



**Immigrating
Women in
Science**

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

Immigrating Women in Science (IWIS) Information Package

Mayu Ishida
April 2009

Immigrating Women in Science (IWIS) is an assistance program for internationally trained female professionals in science, engineering, trades and technology (SETT). The program aims to help develop a community for immigrant women in science where they can share their experience, seek advice and broaden their network as they settle in Canada and look for jobs commensurate with their prior education, training and work experiences. It was established in 2000 by the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST), a non-profit organization that promotes, encourages and empowers women in science and technology.

Currently, skilled immigrants are likely to experience long periods of unemployment and underemployment upon their arrival. They need to overcome practical and systemic barriers to achieve career continuity and employment satisfaction. Barriers to the career advancement of skilled immigrants include:

- Accreditation processes of professional associations and educational institutions
- Lack of bridging programs that support access to appropriate employment
- Lack of pertinent language training programs
- Lack of flexibility in retraining processes
- Demand for Canadian work experience
- Lack of professional network

Government agencies, non-profit organizations and post-secondary schools have become increasingly aware of these barriers and have been trying to address and counter them effectively. They have been providing skilled immigrants with services that enhance their career opportunities and ease their settlement in Canada. As a new, skilled immigrant, I have researched and used such services. It took me a while to find services suitable to my needs because there are many services to browse through. With the recommendation of the IWIS committee, I have compiled this IWIS Information Package - a guide to career and settlement services for immigrant professionals in SETT – so that you do not have to spend as much time as I did to find services relevant to you.

The IWIS information package introduces you to immigrant service agencies mainly in the Greater Vancouver Region, British Columbia (BC). It directs you to the websites in English of organizations and programs relevant to immigrant professionals in SETT via hyperlinks; you simply need to click on them to open the websites in your web browser. The package consists of three sections: **Career, Settlement and Information Sources**. The Career section includes information about career planning, high-level ESL courses, networking and volunteering. The Settlement section includes information about government agencies and non-profit organizations in BC that assist your settlement in Canada. It also lists valuable settlement guides for new immigrants. The Information Sources section lists research tools and resources provided by public libraries, periodicals for immigrants and directories.



**Immigrating
Women in
Science**

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

In the process of settling in Canada, you may experience the devaluation of your skills and experiences. You will often have to devise innovative solutions to challenges in your private and public lives like financial pressures and long accreditation processes. You may choose to shift your career path to meet these challenges. Past IWIS members described the following qualities essential for their survival and settlement in Canada: **assertive, creative, diligent, flexible, positive and proactive**. Moreover, it is vital to become part of a community like IWIS where you can receive support and encouragement to stay committed to your career plan when things are tough.

I would like to acknowledge the support and feedback of my fellow IWIS committee members: Carla Beak, Gülnur Birol and Shabnam Rostamirad, who has also contributed to the segment of this information package on high-level ESL courses. I would also like to thank Demet Edeer, Libo Kong and Mahtab Eskandari who kindly shared with me their knowledge of services for skilled immigrants in BC.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding this information package or IWIS, we, the IWIS committee, would like to hear from you. Following is our contact information:

Email

iwis2@sfu.ca

Mailing Address

471 – 411 Dunsmuir Street
Vancouver, BC, V6B 1X4

Hopefully, this information package will help you achieve satisfying employment in your profession and comfortable settlement in Canada.

Disclaimer: All information provided in this document is for informational purposes only. IWIS makes no representations as to accuracy, completeness, currentness, suitability, or validity of any information in this document and will not be liable for any errors, omissions, or delays in this information or any losses, injuries, or damages arising from its display or use. All information is provided on an as-is basis.



Immigrating Women in Science

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

Career

In this section, you will find information about **career planning**, **high-level ESL courses**, **networking** and **volunteering**. Career planning helps you discern your options for accreditation and retraining to increase your chance of gaining employment in your profession. By taking high-level ESL courses pertinent to your profession, you can appeal to prospective Canadian employers that you can communicate effectively and assimilate to the Canadian work culture of your profession. In Canada, many job openings are not advertised externally but filled internally through references. You can tap into this hidden job market by gaining Canadian references through networking and volunteering.

Career Planning

Two prominent career planning programs in BC:

- [Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre \(SIIC\)](#) at [Vancouver Public Library \(VPL\)](#) serves skilled immigrants who have been in Canada for 10 years or less and receives funding from [the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development](#). SIIC offers in-depth [Guides to Occupations](#) that give you the details of the major Canadian industries and help you discover how to find and apply for a job in your profession. VPL also offers the following career workshops where the VPL librarians may be able to help you devise job hunting strategies specific to your profession:
 - [One Stop Job Search @ Your Library](#) – a one-hour career and job search tour that helps you investigate new careers and find unadvertised jobs
 - [Career Explorer](#) – a free six-hour career and job research workshop available through [InfoAction](#), VPL's information and research centre
- [BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network \(BCITP Net\)](#) is a partnership of skilled immigrants from around the province and receives assistance from three major immigrant settlement agencies: [Immigrant Services Society \(ISS\) of BC](#), [MOSAIC](#) and [Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society \(a.k.a. DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society\)](#). It offers news updates on events relevant to internationally trained professionals (ITPs) and compiles an extensive list of [ITP Resources](#) including skills training and language and speech training.

