



## **Professional Immigrant Networks Honoured for Helping New Canadians Get Established in BC Receive IEC-BC Leadership Awards**

VANCOUVER, BC - Many skilled immigrants arrive in Vancouver unsure of where to begin their job search and often connect with other immigrant professionals. Two volunteer-run professional immigrant networks have been honoured for working with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) to help connect their members and other new Canadians to meaningful employment in BC.

IEC-BC recognized the Iranian Engineers of BC Association (IEBCA) and the Filipino Canadian Construction Society (FCCS) on April 9 at its inaugural leadership awards event. The contributions of 13 individuals and organizations helping skilled new Canadians integrate in BC workplaces were recognized at the event.

When engineer Saeed Hessami came to Canada from Iran over 20 years ago there were no organizations or programs to ease his professional transition in his new country. That kind of help would have been welcome, and in 2007 Hessami and a few other Iranian engineers established IEBCA with a mandate to help other newcomers get established.

IEBCA started with 20 members and few expectations of growth. To his surprise, “we were flooded with interest” and now the organization has 128 paid members, over 500-name mailing list and a full house at regular monthly technical meetings.

“We knew there were organizations that would help individuals with writing resumes and settling in, but our core competency was to help engineers understand the technical arena such as which companies are active and what’s involved in requalifying in BC.”

“When you arrive, everything is new and different. There’s so much to absorb, so much information, it’s like drinking out of a hose instead of a glass. We facilitate a means for our members to network, share and learn from each other’s experience.”

Ed Nicolas said the expectations Filipino construction professionals have when they come to Canada, often don’t match the reality. Many heed the call that Canada needs construction professionals and engineers, but once they arrive they can’t find work.

“Construction here is very regulated and they have trouble getting a job,” says Nicolas whose organization counsels, supports and educates skilled immigrants. “We work closely with IEC-BC to help our members understand that there are opportunities here.”



Finding work, once new Canadians have qualified to work here, can mean going farther afield and FCSS urges skilled immigrants to consider the job opportunities of resource-rich northern BC.

Both FCSS and IEBCA collaborated with IEC-BC on a campaign and website - [www.northernbcjobs.com](http://www.northernbcjobs.com) - to inform new Canadians living in the Lower Mainland of job opportunities in three northern BC communities.

Funded by the Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Province of BC, IEC-BC is a provincial non-government organization that stimulates the integration of skilled immigrant talent into the province's workforce by fostering solutions, building connections and being a champion to help employers attract and retain skilled immigrant talent.

To learn more about the IEC-BC Leadership Recognition awards visit <http://iecbc.ca/2015-leadership-awards>