



# IMPACT REPORT

2024/2025



Central Vancouver Island  
Multicultural Society

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## Message from the President

The past three years have been a time of remarkable progress for CVIMS. We have welcomed more clients than ever before, expanded our programs, and strengthened partnerships to meet the evolving needs of newcomers across Central Vancouver Island.

This year, we successfully completed the four strategic priorities in our plan: strengthening HR administration, securing financial stability, addressing facility and space challenges, and enhancing employer branding.

These accomplishments have given CVIMS a strong foundation for the future. At the same time, the Board adopted new governance policies that reinforce our commitment to equity, inclusion, and innovation.

I am especially grateful to Mikaela Torres for her leadership as Executive Director during this period of change, and to my fellow Board members Darrell, EJ, Gavin, Golfer, and Vania for their dedication and guidance.

I would also like to thank our former Board Secretary, Arooj Tulli-Shah, for her excellent service to the Board.

As we look ahead, CVIMS enters its next chapter with clarity and momentum.

Together with our staff, volunteers, and community partners, we are ready to continue building a welcoming and inclusive Central Vancouver Island.

- Mark Seneviratne



“This year, we successfully completed the four strategic priorities in our plan: strengthening HR administration, securing financial stability, addressing facility and space challenges, and enhancing employer branding.”

## Message from the Executive Director

September marked four years since I joined CVIMS, and what an incredible journey it has been. As I prepare to step down from my role at the end of this month, I find myself reflecting on the transformation, growth, and impact we have experienced together. With this being my final contribution to the Annual Report as Executive Director, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has been part of this journey.



Over the past four years, CVIMS has undergone significant growth. Together, we expanded our operating budget, secured new and diverse contracts, added four additional office spaces, and acquired our first company vehicle. Our team has grown both in size and strength, welcoming new members who bring fresh perspectives and skills. We restructured the organization to support internal growth and succession planning, creating more opportunities for team members to advance. We also completed a successful rebrand, including a revision of our mission and vision, to better reflect who we are today and where we are headed. In addition, we digitized many of our internal processes to improve efficiency, streamline operations, and better serve our clients and community.

These achievements would not have been possible without the remarkable team at CVIMS. It has been a privilege to work alongside such passionate, dedicated, and talented individuals. Your commitment to the work and to each other has been the driving force behind all we have accomplished. I am equally grateful to our Board of Directors, whose guidance, vision, and steady support have been instrumental in steering CVIMS through this period of growth and change.

To our funders and community partners, thank you for believing in CVIMS and in the communities we serve. Your ongoing support has not only sustained our programs and services but has empowered us to innovate and expand our impact. Your trust has made a lasting difference.

To our clients and community members, thank you for your resilience, trust, and engagement. You inspire and motivate us every day to do better and reach further.

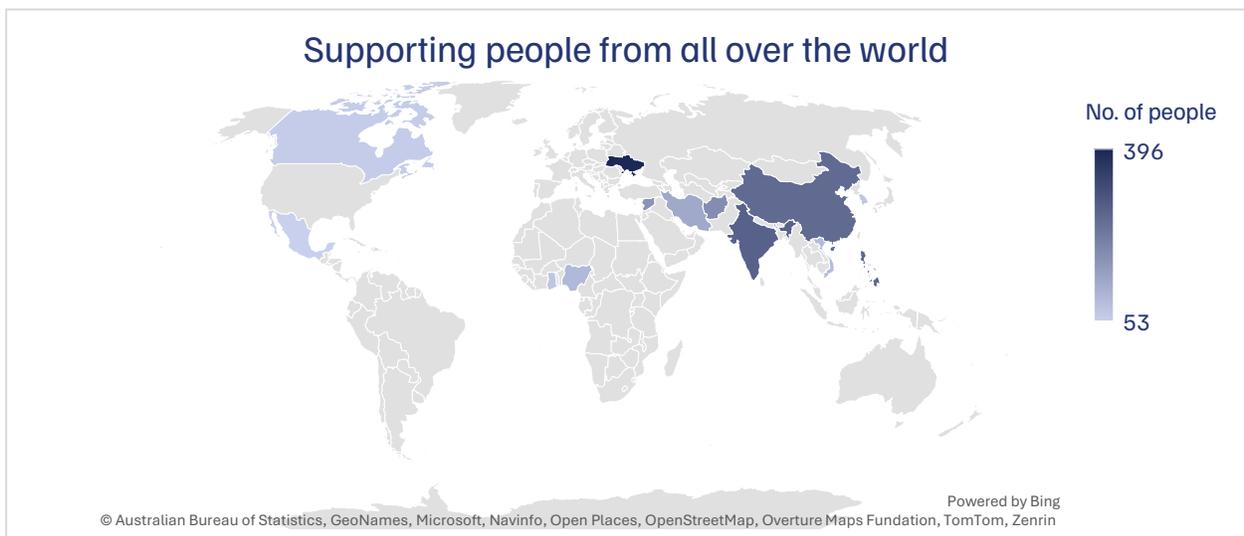
This role has been one of the most meaningful chapters of my professional life. I have learned so much as a leader, a collaborator, and an individual, and I leave this position with deep appreciation for all we have built together.

