happiness and passion!

My Advice on Connecting

Meaningful connection comes from showcasing your authentic self - also being vulnerable and embracing the unknown. It starts with welcoming a stranger with a smile or even a 'namaste'* as you never know what could come next from such a small gesture.

Vancouver may seem cold at first, especially when you first move here and see people around you who seem so busy just going about their daily lives. But if you let the layers unfold, open your heart and mind, and allow yourself to embrace the diversity, you'll be able to connect with the beauty of the people in this city. You just have to be bold enough to take that first step of connecting - whether its attending events or programs in your neighbourhood or simply smiling at the person beside you. Over time, you will become part of the layers; and you never know, that stranger that you smiled at, may one day just invite you over for a cup of tea.

* Namaste is the Indian equivalent to 'greetings' or 'good day' in English with the connotation 'to be well'. As opposed to shaking hands, kissing or embracing each other in other cultures, namaste is a non-contact form of respectful greeting and can be used universally while meeting a person of different gender, age or social status. It is commonly accompanied by a slight bow made with hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointed upwards, in front of the chest.



Overview: Organizing Events & Connecting Communities

When first arriving in Vancouver, a quick online search or visit to your local neighbourhood house, community centre or library will help you find out what are some current community initiatives and events happening in your neighbourhood.

Local media such as [Vancouver Sun](#), [The Province](#), [Vancouver Courier](#), [Georgia Strait](#) and [Westenders](#), provide up to date event information and listing.



VIDEO 2.2 - ORGANIZING EVENTS & CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

youtu.be/anTxNjHvbEo

Links & Resources

Province of British Columbia
www.hellobc.com

Eventbrite
www.eventbrite.ca

Border in Vancouver
www.boredinvancouver.com

Scout Magazine
www.scoutmagazine.ca

Tourism Vancouver
www.tourismvancouver.com

Timeout
www.timeout.com



Favourite events...



Juvy Ebrani, from the Philippines

My favourite event is the Fireworks Competition. We go every year to English Bay and have a barbecue and wait for evening to come and the fireworks to begin.



Soon Young Seo, from South Korea

I love the Pride Parade. It means Vancouver is really a free country they can express whatever they want. People just enjoy and accept who they are. That's very nice. Lots of parks and barbecuing, fishing, boating.



Clemencia Gomez, from Latin America

My favourite thing to do in Vancouver? I like the Folk Festival. I love walking in Stanley Park or riding my bicycle beside the ocean. Other seniors like walks in the forest and having barbecues on the beach.



Agnes Tsang, from China

Whenever there are activities in the community, try to join in with the entire family, you'll be sure to have fun. I encourage everyone to go to Granville Island. Also the July first fireworks for Canada Day.



Ruth Suarez, from Mexico

We always go to The Children's Festival on Granville Island. And we love the PNE in August. This is must at least once per year!



Valeria Mancilla, from Mexico

We like special events. The Jazz Festival. My son loves guitars. They have demonstrations and they sell things. It reminds me of Mexico.

CHAPTER 3: SERVICES & RESOURCES

“Without these programs I wouldn’t feel as welcome. I feel so blessed and happy and proud. I feel more comfortable and connected.”

- Somaya Amiri, originally from Afghanistan, moved to Vancouver in 2011

SERVICES & RESOURCES



VIDEO 3.1 - SERVICES & RESOURCES

youtu.be/MfGxot6tAJQ



3.1 A Place To Live



3.2 Services For New Immigrants



3.3 Getting Jobs



3.4 Learning English



3.5 Local Health



3.6 Child Care



3.7 Schools



3.8 Telephone Information Lines



3.9 Governments & Resources



3.10 Safety & Security



3.11 Human Rights & Discrimination



3.1 A Place To Live

Mariam Demian is a marketing manager and producer for a local Real Estate organization. She moved to Canada in 1989 and to Vancouver from Ottawa five years ago.

Moving to Vancouver

I took a leap of faith; I rented a place online using an online classifieds listing. It was an extremely small space with very little light for about \$800. It's pricey for a basement, but it was furnished and I knew I had a place to move to [when coming here from Ottawa.] I've moved three times since then.

Do your research

Don't jump on anything until you do your research, because you could end up being taken advantage of. Research the areas that you want to live in or where you are going to work and see if you can afford it.. If you are going to school there, research that area. If you have a small budget, stick within it. But don't think the first place you find is the only thing you can get. Get to the city, meet new people, and figure out where you want to be situated.

One challenge is that most ads are online. There are rental agents that can help you find a space, but find out what their commission is, because often you can find a space on your own. Ask lots of people. Once someone tells you something, find out more for yourself. There is the City website and the Real Estate Channel, but see if you can find a forum for renters where people are talking about their experiences in Vancouver.

My advice

Know what you want and try to get as close as you can to that. At the same time, know you aren't going to get everything you want right away. If you don't have a car, make sure



you are close to public transit . You don't want to be further than 30 minutes from one. Don't sign a lease until you are sure you like the place, and find out what your contractual obligations are to breaking a lease. Know your rights as a tenant. There is a guide for landlords and tenants in BC.

I felt local when...

I'd been here for three years. By then, I had a place in Kitsilano and was settled. It was a good location. Once you get established in wherever you're living, I think that's when you can call Vancouver home.

You can be who you want to be in Vancouver. That's why I love it - it's not constricting. Give yourself time to get used to it. If you don't like your current location and you signed a lease, wait a year, live it out and sign a new one next year. Get comfortable, give it time and you'll get used to the rain. And buy an umbrella!



