

DOMESTICS' CROSS-CULTURAL NEWS

INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers

March 2004

Toll Free 1-877-483-4554



INTERCEDE CLIENT SERVICE UNIT MARKS 20th ANNIVERSARY (1984-2004)

By Coco Tarape-Diaz

In March 1984, the INTERCEDE Service Unit Office opened its doors for the first time on 348 College Street to support and advocate for the rights of domestic workers and caregivers. In 1987 the office moved to Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., where presently INTERCEDE monthly educational meetings are held. In 1988, INTERCEDE moved to another location at 489 College Street. INTERCEDE seems to have found a permanent home at 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405. We are proud to say that this March 2004 INTERCEDE will be celebrating **20 years!!!**

When we first began in March 1984 our office consisted of one small room with chairs and tables that did not match. Our office equipment included one portable typewriter, a rusty file cabinet and two rotary telephones. We had a staff of three people; two counselors and a coordinator. I was happy to be one of the counsellors hired. We received a total of \$55,000 in funding for salaries, rent, and running our entire office.

We are happy and proud to see the changes and growth of our agency. Presently, our INTERCEDE office has five private offices (for 3 counsellors, our job search facilitator, our administrative assistant, and our coordinator), a spacious reception area, a space for board meetings/job search workshops, and a self contained kitchenette. Our typewriter and rotary telephones have been replaced with computers, fax machines and a photocopier. With more space and better technology it would appear that the work would also become easier, but the cases are still the same and complicated.

Our clients are under the Live-in Caregiver Program, family sponsored relatives, independent immigrants, or family members of former caregivers. They come to us for information and counseling about their immigration, employment, settlement issues and other social service needs.

Since 1994, INTERCEDE has been organizing an annual conference for domestic workers and caregivers, specifically focusing on the Live-in Caregiver Program. Representatives from Vancouver, Montreal, New Brunswick, Alberta, Regina, Winnipeg and Ontario have participated in the conference and consider it a forum where shared problems can be analyzed, and action plans can be made on a national level to enforce change.

INTERCEDE also supports national and global issues, such as targeting the government to practice the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

The following are messages from previous members, clients, board members and friends:

Hi ! Fely and Coco,

"Congratulations" on INTERCEDE'S 20 years of service to foreign domestic workers and Canadian households. - **Tessie Rayo (1980-1986)**

Congratulations as well to the people behind the organization who put their time and efforts to give the necessary support to domestic workers. - **Wilma Bonifacio (1981-1985)**

You are measured not on the 20 years but on the exceptional task you have done to domestic workers and to Canadian family as the caregivers for their babies and elderly parents. - **Lorie Rosas (1980-1986)**

Continued next page

*All Domestic/Caregiver workers,
Newcomers and those on Temporary Work
Permit are welcome to attend*

INTERCEDE MEETING
Every First Sunday of the Month

(if holiday, meeting is on the second Sunday)

Apply or renew your membership - \$10.

Sunday, March 7, 2004, 3-5 p.m.
At Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.
(one block south of College cor. Spadina)

INCOME TAX PREPARATION

*Guest Speaker, Julito Longkines,
Association of Filipino Canadian Chartered Accountants (AFCCA)*

Dear INTERCEDE:

It is difficult to imagine what would have been our individual situation in this country without your hard work and perseverance to fight for our rights. You paved the way to some of us, if not to most of us. Our gratitude to the staff and this organization. Congratulations on your 20th anniversary and more power. - **friends and family of Evelyn Cruz (1990-1995)**

INTERCEDE:

My Permanent residence is granted after 7 years, I am now enjoying the company of my daughters whom I again contacted you with regards to their adjustment and settlement.

Happy 20th anniversary and keep up the good work! - **Janet Brown**

Dear INTERCEDE:

Hola! Muchas gracias! More Power to INTERCEDE and happy 20th anniversary! - **Maria from Peru**

Hi! Coco,

April 1984, when I came to your office at College Street with regards to my Immigration Status and I was alone at that time, now most of my family members are here. Thank you for your encouragement and support. Happy 20th anniversary and Congratulations! - **Tess Cortez**

INTERCEDE:

I would like to Congratulate INTERCEDE on their 20th Anniversary, I'm one of the lucky one to be a member. I was able to find friends and support when I was lost and alone. - **Sherry L.**



FOCUS GROUP MEETING ON FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

Last February 21, 2004, Marco Campana of OCASI, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, did a focus group meeting on financial investment. It was attended by eleven live in caregivers and immigrants, and it lasted for almost two hours. Snacks and tokens were provided for participants and everyone is hoping that there will be more focus group meeting like this in the future.

