



Celebrating Culture & Community



2020 / 2021 **ANNUAL
REPORT**
CULTURELINK.CA

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Last year, when the world first changed, our team rolled up their sleeves and got to work. With Canada under lockdown, we knew it would be more important than ever to keep CultureLink's sense of community alive.

Before the pandemic, many of our clients had already experienced feelings of isolation. Stepping into a new country and culture can be alienating, and we understood that the restrictions caused by COVID-19 would only amplify that feeling. We thought carefully about those in our community — like kids in school who thrived in our Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program and were now confined to online learning, or seniors living alone who had joined our weekly Active and Connected Seniors Program — and knew, immediately, that it was essential for us to find a way to adapt.

Our goal has always been to foster community and give newcomers the best possible welcome into Canada. Our incredible team of staff and volunteers came together to pivot almost all of our essentials programs in the midst of this global pandemic. We are proud to have been able to continue our services with zero disruption and keep all of our workforce employed throughout this difficult time.

Most of our programs now take place online, and we've created virtual groups so that newcomers can continue to socialize and learn. For example, our Seniors' Group moved to Zoom, which allowed this community to continue meeting each week. We also created new online opportunities to keep kids engaged, like remote singing and music classes.

With the majority of our community separated by public health restrictions, community connection has never been more important. Our Community Connections Mentorship Program (CCMP) now virtually connects newcomers with mentors, who help them build strong education, networking and socialization skills. As does our Labour Market Assistance Program (LMA), which now virtually helps newcomers with their job search. And our Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) also now virtually assists with important applications and status-related issues.

This shift to the virtual world also meant courses like our Cybersecurity Training Program were more popular than ever before. This initiative helps IT professionals get up to speed on the latest tech trends in Canada, and with the pandemic pushing more workers online, it's been a fantastic resource for newcomers.

Another initiative we've focused our efforts on is the E3 Youth Project - Educate, Elevate, Empower program by the City of Toronto. This program focuses on keeping youth engaged and preventing crime through workshops and other services. At CultureLink, we know that community connection plays an enormous role in keeping kids on a positive path.

AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

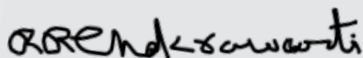
We're also grateful to our wonderful health and safety committee who worked tirelessly to develop plans and procedures for safe outdoor gatherings during the pandemic. While virtual programming meant we could maintain connections during lockdowns, in-person connection is so crucial for newcomers to Canada, and the committee planned outdoor events that were safe for our staff and the surrounding community. One program we were excited to reintroduce, as we were unable to run it virtually, was the Community Bike Hub, where people were able to gather safely, repair bikes and support sustainability.

We are very proud of how CultureLink has met every challenge this past year. We now have a thriving online community that supports and learns from one another, and our staff and volunteers have been instrumental in making that possible. At our core, we are service providers, and while the Internet offers a wealth of resources, most newcomers find it easier to get guidance from real people, not an automated voice, through our Library Settlement Program (LSP) and Settlement Workers in Community Spaces (SWCS) program. At CultureLink, we are a caring community who are ready to listen, and that makes all the difference to newcomers.

Our goal has always been to reduce the stress, anxiety and loneliness that comes with living in a new country and culture. Although the past few years have thrown some curveballs, our team has remained driven by passion, and with that, we always find a way to make things happen.

We are very optimistic for the future and confident in our plan to tackle 'the new normal'. Although most of our work is still remote, we've been able to organize the tools and tech required to keep our services running full steam. We could not do any of this without our dedicated staff, loyal volunteers, unwavering board members, committed partners and funders, and generous donors. Each of these groups is essential to maintaining a supportive community for newcomers in Canada. Whether you're donating your time or donating financially, every role is crucial in creating these bonds.

With your help, we will continue to deliver, no matter what difficulties we face. Our innovative team is always ready to think outside the box and give everyone in the CultureLink community the best possible future in Canada.



Raj Chakrawarti
Interim Executive Director



Wendy-Ann Horning
Acting Chair, Board of Directors

MAKING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Fighting Isolation with Community

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, we knew that it was more important than ever to foster connections between newcomers to Canada. For Martha Galdamez, a participant in our Spanish-speaking Seniors' Group, CultureLink was a crucial way of keeping a sense of community alive.

"We are thankful to belong to CultureLink because, in the middle of the isolation due to COVID-19, they have been our company. By sharing and socializing with the Seniors' Group at this organization, our souls rejoice. This incredible team of volunteers has made every single moment enjoyable, which results in great benefit to our physical and mental health."

