

Independence
Social Justice
Family Rights
Children
Skill
Employment
Equity
Engagement
Volunteer
Health
Financial
Culture
Value
Education
Language
Dignity
Settlement
Canadian Experience
Community
Networking
Senior
Voice



Annual Report 2010-2011
strong women build strong community

Chair and Executive Director's Message

It has been a powerful year for women on the world stage. Women and girls have played leadership roles in reshaping society and overthrowing oppressive governments in Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Syria. Three women have jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize for their contributions to democracy and social justice in an increasingly fractured world. However, the current global recession ensures women are ever more vulnerable to increased poverty, political strife, family violence and social exclusion.

Yet, even before the economic downturn, consider this: Women make up more than half the world's population, carry out two thirds of the world's work hours, yet own less than a hundredth of its property.

For every dollar a woman earns, she invests 80 cents in her family, as compared with 30 cents invested by men. Additionally, in many households, women are the primary caregivers. Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW) invests in women and, by extension, invests in their families and Canadian society. Using gender-based programming principles, NEW supports women with tools and resources to overcome challenges, access information and take charge of their lives. Facilitating the inclusion of newcomer women will also enable them to exercise their rights as engaged Canadian citizens in the future.

Each workshop, each conversation, each interaction with our members is part of a greater political project aimed at enhancing the rights of newcomer women. This notion of "engaged citizenship" drives every aspect of our programming. It is essential for our membership to experience programs which not only support members' life goals, but also challenge economic and political forces which limit newcomers to Canada in terms of individual potential, opportunity and quality of life.

The past year has been a year of great challenges, but also a time of opportunities, as the agency has expanded and continues to challenge itself to remain relevant in these difficult times. This effort could not have been achieved without our committed program participants, staff, board of directors, and volunteers.

Maya Roy
Executive Director

Riti Mandal
Chair, Board of Directors





Thank You to Our Funders



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada



Human Resources and
Social Development Canada

Service
Canada

 Ontario
MINISTRY OF TRAINING
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