The objective of this focus group is to identify the investment information that would be most helpful and appropriate to a wide variety of newcomers to Ontario. This will be an opportunity for settlement service providers and Ontario Securities Commission to see the investment reality from the newcomer's point of view and to determine the type of investment content needed as well as the need for the translation of the material that will be prepared out of the information gathered from this focus group meeting.

Participants were asked to give information about their experiences with investing and what has prevented them from investing if they have not started yet. Marco encouraged participants to voice out their opinions regarding investment and they were asked if there would be benefit in developing investment education material designed specifically for newcomers.



CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY

The Caribbean Connection: INTERCEDE Black Support Group held an event on Saturday February 14 to celebrate Black History Month. Approximately 15 people attended the event which included a potluck meal of Caribbean food, music, dancing, socializing and sharing. The highlight of the day was guest speaker Marilyn Oladimeiji who is on the hiring committee of INTERCEDE. She works full-time at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and teaches full-time at George Brown College in the Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program. Marilyn's work demonstrates her belief in social justice issues, her specific focus centering on marginalized populations, such as women and racialized communities.

Marilyn spoke about her experience of immigrating to Canada from Trinidad and working as a domestic worker. She faced similar barriers that many Black domestic workers and caregivers have today because of the continued devaluation of domestic work and added obstacles because of her race, class, and gender.

She also spoke about the impact on slavery on the Black community and how the economical, political and social state of the Black community presently can be rooted back to slavery. She discussed how the Europeans went to Africa they took people from different parts of Africa and from different tribes, and brought them to the Americas. If the slaves were from different parts of Africa they would not be able to communicate with one another due to language barriers which made it hard for them to come together to revolt against the oppressive system of slavery. Dividing the community was a tactic used by the Europeans; therefore slaves could not come together and would remain powerless.

The division of the community still persists today and this present division can be traced back to slavery. Presently people in positions of power still want the Black community to remain divided; therefore they will not come together and be a strong force to make changes that will make society more equitable and fair. She says the Black community must come together to make actual changes to occur. For the Black community to become more powerful it cannot just be through a few individuals being in powerful positions, but must be through the liberation of the entire community. Marilyn was pleased to see the Caribbean Connection Group at INTERCEDE, as it is a space for caregivers and domestic workers to come together in the Black Community and support each other and advocate for social change.

In addition, she stated that Black History should not be celebrated for one month only, but during the entire year. She carried on to say that the Canadian education system continues to ignore the contributions of the Black community nationally and globally, and there must a change to the education system to be more inclusive. She says that when members of the Black community are shown in the media they are usually portrayed through negative images and positive images of Black people are ignored. This can have profound negative impacts on the Black community.

Thank you to everyone who came out and participated in this event, we had an amazing time. **The Caribbean Connection's next meeting is Saturday March 13, 2004 from 2-4 at the INTERCEDE Office. If you are interested in attending please contact Salma at (416) 483-4554 x 22.**



ASSISTANCE FOR FOREIGN TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

On February 8, 2004, INTERCEDE held its members' monthly meeting at Cecil Community Centre and the resource person was Carlos Sebastian from PROMPT, "Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades".

PROMPT is made up of twenty immigrant professional and trade associations, community initiatives and umbrella groups working to increase the access of immigrants into their fields of expertise. Their goal is to develop policy recommendations to increase access to professions and trades, and advocate for changes based on these recommendations with the long-term goal of improving the economic and social integration of immigrants. He stated the barriers faced by immigrants/professionals and trades people such as, lack of policy coherence amongst levels of government, lack of accountability mechanism amongst key stakeholders, attitudes towards immigrants by Canadian society, occupational regulatory bodies and by employers.

Carlos Sebastian said PROMPT's priorities are to:

1. Develop a national strategy to integrate immigrants into the labour market.
2. Challenge forced immigrant dispersion strategies and develop alternative strategies for regional development that are holistic and incentive based
3. Promote the role of internationally-educated professionals in the Canadian society
4. Promote the role of immigrants in creating innovation and links to global markets
5. Explore the role of regulatory bodies and develop mechanism for transparent accountability
6. Define equity in labour market integration from an immigrant perspective

He stressed further that newcomers, immigrants or working class should try to get in touch with organizations of their profession and get information regarding assessment of their credentials and how can they practice their profession here in Canada. He said getting your credentials assessed will help you figure out if you need more upgrading to be gainfully employed in your profession and overcome the "Canadian experience" requirement for newcomers.

He encouraged participants and other immigrants to give feedback on difficulties they encountered integrating into the job market, that way their professional organization will relay the problem to PROMPT in order to make the necessary recommendations to the government of Ontario.

Call INTERCEDE for further information regarding PROMPT.

