



**THE IMMIGRANT  
EDUCATION SOCIETY**

# **2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT: RESILIENCE**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Year of Resilience ..... 2

Message from the CEO ..... 3

New Initiatives ..... 5

    Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC) ..... 5

    Healthy Minds ..... 6

    Staff Wellness Initiatives .....7

    Coffee with Colleen Podcast.....7

    TIES2U Online Multicultural Festival..... 8

    COVID 9-Teen..... 8

Language Education..... 9

    Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) ..... 9

    LINC Literacy & The Literacy Centre of Expertise ..... 10

    Other LINC Initiatives ..... 10

    LINC Home Study ..... 11

    LINC Blended ..... 11

    English Conversation: Connect Online (ECCO) ..... 12

    Other e-Learning Initiatives ..... 12

    Drop-In ESL..... 13

    Literacy & Basic English ..... 13

    Reading Room ..... 14

    Computer Access for Literacy Learners (CALL) ..... 14

Employment Training..... 15

    Employment Support Programs (ESP) ..... 15

    Empowering Youth through Employment (EYE)..... 17

    Enhancing Youth Possibilities (EYP) ..... 17

    Entrepreneurship Development Training (EDT) ..... 18

    Accounting Programs ..... 19

    Clerical Training..... 20

    Return to Work in Alberta ..... 20

Settlement Assistance..... 21

    Welcome Resources Information Program (WRIP) ..... 21

    Money Smart ..... 22

    Care for Newcomer Children ..... 23

    Settlement Chat ..... 24

Research & Program Development ..... 25

    Language Brokering Initiative ..... 25

    Data Management Projects ..... 26

    Change Can't Wait ..... 27

    Entrepreneurship Development Centre Feasibility Study ..... 28

Board of Directors ..... 29

Management Team .....31

Funders & Donors ..... 33



Illustrations by Alison Edwards  
Communications Coordinator at TIES  
alisonedwards@immigrant-education.ca

# A YEAR OF RESILIENCE

The year of COVID-19 will be remembered for major changes in how the world conducted business, how we attempted to maintain connections in our community, and how we adapted to socially distancing ourselves from others. Throughout these hardships and struggles navigating a world turned upside down, we choose to focus on RESILIENCE instead: through positivity, meaning, social support, perspective, energy, priorities, engagement, vitality, and achievement.

THIS PAST YEAR, WE:

- Remembered that individually we can be strong
- Reflected on the times we overcame past hardships
- Invested in building healthy relationships
- Stopped comparing ourselves to others
- Focused on helpful coping strategies
- Started volunteering or learning a new activity
- Used our time for self-reflection

WEB OUTREACH

290,702  
Website Pageviews

103,463  
Website Users

6,982  
Newsletter Subscribers  
(+36% Increase)

3,567  
Facebook Followers  
(+38% Increase)

2,183  
LinkedIn Followers  
(+43% Increase)

1,123  
Twitter Followers  
(+17% Increase)

OUR VISION

An inclusive and pluralistic society.

OUR MISSION

To provide innovative language education, customized employment training and placement, and integration services to newcomers and Canadians based on best practices.

OUR VALUES

- Togetherness** • We prioritize relationships and respect for each other  
**Inclusion** • We welcome and embrace pluralism  
**Empowerment** • We instill confidence and strength in ourselves and others  
**Service** • We serve and build our community



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

“ If you were to ask people to describe this past year in just one word, they might say unprecedented, challenging, isolating, difficult. I would agree that our 2020 - 2021 fiscal year has indeed been an unprecedented time, with the entire world battling the COVID-19 virus. However, I would choose a different word to encapsulate what we went through this past year – RESILIENCE. This is not meant to gloss over the challenges that The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) faced, along with the rest of the world, to continue to operate under lockdowns, restrictions, and social distancing.

The inspiration for the word RESILIENCE comes from a perspective of gratitude, hope, optimism, and appreciation for everyone's dedication to overcome all the obstacles that life threw at us this past year. I am so proud of the resilient TIES staff, volunteers and especially our clients who persevered and grew their skills in ways they probably never knew they could.

Reflecting on the past year, I am also full of gratitude to our funders and donors, community and corporate partners for their tremendous support, to our Board of Directors for their continued confidence and unfailing assistance, to our amazing, dedicated volunteers for continuing to give their time, expertise, and energy to help our clients. Every day I am also blessed to lead and work side-by-side with extremely knowledgeable, compassionate, and supportive staff who tirelessly focus on serving our community. I am inspired to see our brave and committed clients grow in their learning and confidence. I am honoured to walk alongside them on their settlement journey in the country we all call home!

Since transitioning our services online in mid-March 2020, we have encountered and overcome numerous challenges. At first, many of our clients lacked the proper electronic devices to access learning. Other challenges quickly came to light: struggles with digital literacy, low speed internet connections or even no internet, no phone plan or not enough phone minutes to handle lengthy phone calls. In response, we launched an action plan, including a donation campaign for electronic devices, and reached out to funders for resources to purchase more devices. Thanks to our team's combined efforts, we managed to secure over 100 electronic devices from community groups and individual donors, including Friends of Haiti, the City of Calgary, the Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Library and our own staff. The devices were then loaned out to clients in need.

To help clients with low digital literacy adapt to learning online, TIES staff volunteered flexible tech support to our clients, during the daytime, evening and weekend. We are very grateful that one of our major funders, IRCC, approved our request for a part-time IT support staff, which was a tremendous help to clients accessing the online learning portal. Some of our staff provided support in clients' first languages, which eased a lot of stress on both clients and instructors. With a collective team effort, we empowered all of our clients to access the e-learning portal.

As the pandemic dragged on, longer than anyone anticipated, new struggles began to appear on our horizon. Clients from low-income communities, living in close proximity to each other, began to contract COVID-19 in greater numbers. They needed groceries, medicine and personal protective equipment (PPE) delivered to them

so they could properly isolate. Anxiety and stress were heightened by longer periods of isolation, loss of employment and exclusion from community and faith supports. Thanks to funding support from governments and local funders, we delivered food hampers, PPE, and groceries to the clients and families who tested COVID positive, plus activity packages to the children in our Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program, and learning packages to our Literacy learners.

The longer lasting impacts of COVID have now started to become more apparent as we see more individuals facing mental health challenges. Recognizing this need, our Board of Directors opened the EAP (Employment Assistance Program) using TIES' own resources, so all staff can access free online counselling anonymously to help ease the mental stress. Our Board also launched a special mental health support fundraiser to aid clients in need. With funding support from provincial and municipal governments, United Way and Calgary Foundation and Foundation of Canada, we launched TIES Healthy Minds, a series of mindfulness-based mental health initiatives, including COVID-19 related information, wellness workshops, group counselling sessions, counselling for individuals and families, and the development of a website to share resources.

I am very proud of how our team has stepped up to connect with one another, even though we continue to work remotely. Through 2020, staff initiated the “TIES Together” bi-weekly newsletter, which featured photos, encouragements and stories from staff to encourage one another and share coping strategies. The staff also started “Let's Do This” online activity sessions on Friday afternoons to share our skills such as yoga, cooking, art and baking to stay connected and have some fun learning new skills.

Over the past year, we noticed that some of our Literacy students especially struggled with online learning. Thanks to funding support from IRCC and Calgary Foundation, TIES set up new hybrid learning classrooms and started piloting the hybrid learning process as of April 2021. During lowered restriction stages, we were able to bring some of



DR. SALLY S. ZHAO

our students back for in-class learning. Clients who have been patiently waiting for in-person instruction were extremely happy to return in person, while their classmates were still able to learn online simultaneously.

Looking forward, through collective efforts to promote vaccination, we hope that TIES can soon return to an adapted format of in-person learning (now combined with hybrid learning options). We anticipate being able to serve even more clients in the future through hybrid learning and an expanded facility space in the Westwinds neighbourhood. Through ongoing fund development efforts, development of social enterprise initiatives, and more focus on data management and our upcoming Business Success Centre, we look forward to many new opportunities to realize our vision of an inclusive and pluralistic society.

Please read on for more details about new initiatives launched by TIES, or in collaboration with sector partners, including: the Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC), Coffee with Colleen, TIES2U Summer Festival, TIES Healthy Minds, Covid-9-Teen and many other new and existing programs.

I hope that you continue to stay resilient and healthy in the year ahead!

*Sally Zhao*



A special thank you to my hard working Executive Communications Support, Colleen Cory.



## OUR IMPACT THIS YEAR:

13,000+  
Clients Served

9,000+  
Volunteer Hours

132  
Staff

72  
Countries of Origin

274  
Volunteers

50  
Programs



As COVID-19 cases peaked in late November 2020, it became clear that more needed to be done to support hotspots designated by Alberta Health Services (AHS) in NE Calgary. A group of 17 agencies working in the NE, plus the Calgary Local Immigration Partnership (CLIP), had been meeting regularly during the year. At one of those meetings, an idea was born: the Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC).

