



# Home

## Stories Connecting Us All











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### Funders





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## Stories Connecting Us All

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Edmonton, Alberta

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**ISBN:** in process

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# Introduction

Connecting Us All: Embracing Multicultural Community Development... what a catchy title for a conference, the first one that was held in Edmonton, October 2014! This conference was planned by a collaborative: a team of representatives from agencies and multicultural communities that had been formed about three years earlier, but which have continued to evolve and change, adding new partners to it each year, based on the topics and issues that needed to be addressed in the ethno-cultural communities of Edmonton. It started with a partnership between the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the Edmonton Multicultural Coalition and Action for Healthy Communities, and with the help of City of Edmonton funding. Facilitation and training services were provided through the Alberta government community development unit. This partnership network evolved into what this group has now become.

In 2016, the team became the "Connecting Us All Working Group", comprised of the Action for Healthy

Communities Society of Edmonton, the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the Multicultural Relations Office of the City of Edmonton, the Sierra Leone Association of Alberta, and Alberta Culture and Tourism. The conference that was held in 2014 was one of several initiatives taken on by this group. This group hopes, through the E-book project, to continue to support leaders and members of the many ethno-cultural communities we have here in Edmonton, helping to bring them together to share ideas, tell their stories, and through such sharing get them to develop, together, potential solutions to common issues relevant to the times!

Things have certainly changed since 2012 when the first collaborative was formed!

In those days many ethno-cultural community groups were just forming or blooming; many organizations needed help with leadership and organizational skill development. In 2014, the first Multicultural Community Development conference was organized and

attended by leaders from many ethno-cultural groups. Many were paid for by bursaries provided through the conference planning team. At the conference, it became apparent that the community dialogue sessions that had been hosted by the Working Group team the year before had generated enough interest in ethno-cultural issues. It was also evident that having people come together to share ideas and work toward possible solutions together, had become extremely important. In view of what the conference brought to light,

priorities were discussed. It was time for reflection!

In the spring of 2016, some of the conference planning team came together to chat and see what resources were available and what projects this group might be able to focus on, with the now limited resources they had. At the same time, planning in many areas across Canada was well under way for the big event—Canada's 150th Anniversary, to take place in 2017.

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***“Having people come together to share ideas and work toward possible solutions together, had become extremely important.”***

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it's clear that the Working Group team, now aptly named “Connecting Us All Working Group”, still has much work to do.

After the conference took place in the fall of 2014, the team was tired. The work had been a big drain on the organizational and community resources of many groups. While catching a bit of a breather, the team decided to think about what the next potential project for coming together could be in 2016. Then, in 2015/16 the city became a place to call home for many refugees from Syria. This development changed many conversations at the table as

Two ideas emerged!

One was to try to bring the “Sense of Belonging Quilt” to Edmonton from Ottawa, an amazing opportunity to share this piece of art work with the City. The plan was to provide as much free access to the quilt as possible, so that many can realize how remarkably inclusive Canada and Edmonton are. The quilt, it was hoped, would help to further promote inclusivity by showcasing our multicultural heritage. The second project entertained was to develop an E-Book of stories, written about and by the people who now live in Edmonton; how they landed here, sometimes by



choice, sometimes by assignment and sometimes by accident, making Edmonton their new residence. The team was very excited not only about the Sense of Belonging Quilt project but also about the digital E-book. This digital E-book, called ***HOME – Stories Connecting Us All***, to be circulated online free through various websites, is the culmination of the second idea.

We are very pleased with the work that has gone into it: from gaining funders; to attracting writers to submit stories; to obtaining the Editor; and bringing on board the E-book Designer and Photographer. It would be nowhere without the writers who stepped forward from their busy schedules to help us with this digital piece, whom we thank deeply. We also like to thank

be stories about how agencies formed to provide services to newcomers coming to a strange place needing to bridge language barriers, find jobs or housing, education, or mentoring services. They may be personal stories to do with the immigration experience and settling in Canada, including Edmonton. The stories are about all of these matters! Some people made Edmonton their home long ago, some more recently and some are still not sure they are HOME. They may still be unsure as to whether this is the right place for them yet. There are stories of Indigenous families finding their place as they move from their old communities to ones new to them.

BUT we wanted to hear and read about them ALL. This book is the culmination of many months of work by a team of

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***“Perhaps, sharing our stories is the first step to reconciliation to a new place or belonging.”***

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the Editor and the E-book Designer and Photographer for cooperating smoothly with the Working Group, sensitive of the community needs of the project.

These stories may be about how a community organization got started, out of a need – for example – to find and stay close to like- minded people from their own culture, and to continue to carry on certain traditions or languages. They may

dedicated people, all trying to do the Right Thing...promote opportunities in a place that could become HOME to anyone with the right help at the right time and for the right reasons. Edmonton and Canada remain very multicultural communities and HOME to over two hundred different nationalities.

How then do we create a comfortable space for everyone to live in harmony?

Perhaps, sharing our stories is the first step to reconciliation to a new place or belonging; to feeling at home; to developing empathy for what others had to go through on their journey to get here; a place many of us take for granted. Hopefully we can learn to listen to one another, share different perspectives and gain some commonalities, in order to “make ourselves at home” in a strange land. Many who have come here want to “give back” or “pay it forward” to the community that helped and supported them. But that is what we all do as Canadians, whether we were born here or not. That is how volunteerism and philanthropy were born. It is the Canadian way.

We look forward to continuing to add stories to this book over time as more resources become available. We would like to thank our writers (again), who are amazing storytellers, and our funders – the City of Edmonton, the Province of Alberta Canada 150 grant program, and the Edmonton Heritage Council. We would also like to thank our volunteers who contributed time to editing, proofreading, organizing, and helping with many details for the E-book launch event. It is necessary to thank Action for Healthy Communities Society of Edmonton and Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers for stepping up to the plate with extra resources, to make sure this project was a success! We are pleased to add to our book,

overleaf, the support letter from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as he recognizes this accomplishment.