Overview: A Place to Live

Vancouver is a very expensive place to live. Housing costs vary a lot from one area to the next, so learn about the different neighbourhoods before you settle in. Plan to live close to where you will work or study; it will save you time and money and make it easier to connect to your neighbourhood.

Most people live in privately-owned apartments, condos or homes. Websites like [Padmapper](#) and [Craigslist](#) are very popular among people seeking housing, but be cautious about what you find and what personal information you give out.

BC's [Guide for Landlords and Tenants](#) explains your legal obligations, such as how to get repaid for emergency repairs or how much notice must be given before an owner can enter your rental suite. The City of Vancouver also compiles a Rental Standards Database, where you can check if there are any issues with the building you are considering.

The [Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre](#) (TRAC) provides legal information for newcomers wanting to rent or buy in BC, and lists other helpful programs and organizations. These include information about the workings of strata councils, which are bodies responsible for the management and upkeep of condo buildings.

In housing co-operatives, you and your neighbours own and manage your homes jointly, and low-income members pay less. It may take from three months to three years to get into a co-op. People who wish to buy a new, privately owned home that's part of a close-knit community that shares meals, function rooms and decision-making might consider co-housing.

If you want to buy a home and need financial assistance, you'll need to approach a local credit union or bank. Use the [MLS® Home Price Index](#) tool to measure the current home price trends across the city.

People in need may be able to get subsidized housing from groups like BC Housing or Habitat for Humanity.

Links & Resources

Province of British Columbia

- www.rto.gov.bc.ca/content/publications/guides
- www.rto.gov.bc.ca

City of Vancouver

vancouver.ca/people-programs/housing-and-homelessness

Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre (TRAC)

www.tenants.bc.ca/main/?Immigrants

BC Housing

www.bchousing.org

Co-op Housing

www.chf.bc.ca/what-co-op-housing

Network of Inner City Community Services Society -
Vancouver Rent Bank

www.niccss.ca/VRB



3.2 Services For New Immigrants

Soon Young Seo is from South Korea. She came nearly three years ago to study English and business management. She's currently volunteering at a settlement services agency and at an education centre for international students.

Arriving in Canada

I was really excited because I came as an international student with nothing to worry about. I just wanted to study English for two years, that's all. I met my husband one year after I came here. One year later, we married. We could have chosen to go to Korea, but we chose Canada. We love Vancouver because of the environment. People are very friendly. There are also more opportunities for newcomers — more equality. People here don't look down at newcomers and Asians.

Waiting to become Canadian

After I applied for my permanent resident status, everything changed because I needed to assimilate into Canadian culture and society. I needed to get a real job. Everything is so different, like the medical system, for example. Now that I live here, I worry about my English. I think a lot of immigrants worry about that too.

First steps to becoming local

Friends recommended me to go to SUCCESS, which is a well-known local immigrant service organization. I also found other agencies including Immigrant Services Society of BC, MOSAIC and Options. I went to a workshop on how to find a job. I learned interview skills, how to network, how to communicate, and how to reduce my accent.



The program was helpful. But the main thing they do is to help people not lose confidence. When you put your resume out you often don't get a response. After a while, you lose your confidence even though you were a professional in your own country. I tried to apply for several jobs, but I couldn't get a reply from the companies. So I am trying harder. I think networking is the real key.

My advice

Don't lose your confidence and don't think negative things. Think positive and smile. You need to wait — it doesn't happen right away.

My perfect world

I want to work at a settlement service organization, an organization that helps newcomers adjust to society. I want to help people to find their happiness. I've been through trying to (find my happiness) so I know I can help others do the same. I am going to have a very happy life here. I'm still positive.



Overview: Services for New Immigrants

It's not easy moving to a new country and integrating into a society where life is different from what you may be accustomed to. But you are not alone. A variety of Settlement Services are available in Vancouver through a wide network of organizations, all with the same goal – to help newcomers settle into their new city and country.

Settlement organizations provide services including welcome workshops, orientation, language and networking, employment services and skills upgrading, and information on essential services such as housing and health. They are here to help you and your family find what you need or at least figure out where to look for answers and which questions to ask. But be prepared for a gradual transition. Starting a new life doesn't happen overnight – there are many small victories that you will celebrate along the way.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada can help with becoming a permanent resident or citizen, and offers a comprehensive guidebook to your new home country. Once you have been a permanent resident for more than four years, you can apply for Canadian citizenship. Permanent residents who become citizens have the same rights as citizens who were born in Canada.

WelcomeBC is a provincial government agency set up to ensure new British Columbians can become thriving members of their communities.

Links & Resources

Government of Canada

www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome

Province of British Columbia - Welcome BC

- www.welcomebc.ca/connect
- www.welcomebc.ca/work

City of Vancouver

vancouver.ca/people-programs/mentorship-program

AMSSA – Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC – is the provincial umbrella for community-based settlement serving agencies in BC. AMSSA provides a listing of all settlement agencies.

www.amssa.org

LISTN – Language Instruction and Training Network – is the provincial umbrella for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) agencies and provides a listing of all LINC schools.

www.listn.info



3.3 Getting Jobs

Formerly a medical doctor in Manila, Cecilia Gaanan emigrated from the Philippines in 2010 with her husband and two kids. She's currently employed as a medical clinic assistant.