CENC brought together each organization's strengths. Centre for Newcomers was tasked by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to create a collaborative of NE agencies to better coordinate outreach and referrals. TIES contributed our Research expertise, Employment and Mental Health supports. Immigrant Services Calgary (ISC) contributed data management through their Gateway database. To streamline referrals, CENC used a toll-free emergency response line, where cultural brokers from Action Dignity (in 20+ different languages) referred clients to appropriate services based on need.

The Government of Alberta, City of Calgary, Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA) and AHS all jumped in with ideas, funding and support. In addition to the 17 community organizations involved in CENC, over 100+ community groups are actively involved in CENC work.

In only 3 months, more than 10,000 people directly affected by COVID-19 received the following supports:

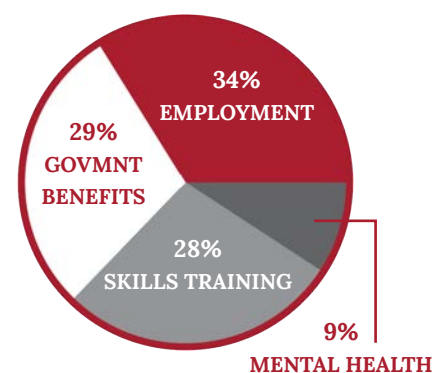
- Guidance in their first language
- Culturally appropriate food hampers
- Mental health counselling
- Job search support & employment training
- Help applying for Government benefits
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

**RESEARCH STUDY** • Findings reveal that CENC has largely succeeded by adopting an intersectoral collaborative governance model, an innovative inter-organizational database, and by recruiting highly professionalized cultural brokers to build trust through cultural competency to bridge the gap between government agencies, community organizations organizing the initiative and community members in need of COVID-19 assistance.

**2648**  
Service Requests Referred  
to TIES

**1706**  
Unique Clients Served

#### TIES SERVICE REQUESTS:



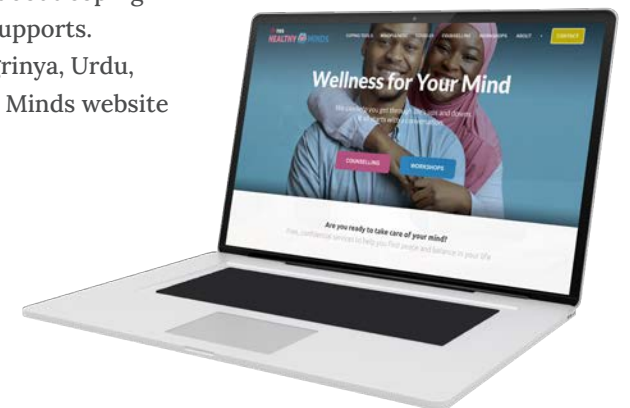
Healthy Minds is a new initiative launched during Fall 2020 in response to mental health needs accentuated by the pandemic. Healthy Minds offered several streams of service over the course of the year:

**FREE ONLINE WORKSHOPS** about a variety of topics related to mental well-being, including: chronic stress, healthy thinking habits, setting boundaries, self-care, parenting, getting enough sleep, and mindfulness.

**FREE CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELLING** for individuals, couples and families offered online by appointment. Online counselling has proven to be an effective means of reducing barriers that clients experience when attending face-to-face sessions. Logistical concerns such as transportation, childcare, and navigating to an unfamiliar location become irrelevant. We will continue to have online counselling options even when the pandemic has passed.

**DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW WEBSITE**, which features information about coping tools, mindfulness techniques, COVID-19 resources, and financial supports. Information was translated into 8 different languages: Amharic, Tigrinya, Urdu, Punjabi, Tagalog, Spanish, Arabic, and Hindi. Check out the Healthy Minds website at [www.tieshealthyminds.ca](http://www.tieshealthyminds.ca).

**CREATION OF DIGITAL MEDIA** to introduce clients to Mindfulness practices, including video recordings, podcast episodes, and the development of the new TIES Mindfulness app.



**5000+**  
Visitors to the website

**4213**  
Clients Served

**1016**  
Mindfulness Session  
Attendees

**213**  
Counselling Sessions

## MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: JOHN, COUNSELLOR



For many of us, anxiety around the ongoing pandemic has inhibited us from fully living. One certain thing, however, is that worrying or ruminating about the pandemic won't change the outcome. Adapting and learning to tolerate more uncertainty plays a huge part in building positive coping skills for ourselves. Through mindfulness practices, I have been able to step back from the brink of catastrophizing over future events that I've got no control over, and learned to be more present at the moment, and make peace with uncertainty.

Join our upcoming conference!  
**June 23-25, 2021**  
Visit our website for more info.



# STAFF WELLNESS INITIATIVES

242

Submissions from  
63 different staff

145

Subscribers  
(Staff + Volunteers)

21

Issues of  
TIES Together

## TIES TOGETHER NEWSLETTER

Shortly after our team began working remotely in March 2020, we started a bi-weekly internal newsletter called TIES Together. Working remotely can be isolating, especially during a time when everything about the world around you has changed. The purpose of TIES Together was to stay connected as a team, encourage one another, and take comfort in sharing our pandemic experiences. It was also used to disseminate resources and important updates.

Every week, staff and volunteers sent in submissions of photos and stories in response to a prompt. Some of the prompts were: workspace at home, furry quarantine buddies, holiday traditions, dream travel destinations, “throwback” photos, and favourite recipes. Each issue also included a feature message from a different member of the staff team.

Many of the **MESSAGES OF RESILIENCE** found throughout this Annual Report were sourced from the TIES Together feature messages.

## “LET’S DO THIS” WELLNESS ACTIVITY FRIDAYS

In 2021, as the pandemic stretched on, we introduced “Let’s Do This” Wellness Activity Fridays. This was an optional way for staff to connect in a relaxed setting, doing non-work related activities. Some staff volunteered to lead an activity of their choice, including yoga, baking donuts, meditative drawing, and a scavenger hunt.



## COFFEE WITH COLLEEN PODCAST



Coffee with Colleen is a new podcast presented by TIES, featuring insightful conversations with guests over a cup of coffee. The goal for this podcast is to create a space for TIES staff and volunteers to chat about their experiences and current programs and initiatives at TIES. For our external partners, this podcast is a way to connect and collaborate on different issues concerning the immigrant sector and the greater Calgary area. Our first guest was our very own CEO, Sally Zhao, who shared her thoughts and experiences on the topic of leadership. Check it out on our website at [immigrant-education/cwcpodcast](https://immigrant-education/cwcpodcast).

# TIES2U ONLINE MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

This year was the 10th anniversary of our annual Summer Festival. At first it looked like we wouldn’t be able to celebrate this year due to restrictions on outdoor gatherings, but that setback didn’t stop us! Thanks to funding from the Government of Alberta and the efforts of our team, TIES was able to reimagine our 2020 Summer Festival as the TIES2U Online Multicultural Festival. Although we celebrated online this year, our founding principles for the festival remained the same: bringing together newcomer students with members of the surrounding communities, and showcasing our city’s vibrant cultural diversity.



400+

Attendees on Zoom and  
Youtube Live

24

Talent Show  
Participants

28

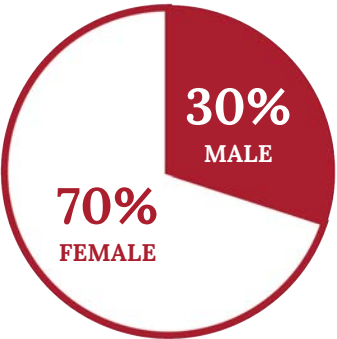
Fashion Slideshow  
Photo Submissions

Day 1 of the event featured a Multicultural Fashion Slideshow, with 28 photos submitted by students; an O Canada video by the TIES staff choir, with each voice compiled digitally; and 24 incredible Talent Show participants. Talent Show video submissions ranged from cultural dances, music and song, to soccer stunts, breakdancing, facepainting and even a theatrical performance! Day 2 was not to be missed either, featuring an array of performances, including Ukranian Dance, Taiko Drums, Taichi, Latin music and more. You can check out recordings of the event at [immigrant-education.ca/ties2u-festival](https://immigrant-education.ca/ties2u-festival).



## COVID 9-TEEN

COVID 9-Teen started as a volunteer initiative by teenagers across Canada, offering free virtual programs to connect youth during the pandemic. TIES partnered with COVID 9-Teen and hired staff to facilitate program delivery. Besides organizing fun online classes such as martial arts, dance, and music for youth, COVID 9-Teen also offers peer support, opportunities to get involved in community projects, and mental health resources.



2000+

Clients Served

4000+

Volunteer Hours

200

Volunteers

15

Talent Shows

13

Career & Life Sessions

# LANGUAGE EDUCATION

## LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

LINC offers free English classes for newcomers to prepare them for life in Canada. In these classes, clients learn reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills from Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 1 to 4, as well as Canadian culture and life skills.

As of March 17, 2020, classes were moved online due to COVID-19, offered via Zoom and Google Classroom. TIES began piloting LINC Hybrid classes (online and in-person simultaneously) on April 5, 2021. Special equipment designated for delivering Hybrid classes has been installed in 6 classrooms.

LINC faced many challenges moving classes online. However, our staff and students stepped up to the challenge, resulting in improvements to students' digital literacy and independence, exploring new methods of instruction, and increased peer support between instructors.

