



The Ellen Street Shout

Winter 2013



Asset Building Program bringing “green initiative” to IRCOM

Fitsum Getahun

Since IRCOM took part in the Asset Building Partnership with SEED Winnipeg in 2009 we have been educating money management training participants to save money. In addition, we have also taught participants to care for the environment and live simpler more sustainable lives. With ideas like walking, taking the bus or riding a bicycle we promote healthy green transportation options. We encourage participants to donate clothes instead of throwing them in the garbage, buy in bulk, shop local, and spend quality time with their loved ones. Over the years we have realized the significance of educating newcomers about collecting, sorting and disposing waste. In 2012/2013 the Asset Building Program team became more interested in engaging the newcomer community at large to broaden the pool of people who care for the environment. One of the things we are working on includes recycling. The big blue box is at the back of IRCOM for all residents. We also have a compost program; all decomposable waste is stored and then we use the new soil for growing plants for the greening program.



Why Recycling? Recycling has many benefits:

Fact: Every ton of recycled paper saves 17 trees

Saves energy: It takes less energy and less transportation to make

papers from recycled paper than to make papers from new trees.

Reduces waste: if we recycle a lot, the garbage will not fill the landfill and we will have cleaner space for us and our children to play.

It helps save money: You can save money by reusing old glass and plastic containers for storage and by making new things from used items.

Why Composting?

Some benefits of composting include:

It takes a huge amount of material, up to 75%, out of the solid waste stream.



This makes the air we breathe and the water we drink cleaner. At home, you can compost decomposable waste like eggshells, vegetable and fruit peelings makes good soil to grow plants. It's a way to produce organic fertilizer for your garden.

In addition, it reduces the amount of garbage we put on the landfill.

Saves money: you do not need to buy soil if you accumulated enough compost for your garden.

What to compost: leftover food, manure, leaves, grass trimmings, paper, worms, and coffee grounds, etc.

We hope that the community, staff and other partners will join us to take this initiative to the next level.

Canadian Council for Refugees Youth Conference

Yamina Tsalamlal

This fall, one conference allowed seven IRCOM youth to experience a new city, learn more about Canada, make new friends and share experiences.

Organized by the Canadian Council for Refugees, the event, called Youth Action Gathering was held in Montreal the weekend of Aug 30 to Sept 1. six IRCOM youth attended.



The Montreal conference was meant to bring newcomer youth from across Canada to share experiences and to learn about various aspects of life in Canada through educational sessions.

"It was good," says Intisar Salih. "We made new friends and shared stories."

For Fathia Amin, the weekend also allowed her to share with others some of the obstacles she faces in Canada and she learned that many face the same ones as herself. Amin explains that, like her, many

see English as a major barrier to finishing school.

On the other hand, much of the learning happened outside of the sessions. All three attendees agreed that the evening activities were the highlight of the weekend.

"We didn't sleep the whole weekend," says Mustafa Mahdi and laughed. Mahdi, 18, is from Iraq and has been in Canada for one year.

Amin says that in the evening attendees could lead cultural presentations. Amin taught others Egyptian dance, Salih led the group in a traditional Eritrean dance and Mahdi shared his talents in singing in Arabic.

"It's so good to learn about another culture and make friends with people from different countries," says Mahdi.

All three agreed that if given the chance they would go again next year.

"It is to be hoped that they'll do similar conference again next year," says Mahdi.



As always, IRCOM is a place of constant energy and change. Our Director of Programming Krista Law has moved on and we wish her all the best. Congratulations to Angie Dooley from the Community Resource office who has gone to Kenya to get married. Fitsum Getahun has returned from maternity leave and returned to her position as Asset Building Coordinator in collaboration with Bemnet Haileglorgis, Unfortunately we said goodbye to Victoria Weir, Alex Garcia and Solomon Seletene who have left us for new opportunities. We have added Marko Gjuric, Maddie Pearlman and Abdullahi Diryea to the after school program as Program Assistants. Erin Anderson the Volunteer Coordinator has gone on maternity leaves and had a baby boy Amedu. Wade Parke has come on as the interim volunteer coordinator until Erin returns. IRCOM (Ellen) welcomes all new staff and wishes all others the best of luck in there new endeavours'.



IRCOM Isabel construction is ongoing and we are all excited for the new building and enhanced program space.

On Dec 17th 2012 we had an important announcement with our partners in the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba to kick off the construction of our new home. Our Executive Director Abdikheir Ahmed gave a heartwarming speech on his experience with cramped

living space in contrast to the quality, spacious

and affordable housing that is provided by IRCOM. IRCOM resident Jeanine Nziguheba also gave a strong speech on her experience as a newcomer and the new home she has found at IRCOM.



The Plug *Help us welcome new Canadians*



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Didier Tshiani Mubambe Profile

Yamina Tsalamlal

Many newcomers see coming to Canada as a chance for safety and security as well as new career opportunities. Many professionals are finding it increasingly difficult to have their skills and education recognized.

"When I came here I was very confident," says Didier Tshiani Mumbambe, 42. He soon realized that finding a job in his field would be more difficult than he had anticipated.

"What I did at home doesn't help me directly here," he adds.

Mumbambe says he is frustrated because it is taking much longer than he expected to get a job using the skills and education he earned in his home country.