Other notable career planning programs:

- [BC Skills Connect for Immigrants Program](#) under [the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development](#) assesses and bridges skilled immigrants into five key sectors of the BC economy: construction, transportation, energy, tourism/hospitality and health.
- [BioTalent Canada](#), funded by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program, is Canada's leading source for human resource information and biotechnology skills development. Its website provides you with the following job-hunting tools:
 - [Are You Ready?](#) – on-line assessment tests
 - [PetriDish](#) – a free job alert database
 - [Skills Development at Work](#) – upcoming program to prepare internationally educated professionals for employment in the biotechnology sector



Immigrating Women in Science

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

- Settlement agencies and non-profit organizations offer career planning programs for skilled immigrants such as:
 - [Progressive Intercultural Community Services \(PICS\) Job Mentoring Program](#)
 - [SUCCESS ProTech Career Connect](#)
 - [YWCA Vancouver Professional & Technical Workers Program](#)
 - [ISS of BC Mentoring Connections](#)

You should look into **credential evaluation** early in your career planning. You need to learn how your profession is regulated in Canada, and how you should have your credentials evaluated by contacting the following agencies:

- [Foreign Credentials Referral Office](#) – a federal agency that provides information and referral services on credential evaluation.
- [Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada \(ACESC\)](#) – an alliance of credential evaluation agencies that can assess your foreign credentials.
- [Canadian Information Centre](#) [for International Credentials](#)
- [International Credential Evaluation Service \(ICES\)](#) – the BC member of the ACESC

For **retraining opportunities** for skilled immigrants in engineering, pharmacy, dietetics and medicine, see [BCITP Net Links - Skills Training](#). For other **employment services and resources** for skilled immigrants, see [BCITP Net Links - Employment Services and Resources](#).

High-Level ESL Courses By taking high-level ESL courses pertinent to your profession, you can increase your chance of gaining employment in your profession. Some business English courses also teach the North American work culture and business conducts.

- [Vancouver Public Library \(VPL\) Research Guide Higher Level ESL Programs in Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island](#)
- [BCITP Net Links - Language Training](#)
- [Welcome BC ESL Information](#)

Shabnam Rostamirad, a member of the IWIS committee, has also compiled [a list of high-level ESL courses for skilled immigrants \(Appendix\)](#).

Networking

Networking can help you build new relationships and become part of communities where you can seek support and mentorship as well as employment opportunities. Few organizations such as [IWIS](#) specifically target immigrant female professionals, but there are organizations for internationally trained professionals as well as organizations for female professionals in SETT.

Two prominent organization for internationally trained professionals:

- [BCITP Net](#)
- [Society of Internationally Trained Engineers of BC \(SITEBC\)](#)



Immigrating Women in Science

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

For other organization for internationally trained professionals, see [BCITP Net Contact List](#).

Organizations for female professionals in science and technology:

- [IWIS and SCWIST](#)
- [Gender and Science and Technology \(GASAT\)](#)
- [Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades, and Technology \(CCWESTT\)](#)
- [Division for Advancement of Women in Engineering and Geoscience \(DAWEG\) @ APEGBC](#)
- [Women in Engineering \(WIE\) @ UBC](#)
- [YWCA Vancouver](#)

You can be creative and find networking opportunities in unexpected places. For example, a past IWIS member networked at the consulate general of her country of origin. If you are not shy, you can network with people around you while in a line or on a bus!

Volunteering

Volunteering can give you opportunities to network and gain Canadian experiences and references. Many settlement agencies offer volunteer programs such as:

- [Immigrant Services Society of BC General Volunteer Program](#)
- [MOSAIC - Community Volunteer Program](#)
- [SUCCESS Volunteer Services](#)

For more volunteer opportunities, see [Looking Ahead - Volunteer Opportunities](#) and [Charity Village - Volunteer](#).

Going back to school is another way of gaining Canadian experiences and references. It is a viable alternative if you are in a field where it is hard to land volunteer positions (e.g., hospitals, unionized workplaces). A past IWIS member entered a post-secondary school as a visiting scholar. [BC Public Post-Secondary Institutions](#) and [VPL Research Guide "College & University](#) list public and private post-secondary institutions in BC. Moreover, organizations such as [the Minerva Foundation for BC Women](#) and [the P.E.O. Sisterhood](#) offer educational loans and scholarships to female students.