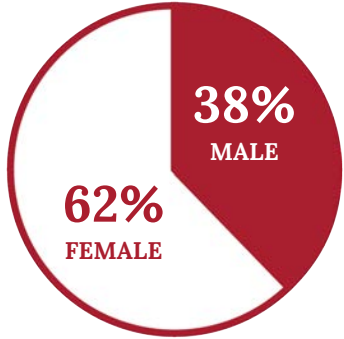
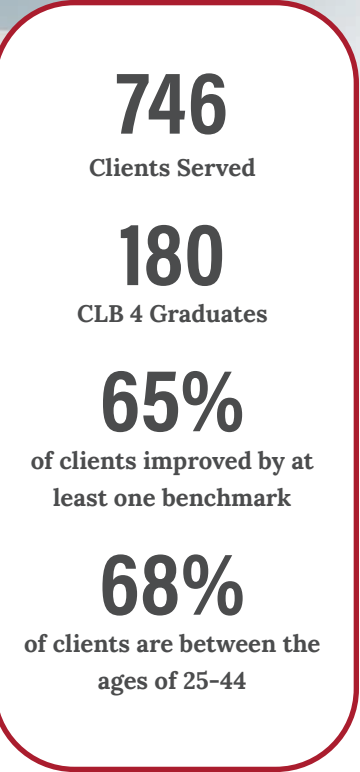
Top countries served: Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Afghanistan



### MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: PIA, LINC INSTRUCTOR

On the last day of our online classes, I asked my students if they were willing to continue studying in this mode. All of them said “YES!” despite their struggles. One of them even said, “This is good, teacher! We are practicing our speaking and listening in real life!”

Now let me then take a few more moments on my “Thinking Chair” to plan for what I can do to help make these online classes a worthwhile experience for my students. To my colleagues, whatever “Thinking Chair” you have, wherever you are in the comfort of your own homes, we’re all in this together.



## LINC LITERACY & THE LITERACY CENTRE OF EXPERTISE

LINC Literacy is designed for beginner English learners and students with limited or disrupted formal education (little experience in a classroom). LINC Literacy students learn the basics, including letters, numbers and grammar.

On June 3, 2020 we launched our new **Literacy Centre of Expertise**. The Literacy Centre of Expertise is a collaborative hub and information centre supporting ESL literacy service providers in Calgary, Alberta and beyond. Through collaboration, we serve students and teachers by sharing research-based best practices, resulting in a consistent and client-centred approach to literacy.

This year, our Literacy Centre of Expertise team organized teacher training, developed modules, and launched a new website featuring monthly blog posts, in-house podcast episodes, and links to resources and training by other Literacy providers. Check it out online at [immigrant-education.ca/literacycentre](https://immigrant-education.ca/literacycentre).

Top countries served: Syria, Afghanistan, Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia

## OTHER LINC INITIATIVES



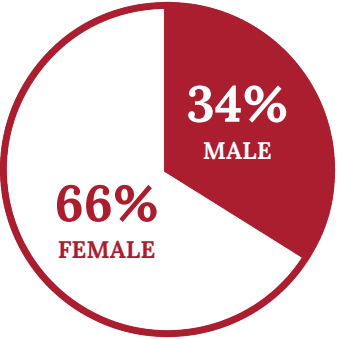
### INDIGENOUS VOICES IN THE CLASSROOM

Indigenous Voices in the Classroom (IVIC) brings Indigenous voices and faces into the LINC classroom through the development of over 200 pages of lesson plans.



### PBLA MODULE BANK FOR LINC ONLINE

To support instructors teaching LINC online, TIES began developing free-to-access modules for CLB 3-8. To date, 10 different modules have been developed. Check them out online at [immigrant-education.ca/pbla-modules](https://immigrant-education.ca/pbla-modules).



### MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: DONNA, LITERACY CENTRE LEAD

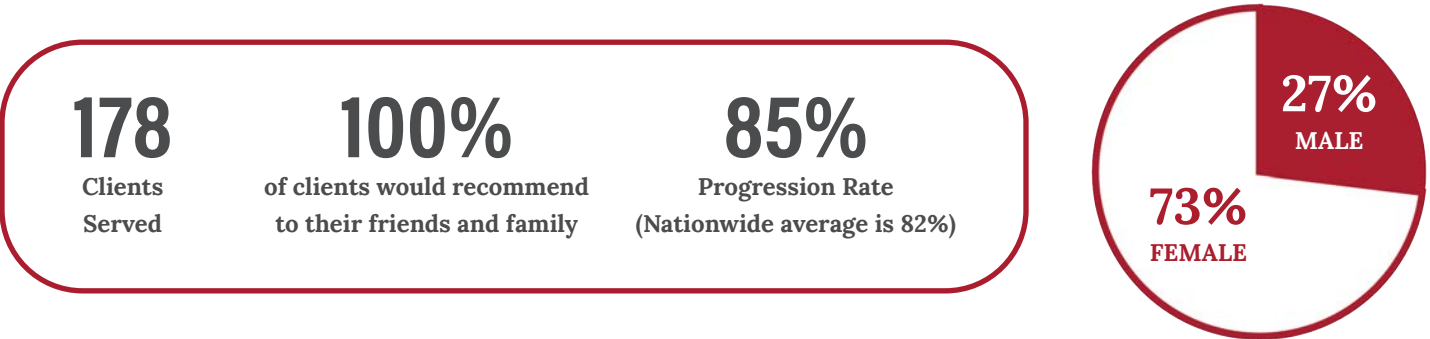


From day one working at TIES, literacy learners touched a special place in my heart. Relocating to a new country is challenging at the best of times, and here was a group of people who came to Canada, usually as refugees from mostly war torn areas with limited formal education, and they were so grateful to be given the opportunity to go to school.

We did not have a literacy stream at TIES when I started working here ten years ago. We started LINC Literacy, a program that understood and catered to their needs. But it was difficult to find resources, training, and a community of practitioners to learn and grow with. Now, here we are, years later with the Literacy Centre of Expertise!

# LINC HOME STUDY

LINC Home Study offers online English classes for learners who are unable to attend class in person due to disability, family commitments or conflicting work schedules. This program has been one of the top performing LINC programs in Canada for the past 7 years. **Top countries served: India, Korea, China, Ukraine**

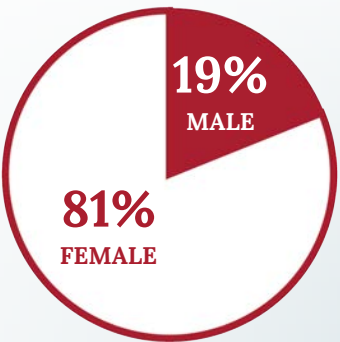


# LINC BLENDED

LINC Blended offers the flexibility of online learning, plus the benefits of one in-person class each week. Clients complete activities online, and attend class in person once each week to receive face-to-face instruction and connect with their classmates.

Early in the year, LINC Blended was transitioned to 100% online delivery. While some of our clients initially missed learning in the physical classroom, nearly every client reported the value of their weekly classes online at a time when socialization and activity outside of the home was at a low. As a result of this dedication, we have noticed significantly greater retention and increased benchmark progression among our LINC Blended clients this year.

**Top countries served: India, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mexico**



## TESTIMONY: ANONYMOUS STUDENT

Online classes are stress-free for me – they make it easier for me to attend class and are a practical way to learn while I take care of my family.

## MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: WHITNEY, E-LEARNING MANAGER

If history has shown us anything, it's that great upheaval generally precedes times of unprecedented peace and prosperity. I think we can get to peace and prosperity again, but it can't happen unless we are willing to change the way we live, change the way we regard the world, and change how we regard one another. Change can be big or small. No matter what you choose, if you do it with the intention to bring some light into the world, you will have an impact. And while it may be idealistic, I choose to daydream about a world where we all emerge from social isolation having done just that. If we did? Nothing could stop us.



# OTHER E-LEARNING INITIATIVES

## Employment Access Counselling (EAC)

EAC offered a series of 4 different webinars during the summer of 2020, hosted by Employment Counsellor Aleksandra Koscielak. Topics included: Stress and the Job Search, Building Your Best Resume Ever, Perfecting Your Online Presence, and How to Shine in Your New Job. 50+ participants attended the webinars.

## Newcomer Introduction to Classes Online (NICO)

Newcomer Introduction to Classes Online (NICO) is an open-source course designed to prepare low-literacy newcomers for online English learning programs. It is free for use by IRCC-funded organizations. Since the launch of the NICO program, TIES has disseminated the course to about 70 staff members representing 59 organizations across Canada, so that they can use the materials with their own LINC and ESL students. Our Research department acquired funding for, researched, developed and piloted the NICO curriculum.

## English for Employment: Job Search (EEJS)

EEJS is a self-driven online course hosted on our Moodle learning management system, TIES|Learn, which helps newcomers and pre-arrival candidates improve their English and job search skills. This year, 79 clients enrolled in EEJS.



