



# PROJECT NEWS

*Vicarious Trauma in the Classroom*

## Project Team

### Research Team

Dr. Katie Crossman (Researcher)  
 Dr. Patricia Kostouros (MRU)  
 May Wang (Research Officer)  
 Danica Macdonald (English Language Instructor)  
 Dr. Rida Abboud (Development Evaluator)

### Research Assistants

Izuchukwu Igwe (BVC)  
 Nathan Millar (MRU)  
 Bria Scarff (MRU)

### Collaborators

Mount Royal University  
 Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA)

### Partners

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)  
 New Brunswick Multicultural Centre  
 NorQuest College  
 Toronto Catholic District School Board  
 Vancouver Community College

### Questions? Contact:

Dr. Katie Crossman  
[sgaresearch@bowvalleycollege.ca](mailto:sgaresearch@bowvalleycollege.ca)

Learn more:  
[globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca](http://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca)

*This project is funded by the Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.*

## Collaborating for Success: Project Partner, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

Our School of Global Access team has a long-standing partnership with the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA). Together, we have worked to elevate our learners, clients, and staff members across various projects, most recently with *Vicarious Trauma in the Classroom*. Established in the early 1980s, CIWA is a non-profit culturally diverse settlement agency that recognizes, responds to, and focuses on the unique concerns and needs of newcomer and refugee women, girls, and their families. With a gender-specific mandate, CIWA works to address the emerging needs of women and girls who are immigrants by developing and delivering innovative programs. One of the things that continues to set CIWA apart is that all clients have access to childcare and first language support during group sessions and individual appointments. Through this work CIWA has come to be recognized as a leader in outcome-based gender-specific settlement services.

CIWA operates with a holistic approach to support clients in the areas of settlement and integration, including literacy and language training, which aligns with the School of Global Access' work, specifically the *Vicarious Trauma in the Classroom* project.

As a project partner, CIWA understands that newcomers enrolled in English language classes, especially those fleeing violent circumstances, often perceive their Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) instructors as supports. They have a particular interest partnering with School of Global Access on this project as it is a meaningful way to improve LINC outcomes by increasing instructors' awareness of trauma-informed approaches for themselves and their classrooms.

CIWA is invested in the project's overall outcome: to increase the capacity to deliver responsive and coordinated settlement and community services that lead to improved language learning outcomes newcomer integration.

From the outset, CIWA staff have been at the table working alongside the project team, participating in interviews, piloting early resources, and providing subject matter expertise at every stage of the work. Today, CIWA and the School of Global Access continue to benefit significantly from our collaboration and are excited that together we are working to collectively improve outcomes for instructors and learners alike.

## Creating Outcomes Together

This spring will usher in the final phase of our work. As we move toward piloting the outcomes across the country, it is important to reflect on what we've learned so far and how that has helped to shape what we've created together.

*Vicarious Trauma in the Classroom* recruited Calgary-based language instructors this past fall for the initial pilot of the co-created instructor toolkit, which was developed during phase two of the project. Throughout the course of Fall 2021, 33 instructors from Bow Valley College and CIWA dedicated approximately ten hours over a six-to-eight-week period to pilot and provide feedback on instructor modules. The primary goal of this first pilot was to test and validate the resources created by the co-creation teams. After receiving an orientation, piloting instructors were invited to spend time exploring, using, and providing feedback on the five modules that cover topics that include "trauma-informed approaches" and "promoting teacher mental wellness." In addition to providing feedback through pre- and post-surveys, pilot participants were asked to share their experiences in reflective focus groups conducted by the developmental evaluator. After the pilot concluded, the project team, with the support of the developmental evaluator, set to work collecting and analyzing the data for themes and recommendations. This feedback has informed the revisions for the toolkit that will be piloted in the last phase of the project.

Over the coming months, until March 2023, work will focus on sharing this important work with LINC providers nationally. This year, the *Vicarious Trauma in the Language Classroom* team will be working closely with our partners in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Fredericton, and Halifax to bring these resources to 100 language instructors and their classrooms across the country. Watch for more information on how you can get involved.

Visit <https://globalaccess.bowvalleycollege.ca/our-research/applied-research-projects/vicarious-trauma-classroom> for the latest project details.

### Key Concept: Trauma Informed Classroom Practices

When it comes to instructors' professional quality of life, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue are interconnected with vicarious trauma. Within the context of teaching, compassion satisfaction refers to the positive aspects of working in a helping profession. Many teachers are drawn to the profession to help people, and instructors often derive meaning from making a positive difference in other people's lives. When instructors have high levels of compassion satisfaction, they feel that their work is rewarding.

On the flip side, compassion fatigue can be understood as the toll that caring takes on someone in a helping profession. It is often connected with burnout and results in feeling numb to others' suffering and being less able or willing to help. Although compassion satisfaction can act as a protective buffer against burnout, compassion fatigue exacerbates burnout (and vice versa). For this reason, instructors, especially those that work with and help trauma survivors, can benefit from tools and organizational structures that encourage compassion satisfaction, which may act as a protection against compassion fatigue, burnout, and ultimately vicarious trauma.