Why we immigrated

We moved for many reasons, but the main one was health. My children and I are asthmatic so we needed to move to a city with cleaner air. We've never had a cough or a cold here. Also, for my husband, it's harder to find a job when you are over 35 years old, because Manila is so overpopulated. They prioritize the younger generation. As a doctor you are very busy, but the pay is much better here.

Laying the groundwork

A month or two before we left Manila, we forced ourselves to send five resumes a day and we attended immigrant seminars where we learned about organizations that help you with your job hunt. We arrived on a Sunday and by Tuesday my husband had a job. We were still jet-lagged!

The job hunt

I knew it would be hard to find a job in my exact profession, but I was determined. I regularly checked the job boards at the settlement agency and finally phoned them to see how they could help. First I had to pass an assessment exam to test my English knowledge, which they paid for. I passed. I let them know that I wanted to get my foot back in the medical world. I thought a good start would be to get a medical office assistant diploma, which would take four months. Two-thirds of the tuition was paid for through the Skills Connect program.



My success story

I passed my resume around to a variety of different medical places including a cosmetic surgery clinic near our home. I introduced myself and explained that I had a medical background and they offered me an interview right away. Then, they asked if I could observe in their clinic for a day. At the end, the nurses told the surgeon, "Doctor, she is teaching us!" I was very flattered. They said, "She doesn't need training, she can start tomorrow!" So, now I am working there as an office assistant and surgical assistant. They have become like family to me.

My advice

I know my story is exceptional. Some of my friends have been searching for many months without luck. But determination, patience, and timing are key. Be prepared to start from scratch and leave everything behind. You are likely going to go back to school. Open your mind to different ways of getting into your field. The first thing you need is experience and doors will open for you. Everything will eventually fall into the right place.



Overview: Getting Jobs

It's not easy to find work in Vancouver. You'll need to be patient, develop strong English language skills, and find ways to make connections.

Foreign work experience is sometimes not recognized here. If you want to work in your previous profession, you may have to retrain in Canada or demonstrate that you speak English well enough to express opinions, do research, and deliver a 10-minute presentation.

LISTN provides information about accessing English language training you'll need to work here, go to school, or to just feel more comfortable in your community.

Skills Connect aims to help skilled immigrants get jobs in every sector of the BC economy, including transportation, construction, manufacturing, tourism, and healthcare.

Job Options BC is a training program for unemployed British Columbians. **Learn the Workplace** is an interactive website that explores the subtleties of Canadian workplace cultures.

WorkBC Employment Service Centres and settlement agencies like **MOSAIC**,

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and **ISS of BC** all offer employment workshops and mentorship. The Vancouver Public Library website offers a **Skilled Immigrant Info Centre**.

These centres offer job boards, and many listings can be found online. Don't just send general resumes everywhere and hope to be noticed; it's much more effective to target a specific career.

Once you identify an organization you'd like to work for, call to see if you can meet with a hiring manager for a short (five or 10 minute) informational interview. If they agree to meet with you, ask what types of skills and aptitudes they are looking for, don't stay longer than the agreed-upon time unless they ask you to, and follow up with a thank you note. It is respectful to show appreciation when someone helps you.

Try volunteering. It will help you acclimatize to the Canadian system and give you a chance to show you are reliable, efficient, and have a positive attitude. Later on, the people you volunteer for could become important references for you.

Websites such as **Meetup.com** offers opportunities to meet and network with people sharing similar interests.

Links & Resources

Government of Canada

- www.servicecanada.gc.ca
- www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs

Province of British Columbia - Work BC

- www.workbc.ca
- www.workbc.ca/work-bc-centres

Industry Training Authority (ITA) - www.itabc.ca

City of Vancouver - vancouver.ca/your-government

Skills Connect

- www.skillsconnect.ca
- video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKBsT-ZoHVg&list=PL248BB540667C8C37

Vancouver Public Library - Skilled immigrant info centre
skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca

Language Instruction Support and Training Network (LISTN)
www.listn.info

LISTN - Resources for Students
www.listn.info/site/resources/links-students

Mentorship Opportunities

- S.U.C.C.E.S.S. - www.successbc.ca
- ISS of BC - issbc.org
- MOSAIC - www.mosaicbc.com
- PICS - pics.bc.ca
- IEC BC - www.iecbc.ca



3.4 Learning English

When Agnes Tsang moved here from China 19 years ago, she completed several programs through the Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS). She is now an ESL teacher assistant at PIRS.

My first feelings here....

At first when the telephone rang I was scared to pick it up because I was afraid of conversation. Whenever the doorbell rang I was so scared to open the door because I knew there was someone Canadian standing outside. I didn't know what to answer, how to answer. Language was the barrier. I had no friends here and I didn't know how to start my life in Vancouver.

Overcoming my language barrier

When I registered my son in school, I also registered myself in ESL. So that's how I started. I'm thinking, 'I need to learn more.' But once I finished a term the teacher said my English was quite good. She suggested that the way to practice was to volunteer in the class!

I also joined two other programs through PIRS. At first I thought, "Not for me. I don't want to speak in front of people." Then I thought it was a good for me to reach out. 'Doesn't matter; I'm not going to die!'

I didn't feel alone

I saw that there were other women I should make friends with, and make my vision wider. We don't only make friends from Hong Kong, we make friends from everywhere.



My advice

Don't hide yourself - reach out to the community. Join ESL programs or story time. You will find someone that you feel comfortable to talk with and friendships start in that way. At a store, don't just pay the cashier and go or nod your head. Practice. Try to speak and answer questions.

And now...

