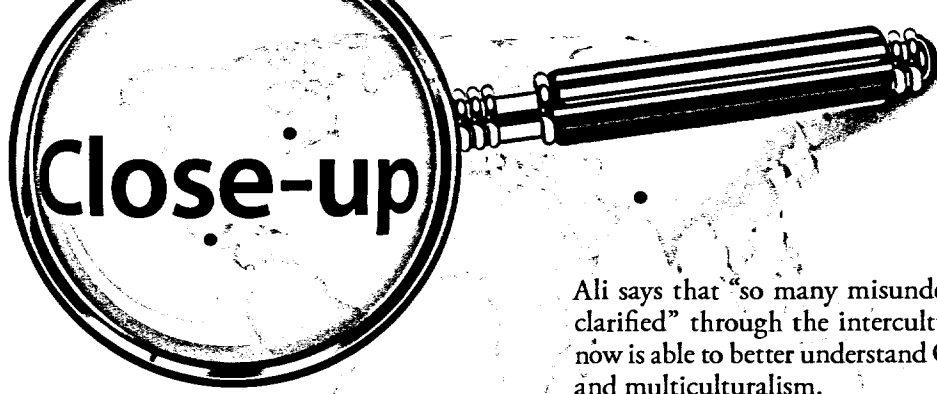


# Canada Close-up



**W**orking at the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala for the past nine years has enabled Lidia Morales to get to know Canada from a distance. The immigration program assistant has learned about the country and its ways from her Canada-based colleagues. She also receives reports from Guatemalan agricultural workers who travel to farms in Quebec and British Columbia under a program she administers.

Ain Ali has served for six years as the social secretary to Canada's high commissioner to Pakistan. She has met many Canadian dignitaries and diplomats and has travelled to Canada to visit relatives, yet she's always longed to know Canada and its people better.

Last month Morales and Ali had a chance to take a first-hand look at the country they work in for a small part of each day. The two were among 25 LES who travelled to Ottawa in February to attend two weeks of training offered through the Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI). The In-Canada Program course includes a one-day session on intercultural effectiveness for LES designed to help them understand Canada and Canadians, says Oksana McVicar, a learning advisor with the Centre for Intercultural Learning at CFSI.

"Intercultural training helps LES decode interactions and communications with Canadians, and equips them to work effectively with Canadians, be they colleagues, supervisors or clients," explains McVicar, herself a former LES in Ukraine. "In-Canada training is a great opportunity to expose LES to Canadian society and culture."

Morales says Canadians who come to her mission "become like Guatemalans," adapting to the country's ways and customs. The course, she says, allowed her to meet Canadians at home. "I am most impressed to learn about their culture first-hand."

Ali says that "so many misunderstandings were clarified" through the intercultural session. She now is able to better understand Canadian history and multiculturalism.

Working for rotational CBS, and serving Canadians abroad, the two find Canadians are not always like the people in their home countries. But through the course, they have come to appreciate what makes Canadians the way they are. Ali explains: "We should accept other cultures and what comes with them."

Morales says the practical tools and training offered in the course "mean I can be more efficient in my job and understand the Canadians I work with."

Nancy Thorpe, the program manager for LES in CFSI's Centre for Corporate Services Learning, says that many LES find Canada much less hierarchical than their home countries. Most LES experience some culture shock in Canada, especially those from warm countries visiting in winter.



(left to right) Ain Ali and Lidia Morales say the intercultural training they received is invaluable.

The visit to Headquarters helps to give LES a "better understanding of the big picture," Thorpe adds, which promotes more effective teamwork between missions and Headquarters.



A group of 25 LES travelled to Ottawa in February to attend the In-Canada Program.