# ENGLISH CONVERSATION: CONNECT ONLINE

From July 2020 to March 2021, ECCO offered free online conversation classes for Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced students. ECCO was an opportunity for participants to improve their language skills through conversation and connect with other English learners during quarantine. Classes were hosted on ZOOM, and focused on topics such as settlement, mental health, wellness, and COVID-19.

**Top countries served: Iran, India, Venezuela, Ukraine, Brazil**

I didn't have any friends when I first arrived in Canada, but the ECCO class has shown me how important people are to me. Now, I look forward to every Saturday class, the new friends I've made, and the wonderful teachers.

ECCO has been our lifeline during the pandemic. It gives us a break from all of the gloom and doom.

By listening to the other participants, my mindset changes and it gives me new things to consider in my own views.

Our ECCO program ROCKS! So, let's rock on... forever and ever... ECCO program is my weekly dose of caffeine and self-esteem booster that keeps me going during these hard times.

# DROP-IN ESL

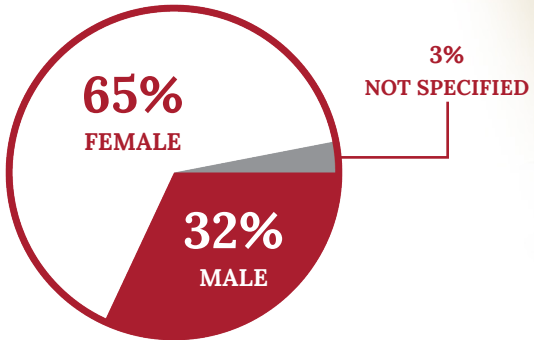
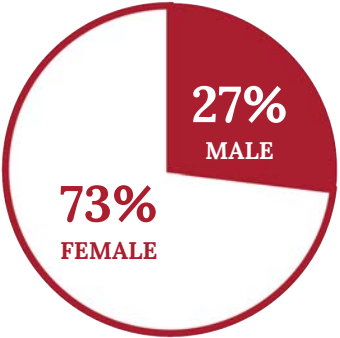
TIES has been offering Drop-In ESL classes for more than 30 years. The flexible class times are convenient for adult learners who have to schedule their classes around childcare needs and work schedules. While there are many funded ESL programs for Permanent Residents, our Drop-in ESL program is unique in that it fills a gap for ESL learners who are Canadian Citizens. This program is fully run by volunteers, and many of our volunteers have been with us for more than 3 years - the longest has been volunteering with us for more than 15 years!

Classes moved online in April 2020, and since then students have been learning via Zoom. Most of the students (82%) indicated that they are satisfied with the overall online learning experience. We engaged Jacky Rivas, Central ESL Regional Advisor, to conduct workshops for our volunteer instructors about online teaching strategies, and to consult in our lesson plan materials.

Top countries served: Mexico, Colombia, India, Brazil, South Korea

## SUCCESS STORY: MADEL JEAN

Madel immigrated to Canada from Haiti in 2013. Her main reason for joining Drop-in ESL was to improve her English to find employment. As Madel's first language is French, she struggled with the pronunciation of certain English sounds. In just a few months of attending classes at TIES, she has noticed a dramatic increase in her ability and confidence to speak. Even when she mispronounces a word, Madel self-corrects which is a great indicator of her improvement.



# READING ROOM

Reading Room provides one-on-one tutoring for LINC students struggling with reading and writing in English. This support is perfect for students with learning disabilities or limited education in their home countries. Reading Room is fully taught by volunteers.

Sessions moved online in April 2020, and since then students have been learning via Zoom. To help the volunteers transition to teaching online, Reading Room staff provided Q+A sessions and training videos. To support students, the Reading Room team prepared binders and delivered the learning materials to students before the start of each semester (pictured above).

This year, 2 booklets were developed by our Literacy Centre of Expertise for use in the Reading Room.

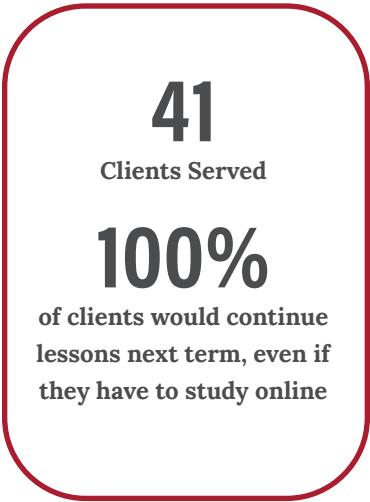
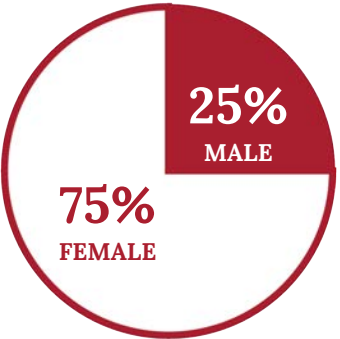
Top countries served: Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Congo, India



# COMPUTER ACCESS FOR LITERACY LEARNERS

Computer Access for Literacy Learners (CALL) equips literacy-level learners with the basics of using a computer. Classes are beginner-friendly, hands-on, and easy to follow. Classes moved online in April 2020, and since then students have been learning via Zoom.

Top countries served: Ethiopia, Eritrea, India



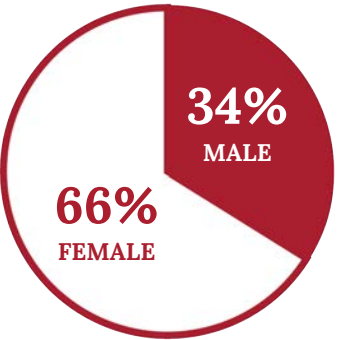
# LITERACY & BASIC ENGLISH

Literacy & Basic English offers literacy-level classes to beginner English learners. Unlike LINC Literacy, this program is available to Canadian Citizens. Classes moved online in April 2020, and since then students have been learning via Zoom. To equip students for class, instructors prepared binders for each student and delivered the learning materials before the start of each semester, and incorporated computer literacy into their lessons.

Top countries served: Iraq, Vietnam, Bhutan, Syria, Eritrea, Pakistan

## SUCCESS STORY: AMNA

Amna is a former refugee from Somalia. She did not attend school when she was a child, and therefore did not learn how to read or write in her first language, Somali. She enrolled in Literacy & Basic English because she had a strong desire to learn how to read and write for the first time. At first, Amna was not confident in her learning abilities, but she was committed to her studies and showed very good progress. Now, Amna displays confidence and is an active participant in all class activities. She is very happy with school and is proud of her developing skills and abilities.



## MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: MONICA, LINC INSTRUCTOR

All of us are social beings. This time of quarantine and self-isolation has brought along a lot of frustration, helplessness, anxiety and a lot of coping mechanisms. For me, personally, I just take each day as it comes. The first thing that I do when I get up is thank God for giving me a family, job, food, clothes and a house apart from the fact I have a work family at TIES to support all of us. I try to stay positive and listen to music after I am done with my students. I am also organizing my house and getting rid of unnecessary clutter. Also trying to clear clutter in my mind, though it is difficult!

# EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS (ESP)

We offer two streams of programming under the ESP banner: Employment Skills Training and Occupation Specific Training. Due to the pandemic, both streams were delivered online this year via Zoom.

Top countries served: India, Eritrea, Philippines, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia

377  
Counselling Hours

58  
Events & Workshops

20+  
Employment Partners

### EMPLOYMENT SKILLS TRAINING

TIES has offered Employment Skills Training (EST) for more than 20 years. Clients receive training in four different categories (up to 80 hours in each) to help them secure work in Canada. These categories include job search skills, Canadian business communication, computer skills for job readiness, seminars, and networking opportunities.

80  
Clients  
Served

70  
Graduates  
(88%)

84%  
Secured  
Employment

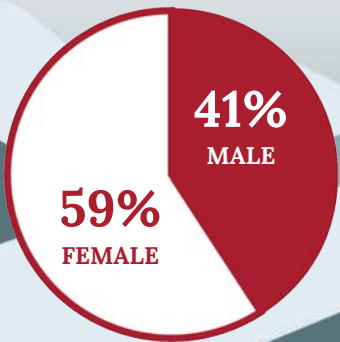
### OCCUPATION SPECIFIC TRAINING

Occupation Specific Training (OST) is designed to prepare newcomers for work in one of the following entry level fields: Childcare, Warehouse Logistics, or Security. Includes both English and job-specific workplace training. OST Childcare has partnered with Bow Valley College to offer academic credits that can be used towards continued studies in the field of childcare.

154  
Clients  
Served

144  
Graduates  
(88%)

70%  
Secured  
Employment



### TESTIMONY: RIYA DALAL

I have joined EST program on May 25, 2020. The program is combination of both personal and professional development. I learnt so many things during this like resume writing, interview skills, employment rights, business communication, etc. Instructor helps individually to improve your professional skills in resume and cover letter writing. I didn't know anything about Calgary before joining EST program but today I am aware of almost everything which every immigrant should know. I found these very helpful when I got job offer from ABM college. All the members of TIES team are very supportive and helpful. I would like to thank Juanito and Zenobia for their continuous support and assistance.