 Ontario

EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO

 TORONTO


ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

 LHINS: Better Health Care
Healthier Communities



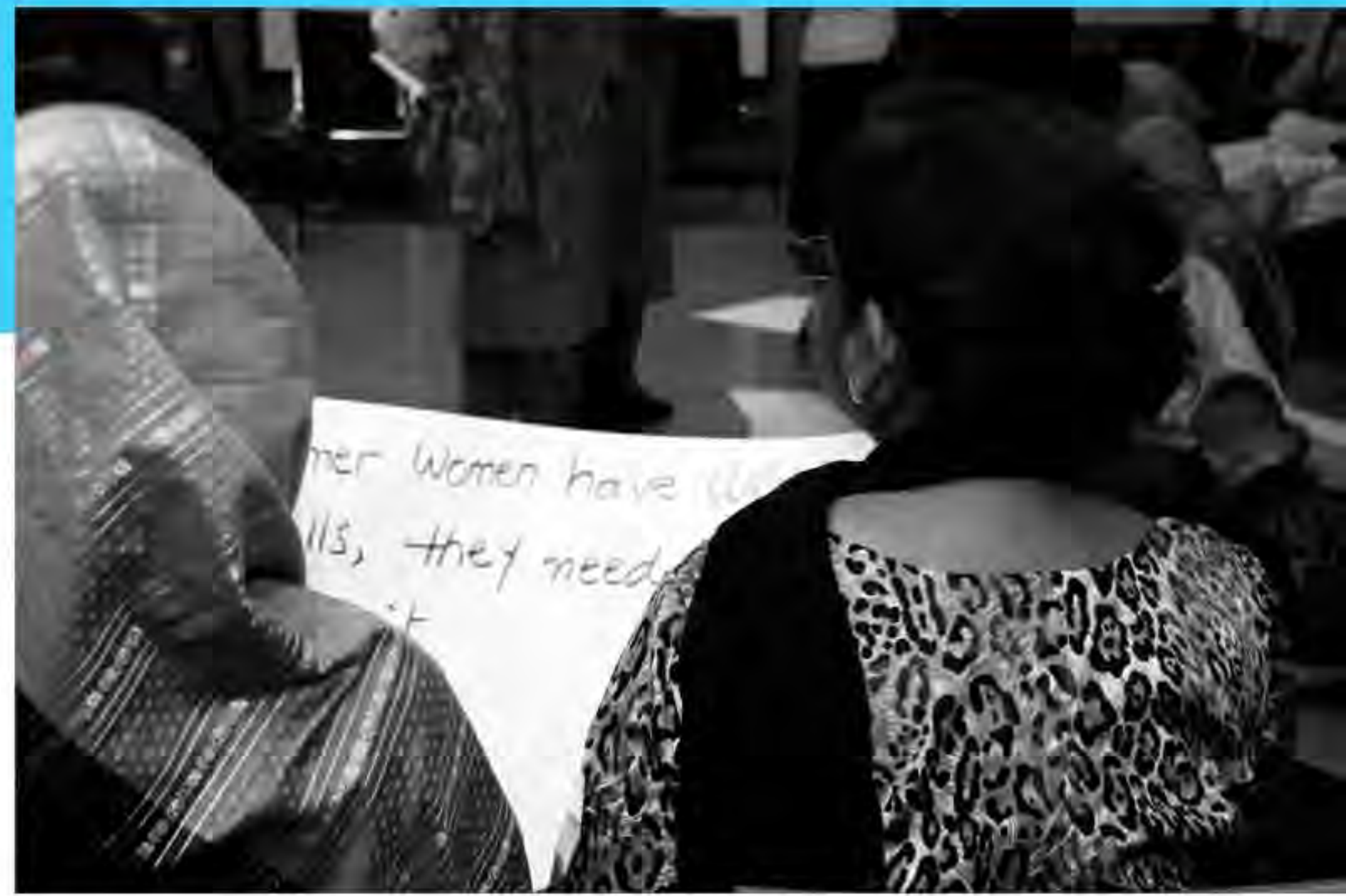


Thank You to Our Partners

Beyond the Lyrics
Centre for Community Learning and Development
CIBC Mellon
City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation
Council of Agencies Serving South Asians
DECNET
East Toronto Community Legal Services
East York Housing Help Centre
Family Inter-Generation Link (FIG)
Growing Together
JUMP Math
JVS Toronto
Kids Up Front
Management Advisory Services
Metro Toronto Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
Neighbourhood Link Support Services
New Circles Community Services
Project Building Blocks
PTP
Red Door Family Shelter
Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
Ryerson University
Sherbourne Community Health Centre
Social Planning Toronto
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
South Riverdale Community Health Centre
The Redwood
Toronto Board of Trade
Toronto Employment and Social Services
Toronto Public Health
Toronto Public Library - Pape/Danforth Branch
University of Toronto Immigrant Support & Awareness (UTISA)
Vietnamese Women's Association of Toronto
Wen-Do Women's Self-Defence
Windfall Clothing Services
Women's Health in Women's Hands
WoodGreen Community Services

Strong Women Build Strong Community

Senior Wen-do instructor Deb Chard and NEW members break one-1 inch traditional martial arts boards with their fists at a Wen-do Women's Self-Defence class. In 2010, 35 NEW women, aged 11 to 70+ completed their Basic Wen-Do Women's Self-Defence course.



A Shifting Landscape

Newcomer women and their families are changing the face of Toronto.

Approximately 128,600 newcomer women arrive in Canada each year; one in five Canadian women are foreign-born; and immigrant women comprise 51% of Toronto's female population. By 2031, immigrant women are projected to form a significant part of the Canadian labour force and in 2006, 10% more immigrant women had attained a degree than their Canadian-born counterparts¹.

However, immigrant women are three times less likely to be employed than Canadian-born women with the same level of education and experience. As a result, 49% of immigrant women report being under-employed and 49% are unemployed, as compared with 30% of their Canadian-born counterparts². The underlying systemic barriers to integration include inadequate language and other training programs and supports. These barriers result in higher incidents of poverty among immigrant women as well as mental and physical health issues that affect their quality of life and their ability to participate in Canadian society.

Women-Centered Settlement Services Work

Women-centred settlement services are better positioned to address the social and economic needs and learning opportunities of immigrant women and the unique issues they face. NEW is a safe space for women, many of whom would not otherwise engage in mainstream services. Women working together are better able to support one another, address social isolation and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. The multiplier effect of this is a benefit to their peers, families and communities.