I am feeling confident. I always tell my students that I don't have good English, but I am brave enough to speak it. I know that if someone doesn't understand, they will ask me to speak again. I have confidence to answer the door, of course, and the telephone. And I have confidence to tell someone if I don't understand what they are asking.



Overview: Learning English

You'll feel much more comfortable in Vancouver if you speak the language and understand more of what's happening around you. English as a Second Language (ESL) training is available throughout the city.

Watching TV, listening to the radio, and reading English books can help a lot. The fastest way to improve your English skills is by taking every opportunity to practice. Children's books are a great place to start — look for them at your local library along with free classes taught by volunteers.

English Corner also offers province-wide informal conversational English classes as a free community service. It's taught by people who were born and raised in Canada as well as people who have immigrated here.

LISTN provides a directory of ESL courses and employment programs that are available in many agencies and can help you find the right kind of language training you'll need to work, study, or settle into your community.

Or, you can try the **Meetup** website. It offers many types of social groups to network with others, including some that get together to practice English language skills.

Most Neighbourhood Houses and Settlement Service Organizations also offer ESL programming. Click through to **2.8 Neighbourhood Houses** and **3.2 Services For New Immigrants** for further information.

Links & Resources

Language Instruction Support and Training Network (LISTN)
www.listn.info

LINC – Resources for Students
www.listn.info/site/resources/links-students

Vancouver Public Library – Literacy and ESL resources
guides.vpl.ca/content.php?pid=173284&sid=1457946



3.5 Local Health

Jacqueline Gregson is a researcher who has done many years of work in the social welfare field. She moved to Vancouver from the UK in 2012. She is currently working at a local university.

Navigating the health system

We were very fortunate. I've heard that finding a family doctor is very difficult. But a neighbour recommended her doctor, so my husband and I went there. We made an appointment and were brought in for an interview. We were immediately signed up. But, I know that's not often the case.

Impressions

I've only been to the doctor a couple of times since I've been here. I was surprised that one can access most of the necessary services in one building. I was impressed with the health services available to women, for example there are women-specific hospitals and clinics available.

Convenience

Walk-in clinics are new to me. In the UK, we might have one or two but not to the degree that you have them here. It seems that there is one in every neighbourhood! If you don't have a family doctor, you are going to be very reliant on the walk-in clinics for anything other than an emergency. You'll likely get a different doctor every time, but it's great that they are available. However, if you don't have medical coverage, you would have to pay a fee.



My advice on finding a doctor

Apart from searching on the Internet, word of mouth worked for me. If you ask others in your neighbourhood, you might find a doctor that is close to where you live. It's very important to have some kind of (private) health care insurance in place before you come because it takes three months to get coverage here under MSP (Medical Services Plan). It could get quite expensive otherwise.



Overview: Local Health

Vancouver has one of the world's best health care systems. However, because it is available to everyone there may occasionally be long waiting periods.

Be aware that you will have to pay the full costs of any medical services you incur for the first three months of being landed in BC. After that time any citizen or permanent resident can apply for the **BC Medical Services Plan** (MSP).

This province-wide group insurance program covers most medical costs. Once you qualify and register, you will need to pay a yearly fee that's calculated according to your household income.

Government sponsored refugees get temporary health insurance through the federal government. From there, you just have to find a health care practitioner.

Vancouver's drop-in clinics can provide same-day medical care for those who don't have a family doctor. These clinics are not for critical care. In those cases, call 9-1-1 and request an ambulance.

If your situation is urgent but not critical, go directly to a hospital emergency room (ER). You can check the Emergency Wait Times website before you leave the house to find the closest hospital that is the least busy, and to find out what you'll need to bring with you.

For regular, ongoing patient care, you'll need to find a family doctor. Start by checking the B.C. Physician Directory to find someone in a convenient part of the city.

Vancouver also has medical clinics that provide special services like cancer treatment, pain management, sexual health info, and traditional Chinese or Ayurvedic medicine. Some health centres cater to the confidential needs of women or youth, and others provide integrative or alternative medicine — often at an extra cost.

The BC Dental Association offers a list of dentists who can take care of your teeth and lists a number of low-cost clinics, as not all dental work will be covered by your MSP.

You should only call 9-1-1 in emergency situations, but you can dial 8-1-1 at any time of day or night to speak with a nurse, or call at certain times to consult a dietitian or pharmacist.

Links & Resources

Province of British Columbia - Ministry of Health
www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp

BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) - PharmaCare
www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)
www.vch.ca

Local Community Health Centres (walk-in clinics)
www.vch.ca/find_us/find_locations

College of Physicians & Surgeons of BC
www.cpsbc.ca

- Find a physician
www.cpsbc.ca/physician_search

British Columbia Dental Association
www.bcdental.org

- Dentists accepting new patients
www.bcdental.org/Find_a_Dentist/DentistSearch.aspx
- Low-cost or reduced rate dentists
www.bcdental.org/Find_a_Dentist/ReducedCostClinics

Emergency Wait Times
www.edwaittimes.ca/WaitTimes

Traditional Chinese Medicine Association of BC
www.tcmabc.org



3.6 Child Care

At age 19, Valeria Mancilla came as a refugee from Mexico City with her two-year-old son. Now four years later, she's studying to be an early childhood educator and supervises the Parent and Tots program at Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

Putting the past behind you

It's difficult, when you leave your country, to survive. I was devastated. I only knew two things: I couldn't go back, and for the sake of my two-year-old son I had no choice here but to get out and get involved. I started at the BWSS (Battered Women's Support Services) and saw that I wasn't alone. That gave me confidence. So my adaptation was fast because I never stayed at home.