The Connecting Us All Working Group will continue to work together, gathering new partners, as others wish to become involved, to continue the work that still needs to be done in this sector. We are very passionate about this work or we would not still be here!

Diversity and inclusion are part of Edmonton, Alberta, and Canada. They enhance our cultural makeup, and are part of our common heritage.

***Connecting Us All Working Group  
Edmonton, Alberta  
November 2017***



**We dedicate this book to all the individuals and communities who have generously shared their stories.**



PRIME MINISTER • PREMIER MINISTRE

Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

November 1, 2017

Dear Mr. Khatiwada:

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you congratulations on the launch of your e-book, notably *150 Stories of Reconciliation: Connecting Us All*.

As we celebrate Canada 150, we can take pride in everything that we have achieved together over the last 150 years. No matter the faith we profess, where we were born, the colour of our skin, the language we speak, or whom we love, we are all equal members of this great country. Let us take this opportunity to honour the many cultures, traditions, and beliefs that make Canada such a wonderful place to live, and a place we can be proud to call home.

It is initiatives like your e-book that help share the stories that define us as Canadians – ordinary people doing extraordinary things. You should be proud of your efforts that only work to further celebrate the diversity in our country.

Please accept my best regards.

Sincerely,

Mr. Suraj Khatiwada  
Project Coordinator  
Settlement & Integration  
Action for Healthy Communities



# War and Peace

by Hussein Abdulahi

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Hussein Abdulahi was born in the Juba Province of Somalia in 1985, and came to Canada with his family in 1996. After graduating from high school, he went on to study an online business course at Athabasca University. He also attended CDI to study Business Administration and Management. He loves reading, watching sports, and volunteer work with seniors.*



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We lived in the Juba province of Somalia where I was born in 1985. My father worked as a supervisor in a sugar factory while my mom took care of me and my two brothers. Because of my father's position at work, we led a comfortable life, compared to many other people who lived in poor conditions. Most people here are Bantu farmers, an oppressed minority in Somalia.

In 1991, when the Siyad Barre's military regime collapsed, my family fled from the civil war that resulted, escaping with other Bantu families to Kenya.

UNHCR (the United Nations High Commission for Refugees) placed many families, including mine, in a refugee camp in Kenya close to the Somali border. Thousands of people had been

displaced from Somalia, many sick and injured from the war. At the camp, we suffered from lack of food and medicine, which UNHCR was unable to provide in sufficient quantities, and from overpopulation. The situation reduced some people, including myself, to skin and bones. I got sick and my parents feared I would die. At night time, militia men made the camp very unsafe. They stole and terrorized, and raped women. UNHCR, whose headquarters was far from the camp, couldn't provide security. So, we did our own security as best as we could.

While my mother took care of us, my father, who had little education, got a job with UNHCR as a foreman in their construction projects. He spoke enough good English to work also as a social

worker for the CARE organization. He helped people and spoke on behalf of them. He reported food and medical shortages to CARE. He also settled personal disputes. He helped to ensure order and peace. He earned a good living, which enabled him to take care of us. People loved him. The militia men though, didn't. To avoid the militia, my father moved around several hiding places. The situation worried our family. But we tried to lead as normal a life as was possible under the circumstances. For fun, for example, we played tag and rag-ball soccer with our friends.

After many years in Kenya and a long process, Almighty God finally granted an opportunity for several Bantu families,

New Brunswick in the winter of 1996. Covering everything was what I later came to know as snow, something I had never seen. We checked into a hotel. In the following days, I observed everything, especially people on the streets. I noticed something. Everybody looked miserable. I thought, *must be the weather, which sucks. Just too cold! I like the living situation though. Nice buildings, cars, roads, and much food. Kenya, Africa? Nice hot weather, but bad living conditions.*

I fell in love with Canada. the Peace at last. After some time, we got an apartment. A good-hearted French lady helped us with goods and services we needed, and with shopping and

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## ***“I fell in love with Canada. Peace at last.”***

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including mine, to come to Canada as refugees. The day for which we had been waiting for came. We boarded a plane. I had never flown before. The impending experience scared and excited me. Then I grew sad as the plane took off. I looked down at Kenya through the window, thinking of friends and relatives back in the refugee camp. The Somali Bantu families going took different planes, heading to various Canadian cities.

My family and I arrived at Saint John,

sightseeing. I enjoyed going to school. I made lots of friends. My father, who was sick, got by on government assistance. My mother kept house and looked after us.

From Saint John we moved to Surrey, British Columbia. We found living there, Somali Bantu families we had known at the camp in Kenya. From BC we moved to Edmonton in Alberta. By this time my mother had had more children. And I now have many brothers and sisters.



We all help to look after our loving and caring parents, especially my sick father. In Edmonton, I did high school, then business administration and management at CDI College. I thank Almighty God for helping us survive Somalia's civil war and the hard camp life in Kenya, and for coming to Canada to a better life. My father is the President of the Somali Bantu Society of Alberta, an organization that I am deeply involved with too, and happy to be, so that I can help the Somali Bantu community, a minority, to survive as a people and a culture.