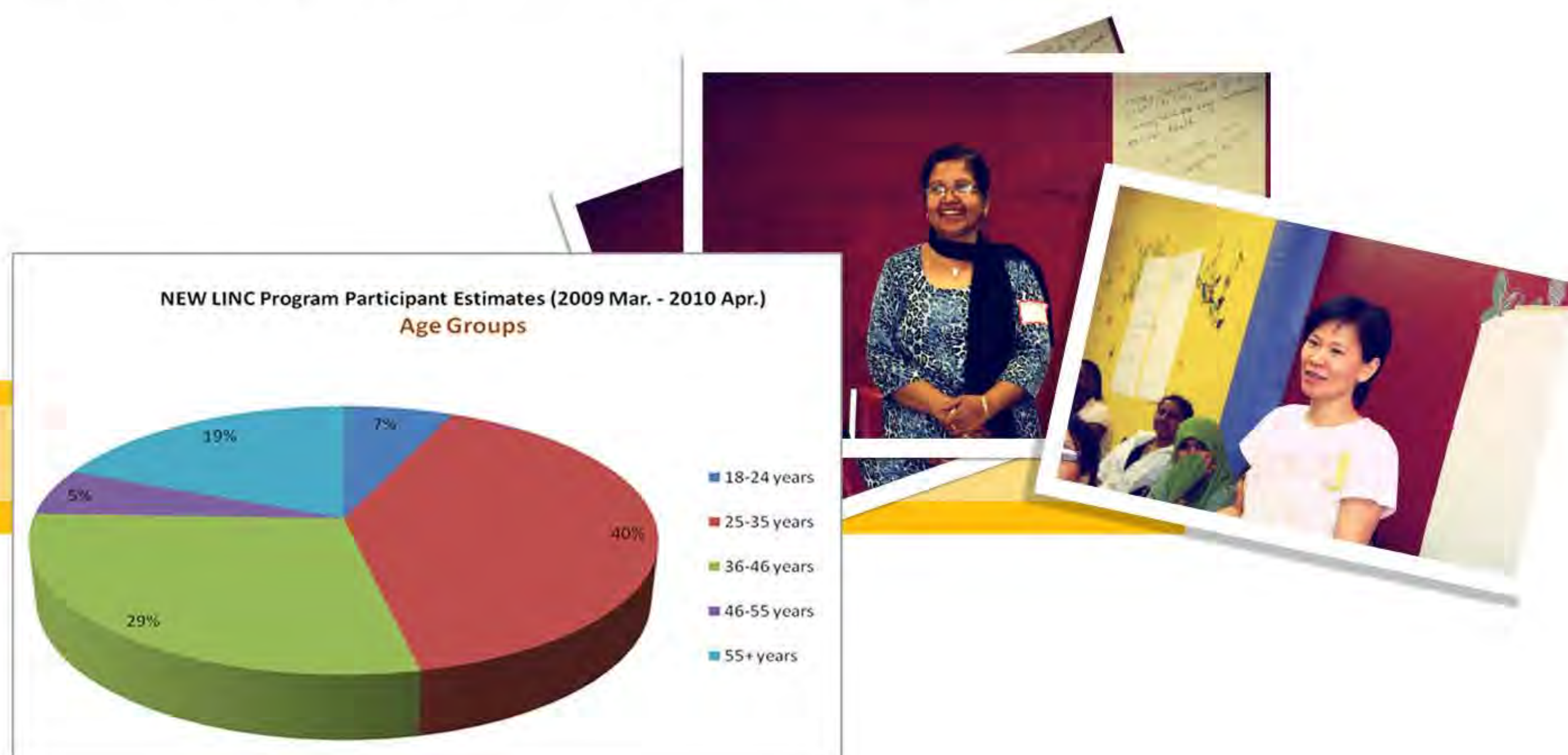
At Newcomer Women's Services Toronto, we believe strongly in the resilience of newcomer women, many of whom leave a familiar landscape, extended support networks, and secure jobs to come to Canada. Over the past 27 years, NEW has worked to instil over 11,500 newcomer women with the confidence they so often lose as they struggle to learn a new language, adapt to a new culture, and integrate into a new society. In the last year alone, NEW served over 2,500 women, providing them with the tools and resources to participate in society.

¹ TIEDI, 2011.