### TESTIMONY: SIRINE GHALAYINI

As a newcomer, I faced some problems when I came to Canada. I am a wife and a mother for 2 children who was desperate and anxious because my husband and I didn't know how to adapt in a new society. We have no friends or relatives, we were alone and nobody helped us in finding the right path to follow. The EST program helped me in improving my skills and in boosting my confidence. It also helped me in making connections and creating a LinkedIn profile to connect with more people. It gave me the opportunity to learn about TIES and apply for voluntary jobs. This was a turning point, I got offer as a full time teacher at the Islamic school. Moreover, the program helped me to know myself better. Canada is a wonderful country because it has such programs for immigrants. Thank you TIES!

### TESTIMONY: FOLAJINMI OLUWASINA

All my objectives for attending this course were met because I feel I am better equipped. I learnt about the job market, how it looks like, the employment processes at the back end and how to better position myself for a job. The training was very detailed to the extent that I was taught how to introduce myself to anyone, workplace policies, employment standards in Canada, familiarizing myself with rights and responsibilities as an employee in Canada. All the way through this training, my instructor, Dr. Juanito reviewed my resume and I was able to apply for jobs. Not too long after that, I got my first job, 3 weeks later, I got another job as an advisor and within one month, I was promoted to the position of a Technical Support Advisor in my organization.

### MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: ZENOBIA, ESP COORDINATOR

Our clients always come to this beautiful country with lots of hope in their eyes for better prospects and good quality of life. For some of my students, life isn't easy. It sometimes knocks them down and lets them take a few steps backwards, but the passion to thrive, survive and adapt to the new challenges for a better future never lets them give up on their dreams. That inspires me to perseverance for new challenges.



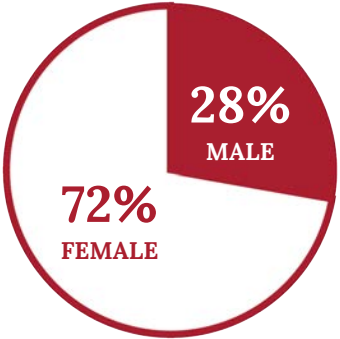
# EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

Empowering Youth through Employment (EYE) is designed to help youth between the ages of 15-30 break barriers to employment through education and training. The program includes 12 weeks of Group-Based Employability Skills (GBES) classroom training followed by 12 weeks of paid Work Experience at a partner organization. Clients are paid a living allowance for the duration of the program. Transit passes and childcare reimbursements were provided to clients based on their need.

In March 2020, GBES training moved online via a learning management system. Many hours were spent to ensure an exceptionally smooth transition with minimal effect on the participants. Participants were provided with tech supports required to attend the program (such as laptops and Microsoft 365/Google Suite). Social interaction was promoted through the gamification of learning content, group discussion, and incorporation of online team building activities. Clients also benefitted from one-on-one coaching and Life Skills Training.

Work Experience, although delayed in some instances, still took place despite economic and pandemic challenges. Many participants opted for direct employment during this period for more stability.

Top countries served: India, Syria, Philippines, Nigeria, Iraq



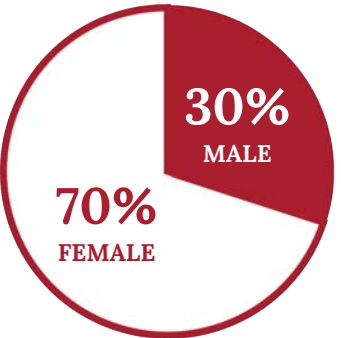
## ENHANCING YOUTH POSSIBILITIES

The Enhancing Youth Possibilities (EYP) program is for youth ages 15 to 29 who are looking to update their employment skills, gain working experience and find a job in Calgary. Compared to EYE, EYP is a fast-track program: participants receive 2 weeks of employment training, followed by 80 hours of paid practicum.

EYP began a few months after the start of the pandemic, so the team had enough time and expertise to prepare for online delivery via Zoom and Google Classroom. Clients were aware of the online delivery prior to the start of the program, and technology was provided to those who needed it. To make learning more fun and focused, the EYP instructor enhanced the students' learning experience through interactive discussions.

The EYP team was able to build connections with different employers to provide work experience placements despite the challenges of the pandemic. Transit passes and childcare reimbursements were provided to clients attending work experience.

Top countries served: Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India



# MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: MAYSSOUN, EMPLOYMENT & SETTLEMENT MANAGER

The resilience shown by EYE clients was inspiring, attendance was maintained, relationships were still being built and fostered. There was uncertainty, there was worry, but everyone pulled through and relied on each other for support and encouragement. The program's success rate was not affected at all despite our team's worry that realistically it would be affected.



# TESTIMONY: MAJID MAMOUN RIDA MOHAMMED

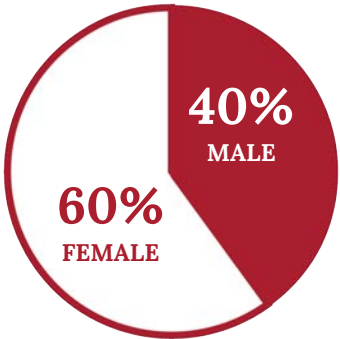
Before I joined EYP, I was constantly applying to jobs and receiving no responses. After applying the tips and strategies taught by our amazing instructor Juanito at TIES, I sent seven applications and got a response from two companies within the same week requesting interviews. I am now working for one of those two companies and loving it! I even got compliments during both of my interviews about how professionally written my resume and cover letter are. I could not have done this without TIES!

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Many newcomers arrive in Canada with a dream to start their own business. Entrepreneurship Development Training (EDT) empowers clients to make their dream a reality, and build a new future for themselves in Canada. Through this program, clients learn about business management, registration, customer service, and hiring to increase their chances of entrepreneurial success.

This year's intake began shortly after the start of the pandemic, which gave our EDT team some time to prepare technology requirements and online delivery methods in advance. Sessions were held online via Zoom and Google Classroom. Clients were engaged and active during the sessions. Online delivery did not affect the quality or outcomes of the program. Ten out of 12 participants were able to complete their business plans by the end of the program, which is considered a tremendous achievement.

Top countries served: Russia, Ecuador, China, Cameroon, Venezuela



# TESTIMONY: MEIMUNA BHAIJI

I wish to thank TIES for giving me an opportunity to join Entrepreneurship Development Training. I also wish to thank Ed Britton and support team to coach and mentor me in my Business Plan Presentation and to make me a better entrepreneur and look forward to working together for my business support services. I am happy to announce that within a short time I have launched my own business known as Maimun Assist, The Professional Virtual Assistant. (Check it out online at [maimunassist.ca](http://maimunassist.ca)).

# ACCOUNTING PROGRAMS

All of our accounting training programs were delivered online this year. The instructors worked very hard to elaborate and improve the online teaching material. Most of our clients indicated that they prefer online delivery. All accounting training clients receive a certificate of achievement upon graduation.

Top countries served: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Philippines

## BASIC ACCOUNTING

Basic Accounting is designed for beginners interested in learning the basics of manual accounting. Students learn about balance sheets, income and cash flow, bookkeeping, posting to ledgers, trial balances and financial statements.

## ADVANCED ACCOUNTING

Advanced Accounting offers training to more advanced students who are ready to improve their skills. Students learn about payroll, taxation principles, personal income taxes and corporate taxes, pensions and other employee benefits.

## QUICKBOOKS

QuickBooks is a computer software commonly used in the accounting industry. This program prepares students for an accounting job in Canada by learning to use this software.

## SAGE 50

Sage 50 is a computer software commonly used in the accounting industry. This program prepares students for an accounting job in Canada by learning to use this software.

356

Clients Served

99%

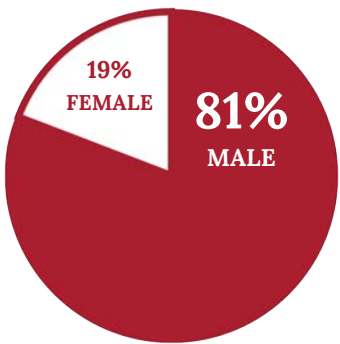
of Basic Accounting graduates registered for another course

80%

of Advanced Accounting clients also registered for Quickbooks / Sage 50

30-45

Client ages



### MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: BOB, JOB DEVELOPER

When we were hit with COVID and were directed to work from home in March, I was concerned that our ability to support our clients virtually, especially the newcomers, would be compromised. Through this, TIES team has pulled through as a team. I am very impressed and inspired by the collaboration and cohesiveness of everyone I work with. We are better than COVID!

# CLERICAL TRAINING

Clerical Training is designed to prepare newcomers for a clerical position in a modern Canadian office environment. The program includes 15 weeks of in-class training, plus an optional 80-hour volunteer job placement where clients are able to gain valuable hands-on Canadian work experience. This year, Clerical Training was offered online. Course materials and technology were upgraded to accommodate online learning.