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***“I thank Almighty God for helping us survive Somalia’s civil war and the hard camp life in Kenya, and for coming to Canada to a better life.”***

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# The International and Heritage Languages Association's Contributions to Multiculturalism and Multilingualism-40 Years of Service

by Trudie Aberdeen, PhD

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Trudie Aberdeen completed her doctoral dissertation on heritage language education in Alberta. She is currently the coordinator of the International and Heritage Languages Association (IHLA), and a sessional instructor at Department of Secondary Education. She wrote the nomination letter and curriculum vitae for IHLA for the Linguapax Prize awarded to IHLA in 2016. [www.ihla.ca](http://www.ihla.ca)*

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Multiculturalism is so ubiquitous in the Canadian psyche that it seems difficult to remember a time when it did not exist. In reality, however, it is a fairly new Canadian concept which only received recognition as a government policy in 1971 and legal status under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. When the federal government began to promote Official Bilingualism and Multiculturalism as Canadian ideals, they created initiatives. One was the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism (CCCM) which had as one of its missions funding projects which supported the development of Canadian multiculturalism.

An early CCCM's project in Alberta was a teachers' conference for those who worked on the weekends in "ethnic schools". This first-of-its-kind conference was motivating and inspiring for teachers who often had no or little exposure to other teachers and other multicultural groups. When these teachers came together at the conference, many realized that they were not alone in their work and that many of their successes and challenges in teaching their community's children were shared by other ethnic groups as well. The participants decided to form a group which they called *The Alberta Ethnic Language Teachers' Association*



(AELTA). This 2017-2018 school year marks our 40th anniversary, albeit under a new name.

At 40 many differences exist (changing demographics of the Canadian population, ever-evolving funding system, different schools, resources, materials, and communication), but our commitment and passion to multilingualism and multiculturalism has never wavered. Following are some of IHLA's unrelenting missions:



*IHLA provides meaningful, personal, and powerful ways to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism.*

IHLA has many opportunities for members of language groups to collaborate and learn from each other. Some of these events are specifically created for children. For the past 15 years, IHLA has been celebrating UNESCO's Annual Mother Language Day with a multilingual celebration. Heritage language schools come together to share plays, poems, songs,

and dances on a stage performed for one another. Schools create displays which showcase students' work and students visit each other's schools with a "passport". Children in heritage language schools also contribute to our annual Mother Language Day Book which showcases students' heritage language writing skills.

Other opportunities for multilingual and multicultural participation for adults abound. IHLA provides adults from different heritage language communities with spaces to get to know one another. We have a board that is comprised of members from many heritage language communities, new and old. We hold regular Principals' Meetings so that school and community leaders can get together and discuss their most pressing needs and seek counsel from others "who have been there."

*IHLA wants heritage language schools to be more than visible; IHLA is a place where groups can shine.*

Heritage language students and teachers work hard and achieve amazing results. Therefore, IHLA provides opportunities for heritage language school students and teachers to showcase their work and demonstrate their excellence. In addition to Mother Language Day and the Mother Language Day Book,

schools also celebrate successes in the IHLA newsletter. Each issue contains highlights from IHLA member schools and our IHLA community. These newsletters are shared with university professors, community leaders, and local politicians.

Our IHLA website ([www.ihla.ca](http://www.ihla.ca)) is also used by schools to highlight their programs, show photos, and advertise for prospective students. So far in 2017, we have had almost 40,000 views from Edmonton and around the world. For potential immigrant families waiting to make Canada their new home and for Canadian families wishing to keep children connected to their languages, IHLA is one place where they can seek contact information.

*IHLA fosters professionalism in the teaching profession.*

IHLA teachers come from many countries and communities (including Canada). IHLA provides them a space where they can develop professionally for themselves, their communities, and their province. We are guided by our

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***“IHLA teachers come from many countries and communities.”***

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professional standards which promote professional sharing and collaboration,

ethical behaviour, commitment to one's school and community, positive relationships with the school community, professional development and goal setting.

Some of the opportunities for professionalism in the international and heritage language teaching community in IHLA include access to IHLA newsletters and the IHLA website, other professional literature, and other professional organizations. We offer regular workshops and teacher training sessions on current topics in the field. Other opportunities include a mentorship program in which an established school and a newer school meet to learn from one another and professional reading project where teachers interested in a specific topic can learn through professional reading and discussion.

In IHLA's past, we were able to offer financial support to internationally-trained teachers entering mainstream schools by assisting them in obtaining Alberta professional licences. Today we continue in this tradition by offering internationally-trained teachers counsel when applying for university and information about applying for Alberta professional teaching licences.

*IHLA is 40 years old and just getting started!*

# Finding a Job in Alberta

by A.E.M.

I arrived in Edmonton from France to join my wife, and received my work permit in September 2016. My main issue became the language barrier; how to deal with interviews in order to land a job. My aim was to use my skills and competencies as soon as possible: my Bachelor in Business Administration, my Masters in Financial Audit or my Bachelor in Quality Safety and Environment, in Logistic and Storage.

I went to several agencies, but no one wanted to help me with my language barrier issue. I wasn't eligible for their programs as a work permit holder, I was told. I learned about Action for Healthy Communities during a Job Fair in March

history. I got a chance to prepare for interviews in English geared to the Alberta Job Market. That made me more comfortable and confident in my next interviews with some potential employers than I had been with my first ones. The opportunity also helped me to update and revise my resume. I became confident that I would be able to apply more of my experiences and skills I brought with me from France than I had previously. Despite the challenging economic situation in Alberta, more opportunities came knocking at my door.

In the second week of July 2017, I decided to focus on applying to logistic

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***“Despite the challenging economic situation in Alberta, more opportunities came knocking at my door.”***

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2017. Through this agency, I attended English classes and was referred to a Northland program, which was helpful. The opportunity enabled me to learn about the federal and provincial systems, and the Canadian life and

companies. Three days later, in response to one of my applications, I received a call inviting me to an interview. During the interview, when the employer showed me some materials, I recognized it as exactly similar to material I had used

in France. It also turned out that the interviewer knew my previous employer in France. So, he contacted my former employer in France, who confirmed my skills and encouraged the interviewer to hire me.