² Ferrao, Vincent and Williams, Cara (2011). 'Immigrant Women' Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report. Sixth Edition.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program

Since 1992, Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW) has run the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The LINC program at NEW covers Canadian Language Benchmark levels one to six and includes a program for seniors. In the past year alone, 150 women have attended the program to develop their language skills, learn more about Canadian culture, and build their confidence. Forty children accompany their mothers to NEW daily and participate in the onsite early childhood program.



For these women the LINC program is more than acquiring communicative competence in English. Their participation addresses social isolation and gives them a sense of community. Without language skills, immigrant women struggle to integrate into Canadian society because information and resources are often inaccessible to them. Though many are internationally trained professionals, the language barrier makes access to the labour market all the more difficult. Even those who have learned English in their countries of origin may find communication difficult. Native English speakers may speak too quickly, use unfamiliar idioms, or allude to specific political, social, and cultural events. One client indicated that she lacked the confidence to request a transfer from a TTC bus driver despite her husband's encouragement to communicate in English.

The lack of ability to speak confidently in English often results in newcomer women withdrawing into their homes and confining themselves to their inner social circles and linguistic communities. This "invisible barrier" between them and the outside world can create an overwhelming sense of isolation and even inadequacy.

The Beautiful Ladies Class: LINC for Seniors

When asked to speak about her LINC for Seniors class, teacher Olga Khellebust replies,

“It’s not a class - it’s a family.”

The self-proclaimed “Beautiful Ladies Class” students echo the sentiment, describing themselves not as friends, but as sisters. As in all families, the fifteen women enrolled in senior LINC classes do not always agree, but they are always there to support one another and offer advice when a classmate is sick or unhappy. For many of the seniors, NEW is a place to socialize freely and open themselves up to new experiences. It is a departure for many who have to assume heavy family responsibilities such as keeping house and helping with their grandchildren while their children are at work.

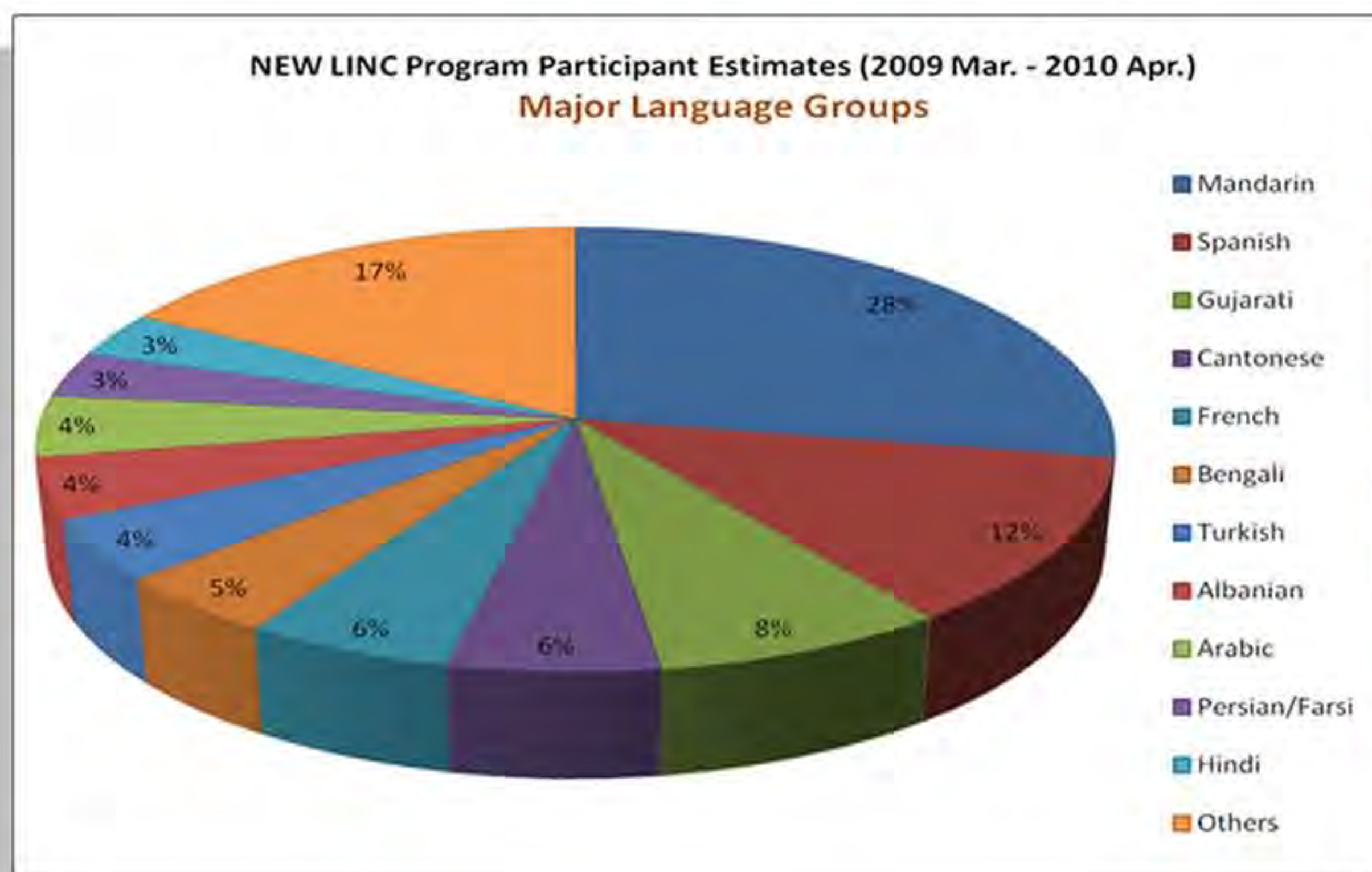
Women in the class point out that due to the family sponsorship process, their ability to contribute to Canadian society is often limited and “many seniors remain locked up in their children’s homes”.