Finding my new community

Early on, I was asked to volunteer at the Parent and Tots program that my son and I were in. Then they asked me to be the supervisor's helper, and eventually they gave me the opportunity to be the supervisor! I feel so grateful. My volunteer work has made me see that I am good at something and can do good things for my new community. A lesson I want my son to see as well.

Child care in Vancouver

From a new mother's perspective, I worried at first that a new language and culture would be hard on him. It never was. It was harder on me. So the support I received was critical. The care workers always made us feel cared for. My son's confidence also helped me. From the other side now, I work very closely with the parents, to help guide

them and assure them their children are in good hands. We show children that they are very capable. I learn from the children just as they learn from me. There are also bursaries you can apply for, to help pay for child care.

My advice

Neighbourhood houses and family places are a great place to start when you are looking for child care. It's an opportunity to socialize in a multicultural environment. They teach children independence and interpersonal skills, but they are also great for parent support and for making friends. We all have our children in common and friendships grow from there. We are never alone.

And now...

My son is thriving. When we first arrived he just wanted to stay near me. But by preschool, he was confident enough to run up to other kids at the park and play. Sometimes I think that if I had had the same opportunities as a child, I would have had a different life in Mexico. I'm glad my son has these chances now.





Overview: Childcare

In Canada, it's illegal to leave children aged 12 or younger alone. If you can't be with your kids because of work or other responsibilities, you'll have to arrange for family help or find a public or private day care. Only licensed day cares are guaranteed to meet Canadian health and safety standards.

Community centres and neighbourhood houses throughout the city offer child care on site.

Contact [Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre](#) to get referred to a child care centre that's appropriate for your situation. Their staff can speak different languages and translated information is available.

Children aged four or younger can attend Strong Start Centres, offered by the Vancouver School Board. They're free and don't require you know English, but they're not day cares — the caregiver must stay and take part in the program.

Full or partial child care subsidies are available through the Province depending on your family's circumstances.

Family places are drop-in centres for parents and pre-school age children, and offer support to parents in a group setting and creative play for pre-school children.

Most Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses offer support and services for childcare. The Vancouver School Board (VSB) has early education programs for children. Click through to [2.8 Neighbourhood Houses](#), [3.2 Services For New Immigrants](#) and [3.7 Schools](#) for further information.

Links & Resources

City of Vancouver

vancouver.ca/people-programs/getting-childcare

Province of British Columbia – Child care subsidies

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/subsidy_promo.htm

Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre

www.wstcoast.org

Referrals to child care spaces, list of all child care facilities

www.wstcoast.org/parents/lists

Brochures about child care in many different languages

www.wstcoast.org/parents/multilingual.html

Family Places

- Eastside Family Place
www.eastsidefamilyplace.org
- Marpole -Oakridge Family Place
www.mofp.org
- Mt. Pleasant Family Centre
www.mpfamilycentre.ca
- South Vancouver Family Place
www.southvancouverfamilyplace.org
- West Side Family Place
www3.telus.net/wsfp



3.7 Schools

Originally from Afghanistan, Somaya Amiri moved to Vancouver with her family two years ago. She is a high school student passionately engaged in many clubs, including one she created for other immigrant ESL students called The English Welcome Club.

First impressions of my new culture

I was really struck by how clean and organized things are, but also by the language. You are in a place where you don't understand anything. At the beginning, I always needed someone to translate. It was strange and unfamiliar.

Biggest challenges

I found the language really challenging. But I worked really hard and so I learned it fast. It's also hard on my parents. I see my mom struggling to help my siblings with their school but she can't. I can see that she feels disappointed or maybe she might think that we don't appreciate her work or maybe that she is not capable. I hope parents know that as children we DO understand what you are going through and we do appreciate everything. And never think that you are not a good parent. For me, they are my biggest heroes. By coming here they have sacrificed their own lives and happiness for their children. That's huge.

Adjusting to school

Back home I didn't go to an official school. I was attending a mosque. My dream was to go to "real" school and be with other kids studying. In my new school, I was nervous but then my excitement took over. The environment in school was very welcoming. At first, I was mostly with other ESL students. I felt connected and more comfortable around them because I knew they had the same experiences and the same goal to improve our English.



Advice to other students

I put all of my energy into studying and trying to get better. It made me happy to get better marks, or if I spoke a little better. My confidence grew and that was the part that made it better. Definitely join different after-school programs and social programs. Experience them, don't be scared. After-school programs are a huge opportunity. It's really important to engage and get connected. I owe a lot to the Homework Club in my school and the Vancouver School Board's Engaged Immigrant Youth program.

Help your parents feel comfortable letting you be involved

My parents met the people who ran the programs I was in, so they knew I was in the right hands. In Afghanistan, I always needed someone to go out with me and take care of me. Here my parents know that it's much safer and they trust me. Earning trust is huge because when you have it you never ever do anything to betray it. Also, they could see that I would never have been able to achieve so much without all the support around me. Without these programs, I wouldn't feel as welcome. I feel so blessed and happy and proud. I feel more comfortable and connected.



Overview: Schools

A quality education is essential, and Vancouver offers excellent public and private schools to all. For post-secondary education, according to a study by Universitas 21, Canada ranks as one of the best in the world.