I started work in this North American company on July 24, 2017. I was very pleased to get this opportunity, which had the added advantage of being a

discrimination and more opportunities.

I have also come to realize that many immigrant people in France are wasting their time there. My Canadian experience is great. It is awesome. I appreciate and enjoy the new challenge it offers me. For sure, France offers more vacation time on jobs, and I miss that, but I find the Anglophone environment to be better in other ways. The Anglophone people, for

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## ***“Here in Canada, there is less discrimination and more opportunities.”***

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union job, and came with a promise of promotion based on my skills.

A week later, my employer realized that my resume may contain other skills which the company could find useful in another position.

My employer is easy going. Even though I'm still improving my English, the communication matter is not as challenging as it was in the beginning.

Working for this employer has given me an insight into a basic difference between Anglophone and Francophone work environments. In the Anglophone system, skills are what are important. In the Francophone system, what are important are diplomas and certificates. Here in Canada, there is less

example, are more easy-going, which makes life better and easier here, in some ways.

I would like to study again and update my knowledge. Getting a Canadian diploma would be very important to me.

# Success in the Land of Opportunities

*by Kameran A. Akrawi*

Canada's greatness comes from its diversity. People from all around the world immigrate to Canada seeking a better life for their families, but not everyone comes here prepared with all the tools required to stand on their own feet. Many are brought to Canada by the United Nations and the Federal government because of the crises in their home country and their inability to go home. Due to the war in Syria, many Syrians were forced out of their homes to seek refuge in other countries, including Canada.

Syrian refugees constitute a mix of skills and classes of people such as farmers, teachers, skilled technicians, engineers and doctors. English language is a major barrier to all of them, to different degrees. What is common is that neither the farmers nor the doctors have a good chance of obtaining jobs in their own field of expertise or study here in Alberta. In order for the experienced refrigeration and heating technician to work in Alberta, for example, he/she needs to score very high on English proficiency

exam and pay fees to sit. They also need to apply to Alberta Trades and Industry Training, and pay yet more fees. They need to provide verifiable documents that prove his experience back home, which could be very hard due to the total destruction in some towns and cities in Syria. Then, after all that, if they are lucky to have everything in order they might have a chance to get training and get licensed at the end. This procedure, and the requirements, are different for each case. Despite the difficulties there are some great success stories among Syrian refugees.

Kifah and his family are one of the lucky ones to escape the wrath of war and arrive here in Canada. As a skilled tradesman and artist, Kifah could not sit home without trying to support his family despite the cultural shock as well as the many barriers they face in settling in Edmonton.

Kifah has around 20 years of experience hand crafting and carving jewellery boxes and a variety of antique

artifacts from Syria. Despite the financial difficulties, such as capital, understanding Health and environment Canada's regulations for importing types of wood as well as securing a shop, Kifah was able to overcome the challenges and establish his own Syrian artifact shop/ exhibit in Edmonton.

He was helped with processing the necessary documents with the government to start his business, such as registering a company, a GST number...

We hope that Kifah's story will inspire others to follow his steps in their own fields of specialty. Edmonton communities, as well as the Alberta government, need to come together to seek ways in which we can bring refugee families out of the cycle of social assistance and into an environment where they utilise their talents to contribute to the society.

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***“We hope that Kifah’s story will inspire others to follow his steps in their own fields of specialty.”***

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etc. Action for Healthy Communities is one of the organizations that helped Kifah reach this goal and stand on his feet in the new country by providing logistic and educational information.

Kifah is grateful for the security provided in Canada which enabled him to pursue his business, and asks the government for more direct help in putting people to work instead of social welfare and income assistance, which will help refugees to be productive and adds another flavor to Canada's melting pot. For now, he imports his artifacts from his old partners in Syria and Lebanon until such a time when he can establish his own workshop here in Edmonton.



# My Homeland, My Homeland

by Amjad Albida

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Amjad Albida is from Damascus, Syria. He attends Ross Shepherd High School in Edmonton.*

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Syria is a wonderful country located in the heart of the Middle East. It is home to an ancient civilization and tradition of peace. Even though Syria now has been hit by the worst form of conflicts, in the eyes of its citizens it is still the most beautiful country in the world.

My name is Amjad. I was born in January 2000 in Damascus in southern Syria. I'm the eldest child in our family. I have two brothers and one sister and we all used to live with our parents. We had a safe house, full of love and support. It felt like a castle and it meant a lot to me. It is the house in which I grew up, played, and studied. I had a very happy childhood. Nothing could change that fact. All I did was study, play and have fun with my friends.

Every morning when the sunshine came through the window of my room, I woke up and prepared to go to school with my friends. I was part of a wonderful soccer

team full of great spirit. My favorite day of the week was the one when we had a game or practice. Soccer is my favourite sport.

The war started in Syria when I was 10. I never expected war to hit my beautiful city. Suddenly everything changed in my beloved city and all you could see were demolished houses and hungry children on the streets. I was a child who only wanted to run on the street and fly his kite. I did not want war. I did not want trouble. I did not want a life filled with sadness. I remember I used to blame whoever made the Sham cry and her children orphans. I used to feel the war was a nightmare from which I was going to wake up from one day.

One day I told my mother, "War is a ghost that turns off lights." Then I told the war ghost, "Go away and never return, please go away, please leave us alone, please go and never come back." I said

that so many times it left my mother speechless.

A little after the war started, we left, yes, we left our homeland, we were forced to go. We didn't choose to go. Everybody hoped that we would find a safe place far away from the sound of the missiles and the conflict. We could not do anything but leave. I can never describe the feeling of losing my hometown and having to go to a new country, meet new friends, attend a new school with new teachers and with a new soccer team. I knew that I would feel like a stranger and homesick. My homeland, my homeland, I said many times walking away from my country, leaving my town even as I hoped to come back one day.

