



## International Events

The VCST invites you to join the June 26th, 2003, Campaign on the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture! The overall campaign objective is to increase international awareness of and support for the:

- \*rehabilitation needs of victims of torture
- \* universal ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Torture
- \* eradication of torture. (above from <http://www.ict.org/main.htm> webpage for International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims)

## WORKSHOP:

In support of this campaign, the VCST is organizing a half-day workshop entitled **“Refugee Resiliency: Part II.**

### **The Legal Process for Refugee Claimants.** **Date:** Thurs, June 26, /03

**Time:** 8:30 Am - 12:00 noon

**Location:** 3100 Foul Bay Rd., Wilma Thomas Cultural Centre, Camosun College, Victoria.

**Fee:** \$50.00 (\$25.00/student)

**Registration:** pre-registration via mail.

Or at 8:30 June 26. **Limited space available.**

**Contact Person:** Cristina Shore : 250-886-7380 or 388-4728

ext:108. **Who would be interested?:**

those in the health care professions; those who work with refugees; those who are interested in the experience of the refugee, particularly the refugee who has experienced torture. **Description:** Peter Golden, Secretary of VCST and a lawyer who is active in working with Victoria refugee claimants will introduce a panel consisting of refugee claimants, the Coordinator of Settlement Services, a representative of the International Refugee Board (IRB), and a lawyer who is a BC Human Rights Tribunal Councillor. Experiences will be explored and processes will be explained. Emphasis will be placed on the needs of the claimants and their experiences. You are welcome to stay, to take part in our

**‘AGM’ meeting at 12:15pm.**

## The Board of VCST:

### Who are we?

By Howard V. Dieno

Who are we at the VCST? **Marco Andino** is our President. He came to Canada as a refugee and survivor of torture from El Salvador. **Ken Agar-Newman** is a nurse and our Treasurer. He is a founding member of VCST who works long, dedicated hours as a spokesperson for the Ethics of Medical Services, speaking to ethical and medical issues within the pressured and confusing circumstances that arise within torture scenarios. **Peter Golden**, also a founding member, is a lawyer who advocates for refugee claimants, many of whom have experienced torture. Another founding member, **Tomoko Okada** is one of the “front line” staff at Victoria’s Intercultural Association (ICA). She and **Cristina Shore** work with refugees to aid them in their entry and adjustment to our culture. They provide a multitude of links for these people. They link to support, language classes, financial aid, and many community resources. As our Chairperson for meetings, Cristina organizes the agenda and moves us through our tasks. She is the coordinator of our June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003, workshop; **“Refugee Resiliency, Part II: The Legal Process for Refugee Claimants.”** **Andrea Monteiro** and **Marianne van der Meij** represent the Victoria Immigration and Refugee Centre Society

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### VCST Board Members:

**Marco Andino: President**

**Ken Agar-Newman: Treasurer**

**Peter Golden: Secretary**

**Tomoko Okada**

**Cristina Shore: Meeting Chair**

**Howard Dieno: Website Manager**

**Sherri Hohert**

**Andrea Monteiro**

**Joan Schwanzenberger**

**Marianne van der Meij**

**Penny Whillans: Newsletter Editor**

**Jan White**

### Next Meeting Scheduled for:

**Date:** June 26, 2003. 12:15pm

**Location:** 3001 Foul Bay Rd..

**This is our AGM - we invite you to stay after the June 26th workshop. Refugee Resiliency: Part II. “The Legal Process for Refugee Claimants” and participate in this meeting.**

**All are welcome.**

We invite you to become a part of our board and our activities.

The VCST was established in 1991. It is a non-profit organization that is deeply concerned with the health and welfare of people who have experienced torture.

The VCST Mandate is:

1 - to help survivors of political violence overcome the legacy of violent oppression and return to leading normal functional lives.

2 - to provide specialized knowledge to professionals and to increase public awareness regarding survivors of torture.

3 - to cooperate with the health community, social service agencies, immigrant settlement workers and the broader community to ensure that the needs of survivors of torture are recognized and met at all levels.