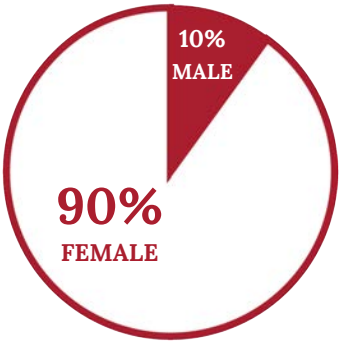
Top countries served: Philippines, India, Pakistan, Mexico, Bangladesh

129

Clients Served

82%

of clients found or retained work in a related field



### TESTIMONY: MICHELE G. ASISTEN

Hi, I am Michelle G. Asisten. I am from Philippines. I graduated BSBA Computer Management & Accounting way back home. I used my field of study for few years and I dreamed ever since to use it here in Canada. This program is very convenient for us since it is once a week and we can still work at the same time. This program is my stepping-stone to apply easily to any prospect company as an Office Clerk/Administrative Position. I am forever grateful to your charity in building our dreams a reality.

# RETURN TO WORK IN ALBERTA (ROWA)

Return to Work in Alberta (ROWA) provides customized, one-on-one support, advocacy, and mentorship to help clients find employment they are qualified for. Financial help is provided to assist with educational courses, job equipment and daycare while attending class.

This year, ROWA was offered online. Because ROWA serves such a wide group of clients with diverse needs, group Zoom calls posed some challenges. Most of the work was done through one-on-one support with daily group Zoom sessions.

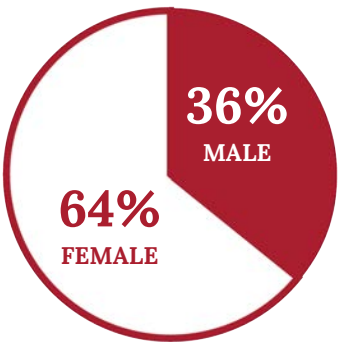
Top countries served: China, Canada, Syria, Ecuador, Columbia

82

Clients Served

60%

of clients found a job in their field



### MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: CATHY, ACCOUNTANT

TIES ROWA classes are great bridge which bring me back to the workplace. I have gained a lot of interview skills during the classes which made me successful for TIES job interview. It is my honor to work at TIES and serve for communities which fulfill my goal. I really appreciate all the help and support from the instructor Bob Morton. (Cathy is a ROWA graduate who is now employed at TIES.)

# SETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE

## WELCOME RESOURCES INFORMATION PROGRAM (WRIP)

The Welcome Resources Information Program (WRIP) helps clients navigate life in Calgary by connecting them to different resources around the city. Offering settlement services virtually posed many challenges. Ideally, we would prefer to meet our clients, establish eye contact, shake hands, and show that we are listening and attentive so that they feel comfortable sharing their needs. The reality of COVID-19 took that in-person interaction out of the equation; however, it didn't take away our passion to offer support to those who rely on us.

If anything, we tried to make up for the lack of in-person interaction by meeting clients' needs in whichever way was most comfortable for them. We used personal phone numbers, What's App and Facetime for most communication. To protect clients' information, only necessary information was shared via e-mail. WRIP helped many clients navigate COVID-19 supports, including CERB, EI, CRB and other benefits. We noticed an increased demand for the food bank, and transit tickets were given to those who needed them. We were creative in finding ways to build connection and ensure that every client's need was met to the best of our ability.

Top countries served: India, Syria, Philippines, Nigeria, Iraq

### TESTIMONY: HEND HELAL

Just wanted to say thank you personally for filling our taxes for us this year. As you know, this was our first year applying and we had no idea where to start. And not just for taxes but for everything you've done for us this past year, we came to Canada during really tough times, with COVID everything was closed up, even government services were either unavailable or very limited and we were kind of lost as to where to begin. Your valuable advice during our phone consults was much appreciated, and so was the transit tickets you helped Khaled with specially when he first started working and he wasn't able to afford it. And now even after we both settled into our jobs and life; your financial advice and coaching is still essential to us.



# MONEY SMART

Money Smart offers free, confidential financial help to newcomers and Canadians through Financial Coaching, RESP Sign-Up events, Tax Clinics, Workshops and more. This program is designed to break down barriers and improve financial literacy, including: understanding credit and the Canadian banking system, financial planning and budgeting, home ownership, education savings, understanding utility bills, microloans, and COVID-19 benefits.

This year, we held three special events online via Zoom:

- RESP Virtual Sign-Up (300 Participants)
- Tax Clinics 2020 (177 Participants)
- Tax Clinics 2021 (149 Participants)

Top countries served: Syria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, India

### SUCCESS STORY: RESP EVENT

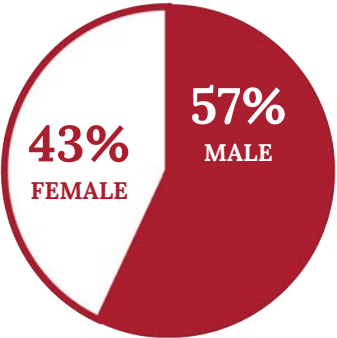
During one of the RESP information sessions, a newcomer family approached us to ask more about what RESP means, as they were not able to understand due to the language barrier. We were able to find an interpreter who speaks the same language and provide them a private session. At first, the parents were not open to the idea of saving money for their children in the bank, as it seemed to be against their beliefs.

In our next meeting we arranged for one staff member who happened to be from the same culture and background to discuss the idea with the family, and the staff member was able to help them see it differently. As a result, the family asked for our help to open RESPs for their five young children and were able to contribute \$100 monthly for each child. Once they were able to understand the benefit of saving for their children's education in their own language and in a culturally sensitive way, it made all the difference, and they were really happy that the RESP will help them create a better future for their kids.



### MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: NOHA, SETTLEMENT COORDINATOR

I think our biggest success this year is that we were able to transition our services to virtual without impacting our clients or the quality of the service. Our team used WhatsApp, Facetime, Zoom and e-mail to communicate with the clients. We tried to eliminate barriers, and communicated with the clients using the method most comfortable for them to meet their needs and offer them the financial services that best suit their situations. The team and clients appreciated that TIES has put their safety and health first. There was some tough times and challenges along the way, but we were able to come together as a team while keeping our clients needs as our top priority.





On two separate occasions, our CNC team prepared and delivered hampers for the children. Hampers included craft supplies, snacks, books, and toys.



## CARE FOR NEWCOMER CHILDREN

Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) is a childcare service offered free of charge to LINC and EST clients at TIES. Program activities are designed to bridge the children's experiences in their home country with their new environment in Canada. By creating a welcoming environment, we help both children and parents feel Canada is their new home. CNC is available for children between 12 months and 11 years of age.

Starting in March 2020, CNC adapted to an online model. CNC educators scheduled regular video classes with children in the program, based on their family's availability. Each child received between 20-30 minutes of interaction time with the educators, where they learned colours, shapes, letters of the alphabet, and numbers, followed by an arts and construction time, then active activities such as dancing or yoga. During each class, educators read a story to the children, and talked to them about their daily activities and hygiene.

Our CNC educators have always been positive and have often gone above and beyond to accommodate the children. Children were happy to see the educators daily and looked forward to the classes. After every class, educators sent parents recommendations for healthy meals they can prepare for their children, and age-appropriate stories, songs, and games. TIES compiled many of these CNC resources and set up a resource bank for parents, which includes fun and educational crafts, music and activities that families can do at home. Check it out online at [immigrant-education.ca/cnc-at-home](https://immigrant-education.ca/cnc-at-home).



## MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: SINDHU, CNC EDUCATOR

*Virtual learning has changed the role of teachers, children, and parents. Since we started online learning, we have been using a schedule to set a time for children based on their parent's convenience, trying to ensure their comfort level and group calls for children to promote social skills with peer groups as well. All of the CNC Educators' teamwork, efforts, and contributions, and the TIES children's smiling faces and excitement, are another secret strategy to go smoothly with our virtual learning process. I would take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all TIES parents and children for your cooperation in this virtual learning time with us.*

159

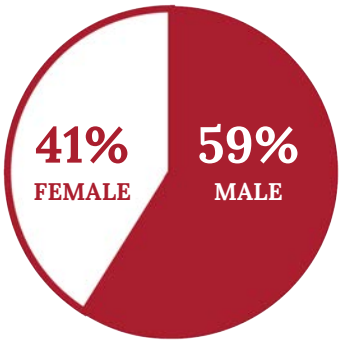
Children Served

148

Volunteer Hours  
(by 4 volunteers)

97%

of parents indicated that  
their children have learned  
English through CNC  
activities



## SETTLEMENT CHAT

Settlement Chat provides live chat support and counselling via the TIES website. This service refers clients to programs and services based on their needs, and offers guidance and direction for a variety of inquiries. TIES' RPD staff led the implementation and research design of Immigrant Access Counselling (IAC), which later became known as Settlement Chat. This year, the most common Settlement Chat inquiries were:

- Interest in English language courses
- Interest in Employment training and job search assistance
- Settlement referrals, including applying for documentation, housing, and how to navigate Calgary Transit
- COVID-19 supports, including applying for government benefits, access to technology to enroll in online classes, and food supports
- Seeking support for mental health or trauma

## MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: "ZOOMY" A POEM BY OSA, LINC INSTRUCTOR



Zoomy? Is there even a word like that?  
Yes! ZOOMY or ZOOMIE!  
So how do you use ZOOMY  
in a sentence?  
Okay, listen!