I accepted this as our destiny.

Our first stop was a country next to Syria, called Jordan. We entered Jordan in July 2014. It is a nice country with nice people, but we didn't find life easy there and we missed a lot of things. My father got very sick and unable to work. So, at age 15 I had to work to support my family. We stayed in Jordan for about one year and

a half before we came to Canada. And now here I am in Edmonton, Alberta.

We had a warm welcome on our arrival at the airport. We felt the love and respect Canadians had for us. To show their affection and warm spirit, they held out red roses to us. I am very happy because I am on track with my studies. I thank God for what he gave me, and I always pray for the safety of this country. Safety is a blessing that some people take for granted and only those who lose it learn of its value. I hope and pray to see my country safe again and war-free.

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***“Safety is a blessing that some people take for granted and only those who lose it learn of its value.”***

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# Reaching for the Stars

by Randa Alhijawi

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Randa Alhijawi is a Research Officer for the Alberta Government and Director of Alhijawi Driver Education. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Jordan, and Office Technology Certificate from Brookhaven College in Texas. Randa is also Director of the Women Committee at Canada Palestine Cultural Association (CPCA) and loves to play Table Tennis during her free time.*

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I immigrated to Canada in April 2004 with my two children Zaid and Aya, while one month pregnant with my now 12-year old Jude. It was an overwhelming experience at the beginning because I had no family in Canada.

Finding a job was very challenging. The fact that I speak very good English and I have years of office management experience, did not make finding work in Canada any easier. But I was lucky to have wonderful friends who helped me settle. They helped me find housing, register my kids at schools, and with all the paperwork I had to fill out at the time.

It didn't take me long to realize volunteering was the magic key! It opens doors for jobs and gives new immigrants a chance to practice English,

meet new people and gain experience. That was not an easy task. Windsor is a small city and many immigrants were looking for volunteer work as well. I was lucky to get a volunteer position at the local YMCA as front desk receptionist.

Later that year I secured my first job with an insurance company. It was an amazing experience and a boost to my career plans. In 2006 I managed to bring my husband to Canada. He was not able to find any work in Windsor, however, so he moved to Alberta. He found work as a truck driver but I was reluctant to follow him. Alberta, I had heard, was very cold and my kids were happy in Windsor.

In 2007 I decided to join my husband. I wanted my kids to be around their dad of whom they did not get to see much. We purchased a truck from my brother

in New York and loaded our furniture in it. I drove the small car and my husband drove the truck, a 5-day road trip to the west. Our plan was to sell the truck as soon as we arrived, but when we got to Edmonton and met my husband's friends, I discovered transportation was big business in Alberta. I told my husband I didn't want to sell the truck; I wanted to hire it out. My husband did not agree and told me to do whatever I wanted, and not get him involved in anything. He was happy being a driver working for another company.

I remember holding the big yellow pages book sitting at the kitchen table

had named after my kids' initials. I signed my first contract with Direct Transport (now Canada Cartage). By the end of 2009, I had 8 trucks, 2 tractor trailers, and I employed more than 10 drivers. I had contracts for Shoppers Drug Mart in Edmonton, Winners and Homesense.

Unfortunately, at the end of 2010 my marriage broke up. I had to choose between taking care of my 3 children, or running a business and staying in an abusive relationship. I decided to give up everything and focus on my 3 wonderful children, who mattered to me the most. I gave up everything to provide a safe life for them. I focused only on that goal.

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***“I decided to give up everything and focus on my 3 wonderful children, who mattered to me the most.”***

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calling transportation companies to ask them if they were hiring owner-operators (I had learned that term from my husband's friends.) After many calls, I got a break. One manager agreed to meet me. I did some research and went to the interview. I remember him asking me if I had WCB insurance. I had no idea what that meant. I told him I didn't have it, but I would get it for sure as soon as I left his office. I went home and researched WCB. A week later I was back with all the documents and driver information needed. In 2008 I started with one truck as JAZ Transport, which I

As a single mom and with no job and with children and a mortgage, I started again from scratch. To punish me for refusing to remain in the abusive relationship, my ex-husband transferred his assets to another name to avoid paying child support. I found that the normal tactic by some men in my culture to force women to stay in a relationship, is to make it very hard for them to survive financially. His actions, however, didn't stop me. I was determined to set a good example for my daughters and my son, showing them that we can sacrifice material things and luxury living for the

sake of our dignity and pride.

Eight years later, I am now working as Research Officer with Children Services in the Government of Alberta. I have started my own business called Alhijawi Driver Education. I am the Director of the Women Committee at the non-profit Canada Palestine Cultural Association. My oldest kids are full time students and also working. My youngest Jude is an Leader-in-Training (LIT) at the YMCA.

I made it through with the help of some wonderful people around me, my friends, my managers at work, and my wonderful kids. You can do nothing without hard work and a support system unless you win the lottery!!

I have a message to all women out there. Reach for the stars and keep focused on your goals because you will eventually achieve them!!!

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***“Reach for the stars and keep focused on your goals  
because you will eventually achieve them!!!”***

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# Reality Knows No Age

by Aya Alferai

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Hello, I'm Aya Alferai, a Syrian girl from Damascus, who has lived the past and the present, who used to live in a stable and secure country, then witnessed the beginning of a historic war in Damascus, the capital of the Syrian Arab Republic, one of the oldest cities in the world that is also known as the city of Jasmine.*

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Because of its beautiful nature, and its streets and markets, Syria was one of the best tourist destinations in the world. Then in 2011, the Syrian crisis broke out. We have all suffered from this war – children, the elderly, and women.