The **Vancouver School Board** (VSB) accepts children and youth into their preschool, kindergarten, elementary, secondary, or high school programs, depending on their age. At age 19, people in BC are legally considered adults and would need to pursue adult education.

The VSB has settlement workers in schools who can help place you and your family where you need to be, and provides information in other languages.

Children younger than five can attend preschool at one of 19 StrongStart Early Learning Centres. There's no cost to families and English doesn't have to be your first language, but it's not a day care. The parent/caregiver is required to stay with their child and take part in the program.

Students who have finished high school and want to pursue higher education might enrol in one of Vancouver's colleges or universities. Many programs are competitive to get into, so it helps if the student has good grades! Higher education is not free in Canada, but it is government subsidized, which makes it much more affordable than other countries.

University entry may require a second language, and because Canada is a bilingual country some schools offer French immersion education so your child can study in both national languages.

Continuing education or online distance courses suit people of every age and cover a wide range of topics, including those required by many places of work. These might include English as a Second Language (ESL), completing grade 12, or passing the GED® or General Educational Development, which tests people's abilities with reading, writing, social studies, science, and mathematics.

Trade schools provide specific training for technical or skilled jobs such as construction, electrical, hairdressing, or dental care.

Links & Resources

Vancouver School Board (VSB) – Public Schools
www.vsb.bc.ca

- Parent Information Brochure
www.vsb.bc.ca/parent-information-brochures
- Programs
www.vsb.bc.ca/programs
- Settlement Workers In Schools
www.vsb.bc.ca/settlement-workers-schools-swis
- Engaged Immigrant Youth
www.vsb.bc.ca/engaged-immigrant-youth
- Multicultural Liaison Workers
www.vsb.bc.ca/multicultural-workers
- Events for ELL Parents/Students
www.vsb.bc.ca/events-esl-parentsstudents
- Circle of Care Refugee
www.vsb.bc.ca/programs/circle-care-refugee-pilot

Province of British Columbia - Post-secondary education institutes
www.aved.gov.bc.ca/publicpsed

Federation of Independent School Association BC
www.fisabc.ca

Conseil Scolaire Francophone BC (French language schools)
www.csf.bc.ca



3.8 Telephone Information Lines

If you are new to the city, there are several free but important telephone information lines that you should be aware of: 3-1-1, 9-1-1, 2-1-1, 8-1-1 and 7-1-1.

3-1-1 City of Vancouver

Call 3-1-1 for all City of Vancouver concerns such as:

- Garbage, recycling and yard trimmings
- Parking enforcement, ticketing and payments
- Animal control
- Streets, traffic and electrical concerns
- Community and City of Vancouver events

Dial 3-1-1 from any phone in the City and representatives can respond to your questions in over 180 languages upon request. 3-1-1 provides access to most City information and non-emergency services. It is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

9-1-1 Emergency

For fire, police, or ambulance emergencies, call 9-1-1. All calls are traced and followed-up on, so even if you can't speak English, they can send someone to help. It's good to know the name of your language in English as they can put an interpreter on line to assist. You should know the name of the city you are in, the address where you are located, and be able to say which emergency service you need: fire, police or ambulance. Teach your children how to make a 9-1-1 call and what to say.

2-1-1 Community Services

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember, three-digit telephone number that provides free, confidential, multilingual information and referral to a full range of community, social, and government services. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, information and referral specialists link callers to the services and support they need.

8-1-1 Health Information

8-1-1 is a health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia. The 8-1-1 phone line is operated by HealthLink BC, which is part of the Ministry of Health. By calling 8-1-1, you can speak to a health services representative, who can help you find health information and services; or connect you directly with a registered nurse, a registered dietitian or a pharmacist. 8-1-1 provides translation services on request in more than 130 languages.

7-1-1 / TTY Hearing Impaired

People who are deaf and hard of hearing can set up a 7-1-1 relay telephone system at home.

Victim Link BC Helpline
Telecommunications for the Deaf (TTY) 604-875-0885 or text 604-836-6381



3.9 Governments & Resources

Canada is a parliamentary democracy. You vote for people to represent you in the House of Commons (federally), the Provincial Legislatures (provincially) and local City Council (municipally). The Canadian government is also a constitutional monarchy, which means England's monarch (King or Queen) is our Head of State and is represented by the Governor General of Canada and the Lieutenant Governor of each province.

Federal Government

The federal government deals with laws that affect the whole country. It's based in Ottawa and led by the Prime Minister, who is the most senior or "first" minister in the government. This level is responsible for national and international matters including foreign affairs, national defense, federal taxes, criminal law, Employment Insurance (EI), currency, banking, postal services, shipping, railways, immigration and Aboriginal lands and rights.

www.canada.ca

Resources

The federal government has published *Welcome to Canada Guide* which provides a comprehensive overview about the country and the resources needed by newcomers.

www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome/

Provincial Government

There are 10 provinces and three territories in Canada. Each province is led by a Premier and has its own elected legislature which oversees areas including education, health care, natural resources, social services, employment and housing. Vancouver is part of the Province of British Columbia.

www2.gov.bc.ca

Resources

The Province of British Columbia has published *Newcomers' Guide to Resources and Services* which is available in multiple languages.

www.welcomebc.ca

Municipal Government

Cities and towns have their own levels of local government. Vancouver city government is made up of the City Council and the Vancouver Park Board. City Council is made up of the Mayor and 10 councillors who are elected every three years. The City is responsible for many functions and services that include police, fire protection, libraries, community centres, garbage, roadways and parking.

vancouver.ca

Resources

The City of Vancouver has published *A Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver* (2014) which is available in multiple digital formats.

vancouver.ca/newcomers

First Nations

In Canada, First Nations communities are governed by their own elected Band Councils.