Our Seniors' Group helps meet participants' psychological, recreational and social needs. Our volunteers also help with weekly donations of vegetables, document translations, online banking support and other day-to-day tasks.

"To have a virtual room, through the weekly meeting via Zoom, has been a relief as we have the chance to see most of our faces and to enjoy our songs, poems, stories and experiences told in our own voices. We celebrate to be a part of this amazing program that CultureLink created to support seniors without limits."



SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Creating Spaces That Feel Like Home

Hamida arrived in Canada as a government-assisted refugee. She had suffered a head injury during the Afghan war and lost four children to divorce. She struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues.

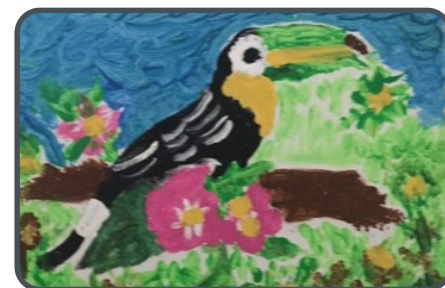
She first began visiting CultureLink's Settlement Workers in Community Spaces (SWCS) program at Toronto City Hall in 2019 for help integrating into the community. Here, our staff helped connect her with the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, helped her rejoin English classes, and arranged for other support she needed at home.

However, when the pandemic hit, Hamida's weekly visits to the program ended and the sudden isolation and loss of community contact were difficult on her mental health.

At this time CultureLink programs were pivoting to virtual and staff were responding to remote client requests from home. We made sure Hamida was taken care of, setting up crisis worker visits and secure access to her medication. We were also able to arrange for Hamida to see a family doctor and receive other professional mental health services, all with interpreter assistance.

We know that newcomers are often already battling isolation, and the pandemic only heightened that feeling for many. For Hamida to be genuinely comfortable, we needed her space to also feel like home. We arranged hot Afghan meal deliveries, and a volunteer donated a television set for her room. Lastly, we negotiated a low-cost Internet plan with Rogers that would allow Hamida to connect with people near and far.

All of these services have helped with Hamida's mental health and happiness. She's always had a passion for drawing, and now that she's in a better headspace, she's started creating again.



Drawings by Hamida

EMPLOYMENT

Helping to Land Dream Jobs

In Vietnam, Lily was a healthcare professional, but when she moved to Canada she realized she wanted a career change. Her new interests led her to study Analytics for Business Decision Making at George Brown College.

She graduated in April 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and a time when many people were being made redundant. It was a difficult job market and she struggled to find work. After four months of searching and zero responses, she began to lose hope in ever finding her dream job.



That's when a friend told her about CultureLink's Community Connections Mentorship Program (CCMP). They helped connect her with a mentor from their Interview Squad, a group of volunteer HR professionals who use their experience to prepare newcomers for Canada's job market.

After signing up, Lily learned how to master resume writing and interview skills. She was also paired with a mentor that was hand-picked for her unique background and interests.

"I had the opportunity to work with a retired HR professional who had a wealth of experience in the recruiting process. She was an astounding and resourceful mentor. She was quick to jump on the phone with me and regularly checked in. Her advice and positive energy boosted my job search skills and significantly helped me regain confidence in my analytic skills. I started to receive more interviews while working with her."

With the support of the CultureLink community behind her, Lily received an offer at BMW Financial Service as a Risk Controlling Analyst after only two months in the program.

"I am extremely happy with my new job and grateful to the Interview Squad and all the mentors at CultureLink."

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Boosting Youth Confidence



Yiwen will remember the day she boarded a plane to Canada for the rest of her life. After flying 12 hours to join her family, she stepped foot into a new country for the first time.

A week later, she started high school, nervous about her limited English. Fortunately, a member of our Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) team was there to help her select courses and tour the high school's campus. Yiwen was also introduced to our Newcomer Orientation Week Program (NOW), a partnership between teachers, SWIS program workers and peer leaders dedicated to helping newcomers like her adjust to their new school.

Three years later, Yiwen still thinks back to how different her experience would have been without CultureLink.

"Although I would probably still graduate successfully, have good grades and go to a good university, my experience would have never been the same. I would not have met so many friendly people who support each other like family."

For youth starting life in Canada, one of the most significant challenges is the language barrier. When it's hard to communicate, confidence suffers. Programs like SWIS and NOW give these students the opportunity to participate in lectures and meetings where they can improve their English.