More than five years have now passed, and when will the nightmare end? That we do not know. We have all tried to hold on, telling ourselves things could become normal again. Even long ago, when I was one of the thousands of Syrian children going to school, we tried to convince ourselves that there was no war.

But every day, as I got ready to go to school, my mother cried at the door out of fear something bad would happen to me. We would hear scary sounds, then suddenly nothing. I remember something that happened one day, one

of a thousand daily incidents, which caused children, women and the elderly to weep. I was in grade six. A rocket had landed next to our school. Besides the crashing sound of the rocket, we also heard bullets, and saw many wounded people at the site. The incident distressed everyone at our school. I remember looking for my friends and siblings in the basement of the school, where we were all made to stay. Out of fear of losing lives, the school ordered everyone not to leave the basement. I was more scared for my sister than for myself. She was so little then. I was scared something would happen to her. Our parents waited outside in the midst of the bullets flying, until the incident was over. Only then did the school allow us to go to our parents.

I saw my father and ran to him. I saw my friend talking to her father. Her father

told her, "Our house has been destroyed, and some people in the building have died. We have no place to go, to stay."

My friend started crying, and I rushed to her. I wanted to help her, but I couldn't think of what to do. Her family refused to come to stay our house. "We don't want to cause you stress," my friend told me.

Day after day, war continued. The unstable situation affected our life, and we decided that leaving would be better than staying. To leave in search of better life and a prosperous future.

beautiful days of my life.

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I still think about Syria, hoping the war would end, but I have also tried to adapt to the new life. At first, I had some difficulties in my transition into the new system, especially with the English language. But the challenge of having to learn the language, motivated me. I knew that if I learned English, I could become the best version of myself, to support my family, to get an education and to improve my life and our future. I

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***"I knew that if I learned English, I could become the best version of myself, to support my family, to get an education and to improve my life and our future."***

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It was not easy to decide to leave for Canada, a country so far from Syria. And we knew that after we left, we would never be able to look back. We stayed several months in Turkey to wait for our immigration papers, before we travelled to Canada.

I can never describe my feelings during my first days in Canada. One of the things I will never forget is the way people welcomed us. This would be the beginning of a new life, I thought at the nice way people treated us. The day I arrived in Canada was one of the most

am grateful at the way everybody have been treating us in Canada. No one has made me feel that I am different from others or that I am not from this country. People have treated me just like any other Canadian student. Because Edmonton is inhabited by immigrants from all over the world, living together in harmony in one city, I believe that my future here will be bright, and that I will achieve my dreams.

# Expectation of Life

by Ossama Allam

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*An Egyptian writer based in Canada.*

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It was my first visit to Edmonton, a city they told me had many job opportunities. I carried a lot of colors and joy from the cities I have lived in. Cairo, Paris, Montreal.

At the airport, Catherine carried a placard with my name on it. I knew her from our past correspondence. She was the daughter of an old lady, living in the Northside, from whom I would be renting a room. Catherine's English accent was almost incomprehensible to me. I shook my head and mumbled thanks. Among the words I understood was something about the old lady being deaf and wheelchair bound. Catherine lived in a house on the South Side with her boyfriend and three children. She told me that at my rental place I would not be allowed to take drugs or to have a party. And I would always have to be quiet after 11 at night. She politely asked me to pay a month's rent in advance.

The room, as I had seen in pictures, was small and clean. It had a bed for two people and a closet, nothing else. I assured myself that I had all I needed as I quickly got ready for my night shift as a security guard. The company that gave me the job had told me where to go. They had also sent me a uniform. I got dressed fast without looking in the mirror. In times past, I used to look proudly at myself in the mirror to make sure I was well made over, when I worked as a doctor, back home. I whispered to myself, "Nothing matters now, I only need to make money and pay my bills."

The workplace was one of the buildings inhabited by low income people: underemployed immigrants or old people who had not done enough work in their lives to allow them a Canadian pension and a decent life. This is what I thought about the place. But what I discovered was that the building was inhabited by people native to

the country nursing their problems. Problems of violence and alcohol addiction. The place may be a popular market for young drug dealers, too, I thought. My job was to keep the door of the building closed, in order to prevent homeless people from entering. The weather was cold outside as Edmonton winters are. I sat quietly on the only seat in the reception building. I would be working a twelve-hour night. I took out a Naguib Mahfouz novel. But I watched for possible movement around the gate. People walked by without looking at me, as I were a ghost. Others tossed me a 'good night'.

a headkerchief. She had a cross on her chest. She wore athletes' Nike shoes.

Without waiting for my reply, she said, "I've loved writing stories since my childhood. I and my siblings, eight of us, lived a difficult childhood on a farm in North Edmonton. You can't imagine how poor we were. My parents owned a farm and a three-roomed house. There was a girls' room, and a small one for the boys. I was the oldest child. We planted potatoes all summer and ate them into the winter. My mother was creative at cooking potatoes. My brother Fernaldo was our saver. He could talk to birds,

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## ***"We planted potatoes all summer and ate them into the winter."***

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The first hours passed quietly as I enjoyed Naguib Mahfouz's funny Cairo characters. I had lost myself in the novel when, looking up, I saw a 40-year lady staring down at me. I scrambled to my feet up, and asked quietly, "How can I help you?"

She replied, "You seem engaged in the story you are reading." Then she said, "You know, I also write stories."

