

December 2009 Bulletin

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The Yin and Yang of 2009 for CCS

Without all of us working in harmony, we can't achieve balance.

The yin and yang theory is a belief in the natural harmony and balance of the things around us. The original concept came from the literal observation of nature; yin referred to the shady side of a slope, yang to the sunny side.

This last year has seen our economy—both as a country and community, and on a personal level for many families—swing from the sun to the shade, and now, back towards the sun again. 2009 for CCS has likewise experienced some of this turbulence.

In many ways, CCS has made great strides forward this year in several of our programs.

- *Construction on the Legacy Social Housing Project*, in partnership with the Creative Centre Society, has started.
- *Immigrant Services* (see article in this newsletter) has grown with the addition of a new staff member to work directly with seniors.
- *The Early Years Program* is also growing, with the addition of four new elementary school Strong Start locations. Strong Start programs operate in partnership with School District #33, to engage parents and their children in play-based learning that fosters development of the “whole” child.

- *A newly created staff leadership team* who are interested in the ongoing, strong leadership of the agency as we look to the future.

The ‘Yin’ of these steps forward is countered by the ‘Yang’ of the mixed success of our fundraising efforts.

On the positive side, some groups have come forward to offer unique support. For example, the Rotaract Club in Chilliwack is helping with our first ever Christmas party for pregnant and parenting youth.

As well, the Real Estate Board continues to help with blanket and food drives, and the Chilliwack Mount Cheam Rotary Club continued with the organization of the CATT volleyball tournament raising over \$20,000 plus toys for our Christmas Sharing program.

However, we will still need more of your help.

Last Christmas saw a 66% increase in client needs, and we expect this Christmas to continue that negative trend. Stories come to us every day of the challenges families are facing, especially

during this holiday season. We try to stretch our resources as much as we can, but sadly 2009 has seen us fall short of our objectives.

Any assistance you can provide—whether a lump sum cash donation, a monthly commitment or a donation of time or gifts—is so very much appreciated, not just by the staff and volunteers at CCS, but more importantly, by the families at the receiving end of your generosity.

In the eyes of the Ancient Chinese people, no single being or form could exist unless it is seen in relation to its surrounding environment. This so strongly underscores CCS's motto “Share. Grow. Belong.” Without all of us working in harmony, we can't achieve balance.

My sincere thanks go out to every supporter that has come forward, or has made the decision today to help others in the Chilliwack community.

*Dale Cuthbertson,
Executive Director*



**Chilliwack
Community
Services**

SHARE • GROW • BELONG

Home Away From Home

Ramona and her young family moved to Canada three years ago from Romania. While circumstances in Ramona's home country had improved since the revolution, times there were still very difficult.

Tension between cultural groups was ongoing, and providing a good living for a family was very challenging. Seeking training or education as an adult was belittled, and if you hadn't gained all your training during your late teens, peer pressure made it difficult to pursue higher education as a mature adult.

When Ramona's brother encouraged her to bring her family to Canada, she and her family decided to take a chance on finding a better life in a new country.

Ramona had taken English classes in Romania, and could speak and understand basic English, but even with her level of proficiency she felt intimidated using her language skills in her new community. Ramona felt more comfortable staying within her small circle of Romanian family and friends.

Matt, a settlement worker at CCS's Immigrant Services, reached out to Ramona repeatedly, encouraging her to participate in the many services he knew

would help her adjust to her new life in Canada. It took some persistence on Matt's part to help Ramona overcome her personal fears of rejection and feeling "out of her element," but finally Ramona broke through her reluctance.

"I felt comfortable and safe in my life, surrounded by my family and friends," Ramona remembered, thinking back to those early calls from Matt, *"but I didn't want to only live within that circle. I wanted to fit in and be a part of my new community. I wanted to improve my English skills and eventually find work, but it was frightening to think of going back to school. Once I found out CCS had child care for my son, David, I could make no more excuses—I had to go."*

Ramona joined ELSA (English Language Services for Adults) and discovered her skills were at an advanced level 4 (level 1 is little or no English language skills). She found a welcoming and accepting environment, which helped accelerate her learning. She was able to improve her conversation skills, and get additional help and advice about future employment and job upgrading.

Ramona is not alone. There are many individuals and families living in Chilliwack, intimidated by their lack of language skills and just trying to fit in the best way they can.