"During those sessions, I noticed the confidence in the eyes of previous peer leaders. I told myself, those are the people that I want to be."

The following year, Yiwen applied to be a peer leader.



"I could have never imagined that I would be able to use my strength to help others adapt to new studying environments as the old peer leaders did with me when I first came."

VOLUNTEERISM

Coming Together for the Community



Early on in the pandemic, a CultureLink staff member noticed the immense need for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in the shelters and other community agencies we partnered with. We immediately knew we could help by making cloth masks.

We partnered with Sewing for Change to provide material and handle logistics and began recruiting sewers for the task. Within no time, we went from one sewer with one machine to an entire team of enthusiastic volunteers.

Most of our volunteers spoke Spanish, so one of our Spanish-speaking program workers stepped up to help facilitate. Canada Sews translated all the patterns into Spanish and the Sewing for Change COVID-19 Community Initiative provided several sewing machines.

Soon, we were producing hundreds of masks and expanded our call for volunteers. The response was overwhelming as we heard back from drivers, professional fabric cutters and office administration staff. We also encouraged immigrants and newcomers in our community to join the team. Whenever language was a barrier, someone always stepped in to help with translation.

Our volunteers went on to sew more than 1,300 masks which were distributed amongst five different shelters. By bringing people together, we were able to support the essential work of these incredible organizations in our community.



INNOVATION

Learning and Growing Online

In 2017, Ahlam arrived in Canada speaking very little English. Nervous about the transition into a new culture and society, she signed up for ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and achieved CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks) Level 3/4.

Although Ahlam was eager to continue integrating into Canadian society, a newborn baby meant her priorities were now in taking care of her family at home rather than joining groups to help her continue to improve her English and make friends.

Our 'SOS English Conversation Circle' allowed her to do both. The all-women classes took place over WhatsApp and gave women the opportunity to fit learning into their busy schedules. Ahlam and her group participated in daily exercises: listening to recordings, reading chats and following a workbook designed for the class.

The program also connected participants with personal mentors from the Community Connections Mentorship Program (CCMP). They helped guide each newcomer and offered language support.

At CultureLink, we know that newcomers may feel insecure about learning a whole new language. Our WhatsApp group and mentorship programs provide a safe space for people to make mistakes and learn from them.

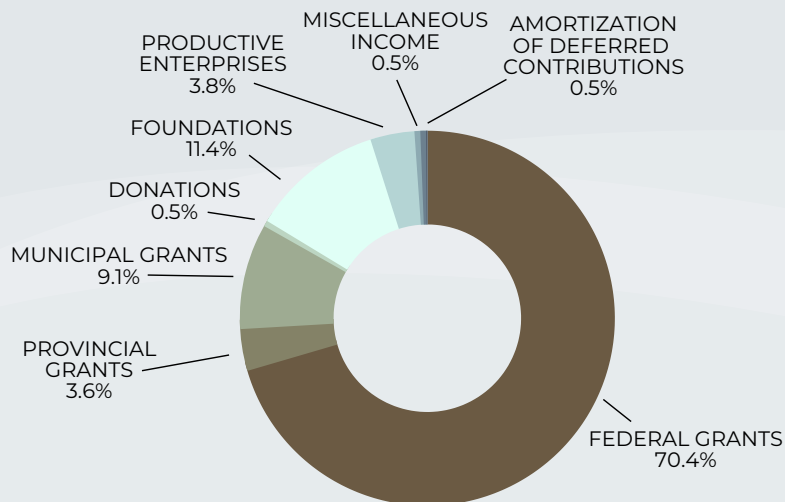
"This is a great program. I hope it continues to help other ladies who are eager to improve their English skills and unable to attend daytime language school. It is also good for ladies who feel shy to speak or are worried about others making fun of them if they make mistakes. I am so grateful to have been a part of it."

Ahlah went on to take another language assessment and showed remarkable progress (CLB level 4/5). Now she is ready to take on her citizenship test.