Her silence after those words allowed me to reflect upon her strange looks. Her dress, which was long, looked like a church attire, her head covered with

the only one able to do that. He could tell them, for example, how much we craved the taste of the soup." The lady paused, then said, "You probably don't believe me" but went on. "Fernaldo usually caught some timorous birds and put them at the dinner table. But we were generous with the birds. We only had them for dinner once a month. I came alone to Edmonton to find work, but I quickly discovered that people here are different. So I've decided to help people in the name of God. All day I babysit the elderly and the sick. I find them to be closer to God. You know, I quite like to write alien stories. But I



can't find a publisher for them. Maybe, Mr. Handsome, you'll like to read what I've written? "

Suddenly the lady disappeared. I went back to the characters of Mahfouz and the tedium. My presence in the building kept out displaced people. They stopped to look through the glass window, then went on their way. Someone gave me the middle finger, and smiled. The hours crawled along. I tried to conquer sleep with black coffee, and singing, and waited for the lady who promised me odd stories that might amuse me. But she did not appear again. Not that night or any other night I worked in the building.

I went back to my place in the morning. I never met the wheelchair-bound Lady of the House, as I expected. But the light of her room was on and the smell of marijuana filled the place, and I heard her crying. I got into my room which was wrapped in deep silence. I prevented myself from entering her room to ask about her crying which broke my heart. I just needed to sleep. Maybe I would dream of an image of Canada, this amazing and delightful place, filled with lush pictures of joggers and their happy dogs.



# Paying Back

by Najm al-Tameem

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Najm Al-Tameem was born in Iraq. A holder of a Business Administration Master's, he has worked in finance. In Syria, he established a charity organization for refugees and does much volunteer work in Edmonton. He is a calligraphy artist, a gallery of his work was displayed once at City Hall. He is married and is a father of seven children.*

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In 2007, when religious conflict broke out in Iraq, we fled to Syria. Before that we had endured the Iran-Iraq war, the two Gulf Wars, and the sanctions against the Sadaam regime. Three years after we arrived in Syria, civil war broke out. At first, I volunteered to help others in that terrible situation, but eventually we had to leave.

Arriving in Canada, I missed the volunteer work I was doing in Syria. But soon I asked myself: how can I pay back Canada which has provided us a new home and a future? One day as I rode a bus, I saw some physically challenged people doing artwork inside a building, while some personnel assisted them. I am an artist in Arabic calligraphy. Curious, I got off the bus. I entered the building, uncomfortable due to my ignorance about the place, and my very

poor English.

Inside the building, I met a man I would come to know as Mr. David. He welcomed me when, through Google translate, I explained why I had entered. He took me on a tour of the place. Smiling faces greeted me. Each of the physically challenged people wanted to show me what they were working on. Mr. David amiably suggested I meet Mr. Paul Freeman, who agreed to my request to volunteer there. I felt great joy for I knew I had found the place where I could fulfill my purpose: to integrate into my new society and help people at the same time.

That was how I started working at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, a centre dedicated to people with special needs, which tries to alleviate their

discomfort and temporarily relieve their parents, as well as encouraging them to explore their talents. Working there, which I do to this day, has been satisfying.

I next volunteered to teach a calligraphy course at the historic 150-year old Al Rashid mosque, the oldest in Edmonton. Arabic calligraphy is an ancient art. Many Arabs living in the Diaspora are attracted to it, to teach their children something about their heritage. My main challenge as I taught, one I face to this day, was the language barrier in communicating with my students. I succeeded to do so with my restricted English and the help of some.

Helping with donations for Syrian refugees was the next volunteer work I did. I collected donations from sources everywhere, sometimes over long distances. Some of the donations came from within spheres of my daily life such as my calligraphy students or from the mosque or my colleagues at my ESL Eastwood school. I got my teacher Miss Kylie to do a donation drive among students. The drive brought in large amounts of clothes and food. After sorting through donations at home, my

wife and I took them to refugee families in their temporary hotels or in their houses. We assisted a total of 21 families with whom we are still in touch and whose welfare we continue to check.

Elsewhere in the city, members of the Lebanese community opened a relief centre for Syrian families. I facilitated the connection between the centre and the newcomers by driving the families to the centre to obtain donated items and then returned them to their hotel. The centre did a wonderful job of alleviating the suffering of many families. This same group also organised many educational forums where meals were served. My wife participated in these events by helping with food preparation and clean up. She got to know the families and informed me of their specific needs, so I could add these items to my distribution list.

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One thing my family and I have learned in all that we have undergone and undertaken in life: don't let hurdles block your path. Turn them instead into stepping stones to keep going forward. Between moving from Iraq

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***“Don’t let hurdles block your path. Turn them instead into stepping stones to keep going forward.”***

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to Syria and to Canada, no one has undergone as many relocations, living in different communities, as I have. No sooner do I adapt to a new setting than circumstances force me to move. Because of this, my family and I have learned, partly through helping others, to adapt and integrate into every new community, no matter its beliefs and customs. Another lesson we have learned is that happiness, a beautiful thing, is strongest when you bring joy into another's heart through what you can do for them, and when you see the results of your offering to others.

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***“Happiness, a beautiful thing, is strongest when you bring joy into another’s heart through what you can do for them.”***

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# Road to Canada: Diary

by Miki Andrejevic

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Miki Andrejevic is an Arts Management Executive and Festival Producer. He is a graduate of the Law Faculty University of Belgrade, former Yugoslavia; Grant McEwan University Arts Administration Program, Edmonton, is a Fellow of RSA – Royal Society of Arts, London England and recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal and the City of Edmonton Arts and Culture Citation Award.*

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### 1972

I meet a 16-year-old “Canadian girl” in Belgrade. Quite by chance. She has been wandering all over Yugoslavia, visiting her family and friends in Slovenia and Serbia. She is Slovenian/Serbian mix. Me? Only a 19-year-old boy! A Serbian/Croatian. Yes, that's me.