Please see [1.1 Local First Nations Perspectives](#), [1.2 Urban Aboriginal Perspectives](#) and [Links & Resources Aboriginal Perspectives](#)

Resources

The City of Vancouver will publish *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers* (2014).

vancouver.ca/newcomers



3.10 Safety & Security

A retired police officer, Dave Dickson served with the Vancouver Police Department for 28 years. Currently he's a volunteer at the Raycam Community Centre and the community liaison for Lookout Emergency Aid Society, primarily focused on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

Is Vancouver safe?

Vancouver is a beautiful city and a great place to live. But, like many major cities, you have to take your own personal steps to ensure your safety.

Tips to avoid crime

Don't leave valuables in your car including visible change and bags. In certain areas of town, people will smash windows for ANYTHING they think might have value. Do not leave your purse or property unattended. I see people leaving cameras on posts as they turn to talk to someone. That's asking for trouble.

[Home] break-ins happen. Always lock doors. Get an alarm system. A criminal will be deterred if they see an alarm sticker on a door or window; they won't want the hassle. A good idea when deciding where to buy [or rent] a home is to [check online or] visit a local police office and ask to see crime statistics in the area.

Staying safe

Be alert walking around town. Keep your head up and notice who or what is happening around you. Street people who ask you for money are generally harmless. They'll ask you for change a million times a day but they won't usually do more than that. Always be polite and say, "I don't have any. I'm sorry." If they start getting aggressive, which is rare, phone 9-1-1. Body language is also very important. Don't look down with your head-



phones on, texting. Stay alert. Pay attention. Don't stare and people will seldom bother you. The same advice applies at night. Don't walk quiet streets by yourself; taking a taxi or transit are safe ways to get around.

Comments on Interpersonal Violence

Like any city, Vancouver has interpersonal violence such as domestic and sexual violence in relationships. Many of these crimes occur between people who know each other and women and girls are often the victims of this violence. If you are not comfortable with any situation, dial 9-1-1 and/or call for services. See Links and Resources for more information.



Overview: Safety & Security

It's wise to be aware of your surroundings and to trust your instincts, especially if you're new to an area, don't know the traffic rules, or are walking alone at night.

For fire, police, or ambulance emergencies, call 9-1-1. For other crisis support, one may contact Victim Link BC Helpline 1-800-563-0808 (24h).

International students can benefit from information posted on the International Student Safety website.

While natural or man-made disasters are rare, Vancouver is situated in an earthquake zone, so residents are wise to be prepared for earthquakes or other emergencies. Every household in Vancouver should have an emergency plan so your family understands what to do if there is an earthquake or other disaster. You should always have food, water, and clothing ready in case you need to leave quickly or survive in your home without water or electricity for several days. Emergency Management BC is a great resource for earthquake

preparedness information.

Condos and apartment buildings should hold regular "fire drills" so you can practice how to get out of your home quickly in an emergency and know where to wait for help.

Block Watch is a program in which neighbours help keep an eye on each other's homes for suspicious activity.

But sometimes danger isn't just physical. New Canadians could be at risk of being tricked out of money or possessions because they don't know the warning signs. Check with the Better Business Bureau if you want to know more about the business you are dealing with. Consumer Protection BC prepared five case studies so you can test your knowledge of what to do in similar situations.

ImmigrantLegal.ca provides immigrants free legal information, education and resources so you can know your rights and responsibilities with employment, residential tenancy, family law, and domestic violence.

Links & Resources

Vancouver Police Department
vancouver.ca/police

- Community Policing Centres
vancouver.ca/police/community-policing
- Fire prevention & health and safety courses
vancouver.ca/your-government/vancouver-fire-and-rescue-services
- Disaster preparedness workshops and safety advice
vancouver.ca/home-property-development/home-safety
- International Student Safety
vancouver.ca/police/crime-prevention/for-individuals/student-safety

Metro Vancouver - www.metrovancouver.org/planning/emergency

Province of British Columbia – Emergency Info BC - embc.gov.bc.ca

Better Business Bureau - mbc.bbb.org

Consumer Protection BC - www.consumerprotectionbc.ca

Legal Services Society BC (LSS) - www.lss.bc.ca

Victim services and anti-victim helplines

- www.victimlinkbc.ca
- www.domesticviolencebc.ca
- www.endingviolence.org
- www.policevictimservices.bc.ca
- BC Society of Transition Houses – www.bcsth.ca

3.2 Services For New Immigrants can also provide information on this topic.



3.11 Human Rights & Discrimination

Robyn Durling is the communications officer for the BC Human Rights Coalition, which is a charitable non-profit, community-based organization that seeks to promote and strengthen human rights throughout B.C. and Canada.

What we do

We provide a place for people to see that they have access to justice and that they have human rights. Although the result might not be in their favour, it's a place where they can air their grievances and they are at least being heard. Our programs and resources are provided free of charge.

How we do it

You can contact our hotline. We can answer general questions, but we can't give you legal advice over the phone. Every Monday at the Human Rights Tribunal on Robson Street, one of our advocates can help on a first-come, first-served basis. We can tell you if you have cause for filing a complaint. If you do, we can help with the paperwork. We can explain why, if not, and we can explain where to go to get the appropriate help.