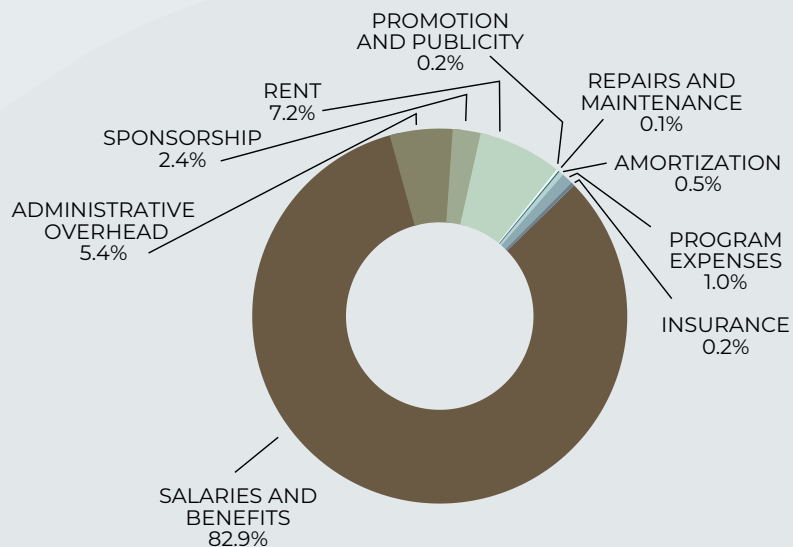


FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUE SOURCES



EXPENSES



STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS	2021	2020
REVENUE SOURCES		
FEDERAL GRANTS	3,568,059	3,411,136
PROVINCIAL GRANTS	184,265	203,850
MUNICIPAL GRANTS	462,897	309,723
DONATIONS	27,726	49,021
FOUNDATIONS	578,266	766,014
FUNDRAISING INCOME	2,825	2,168
PRODUCTIVE ENTERPRISES	193,157	179,987
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	27,258	26,858
AMORTIZATION OF DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS	25,839	79,813
TOTAL REVENUES	5,070,292	5,028,570
EXPENSES		
SALARIES AND BENEFITS	4,102,415	3,956,878
ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD	267,609	332,334
SPONSORSHIP	117,102	89,778
RENT	355,163	351,797
PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY	7,664	22,290
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	2,256	4,043
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE	7,287	8,441
AMORTIZATION	25,839	79,813
PROGRAM EXPENSES	48,316	85,274
INSURANCE	11,845	11,931
INTEREST	1,366	489
SECURITY	1,242	1,317
POLICE CHECK	667	963
TOTAL EXPENSES	4,948,771	4,945,348
SURPLUS (+)/ DEFICIT (-)	121,521	83,222
BREAK-UP OF ADMIN OVERHEAD		
OFFICE EQUIPMENT	73,974	55,404
OFFICE SUPPLIES	77,804	120,147
TELEPHONE	38,382	30,326
PROFESSIONAL FEES	18,268	25,669
HST	41,528	42,706
TRAVEL	6,505	44,389
MEMBERSHIP FEES	5,130	6,275
BANK CHARGES	2,544	3,511
POSTAGE	3,474	3,907
	267,609	332,334

The Federal Government is the largest funder of CultureLink and provides 70.4% of the agency's revenues. The Federal Government funds are mainly received from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

These funds are used for the Settlement of Newcomers to Canada.

Other sources of funding include the Province of Ontario, United Way Greater Toronto, The Ontario Trillium Foundation and the City of Toronto.

CultureLink's expenses are mainly directed to staffing (82.9%) and program-related expenses.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

	NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED
PARKDALE COMMUNITY INFORMATION (PCI) SITE	4,058
COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM (CCMP)	666
SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOL (SWIS)	9,098
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS, YOUTH CENTRE	5,026
SENIORS' PROGRAM, YOUTH CENTRE	2,998
NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT PROGRAM (NSP)	2,632
LABOUR MARKET ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LMAP)	501
LIBRARY SETTLEMENT PROGRAM (LSP) / SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN COMMUNITY SPACES (SWCS)	2,895
CYBERSECURITY TRAINING PROGRAM (ITS)	175
NAI CHILDREN'S CHOIR	180
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES	1,305

SPRING 2020

Over 2,200 attendees join our **Facebook Live** event for the Hungarian community.

Our **Eat at Home to Learn at Home** fundraising campaign results in \$7,500 worth of food gift cards for newcomer families.

Canada Connects Program launches in partnership with **Harbourfront Centre**. Canadian mentors are paired with newcomers to practice language skills, build social networks and create community.

CultureLink's **Nai Children's Choir** collaborates with the **Connecting Culture and Childhood Project** at York University to create an original children's book: Zahra and the Lost Voices.

United Way launches **Care for Vulnerable Seniors in Parkdale** project. CultureLink is approved to purchase grocery cards for 360 seniors during the pandemic.