The seniors class is very often the only opportunity for many participants to interact with other women who are at the same stage of life as they are. Women over the age of 55 often have different needs, experiences, and expectations. In 2010, the women collaborated with NEW staff to organize “Sister to Sister,” a forum on Elder Abuse Prevention held at Ryerson University.

In their day-to-day lives, “we do not always ask seniors for their ideas and opinions, so they do not voice them,” comments Ms. Khellebust, “but at NEW, we not only provide a safe space for senior women to be themselves, but we also ask for their input and encourage them to take the lead on issues.” There is much laughter and passionate debate in class, as women discuss topics such as caring for grandchildren, menopause, health issues, and elder abuse.. Weekly yoga classes and monthly outings round out the intensive study of grammar, spelling and conversation.

NEW’s vision for this program is for the seniors class to take more initiative and break the silence on issues that affect senior newcomer women in Toronto.

By Aisha Wilks



Childminding for LINC Clients

More often than not, mothers are the primary caregivers for their children and it is often difficult for them to attend language classes without reliable childcare. Since 1992 NEW has provided childminding for children between nineteen months and six years of age so that their mothers may attend the LINC program for newcomer women. Furthermore, LINC clients can be assured that their children are safe and engaged in meaningful social and cognitive activities. In 2009-2010, 140 children participated in the childminding program at NEW.



Childminders use a broad range of activities to help the children improve their social, cognitive, sensory, fine- and gross-motor skills. On a daily basis, the children read, sing, do handicrafts, and play with balls, hula hoops, and bicycles. These developmental skills provide a solid foundation, and prepare the children for a positive learning experience at pre-school and beyond. This program exposes children of newcomer women to Canada's social, cultural and linguistic diversity.



Toronto writing workshop gives immigrant women a voice

In Althea Prince's class, students immigrant women of all ages are told to check the daily hustle and bustle of their new lives at the door.

This is a refuge where they are encouraged to pause and think, and most important, find a voice they don't usually have in their newly adopted homeland, said Prince, the writer-in-residence at Newcomer Women's Services Toronto.

Prince's job is to motivate immigrant women to build self-esteem and confidence by voicing their feelings and thoughts through the written word in the six-week writing workshop launched in February.

"It is important for them to find their voice within," said Prince, a published novelist and Ryerson University sociology professor. "Immigrants' confidence is shaken when moving to a new place. The voice within the writing helps them feel acknowledged."

The unique program is the brainchild of Newcomer Women's executive director Maya Roy, who spotted the need to help immigrant women connect with each other and find time for creative pursuits.

Many newcomer women are sponsored to Canada by their spouses and often feel isolated by the overwhelming migration experience, said Roy.