With many of our strategic priorities in place and a strong foundation for the future, I believe this is the right time for new leadership to guide CVIMS into its next chapter. I am confident the organization will continue to thrive and grow in the years ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve. I will continue to cheer CVIMS on and look forward to seeing all that you accomplish next.

With heartfelt appreciation,  
Mikaela

## 2024/2025 Overview – At a Glance



## 2024-2025 CVIMS Financials

### Revenue:

Revenue	2023-2024	2024-2025
Federal	\$ 4,125,676	\$ 4,217,190
Provincial	\$ 426,532	\$ 551,335
Other	\$ 35,722	\$ -
Grants and Special Projects	\$ 80,383	\$ 131,440
Fees for Service, Donations, Memberships	\$ 42,101	\$ 70,687
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 4,710,413</b>	<b>\$ 4,970,651</b>

### Expenses:

Expenses	2023-2024	2024-2025
Wages and Benefits	\$ 2,573,868	\$ 3,288,261
Direct Program Benefits	\$ 1,327,942	\$ 917,159
Capital Purchases	\$ 260,135	\$ 76,774
Office and General Expenses	\$ 487,017	\$ 782,156
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 4,648,962</b>	<b>\$ 5,064,350</b>

# Settlement

## Welcoming and Supporting Newcomers in Our Communities

Helping newcomers feel settled in their new communities is at the heart of everything our Settlement Team does. From the moment individuals and families arrive, we are here to walk alongside them, meeting immediate needs and supporting their journey toward long-term integration. Our work at CVIMS is about more than just services, it's about building trust, belonging, and opportunities in their new communities.



This year, we were proud to support thousands of newcomers as they began their lives in our communities. Some of the key highlights from the past year include:

- Improving how we deliver services to ensure our support is more efficient, responsive, and accessible for those who need it most.
- Providing settlement support to 1,616 clients in the Nanaimo area, helping them navigate their first steps in Canada with confidence.
- Welcoming families from over 80 different countries, each bringing their unique stories, strengths, and cultures to our region.
- Creating personalized settlement plans to guide clients through vital systems like healthcare, education, legal support, and government services.
- Building new partnerships with organizations such as Island Health, No Fear Counselling, Canada Revenue Agency, Poverty Advocacy Nanaimo, Coastal Community Credit Union, Ears to You: Mobile Hearing Clinic, and the Men's Centre—to offer even more holistic and connected support.
- Signing new Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Vancouver Island University, the Career Centre in Parksville, and Ethos Career Management Group in Ladysmith to expand our Settlement Outreach Services.

Each step we take together with newcomers strengthens not just individual futures, but the fabric of our entire community. We are honored to be part of these journeys.



**Clients Supported**  
**= 1,616**



**Families and Individuals from**  
**80+ Countries**



# Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)

## Guiding Newcomers Through Their First Steps in Canada



125+ GARs Supported



Supported clients from  
13 different countries

This year, the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) supported the arrival and settlement of more than 125 Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), helping individuals and families begin their new lives in Canada with dignity and hope.