What we want you to know

Understand that you have rights. We work in a very down-to-earth way and deal with issues in a very realistic, pragmatic way. On a daily basis we work with people that are discriminated against in their lives here in the city and try to get them to the next stage that they would like to be at from a legal perspective. We're not a scary place to visit. We're not overly legalistic. We are approachable.



We are accessible

We try very hard to reach out to the different communities. We try to be as inclusive as we can and support organizations that have similar mandate. We've been in the community for more than 25 years now and are connected to all sorts of groups. We are a grassroots organization. When you come here we are going to be very accessible and talk to you very candidly.

My advice

If you have a question, pick up the phone and call us. We can try to explain to you why you may or may not have a complaint or where you should go. If you are worried about the language barrier — if you need an interpreter — we will try and arrange one for you. I think the organization plays a very fundamental role in our society. I'm proud of what we do here.



Overview: Human Rights & Discrimination

Canada guarantees civil rights to everybody, whether you are a citizen or not.

The [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) states that in Canada every individual is equal before and under the law. That means men and women are entitled to equal rights and protection without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnic origin, mental or physical disability, colour, religion, age, or sexual preference.

A good introduction to human rights and discrimination is provided in the federal [Welcome to Canada](#) guidebook. The [B.C. Human Rights Coalition](#) is another great resource where you can register for a workshop that explains your human rights at work or in school.

If you believe someone has discriminated against you, you may want to consult the human rights legal experts at the [B.C. Human Rights Tribunal](#). An information sheet on the Tribunal's services is available in several languages. You can also consult the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The [Justice Education Society of BC](#) creates innovative programs and resources to improve access to the justice system. Pivot Legal is available for low-income populations. These services help individuals better understand how our justice system works and how to resolve their legal matters.

Practical information on many areas of law in British Columbia is available through a recorded service called [Dial-A-Law](#). Visit their website or call 604-687-4680.

Links & Resources

Government of Canada

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html
- Citizenship and Immigration
www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/welcome

Province of British Columbia – Ministry of Justice
www.ag.gov.bc.ca/human-rights-protection

City of Vancouver – Equal employment opportunities at the
vancouver.ca/your-government/diversity-in-hiring

Legal Services Society BC
www.lss.bc.ca

BC Human Rights Coalition
www.bchrcoalition.org

Justice Education Society of BC
www.justiceeducation.ca

The Canadian Bar Association – Dial-a-Law
www.dialalaw.org

Click Law
www.clicklaw.bc.ca

Credits

Photography

Page 12 Wanting Qu.
Photographer: Steven Xu. Courtesy of Netzwerk Records

Page 13 Wanting Qu and friends.
Photographer: Steven Xu. Courtesy of Netzwerk Records

Page 17 Chris Morrissey.
Photographer: Leah Bromley.

Page 32 Grouse grind.
Courtesy of Grouse Mountain.

Page 32 Killarney swimming pool.
Source: City of Vancouver.

Page 32 April Lacheur painting as part of the annual art event "Drift".
Photographer: Renato Horvath. Courtesy of April Lacheur.

Page 33 Aerial view of Vancouver.
Source: City of Vancouver.

Page 38 Maximo Morales.
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Page 55 Celebration of Light.
Photographer: Jonathan Evans. Courtesy of the Honda Celebration of Light.

Page 55 Pride Parade, 2010.
Source: City of Vancouver.

Page 55 Vancouver Folk Music Festival.
Courtesy of the VFMF.

Page 55 Market at Granville Island.
Source: City of Vancouver.

Page 45 David Lam Park Jazz Weekend during the TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival.
Photographer: Chris Cameron.

Page 45 *Entwined*.
Photographer: Tim Matheson. Courtesy of the Vancouver International Children's Festival.

Page 56 Walk-in clinic.
Photographer: Rasha Amer.

Page 58 Valeria Mancilla.
Photographer: Heather McCrae.

Page 60 Somaya Amiri.
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Videos

Page 4 *Introduction to the Newcomer's Guide*
Director: Zack Embree.

Page 9 *Aboriginal Perspectives*
Director: Kamala Todd. Camera: Rasha Amer.

Page 9 *People*
Director: Dima Alansari. Editor and Camera: Rasha Amer.

Page 27 *Neighbourhoods & Getting Involved*
Director: Joah Lui. Camera: Sophia Dagher.

Page 54 *Organizing Events & Connecting Communities*
Director and Editor: Sophia Dagher. Camera: Joah Lui.

Page 57 *Services & Resources*
Director: Dima Alansari. Camera: Rasha Amer. Editor: Ramiya Pushparajah.

All videos produced by Dana Wilson.

Maps

Page 6 Map of Vancouver.
Source: City of Vancouver. Adapted from Statistics Canada, Boundary and Road Network Files, 2011 Census

Page 29 Map of Metro Vancouver.
Source: City of Vancouver. Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Geographic Boundary Files, 2011 Census.

Page 31 Map of Vancouver's Neighbourhoods.
Source: City of Vancouver. Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Geographic Boundary Files, 2011 Census.

Page 46 Map of Vancouver's Neighbourhood Houses.
Source: City of Vancouver. Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Geographic Boundary Files, 2011 Census.

Page 50 Map of Vancouver's Community Centres.
Source: City of Vancouver. Adapted from Statistics Canada, 2011 Geographic Boundary Files, 2011 Census.

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We hope that you, the reader, will find this guide useful in getting to know the city and accessing resources. We welcome your feedback and comments: social.policy@vancouver.ca