CultureLink volunteers assist **United Way** in their **COVID-19 - Bridging the Service Gap for Vulnerable Seniors** project. 985 phone call check-ins and 259 essential items deliveries are made to senior newcomers.

SUMMER 2020

First virtual **Peer Leader Training** for high school newcomer students.

CultureLink partners with **United Way** on emergency fund, **Community Response to the Urgent Needs of Vulnerable Seniors During COVID-19**. Volunteers assist seniors with mental health, information and navigation, social inclusion, and learning. Grocery gift cards and deliveries are also offered.

CultureLink begins a new partnership with **Ontario Land Trust Alliance** to implement online events promoting exploration and engagement with nature.



FALL 2020

CultureLink launches **E3 Youth - Educate, Elevate, Empower**—which aims to reduce violence among young people in South and Central Etobicoke. The program is funded by the **City of Toronto**.

CultureLink holds their **Annual General Meeting** over Zoom for the first time with over 100 participants.

WINTER 2021

CultureLink launches its first virtual **Newcomer Orientation Week** for high school students.

CultureLink partners with **Mercer** to create the **Mercer-CultureLink Newcomer Internship Program**, a paid 6-month internship to help newcomers gain experience and explore the Canadian professional services landscape.

CultureLink hosts **International Women's Day** celebration at **Rose Avenue Public School**.

CultureLink organizes **Kids and COVID-19: Mental Health Night for Parents** in partnership with **Queen Victoria Public School**.

We envision a healthy, equitable, inclusive and welcoming society that works together to engage and integrate newcomers and other community members into Canadian life.

FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Employment and Social Development Canada

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ontario

Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, Ontario

The City of Toronto

Ontario Trillium Foundation

The Rogers Foundation

United Way of Greater Toronto

The Region of Peel

George C. Metcalf Foundation

Toronto Foundation

PARTNERS/NETWORK

Accenture

Access Community Capital Fund

Access to Housing

Achev

Assisting in Medical Expectations (AIME)

BMO (Bank of Montreal)

BusyQA

Catholic Crosscultural Services

Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples

Centre for Immigrant and Community Services

Centre for Mindfulness Studies

Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

CIBC

Community Arts Guild Scarborough

Cycle Toronto

East Scarborough Storefront

EY

Fairview Interagency Network

Google

Harbourfront Centre

Heritage Skills Development Centre (HSDC)

High Park Nature Centre

Humber College

Hydro One

Indus Community Services

JobStart / WoodGreen Community Services

Kids Up Front

Learning Enrichment Foundation

Luminato Festival

Maggie Duan of Yoga Time

Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE)

Mercer Canada

Moneris

National Film Board of Canada

North York Community House

Ontario Land Trust Alliance

Parkbus

Parkdale Community Economic Development Network

Parkdale Focus Toronto Network

Parkdale Interagency Referral Network (PIRN)

Parkdale Seniors Service Providers Network

Parkdale Settlement Service Providers Network

Parks Canada

Peel Multicultural Council

Royal Ontario Museum Community Access Network (ROMCAM)

Scadding Court Community Centre

Scotiabank

Settlement Education Partnership Toronto (SEPT)

Sherbourne Health

Soulpepper Theatre

TD Bank

Telus

The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association

The Neighbourhood Group / St. Stephen's Community House

The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO)

Toronto Catholic District School Board

Toronto District School Board

Toronto Public Library

Toronto South Local Immigration Partnership (TSLIP)

Tropicana Employment Centre

University Settlement

Wells Fargo

West Neighbourhood House

Women's Habitat

YMCA of Greater Toronto

PLACEMENT STUDENTS

Asiya Shaikh	Samantha Shore
Kirstyn Marwah	Shaela-Jane Campbell
Marysol Landau	Shivanh Shah