Our clients came from 13 different countries - Honduras, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Venezuela, Eritrea, Sudan, Palestine, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Cuba, and South Sudan - each bringing unique experiences, strengths, and cultures to our community. Services were offered in 10 languages - English, Pashto, Tigrinya, Arabic, Dinka, Spanish, French, Somali, Dari, and Urdu - ensuring that newcomers felt understood and supported during their first weeks in Canada.

Over the year, **47 family and individual units were successfully housed across 34 homes**, thanks to the dedication of our RAP team and the generosity of local housing partners. With three RAP workers and one Housing Worker, the team provided wraparound support throughout clients' first 4-6 weeks in Canada.

The impact of this work is already visible: more than half of current RAP clients are employed either part-time or full-time, while many former clients continue to build on their successes by finding stable jobs, pursuing education, or upgrading their skills.

RAP has also strengthened partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, property management companies, and private landlords. This growing collaboration reflects our community's openness and shared commitment to welcoming newcomers. Our approach, grounded in advocacy, transparency, consistency, and clear communication, ensures that every newcomer feels supported as they take their first steps toward building a future here.

# Employment and BC Services

## Building Pathways to Meaningful Work

This year, our Employment Team continued to walk alongside newcomers as they prepared to enter the Canadian workforce. Through one-on-one support and workshops, clients gained the skills to build strong résumés and cover letters, practice interview techniques, and better understand Canadian workplace culture.

While IRCC-funded employment services were offered in Nanaimo, provincially funded programs allowed us to extend our reach to Ladysmith and Port Alberni. The *Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants* program provided the widest service area, helping skilled professionals pursue their career goals from Ladysmith all the way to Port Hardy.

Across all of these programs, our focus remained the same: ensuring that newcomers have the tools, confidence, and connections they need to succeed in their new careers.

### IRCC Employment - Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants

**13 Clients**

Stream 2 Regulated Occupants

**5 Clients**

Stream 3 Unregulated Occupants

## BCNSP Employment

188 Clients

Assisted In our service areas

## BC Safe Haven Employment

21 Clients

Assisted In Nanaimo

### BC Services

The **BC Newcomer Services Program (BCNSP)** provides settlement, employment, and language support to newcomers holding Work Permits, Study Permits, or Naturalized Canadian Citizenship status. Through this program, we were able to serve communities across Ladysmith, Parksville, Nanaimo, and Port Alberni.

This year, we were grateful to collaborate with a local service provider in Port Alberni, whose partnership helped us reach and support even more BCNSP clients. Together, we worked to ensure that newcomers in smaller and rural communities could access the same quality of services and opportunities as those in larger centers.



1,170+ Clients Assisted

**BC Safe Haven** provides settlement, employment, and language support services for refugee claimants in Nanaimo. This year marked the highest number of refugee claimants served in recent CVIMS history, reflecting the growing need for these services in our community.

Through this program, we delivered wraparound support to 68 clients, surpassing program targets and ensuring that each individual had the tools, resources, and guidance needed to take their first steps toward building a new life in Canada.

# Community Engagement

## Celebrating Diversity and Connecting Communities

CVIMS remains committed to strengthening connections with both newcomers and the wider community. Over the past year, our Community Engagement team led initiatives that celebrated diversity, built meaningful relationships, and fostered inclusivity across our region. These efforts not only brought people together but also created opportunities for newcomers and long-time residents to learn from one another and share in the richness of our collective community.

### Newcomer Wellness Fair

The Newcomer Wellness Fair welcomed over 200 newcomers and featured more than 40 organizations, Indigenous communities, and dignitaries. Participants were introduced to essential services in health and wellness, recreation, and settlement supports. Held in conjunction with the Volunteer Fair, co-hosted with Volunteer Nanaimo, the event also celebrated the contributions of CVIMS volunteers while giving community partners the chance to showcase their programs and highlight volunteer opportunities.



### Through the Eyes of Our Community: Nanaimo Needs Assessment Report on Inclusion

In collaboration with Resilience BC, CVIMS conducted community-based research in late 2024 and early 2025 titled *Through the Eyes of Our Community*. This initiative engaged newcomers, long-term residents, and cultural and religious organizations to better understand the accessibility of services in Nanaimo and to explore experiences with racism. Service providers, international students, and LINC students also contributed through interviews, while surveys, available in seven languages, were distributed widely through community and media channels to ensure diverse voices were represented.