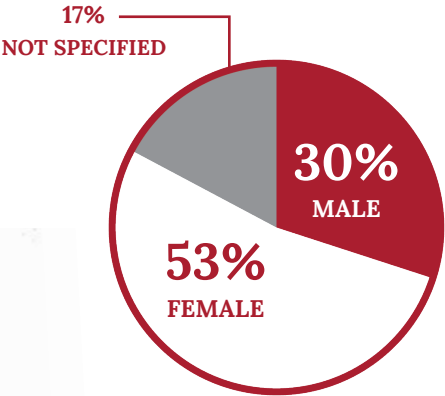
Hello, is that Mustapha?  
I'm your new teacher. How are you?  
..."I fine. Thank you."  
Have you heard of ZOOM?  
..."Teacher, no speaking English."  
Do you know ZOOM App?  
..."Teacher, no speaking English."  
Okay, you need ZOOM to be able to...  
Line drops!  
- What is that? A ZOOMY conversation.

Hello, is that Leila?  
..."Teacher! Yes, this is Leila."  
Leila, how are you?  
..."I fine, thank you."

Have you heard of ZOOM?  
..."Teacher, me no ZOOM, me Leila."  
Okay Leila, you need ZOOM App for class.  
..."Teacher, me no ZOOM, me Leila."

Now, you have a headache  
- ZOOMY headache.  
You go to bed, wake up from a dream of  
downloading and installing ZOOM for  
students  
- ZOOMY dream.  
You go to the shower thinking of how  
to help the students  
- ZOOMY shower.

You cry out to your colleagues!  
'I need help with any other  
language speaker!'  
"I can help, I speak Punjabi. I can help,  
I speak Arabic. I can help, I speak..."  
ZOOMY teamwork.



Students finally download  
and install ZOOM.  
..."Teacher, me hearing you,  
me not see you."  
ZOOMY frustration.

Now, students can see and hear you;  
they can see and hear their classmates.  
ZOOMY excitement.

Finally, everyone is on ZOOM.  
ZOOMY success.

Wow! Thank God! We are all good to go!  
A ZOOMY celebration.

It's been a ZOOMY week!  
So what does ZOOMY really mean?  
You tell me!

*All names are fictitious.*

682  
Support Chats Completed

19+  
Different Countries Served

# RESEARCH & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

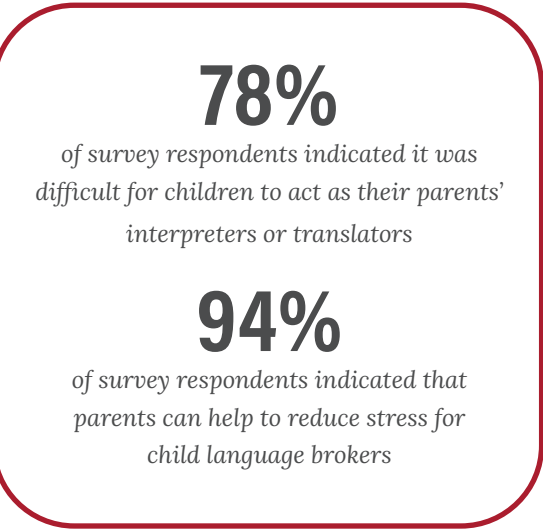
The Research and Program Development (RPD) department at TIES aims to move the organization toward greater use of evidence-based knowledge and data to inform its efforts to help newcomers settle into Alberta. RPD also aims to generate new knowledge from a settlement service perspective on best practices, newcomer needs and experiences to inform stakeholders and policy makers. As the youngest of the Society’s four pillars (Language, Employment, Settlement, Research) RPD is only at the early stages of this long-term goal. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has crystallized several of its ongoing efforts, and triggered a few new ones.

## LANGUAGE BROKERING INITIATIVE

Often overlooked in studies and programming within Canadian integration contexts is how youth and children are often agents of linguistic integration for their parents who lack English proficiency. This very common practice is referred to as language brokering (LB) and is prevalent among immigrant families. While common, it comes with emotional wellness caveats that must be managed through awareness and programming to overcome its negative psycho-social impacts on the participating youth.

The Language Brokering Initiative, funded by the Calgary Foundation, explored the nuances of family-based translation and interpretation – a common practice amongst newcomers. The project looked into the scholarly literature pointing to the negative psychological impacts and looked into find ways of mitigating them to maximize its educational benefits – which is also evidenced in the established literature. A pilot intervention will be deployed in mid-2021 to measure the impact of interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of child language brokering.

The unique individual training participants in the project included 29 LINC staff plus 6 settlement practitioners. The teacher and practitioner participants then delivered content from the project’s workshops to 194 LINC students – they received the Child Language Brokering (CLB) module and toolkit. In their qualitative feedback, instructors indicated that prior to learning about the topic, students were not aware parents could be stressors for children acting as translators, but that now parents were more aware of this and that they are now more capable of alleviating this stress.



# DATA MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

The Data Management Readiness Assessment project, funded by the Calgary Foundation, is a cornerstone, long-term initiative by RPD that has its roots in 2018, predating the formation of the department. Envisioning a time when all data collected through TIES programs is consolidated and readily available for analysis, this project, in partnership with Edmonton-based PolicyWise, takes the first steps toward that goal. This effort will aim to develop a universalized intake form that consolidates key demographic information from all our clients regardless of program.

The follow up initiative, the TIES Rapid Emergency needs Assessment & Tracking (TREAT) project, funded by United Way, aims to take the first tangible steps towards a consolidated management of our data through the deployment of a Universalized Intake Form (UIF), developed through the Calgary Foundation funded project. Concluded in March 2021 the pilot of the UIF included 90 new TIES clients, and collected feedback from 124 existing ones. The new intake form is currently being built and will deploy in mid-2021.



## MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE: RESEARCH & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The lockdown and consequent transition to remote service delivery has precipitated significant changes to the way TIES operates. As such, Research & Program Development (RPD) has deployed its own survey early on in the pandemic, and consolidated subsequent surveys from other departments to gain insight on the state of the organization and the disposition of its staff and clients. This gathered data is informing leadership’s decision making and policies toward the lockdown and an even return to regular operations.

RPD has deployed webinars such as the COVID-19 info sessions in collaboration with the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA), Employment Access Counselling Online Webinars, and live chat sessions addressing major client concerns as a result of the pandemic (related to health, safety and employment). RPD also produced reopening videos to keep client and staff informed and reassured that all measures to ensure health and safety are taken.

### PROGRAM GOALS

Improved registration experience for clients  
– one form, one time.

Consistency in data about clients across TIES.

Standardization and improved data quality.

Improved data management.

Improved data culture and opportunities for more integrated strategic planning.

Surveyed:  
**90 TIES CLIENTS**  
**124 TOTAL FORMS**

# CHANGE CAN'T WAIT

A side project to the Language Brokering Initiative, previously mentioned, was the Change Can't Wait project. This took the form of a toolkit and staff workshop through the City of Calgary's Change Can't Wait funding stream. Unique training participants included 29 LINC staff, plus 6 settlement practitioners.

A second Change Can't Wait project was held in the fall of 2020, titled "Pedagogy-based Emotional Wellness Intervention." Teachers have credibility with and possess the trust of newcomer students, who interact with them on a daily basis and turn to them as their primary guide to their first Canadian experiences. This project tapped into this credibility and trust to deliver key messages and attitudes about mental and emotional wellness.

A pedagogy-focused intervention equips teachers with a repertoire to prevent and address such issues, while at the same time staying within a familiar and comfortable scope of practice for them, addressing their own anxiety and mental wellness. 37 staff received the workshop, and 309 newcomer clients benefited from the materials introduced in the workshops.



## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

*Participants were asked to evaluate their knowledge about emotional wellness in general, how emotions can manifest in the classroom, the role of identity in one's life, and the value of empathy. The participants also evaluated their confidence in recognizing emotional distress in their students, knowing what to do when a student show signs of emotional distress, understanding students' identities and using empathy to understand their students' perspectives.*

## CHANGE CAN'T WAIT FAMILY-BASED INTERPRETERS PILOT RESULTS:

In December 2020, the workshop participants were approached once again and were asked to complete a final survey. All instructors were able to use their emotional and mental wellness knowledge for approximately seven weeks before completing this final survey.

- 67% said that since participating in the workshops, they have dealt with a student presenting emotional distress sometimes, very often or always.
- 93% said that since participating in the workshops, they have supported students in their acculturation process by understanding their identity sometimes, very often or always.
- 93% said that since participating in the workshops, they have empathized with their students' perspectives sometimes, very often or always.
- 87% said that since participating in the workshops, they have addressed students' distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic sometimes, very often or always.
- 87% said that they felt confident to deal with a student presenting emotional distress.
- 87% said that they felt confident to support students in their acculturation process by understanding their identity.
- 87% said that they felt confident to empathize with their students' perspectives.
- 93% said that they felt confident to address students' distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT CENTRE FEASIBILITY STUDY

With generous funding from Community Foundations of Canada - Investment Readiness Program, TIES conducted a four month feasibility study to evaluate the viability of a new social enterprise initiative focused on the creation of an Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) in NE Calgary providing training and mentoring for new immigrants and low income Albertans empowering them to create their own businesses.