When Roy first brought up the idea of the writing workshops last year, she was met with ridicule from immigrant women themselves, who doubted their ability in both writing and English.

But a four-week pilot was so well-received that it motivated participants to share their personal stories and beloved recipes in a soon-to-be-published cookbook, *Listening to Ourselves: Stories About Life*, to be launched at the Pape Ave. public library April 4.



Thanks to a \$7,500 Ontario Arts Council grant, the writing workshops are now a regular program and have a six-week waiting list.

In a recent session, participants started with a group meditation before their "creative visualization" routine.

"Imagine what it feels like with rain on your face," Prince said to the dozen participants in a crowded back room at Newcomer Women's Danforth Ave. office. "Think about it and make some notes about it. Remember not to erase anything. Keep the pen moving."

The women – all from different parts of the world – quickly scribbled on note pads and loose paper.

Participants are asked to tell stories based on objects they find in the classroom, such as flowers, baby dolls and bookends, or sometimes about strangers they see on a streetcar. Students sometimes jot down their thoughts in their mother tongue before translating them into English.

"I found a baby doll and it reminds me of the doll that I got during wartime in Turkey in 1974," said Havva Gizmen, a school lunch supervisor, who settled in Toronto with her family from Cyprus a decade ago.

"It was such a treasure that I kept it in the original box. It reminds me of my childhood memories with my parents and my brother. It is nice to share my stories with the class."

Some women said they have found "therapeutic value" in writing.

cont.....page 10

“So many things are happening around you and the world. You feel something is not right but nobody is going to hear you,” said Sumati Bhala, a university lecturer from India, who joined her husband in Toronto in October.

“But when you pen down your thoughts, it is out of you, out of your system.”

by Nicholas Keung, Immigration Reporter/Toronto Star



A writer-in-residence belongs in a settlement agency

How do we find our voices as women? NEW’s writer-in-residence, Dr. Althea Prince cautions us about the danger of telling one story – a single story which wholly defines newcomer women while denying them of their skills, capacities and voices. In 2010, twice a week, members of the PRISMs Life-writing program refused to be defined by this single story.

The first group published an anthology of essays, poems and recipes entitled “Listening to Ourselves ... Stories About Life.” The book is published by A Different Publisher and is currently sold at A Different Bookstore. A book launch was held at the Pape Branch of the Toronto Public Library featuring artist Itah Sadhu and distinguished journalist Jan Wong.

This second group of participants in the Life-writing Workshop developed excellent writing habits, and took to heart the guidance to “write every day, even if it is just for fifteen minutes.” Several of the women found new strength and confidence in themselves, as they relied on going within to release some of the experiences of settling into their adopted country. In addition, the dialogue that came out of the weekly meetings allowed them to feel confident and proud of their creative voice. The group is currently working on a second anthology.



The group is currently working on a second anthology.

Employment Ontario

The Employment program is funded by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities and offers assistance to newcomer women to realize their employment and career goals.

The program offers clients several options including referrals to practice firms, apprenticeship training and “second career” support. In addition, the Employment Ontario model offers a hiring incentive to employers who recruit our clients so that clients may receive on-the-job training. In-house supports include Job Fairs, Employment Boot-camps and Speed Mentoring sessions. NEW’s Saturday Networking Program provides addition workplace communication and IT skills for Employment Ontario clients.

Under the Employment Ontario model, clients are assessed by counsellors in one-to-one meetings. Career goals and training needs are identified. The on-going employment workshops expose newcomer women to Canadian workplace culture as well as support newcomers to develop resumes, look for work and prepare for job interviews. Job Developers work with employers and explore the hidden job market to assist clients to find jobs.

This full-service centre ensures that clients can also drop in and access job readiness assessment software, a job board and employment-related resources and information. Clients are able to meet one another at the centre and at the employment workshops, thus building their networks and knowledge of the Canadian labour market.

GET HIRED BOOTCAMP
Intensive training for women 16+
10:00 am - 3:00 pm
745 Danforth Avenue, Toronto
This four day course includes:
- effective job search
- savvy networking
- winning resumes
- successful interviews
Please contact Indika at 416-469-0196
or email: indika@newcomerwomen.org
Free childcare: reading and math fun for your kids!
*Please bring your own lunch.

EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOPS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER
Information Session
Date: October 5, Time: 10:30 am—12:30 pm
Build Your Resume
Date: October 12, Time: 10:30 am—12:30 pm
Job Search: Discover the Hidden Job Market and Networking
Date: October 19, Time: 10:30 am—12:30 pm
Interview Skills Workshop
Date: October 26, Time: 10:30 am—12:30 pm
745 Danforth Avenue
Room 307
416-751-8886

Invites You to Our Open House
Take a tour of our new office
Learn more about our services
Meet and chat with the staff
Representatives from the TD Bank will be here to answer your questions
Have a make-over by a professional artist
Enjoy refreshments and a light lunch
Sign-up to win a raffle
TIME: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
WHERE: 705 Danforth Avenue
TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT
Call Selvino or Angela at 416.751.8886
Two tokens will be provided.
705 Danforth Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M4E 1L2
Tel: 416.751.8886

Newcomer Settlement Program

The Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration provides settlement information through one-to-one and group settings.

Newcomer women face complex settlement needs and navigating new and changing roles and responsibilities after arriving to Canada is stressful. The NSP program aims to decrease this settlement stress significantly through sensitive and confidential on-site support and referrals to an extensive network of community agencies and service providers. Reflecting on the past year, Settlement Co-ordinator Natasa Boskovic notes, “it is difficult to draw out the factors that make the settlement experience of one newcomer more successful than another’s.”

In 2009-2010, staff worked with 811 new clients, identified their settlement needs, and provided supportive consultations for individuals and families, orientation and accurate up-to-date settlement information. Staff organized 165 group sessions and workshops on various settlement and employment-related topics to increase women’s knowledge about their legal rights and responsibilities.

How do settlement staff members respond to the diverse needs of hundreds of clients? Ms. Boskovic laughs and says, “programs such as NSP play a vital role in this process in shifting the cultural identity of newcomers who have to assume new roles in Canada. Providing relevant information, advocating on behalf of the client, and offering encouragement and support are all critical to a successful settlement experience!”



Special Feature:

“Empowered Seniors can make a difference”

Summary of the Sister II Sister Elder Abuse Prevention Public Forum

Elder abuse may happen to any senior, but it occurs much frequently to those newcomer seniors who are sponsored by their families to come to Canada. Language barriers, cultural differences, social isolation and immigration status are all contribute to the issue.

In an effort to address elder abuse experienced by newcomer seniors, approximately 300 seniors and service providers gathered and shared their learning on the best practices of elder abuse prevention and senior leadership building. A one-day forum called Sister II Sister Elder Abuse Prevention Forum was hosted by Newcomer Women’s Services Toronto and Ryerson University on May 3, 2011.

"Elder abuse is often defined as any single, or repeated acts, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person," says Monita Laura Persaud, the presenter from Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. According to Ms. Persaud, many seniors don't report their case because they are not aware of seniors' rights. Meanwhile, cultural differences and language barriers make it more difficult for newcomer seniors to connect with community and get help from others. Therefore, it's significant for seniors to understand their rights, Canadian law and the justice system, and most of all, how to of access services and navigate the system.



Isolation and abuse go hand in hand. Ying Quan Li and Shao Jie Jin, two newcomer senior leaders from St. Jamestown Sunshine Seniors Group, shared their personal stories of fighting against elder abuse. "I used to sign on any documents others asked me to sign...I don't understand English, so the only thing I can do is to trust in them." Ying Quan Li paused with a smile, "But now, I won't sign on any document if I'm not sure what that is. Even though I just understand limited English, I can always ask for help from my English-speaking friends or social workers." Shao Jie Jin, also told her story, "After being armed with the knowledge of seniors' rights, I know how to protect myself and help my friends." In addition to sharing their experiences, Ying Quan Li and Shao Jie Jin expressed their need for seniors' benefits, including free senior TTC tickets and a higher pension for newcomer seniors.

The Sister II Sister Project was a Seniors' Leadership Building Program initiated by NEW for its senior clients. The project empowered newcomer senior clients to engage one another and to share their knowledge and experience on elder abuse with their peers.

The latest study on elder abuse prevention was discussed at the forum. Service providers had the opportunity to learn from seniors with regard to best practices for newcomer elder abuse prevention. Seniors participated in the senior leadership training and addressed their concerns regarding elder abuse in the community.

by Stephanie Zeng