### Truth and Reconciliation

CVIMS hosted a Truth and Reconciliation event on Saysutshun Island, where knowledge holder David Bodaly guided participants through a cultural tour and cedar weaving workshop. The event provided clients and staff

with a meaningful opportunity to learn, reflect, and deepen their understanding of Indigenous history and culture.

Throughout the year, *One in Spirit* walks were also held in local parks, led by Elder Randy Fred. These walks created a safe and supportive space for clients to learn about Indigenous culture while sharing their own stories, fostering dialogue and mutual respect.

### Bikes for Kids Partnership

Through a partnership with the *Bikes for Kids* program, CVIMS provided bicycles to children and adults in need. Beyond meeting a practical need for transportation, these bikes offered newcomers a sense of freedom, belonging, and connection within their new community.

### Cultural Events

Partnership with the Harbourfront Library made it possible to co-host vibrant cultural events, including Diwali, Día de los Muertos, Lunar New Year, and the celebration of African Cultures. These gatherings created opportunities for newcomers and long-time residents to come together, share traditions, and celebrate diversity.

In addition, CVIMS partnered with the Iranian-Canadian Society of Vancouver Island to host an afternoon tea for Iranian and Afghan women. This welcoming event created a supportive space for women to connect, build relationships, and strengthen their sense of belonging.





# Language

## Opening Doors Through Language and Learning

This past year was a milestone as we concluded our five-year contract with IRCC and prepared for the new agreement ahead. Throughout this transition, we continued to deliver the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, while also launching the new provincially funded English Language Training (ELT) program in May 2024.

With ELT, language learning became accessible to an even wider group of newcomers, including temporary foreign workers, naturalized Canadian citizens, and refugee claimants. For many, this opened the door to strengthening their language skills not only for employment, but also for everyday life in Canada.

Beyond the classroom, students joined information sessions and community events such as the Newcomer Wellness Fair, Volunteer Fair, Newcomer Welcome Event, Truth and Reconciliation event, and several cultural celebrations. These gatherings gave students the chance to connect with the local community, practice their language skills in real settings, build confidence, and enrich their settlement journey.

## Demographic Highlights

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### Top 3 Countries of Origin for Language Assessments

1. Ukraine    2. China    3. Somalia

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### Top 3 Countries of Origin for LINC

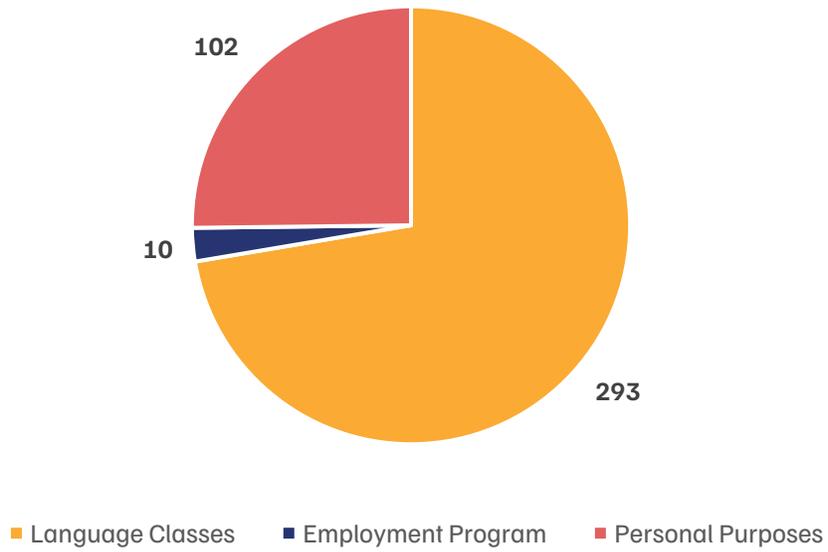
1. Afghanistan    2. Ukraine    3. Syria