COME AND JOIN:

INTERCEDE BOARD, STAFF AND MEMBERS

To Celebrate INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH

March 6, 2004, Saturday

Call Genie for the meeting place at 416-483-4554 ext. 21

Q & A

Q. *This is the first time that I will file income tax return here in Canada. I arrived February of last year and my employer had given me my T4. Room and Board expense is not stated in that T4, but my friends told me that I should claim for this expense since this is automatically deducted from my salary. I am receiving \$1,200 net every month with out pay slip. Can I get a refund for Room and Board expense? Is it true that employers automatically deduct this expense from our salary?*

A. Yes, it is true that under the Live in Caregiver Program, you must pay for room and board expense to your employer and it is usually deducted to your salary in the amount of \$369.42 every month.

But not all employers are deducting this amount from caregivers salary; there are employers who opted not to deduct this amount since this will be an added taxable income to them as rent income.

In your case, since you have no idea what were deducted from your salary every payday, ask your employer about it before claiming for a refund for this expense in your income tax return. Otherwise, CCRA will ask you why did you declare an expense for this purpose when your employer did not declare rent income in their income tax return.

Next time, be sure to ask for a statement of earnings every time you receive your salary from your employer so you will be aware of what were being deducted from your salary.

Q. *I arrived in Canada on May 2001 and I will complete 24 months under the LCP on March 2004. Can I apply first for open work permit before applying for permanent residence so I did not have to renew my work permit before May 2004 which happens to be my third year?*

A. No, Immigration gives open work permit to applicants whose application for permanent residence has been approved in principle after four to six months after submission of Permanent Residence. This means that Immigration had done preliminary assessment of your application for permanent residence and you have met all the requirements. Therefore, if you submit your open work permit application ahead of your application for permanent residence, you will receive a refusal from CIC.

Besides, even if you applied for permanent residence before open work permit, you still have to apply for extension of your current work permit, because you must have a valid immigration document while the two above mentioned applications are in process.



DEADLINE FOR RENEWAL OF YOUR S.I.N.

INTERCEDE would like to remind persons whose S.I.N. starts with 900 series to have their S.I.N. cards renewed on or before March 31, 2004. By April 2004, S.I.N. that begins with 900 series will no longer be valid.

If you renewed your S.I.N. card, it will have the same number but with an expiry date the same expiry date as your current work permit. For further information call INTERCEDE office and talk to any of the counselors.

FREE Income Tax Clinic
April 4, 2004, 1:00—5:00 p.m.
Cecil Community Centre, 58 Cecil St.

Please bring these supporting documents:

1. Income Tax Return Form
2. T-4 Slips from employer
3. All T-Slips received from other sources:
 - ◆ T2202/A – Tuition and Education Amount
 - ◆ T5 – Investment Income
4. Receipts
 - ◆ RRSP
 - ◆ Rent
 - ◆ Donations
 - ◆ Medical Expenses
 - ◆ Tuition Fees
 - ◆ Union Dues /Interest Expense on Student Loan
5. Information required:
 - ◆ Marital Status
 - ◆ SIN of taxpayer (and spouse, if here)
 - ◆ Date of birth
 - ◆ Name of dependents, including parents living with tax payer
 - ◆ Income of spouse
6. 2002 Notice of Assessment from Revenue Canada, or taxpayer 2002 Income Tax Return.

FREE JOB SEARCH WORKSHOP

FOR CAREGIVERS & FOR NEWCOMERS

WHEN: Sunday
March 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2004
April 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2004
May 2, 9, 16 & 30, 2004
TIME : 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
WHERE: INTERCEDE
234 Eglinton Ave E., Suite 405
Toronto, On, M4P 1K5

Please call (416)483-4554 ext. 30 or 21 to sign up.
Seating is limited.

Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada & sponsored by COSTI & OCASI

INTERCEDE

Address: 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 405
Toronto Ontario
M4P 1K5

Regular Hours: Mon-Fri 9 am - 4 p.m.
Telephone: (416) 483-4554
Fax: (416) 483-9781
Toll-Free: 1-877-483-4554
E-mail: info@intercedetoronto.org

INTERCEDE STAFF:
Fely Villasin - Coordinator
Des Balce - JSW Facilitator
Columbia Diaz - Settlement Counsellor
Salma Saadi - Settlement Counsellor
Anita Fortuno - Settlement Counsellor
Genie Policarpio - Intake & Administrative Assistant

We wish to thank: Citizenship and Immigration Canada- ISAP Program and Job Search Program with COSTI-OCASI; Ontario Status of Women; the Municipality of Toronto CSGP, Access & Equity and "Breaking the Cycle of Violence" grant programs, for their financial support.



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