This study resulted in several key outcomes that were instrumental in the creation and feasibility understanding around a TIES Entrepreneurship Development Center (EDC). Aside from successfully completing validated research with strong confidence and in-depth detail, the results of this research were deemed clear enough to drive forward a strategic approach to the creation of the EDC. Additionally, through the process of research, interviews and outreach, there has been a strong positive response to the notion of this program, further validating its feasibility and paving the way for a first cohort of potential participants in the near term.

### Result highlights include:

1. **Completion of full research initiative** including national exploratory research to determine what other similar programs exist to be learned from, a quantitative survey to assess market feasibility and interest, common challenges and initial program structure opinions, and focused qualitative research to dig deeper into the program value and delivery details with prospective clients.

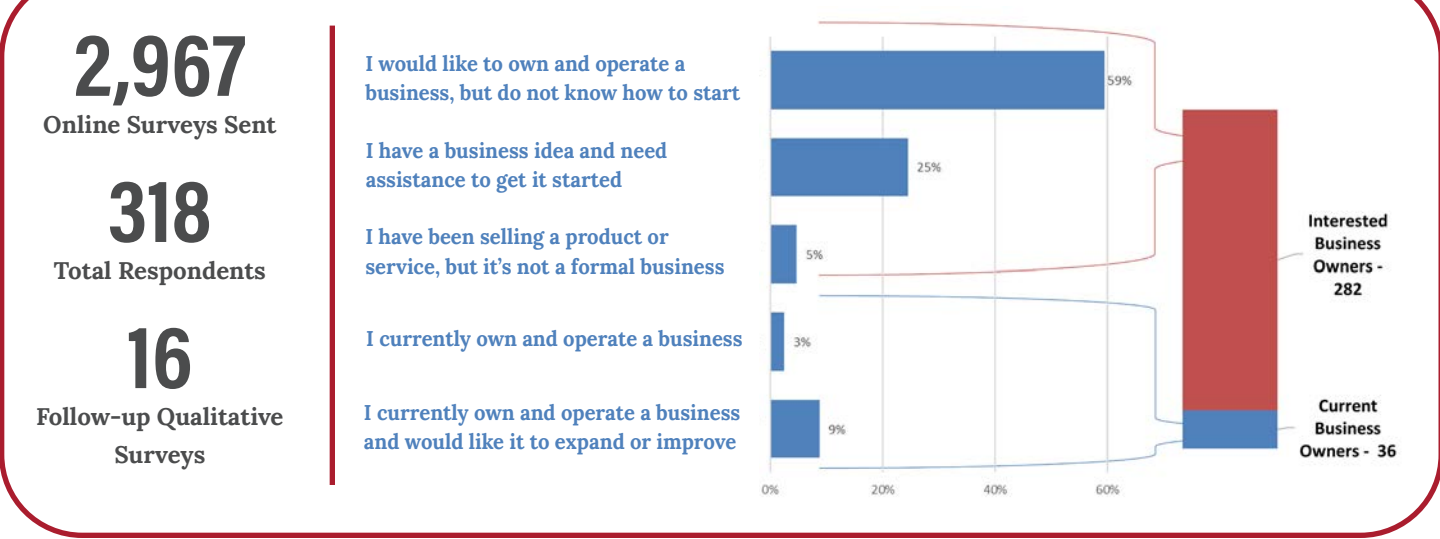
2. **Initial prospect list creation**, both through the outreach from the quantitative survey as well as a pre-registration page setup to capture interested parties. There are a number of individuals captured who are keen to follow the journey of this EDC initiative and be a part of the program once it has launched.

3. **A specific and detailed program design** has been created through a comprehensive business plan. This plan was created with the full findings of the executed research in order to guide value perceptions of prospective clients, challenges of immigrant business owners and where the gap currently exists in the market for TIES to help address.

4. **A viable path forward** to help Calgary immigrant entrepreneurs. With the positive results and recommendations of the research and the viability of the associated business plan, TIES feels confident in pursuing next steps in seeking partnerships and funding sources to execute on the plan as set out. The launch of the TIES Business Success Center, called Launchpad, will have an undeniable positive social and economic impacts in the community.



## EDC FEASIBILITY RESULTS:



# TIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“As we mark our 33<sup>rd</sup> year of operations, you could say that this not-for-profit Society is easing into adulthood. As adults, we always think that we are well prepared to take on life’s many challenges. This past year has certainly been one of those years of adversity and learning. I have to say that TIES leadership, staff, volunteers, clients, and my fellow members on the Board have certainly demonstrated a spirit of RESILIENCE to overcome the tall obstacles that were placed ahead of us at the start of the year.

One of my favorite expressions that best sums up what it means to be resilient is the saying: “Bloom where you are planted”. Living outside of the city, as I do, I certainly get to do my fair share of gardening and planting. The plants that thrive and flourish are those that demonstrate hardiness and the ability to adapt to their conditions. This is a perfect analogy of what we all have had to do this past year to continue to serve our clients and our community. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us to “Bloom where we have been planted”! This is the situation the whole world is facing collectively, and we must all be hardy to continue to thrive.

I would like to recognize the tremendous efforts and dedication of our CEO, Sally, and all the team members at

TIES, including the volunteers, for their unfaltering focus on our clients’ needs to adapt to this brave new world of online learning. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to our funders, community partners, business relations, and everyone who has walked with us, hand-in-hand, throughout this pandemic. You have all demonstrated flexibility and adaptiveness to the new realities facing us on this journey of resilience.

Through it all, I am confident that we have all learned new tools and coping strategies to better handle life’s unexpected challenges in the years ahead. We have many exciting new programs in development, a new, larger building to look forward to at the Westwinds location where we can serve even more clients in the years ahead.

As we transition out of this pandemic, I am very proud of the work that TIES has done to “Bloom” under harsh conditions. We are firmly planted in this community, and we are even stronger in our core purpose and convictions.

*M Edwards*



Columns (above and right)  
**M'Liss Edwards**, President  
**John Li**, Vice President  
**Philip Baker**, Treasurer and Secretary



Column below  
(top to bottom)

**Wilson Howe**

**Peter Plesche**

**Marilynne Smith**



Column above  
(top to bottom)  
**Gita Boyd**  
**Nalini Plesche**  
**Gerry Robitaille**

Column above  
(top to bottom)  
**Ray Kristinson**  
**Rabail Qasir**  
**Kuldip Thind**

# TIES MANAGEMENT TEAM



Column (below)

**Jana Ciobanu**, Senior Manager, LINC Programs

**Wei Dang**, Chief Financial Officer

**Mayssoun Hniedi**, Manager  
Employment & Settlement



Column (top to bottom)

**Ronni Abraham**, Manager  
Mental Health & Mindfulness

**Irina Copil**, Manager  
Drop-in ESL & Volunteer Programs

**Racine Diallo**, Manager  
Training & IT



Column (above)

**Kerry Howard**, Manager  
LINC Programs



Column (below)

**Whitney Loewen**, Manager  
e-Learning & Special Projects

**Eva Su**, Manager  
HR & Office Operations

**Kim Thronsdon**, Manager  
Accounting



Column (top to bottom)

**Suman Khanal**, Director  
Employment & Settlement

**Cesar Suva**, Director  
Research & Program  
Development



Column (top to bottom)

**Richard LeBlanc**, Director  
Language & Childcare

**Clifford McGuire**, Manager  
Facility & Operations

**Robert Toth**, Director  
Communications & Community

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR FUNDERS



AND DONORS

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Alison Edwards  
Carolyn Mitchell  
Cheri Nijssen-Jordan  
Chetan Sainath  
Clifford McGuire  
Colleen Cory  
David Grijzenhout  
Frances Rauch-Easson  
Gail Urquhart  
Gaurav Singh  
Gerry Robitaille  
Hong (May) Han  
Irina Copil  
Izzy Gliener  
Jana Ciobanu  
Jason and Cheryl Gurevitch  
Joanne Hingley  
Kim Thronson  
Li Sun  
Marilynne Smith  
Marlon Bughao  
Mayssoun Hniedi  
Nataliya Lyksherstova  
Olivia Chen  
Peter and Nalini Plesche  
Philip Baker  
Priscilla Lee  
Racine Diallo  
Robert Toth  
Sally Zhao  
Stuart Ormsbee  
Suman Khanal  
Svitlana Parasiuk  
Wei Dang and Yi Jin  
Whitney Loewen  
Wilson Howe





### **TIES Whitehorn (NE)**

3820 - 32 Street  
Calgary, AB T1Y 7L9  
(403) 291-0002



### **TIES Westwinds (NE)**

#311, 32 Westwinds Cr.  
Calgary, AB T3J 5L3  
(587) 392-4177



### **TIES Forest Lawn (SE)**

1723 - 40 Street  
Calgary, AB T2A 7Y3  
(403) 235-3666

Visit us online:  
[immigrant-education.ca](http://immigrant-education.ca)

Follow us on social media:  
[@TIESyyc](https://www.instagram.com/TIESyyc)