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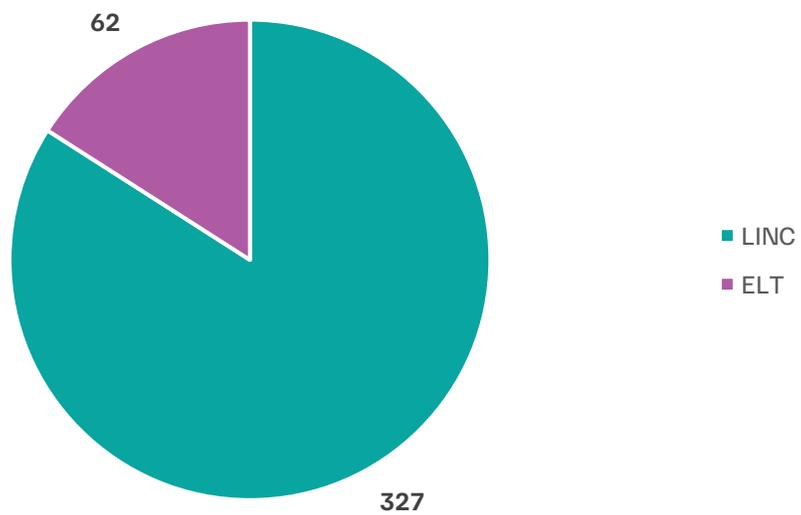
### Refugees ranked first among immigration categories:

- 47% of those assessed
  - 55% of those enrolled in LINC
-

CLB Assessments Conducted (Total: 405)



Language Training Provided (Total: 389)



# Family Services

## Strengthening Families and Nurturing Resilience

The CVIMS Family Services team—comprising Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), Childminding, and the Newcomer Youth Resilience Strategy (NYRS)—continued to provide essential support to newcomer children, youth, and families throughout the 2024–2025 fiscal year.

Despite staffing transitions, the team delivered consistent, high-quality programming while strengthening partnerships across the community. Together, these programs helped foster resilience, supported educational success, and created welcoming spaces where newcomer families could thrive and feel included.



Youth Art Club - Aug 2024

### Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)

The SWIS team continued to play a key role in helping newcomer families navigate the education system, access services, and strengthen community connections. This year, the team provided targeted support to Ukrainian families, ensuring they felt welcomed and supported in their transition to Canadian schools.

Beyond individual support, SWIS hosted community-building events such as *WinterFest* and *Family Fun Soccer Day*, which brought families together in celebration and connection.

Key initiatives included:

- **Welcome to Kindergarten workshops** that helped families prepare their children for school.
- **Youth-led lunch clubs** that empowered students to create inclusive spaces among their peers.
- **Wellness programs** such as *Stress Busters* and *Artful Masterminds*, which promoted mental health and creativity.
- **Family events** including *WinterFest* and *Family Fun Soccer Day*, offering opportunities for families to connect and engage with the broader community.

Through these initiatives, SWIS not only supported academic success but also fostered a sense of belonging and resilience among newcomer students and their families.



Clients Supported  
= 430

## Childminding

This year, our Childminding program became so much more than just a safe place for children while their parents attended classes, it became a space for growth, learning, and connection. Guided by BC's Early Learning Framework, children explored, played, and learned in an environment designed to nurture curiosity and inclusion.

Families received Early Learning Reports that celebrated their children's progress, and many joined us for Open Houses where they could see firsthand the milestones their little ones had achieved. One of the highlights was the collaboration with the Nanaimo Child Development Centre, which allowed us to connect families with extra support when children had diverse needs. Together, we made sure every child could thrive.



Childminding open house - Feb 20, 2025



Children supported  
= 54

## Newcomer Youth Resilience Strategy (NYRS)

This year, the Newcomer Youth Resilience Strategy supported 183 youth between the ages of 12 and 25, creating spaces where young people could build leadership, strengthen resilience, and prioritize mental wellness. The program's peer-led and trauma-informed approach meant that youth weren't just participants, they were leaders, mentors, and role models for one another.

Partnerships with the Harbourfront Library, Island Health, and School District 68 enriched programming and expanded opportunities for connection, learning, and growth.

Highlights included:

- **Peer Mentor Certification Program** that equipped youth with leadership skills and confidence to guide others.
- **Youth Art and Movie Clubs** where creativity and self-expression helped strengthen friendships and foster belonging.
- **Art Therapy sessions** that provided a safe outlet for processing experiences and promoting mental wellness.
- **Overdose Awareness training** that empowered youth with life-saving knowledge and skills to care for themselves and their peers.