Mumbambe was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There he earned the equivalent of a bachelor in electronics and a diploma in electricity. Mumbambe wanted to make a greater change in his war-torn country.

"My education in electronics couldn't help me to make an impact in my community," he says.



He decided that law would be the answer. He returned to school and enrolled in the faculty of law. While studying he started a human rights club. In 2000, his activist work was getting him too much unwanted attention

and so two years into his law degree he had to leave with his young family for Uganda.

In Uganda he started working with computers at a secondary school and when he saw that they needed teachers he started teaching math. He also worked in the physics lab. He lived in Uganda for 11 years, but again, his activist work with youth endangered his life and the lives of his family members.

In November 2011, Mumbambe, his wife Amina and his three children, Peter, 12, Victor, 10 and Mary, 3 came to Canada as refugees. He and his family spent two months in Welcome Place and then moved into IRCOM.

When he first arrived, Mumbambe says his most important goal, safety for him and his family, was achieved.

"I don't feel threatened anymore," he says.

While his first needs of safety and security were met, Mumbambe started to see that his hopes of finding the

same kind of employment he had back home were quashed. He says that the different electrical system in Canada and the new and more advanced technology meant that there was a learning curve.

"To catch up with the learning gap I have to upgrade," he says.

Upgrading was much more difficult than he had expected. He argues that the system to integrate newcomers into the Canadian workforce is perfect on paper. In practice, the system is full of flaws.

Mumbambe compares the experience of many unemployed newcomers to a kind of "slavery" where they are forced to work at a low level and not advance. He says he had hoped to get an apprenticeship where he could work, learn and earn money but that wasn't the case.

"Things don't flow as fast as the papers says," he says referring to the integration programs.

He says he faced obstacles working with the government as he tried to get his qualifications recognized and find a job. He says he was told once that it is assumed that those from Africa will have a lower level of education and would not be able to achieve certain levels. He also said that until he had Canadian certification, he would not be able to work in his field. He says the system lacks flexibility.

He says he wants people to become aware of these flaws.

"I get involved to expose what I consider as a wrongdoing through the media," he says.

In January he says he will begin a two year program in electrical engineering at Red River College. The application proved to be a complicated process as well. He says he waited four months just to get a reply on his application. That being said, he knows the program will be worth it.

"Education is the key for success in life," he says.

While he has faced many challenges, Mumbambe remains optimistic.

"I always dream very big," he says.

He says he hopes to own a house and be financially stable in the next three or four years. While he went into electrical engineering because he saw it as the best way to find good employment he still dreams of going back to law school. He says he wants to make an impact on his community, he just needs the tools to do so.

"I think I can do better, I have more to offer," he says.

Winnipegger finds second home amongst festival of Nations



Volunteer profile for IRCOM Jon Gurniak

Jon Gurniak has volunteered in the After School Program at IRCOM since September 2011. He was told by a friend about IRCOM and decided that in this place he could make a positive impact. He works every Friday in the homework club and works with Muluken and Muuxi in the basketball program. He has also worked in the mentorship program as a mentor and volunteers in the hockey program run by NLI teacher Jen.

What Jon likes best about IRCOM is the tight knit nature of all the staff and volunteers that work at IRCOM. He finds the work with kids really rewarding and the people to be open and understanding. Jon appreciates the opportunity to learn about different cultures and languages. One of his best moments

was when one of the kids asked if he liked the Jets and another responded of course he does he's white. It was a humorous moment and typical of the unpredictability of the kids

Jon is a lifelong Winnipegger but finds a second home amongst the people from the festival of nations that call IRCOM home. He tries to meet the children where they are and says that there is no uniform way to work with children, but says establishing relationships is the key. He says that ASP staff are always working to see what practices work best and are always working to develop and grow the program.

Jon feels that all staff and volunteers are accepting to different cultural and religious backgrounds. He says that children and adults are interested in his background and he wants to know about them. All cultures working together are a good example to the rest of the world, Understanding is what makes IRCOM strong.



Tell me about yourself.

My name is Elesio Lasuba and I am originally from South Sudan. I immigrated to Canada in 2001. I like reading, painting, drawing, and helping immigrants who are new to Canada.

WHO ARE YOU?

What do you do when you're not at IRCOM?

I spent time with my family especially with my children; I help them with their homework and drop them to their sports activities, such as games and music.

What do you do when you are at IRCOM?

I am the administrative Assistant and Bookkeeper; I provide the day to day office administrative task including reception, bookkeeping and payroll. In addition, I respond to the general phone and e-mail inquiries and direct them accordingly. I also help our newcomers with photocopying and faxing on a regular basis.



What was your first impression of IRCOM?

When I joined IRCOM I was impressed with its mandate and objectives to empower newcomer families to integrate into the wider community through affordable transitional housing, programs, and services. Therefore, I felt I had a lot to provide to IRCOM with my experience and skills, having worked with other Immigrant serving organizations.

Is there anything else you want the IRCOM community to know about you?

I enjoy helping new immigrants and refugees from different cultural backgrounds and hope to inspire them with my personal immigrant experience, and through the principals of helping others help themselves.

Can you give an example of someone you admire?

Although most of the new immigrants at IRCOM speak little English; they have many technical skills and experience in different areas such as house maintenance and trades. Therefore, I admire the enormous skills and experiences our newcomers bring to Canada.