Julianna A. Drexler



Mary Pigott

VOLUNTEERS

Abdulrahman Alkayali	Cathy Brown
Abdus Shinwary	Cathy Gatlin
Abhinav Chopra	Cecilia Monteiro
Abner Josafat Vega Morales	Charran Hetram (Dudley)
Alexandra Agudelo	Chelsea Chan
Alka Kumar	Cherry Calasanz
Alla Novitskaia	Christelle Davis
Ally Ladak	Christen Kong
Amanda Ward	Chuyan Xiao
Amna Basit	Claudio Cicuta
Andrea Shaikin	Connie K
Andres Hernandez	Corrina Fowlow
Andressa Zhu	Cristina Ion
Andrew Lockhart	Daisy Heung
Angie Christodoulou	Danny Pivnick
Anjolaoluwa Moronfolu	Danny Wong
Arden Jobling-Hey	Dave Rose
Arun Balakrishnan	Debbie Ali
Ashish Koirala	Deborah Stiff
Atul Shah	Diamond Tekay
Ayyappan Pillai	Dmytro Ilchuk
Barb Flewwelling	Dora Astrid Gaviria
Benjamin Aser	Dora Luz Carmona
Beth Ralbosky	Drago Trendafilov
Bhavana Agarwal	Dyan Lyn
Bill Zeng	Elena Jara
Brittany Fletcher	Ellen Chisholm
Bryant Londono	Emmanuel Naranjo Cardona
Candy Burstein	Esteban Perez Montoya
Carmela Natalizio	Fatima Syed
Carmen Mendez Espino	Felipe dos Santos
Carmen Pecican	

Feras Rajjoub	Julianna A. Drexler	Muhammad Suleman	Sakina S
Fon Arunpairojana	Karen Correa Zapata	Ahmed Zafar	Samuel Perez Montoya
Fredy Alexis Bolaños Montoya	Katarzyna Skalska	Murray Lightman	Sandra Cadavid
Gardezi, Naseera	Kathryn Boire	Myrtel Saltat	Sandra Milena Barrios Fragozo
Giovanna Bendezu Medina	Kawaldeep Singh	Nadia Dowhaniuk	Sara Perez
Gloria Maribel Tamayo Lopera	Kim Sedore	Nasiha Mbalozi (Elsa)	Sergio Gutierrez
Gloria Montoya	Latoya Aldridge	Natalia Liu	Shannon Jankari
Hanne Abada	Laya Shariatpanah	Natalie Gooding	Shaohua (Crystal) Feng
Harish Sharma	Lena Chen	Neil Gangal	Sherry Feng
Harmit Kamboe	Liliana Nakamura	Nicolle Weeks	Shweta Saxena
Helen Latimer	Lina Rodriguez	Nina Faith Canalita	Silvia Isabella
Huiyan Pan	Liz Sauter	Nithya Vijayakumar	Sita Welsh
Illaneet Goren	Luis Sarabia	Obada Abu Saleh	Sonya Lockhart
Irshad Osman	Lumy Fuentes Castillo	Oliver Gorman-Asal	Stella Gordon
Jackie Tavares	Maha Ashraf	Oshane Grant	Stephen Kerkmann
Jai Rohra	Mahdi Zangeneh	Pamela Wood	Susana Catala
Jane Doan	Mai Zhang	Piero Alvarado Bellido	Tenzin Lhakdon
Janet Harley Boomer	Margaret Jones	Pooja Gogia	Thu Phương Trần (Myn)
Janice Karlinsky	Maria Belen Villacis	Rana Odeh	Trayven Rwigema
Janice Steel	Maribeth Henderson	Rebecca Chua	Trichana Campbell
Jasmine Do	Marinela Piedrahita	Reni Walker	Ummalhair Olowewa
Jason Greenley	Mark Takefman	Riana Feliciano	Valeria Naranjo Cardona
Jenna Seguin	Mary Jane Laxa	Rishika Jani	Vasilije Jevtic
Jennifer Johnson	Mary Pigott	Ritva Nosov	Velia Romo
Jianghan Hou	Mathias Hartmann	Roberto D'Angelo	Vicki McCudden
Jigna Fadia	Matthew Webster	Rohith Suresh	Wilma Aranha
Jill Dupuis	Maya Kabbani	Rongyi Chai	Yael Boyd
Jiyin T	Mekdes Tekalign	Rouaa Rajjoub	Yanini Melnichenka
Joanna Li	Melanie Huang	Rui Fang	Zachary Fillingham
Julia Warrender	Michele Pickios	Rukundo Bruce	Zarina Decambra
	Minhduc Nguyen	Rupesh Gunapati	
	Monice Peter	Ruzaan Karwa	



We at CultureLink acknowledge the land we are on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

LOCATIONS

MAIN OFFICE:

2340 Dundas St. West Suite 301, Toronto ON M6P 4A9

YOUTH CENTRE:

3535 Dundas St. West, Toronto ON M6S 2S7

PARKDALE COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTRE:

1303 Queen St. West, Toronto ON M6K 1L6

COMMUNITY BICYCLE HUB:

15 Tobermory Dr., North York ON M3N 2R5

MABELLE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM:

49 Mabelle Ave., Toronto ON M9A 5B1

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