Together, these initiatives helped newcomer youth find their voices, build supportive networks, and envision brighter futures for themselves and their communities.



Science camp - July 2024

# HIPPY

## Empowering Parents as Their Children's First Teachers

This year the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program. Since its launch in May 2014, the program has welcomed between 36 and 55 newcomer families each year, representing more than 20 countries. Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary HIPPY Nanaimo!

HIPPY believes that the parent, primarily the mother, is the first and best teacher of the child. With guidance from a Home Visitor, parents use a structured curriculum to teach their child. HIPPY strengthens families and communities by empowering parents to actively participate in Canadian society and prepare their children for success in school and life. One parent shared,

**"This program is not only educational for children but also inspiring and beneficial for parents. It was a beautiful feeling to realize that I could take even a small step in my child's learning journey. This program gave me the motivation to work harder for my child's future and introduced me to new teaching methods". NE**

The HIPPY team, made up of a Team Lead and six dedicated Home Visitors, remained committed to walking alongside families as they settled into life in Canada. By building trusting relationships, the team helped parents create enriching educational environments at home, while also supporting them to grow in confidence and strengthen their social and community connections. Through regular home visits and group meetings, families were encouraged and supported to overcome isolation and barriers. These gatherings became more than lessons—they were moments of encouragement, celebration, and growth. For many parents, HIPPY became the bridge that empowered them to feel more engaged, more confident, and more connected as active members of Canadian society. A parent who participated in the program for 3 years expressed,

**"HIPPY program not only helped me structure daily activities with my child but also made them fun and beneficial. It allowed me to meet other moms who became my friends, which is incredibly valuable in a new place. Additionally, through books and materials, my child and I are learning English and getting to know the local culture". DC**

Two memorable graduation ceremonies were held, one in May 2024 and the other in March 2025, with over one hundred guests in attendance including CVIMS board members, valued community partners, and the proud families of program participants. During these ceremonies, fifty parents and fifty-seven children were

celebrated for their achievements, graduating from levels one, two, and three. The event marked a significant milestone in the participants' journeys, highlighting their hard work and dedication throughout the program.

The HIPPY program was generously funded by both the BC government, supporting twelve families, and the federal government, which provided funding for forty-one families. Unfortunately, funding ceased in March, and as a result, the HIPPY program will no longer be available through CVIMS. It is with great sadness that the CVIMS say goodbye to this important initiative, which has touched so many lives. We remain hopeful that, in the future, we may have the opportunity to bring HIPPY back to the community.



HIPPY was a transformative program that made a lasting difference in the lives of many families, fostering growth, connection, and support. The following heartfelt testimonials from participants serve as a testament to the program's profound impact:

“The most valuable thing I've gained from the program is the opportunity to spend more quality time with my child, engaging in interesting and beneficial activities. I have noticed significant improvements in my child's skills and confidence. This program is truly a valuable resource for any parent”.

MH

“This program has had a huge positive impact on our lives, has brought tremendous progress for my son, our time together has become much more meaningful and enriching: Even our walks in the park have taken on new meaning”. EV

“This program has been a huge support for our family, helping us navigate early education and strengthen our bond”. LMN

“HIPPY taught me that learning is not limited to school and books; every moment spent with love and dedication toward my child's growth is a learning opportunity”. NE

“The guidance, resources, and support provided through this program have been instrumental in preparing my child for kindergarten, and I truly appreciate the dedication and effort put into making this initiative so impactful”. SG

“What I appreciate most is that the program is designed to be in a way that the child doesn't know that he is learning concepts allowing me to confidently guide my child through engaging lessons at home. The materials are easy to use and sparks curiosity and excitement in my child, which has made learning both enjoyable and effective”. EJ

“I was pleasantly surprised by the program's approach to child development. It's not simply a set of exercises, but a complete philosophy founded on play, creativity, and

“This program inspires, teaches the child moral life values such as empathy, faith in one's own strength, support of others, love for all living things on our earth, and it is also a great happiness to spend time with a child for classes, watching her enthusiasm for the process”. YK