Immigrating Women in Science

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

Settlement

In this section, you will find information relevant to your settlement in Canada such as how to apply for a social insurance number and a provincial medical plan and how to find a residence and schools for your children. Following federal and provincial government agencies offer settlement assistance to new immigrants in Canada:

- [Service Canada](#)
- [Citizenship and Immigration Canada \(CIC\)](#)
- [Integration-Net](#)
- [Welcome BC](#)

For non-profit settlement agencies in BC, see [BC Settlement Agency Directory](#). Government agencies and non-profit settlement agencies also offer valuable settlement guides to new immigrants:

- [CIC "Welcome to Canada"](#)
- [Welcome BC "Newcomers' Guide"](#)
- [Community Airport Newcomers Network \(CANN\) "Information for Newcomers"](#)
- [City of Vancouver "Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver"](#)
- [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\) "Alone In Canada: 21 Ways to Make it Better"](#)
- [VPL Research Guide "Resist Racism"](#)

Information Sources

This section lists information sources that can help you conduct research on topics relevant to new immigrants, such as how to become a Canadian citizen and how to prepare for your citizenship test. [Public libraries](#) give you free access to books, DVDs, computers and the Internet, and offer workshops on library catalogs and databases. Librarians can also consult with you and refer you to information sources relevant to your research. VPL offers an excellent [Research Guides](#) that comes with research suggestions by topic. On-line immigrant magazines such as [Canadian Newcomer Magazine \(for Greater Toronto Region\)](#) and [Canadian Immigrant Magazine \(for Greater Vancouver Region\)](#) publish and archive inspiring and informative stories for the immigrant community. On-line directories such as [The Red Book Online](#) are also good research tools.



**Immigrating
Women in
Science**

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

Appendix

List of High-Level ESL Courses Compiled by Shabnam Rostamirad

School Name

- URL
- Address
- Phone Number/Fax Number
- Rating/Note

Vancouver Medical English Institute

- <http://www.vancouvermedicalenglish.com/>
- London Building, Suite 920 - 626 West Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1V9
- Telephone: 604-685-1333, Fax: 604-685-1774
- √√√√, strong medical related

Bodwell Language School

- <http://www.bodwell.edu/language/>
- 473 West Hastings, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 1L4
- Tel: 1-604-602-7633 Fax: 1-604-602-7611
- √, strong TOEFL classes/no professional classes/same price for international and local students

English Canadian as a Second Language Institute (CSLI)

- http://www.csli.com/programs/csli_courses_academic.html#academic_class
- 188 Nelson Street, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6B 6J8
- TEL 1-604 -683-2754 | FAX 1-604-683-8667
- X

English Canadian College of English Language (CCEL)

- <http://www.canada-english.com/>
- 1050 Alberni St. Vancouver, BC, V6E 1A3, Canada
- Phone: 604.688.9366, Fax: 604.688.9322
- √√, strong academic English/Business English/University of Alberta

English Columbia College, English Language Centre

- http://www.columbiacollege.ca/elc/academic_esl.php
- 500-555 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC CANADA V6B 6J9
- TEL: (604) 683-8360 FAX: (604) 682-7191
- √, strong international student program/mostly for students proceeding to university



**Immigrating
Women in
Science**

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

English EF International Language Schools Inc – Vancouver

- <http://www.ef.com/Default.aspx?bhcp=1>
- online and international
- TEL: +44 207 341 8500
- √, strong business English/Cambridge UK and USA

English ELS Language Center – Vancouver

- <http://www.elscanada.com/els/program/programs.html>
- N/A
- N/A
- X

English English Bay College

- <http://www.englishbaycollege.com/>
- 2nd Floor, 321 Water Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6B 1B8
- TEL: 604-639-9075 FAX: 604-639-9079
- X

English Eurocentres – Vancouver

- <http://languagecanada.com/en/Career%20Programs>
- N/A
- N/A
- √√, strong business English/ Work experience

English Geos Language Academy – Vancouver

- <http://www.geosvancouver.com/>
- 1199 West Pender Street, Suite 298, Vancouver, BC, V6E2R1
- Phone: (604)684-6407 Fax: (604)684-5667
- X

English Global Village English Centres – Vancouver

- <http://www.gvenglish.com/>
- 220 Cambie Street, Suite 550, Vancouver, BC, V6B2M9 Canada
- Phone: 604 684 2354 Fax: 604 684 2165
- √

English Immigrant Services Society of BC, Language College

- <http://www.issbc.org/>
- #501–333 Terminal Ave, Vancouver, BC V6A 2L7
- Phone: 604-684-2561
- X, basic communication skills/ free for new comers



**Immigrating
Women in
Science**

A Project of SCWIST,
The Society for Canadian Women
in Science and Technology

English Inlingua Vancouver

- <http://www.inlinguavancouver.com>
- 300 – 150 Water St. Vancouver, British Columbia, V6B 1B2
- Phone: +1 (604) 605 0960
- N/A