**Torture** is “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted by or at the instigation of a public official on a person for such purposes as obtaining .. information or confession, or punishing.. or intimidating him, her or other persons.” (UN Declaration, 1975)

.. “It is a crime against humanity; and a strategic tool of repression.” precised from (<http://www.cvt.org/index.html>)



## FEEDBACK from our last Conference:

We have received much positive feedback from our February one-day conference **Refugee Resiliency**. Thank you to all who participated and thank you to the speakers. Special thanks goes to Janice Hlady for her leadership and skills. Many people commented on the benefits and vitality of listening to the voices of experience. We also received feedback that the interactive quality of the conference helped people identify and personalize their role in aiding refugees. Participants requested a workshop that would help them to learn more about the process that the refugee must undertake in claiming refugee status and in obtaining 'landed status.' The June 26th workshop is in response to this request.

## VCST Current Affairs:

The VCST has been concerned about the provincial government's declaration this spring that it will cease its previously provided legal funding for the necessary legal process that all refugees must undertake. This funding will be cut by the commencement of the fiscal year of 04-05. As most refugees do not have independent financial resources, and are in fact fleeing from their country of origin with very little possessions, this declaration brings the possibility of refugee claimants not being adequately represented in the claim process, especially those who have experienced torture and trauma. Our concern has prompted letter writing to our MLAs and to our MP's. This concern, accompanied by the requests for further knowledge during our last conference, has hastened the planning for the upcoming June 26th half-day workshop on the legal process undertaken by a refugee claimant.

For your information: Website for Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture: <http://www.iccnms.ca/ccvt/index.html> Website for Canadian Traumatic Stress Network: <http://www.ctsn-ccst.ca/>

*("The Board" continued from front page)*

(VIRCS). They are refugee settlement workers and they support and link immigrants as well as refugees to appropriate resources and help with their settling into Victoria. **Sherri Hohert** is a social worker as well as a school counselor with the Western Opportunities Network (WON). Sherri was part of the "Project Accompaniment" team which escorted refugees returning to Mexico from Guatemala. **Joan Schwartzberger** is an addictions counsellor who is involved in intercultural education, and with community development and anti-racism projects. **Penny Whillans** is a psychologist working with people who experience chronic pain, existential/spiritual issues, and life re-structuring after traumatic experience, including torture. Penny edits and oversees the construction of this newsletter. **Jan White** manages an "Early Childhood Development" Master's degree cohort at the University of Victoria. She is expecting her third child this June. We wish her and the baby a smooth delivery. And I, **Howard Diene**, having trained in Britain as an Osteopath and Naturopath now work as a health care practitioner in Victoria. I manage the VCST website.

As a board we aid in the decision making processes that focus on our mandate and increase community awareness of the needs of those who have experienced torture. We host workshops, write letters, attend and report on events that effect refugees who have experienced torture.

## INPUT:

### A Personal



Connection: *by Penny Whillans* The word "torture" can halt a conversation; articles with facts and figures about torture can 'overwhelm' us into fear, helplessness and immobility - even for those of us who have experienced torture. Such responses separate us from and depersonalizes the awareness of the experience of torture. We tend to resist such awareness, and such a personal connection. In doing so, we isolate ourselves from the very thing most of us want: a safe connection to self and others. How can we include awareness of the reality of torture without separating ourselves or becoming overwhelmed? Perhaps, if we were to speak or share from within the aspect of being a human being, we might more readily maintain and nourish personal connections. This is my focus for this newsletter: to provide a forum for direct and personal connections such that fear, helplessness and anger do not necessitate separateness and immobility. I am hoping that you, whatever your background, will use this forum to ask questions, and share your knowledge and personal experiences. I believe that in this way we need not be 'overwhelmed' or be immobilized by the realities of the darker side of human existence. It is with anticipation and gratitude that I undertake the position of 'editor.' I look forward to your personal contributions.

VCST PLANS are underway for the undertaking of another workshop in the early autumn. This workshop follows on the suggestions of previous conference participants for more experiential input and learning. The workshop will be entitled 'Refugee Resiliency, Part III: Health Services for Refugee Claimants'. We look forward to another interactive and motivating workshop, which focuses this time on the health services provided for and needed by refugee claimants, particularly those who have experienced torture.

## Your Feedback and Contributions are

IMPORTANT. We invite you to include your thoughts in this newsletter. We are interested in printing your articles, your experiences, your poems, your words. Please send them to us at: VCST Newsletter c/o 930 Balmoral St., Victoria, B.C. V8T 1A8. E-mail us at: [vcst@info.ca](mailto:vcst@info.ca) Visit our webpage [www.vcst.ca](http://www.vcst.ca)