Many of these individuals are incredibly skilled and trained in professions in their native country, but can't apply their skills here until their grasp of English is at a higher level. It's easy to see how a lack of self-esteem could settle in and take hold.

As a community, we need to open our hearts and be understanding of those who are trying to learn the Canadian culture. CCS has taken an active role in making this happen. Some of the services CCS offers are:

- **Settlement Services**
Understand how to settle in Canada by attending workshops and orientation, receive support and referrals to community services, learn about the local labour market in order to find work or develop a career strategy.
- **ELSA**
Learn beginning and advanced English in a safe and welcoming environment; get help to settle into and understand Canadian culture and pursue personal and employment goals.
- **Conversation Class**
Practice speaking English in a group setting with the help of an experienced volunteer facilitator.
- **Immigrant Senior Services**
Participate in settlement support, referrals to community services, conversation circle, recreational and social outings to assist newcomers 55 years and older to adjust and settle into the community.
- **Youth Buddy**
Join in recreational and social activities aimed at promoting the successful integration of newcomers into school and the community with the help of a local youth host.

If you or someone you know could benefit from these services, contact Julie Pariseau, Immigrant Services Supervisor, at 604.393.3251.

Fact Sheet 2008

- 247,243 individuals immigrated to Canada.
- B.C. welcomed the third largest number of immigrants, which was an increase of almost 13% from the previous year.
- Over 50% of B.C. immigrants arrived with university degrees from their native country.
- The largest class of immigrants was in the Skilled Worker category.
- Almost two thirds of immigrant seniors to B.C. arrived without official language ability.
- The majority of immigrant seniors to B.C. came from Mainland China, India and the Phillipines.

DID YOU KNOW?

Donations to Chilliwack Community Services can be made online at www.comserv.bc.ca

Planned Giving, Planned Joy



**Chilliwack
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Services**

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While we plan ahead for the upcoming Christmas season and let ourselves get caught up in the excitement and spirit of the holiday, many others in our community are not.

It may be that these individuals are families new to our country, feeling isolated in a culture new to them.

Or it may be a teen who no longer has a home he or she feels welcome in.

Christmas can be a lonely time for many in Chilliwack, but there are ways you can help CCS provide support to these individuals, and encourage them to feel included in our community.

1. Time donations:

At this time of year, finding time can be difficult, but there are many ways you and your family can volunteer—now and throughout

the year—to assist CCS in creating a sense of belonging for these individuals.

You can donate time on a regular basis, such as being a Community Driver, or you can visit the Volunteer Chilliwack website (www.volweb.ca) and fulfill a one-time need. Just select the “Find Events” tab, and enter “Chilliwack” in the keyword search field on the right.

2. Creative donations:

Meal hampers, Christmas gifts, gently used clothing or children’s toys and books—all are welcome and needed.

One example is to put together a cookie-making basket. You can buy chocolate chips, flour, brown sugar and a simple basket. Of course, don’t forget to write out your favourite chocolate chip recipe. You can put this together over a weekend, or over a number of weeks. Just add a new ingredient to your grocery list until it’s all put together.

Church, school or other group craft projects are also great ways you can get creative and give—at Christmas or at any time of the year!

3. Cash donations:

Now more than ever, your support is needed. As mentioned on page 1, last Christmas saw an increase in clients’ needs of over 66%.

That negative trend is expected to increase this year. Any cash donations are directly allocated to the program most in need. This has been a challenging year for many individuals in our community who

have been hurt by the economic downturn, but it’s even more challenging for those who are at risk and have no family support system.

It doesn’t end with Christmas.

Make a family plan to help CCS continue to provide its many programs and services year-round. Here are some ideas on how your family can include giving in your everyday life:

- Your children can pledge a small but regular amount of their allowance towards a service that feels important to them.
- You can collect Christmas quilting scraps to make a quilt or gift basket supplies throughout the year.
- You can shorten the family vacation by a day or two and contribute the savings to a program your family feels a connection to.
- You can visit the CCS calendar (<http://comserv.bc.ca/events>) for upcoming events or programs you could volunteer for.

To learn more about how you can help, contact Heather Rollins, Community Relations Director, at 604.847.2233.



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Many thanks to our dedicated donors

On behalf of the families, youth and seniors we serve, thank you to the individuals and organizations who made leadership donations since our last newsletter. Your generosity supports our community funded programs.

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