### 1982

I come to Alberta, Canada. For five days. In the five days, I marry the Canadian, Serbian/Slovenian girl. I take her to Belgrade, in what is still Yugoslavia, but won't be for long. Our marriage has

added to my ethnic Serbian/ Croatian mix. We have become a real Yugoslavian couple and family. We represent the founding nations of Yugoslavia. The Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.

### 1989 - 1990

In a historic inter-ethnic conflict, the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians decide not to like each other any more. They “successfully” bring about the economical, political and bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia. But our marriage holds. It's intact.

It is a very difficult time for all, but

particularly for those who come from religiously and ethnically mixed marriages. We are simply ostracized. It is unbearable.

Here is the letter I write, in 1989, to my dear friend Myrna Kostash, an Edmonton based Canadian writer. She is our frequent visitor and guest in Belgrade. She is working on a book, to be titled, she says: "Blood Lines – A Journey Into Eastern Europe". (The title will survive publication; the book will become acclaimed). The letter I write to Myrna is to be published in the same book. Here is the letter:

*June, 1989*

*Dear Myrna,*

*I have had a hard time in Yugoslavia. Inflation is 1430% and will be more than 2000% in December.*

*The cultural situation is as the political. Slovenian Writers' Union isn't part of Yugoslav writers' union any more; they resigned from the organization allegedly because of "Serbian Nationalism". In fact, we have lots of nationalisms and it is our biggest problem. During family parties usually we are talking about what Slovenians said about (the Serbian president) Milosevic and how people refuse to buy Slovenian products. Similar situation is in Slovenia.*

*On June 28 the Serbs celebrated 600 years since Kosovo battle and you can imagine the political implications of it. People in Slovenia and Croatia said this celebration was part of Serbian hegemony. .... After the ceremony (with 2 million participants), His Highness Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia (in exile) proclaimed the monarchy is the best option in the present situation (while nationalisms and hatred are raging!). Sometime everything looks like a soap opera.*

*We are calling our situation "Catastroika – (as the allusion to Soviet "Perestroika").*

*Your friend,*

*Miki*

These are times of great economic uncertainty. Constitutional crises are brewing. Drums of civil war are sounding with the looming of unilateral declarations of independence. With the threatening Civil war, we will face the collapse of once one of the most prosperous socialist countries in the world.

Ours is a warning to other countries, even peaceful ones. It may start with the constitutional crisis, and if divisiveness, bigotry, narrow nationalism are not checked, watch out...!

**1990**

I get an immigrant visa.

We leave the country that does not tolerate mixed bloodlines. We move to Edmonton, Alberta with our two wonderful daughters, five hockey size bags and \$3,000 in our pockets.

**1999**

NATO airplanes – including CANADIAN ones – BOMB Belgrade in my Serbia!

Unbelievable. My adopted country at war with my country of birth! Our little daughters cry. They fear for their grandparents. We all fear for family members. I can't get through to them on the phone. Thank goodness, I get through finally. "What's happening? Are you Ok?"

"We're Ok, we're Ok," my father answers me.

"Should I come and be with you?"

"No, no. Stay put! You're better off there."

Click!

78 days of bombing. 2, 500 dead. Buildings wrecked, including foreign embassies. Infrastructure destroyed.

My sense of guilt and shame for not

being there is overwhelming.

**2016**

We have relocated to beautiful British Columbia. We live in our dream house in St. Ives, a small village with a winter population of 35, summer 300. The village is on the big Shuswap Lake. We just celebrated our 35th wedding anniversary. We maintain strong ties to Edmonton through professional work. And more important, our family – we have children in Edmonton and four grandchildren of Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, German and Lebanese origins.

Only in Canada, eh!

**2017**

Not so fast.

In retrospective, Yugoslavia was probably a utopian dream. Nevertheless, looking back over the decades a sense of loss haunts – loss of THE COUNTRY I knew, of a lifestyle, of what could have been, a sense of loss I can't quite shake.

Coming to Canada is an acceptance of a marvellously imperfect real and new life. A life that rings with children and grand children, a new dream home, a fulfilling career, and yet....



# ASSIST Community Services Centre: Bridging People & Communities

*by the Board and Staff of ASSIST Community Services Centre*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*ASSIST's vision is to bridge people and communities and the mission is to enhance lives of newcomers through quality programs & services. Their mandate is to help to facilitate immigrants' successful integration into mainstream society through support and practical settlement services. ASSIST provides programs to promote the health and well-being of immigrants of all ages, cultures and ethnic backgrounds.*

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### **Early Days (1977-1983)**

As we get to honor our past and be proud to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, 2017 is also a special year for ASSIST Community Services Centre (ASSIST) as we are celebrating our 40th anniversary. ASSIST, formerly known as "Chinese Community Services Centre", has come a long way since its beginnings in 1977. That year the Chinese Graduates Association of Alberta (CGAA) funded and supported a one-year project to determine and meet the needs of Chinese people in Edmonton entitled "Need of Social Services in the Chinese Community".

The work to help Chinese newcomers carried on after the project ended

despite the lack of funding for the work. The Centre continued to operate through the effort of volunteers and donations from local businesses. The mass influx of Indo-Chinese refugees (Boat People) to Canada in the mid-1970s following the end of the Vietnam War, brought more newcomers with settlement needs. The Centre received its first one-time funding of \$15,000 from the City of Edmonton to carry out basic settlement services in 1980. A year later, the Centre also received funding from the federal government to expand its settlement services. Throughout these early years, volunteers played a major role in the work of the centre.

## **Getting Formal (1983-1994)**

On January 12, 1983, the Centre registered as a non-profit organization, and became a registered charity later in 1990. During this period, the Centre's annual budget ranged from \$30,000 to \$50,000. Although there were only two full time staff, with the help of many volunteers, the Centre was able to offer some programs meeting the essential needs of Chinese immigrants, including English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, the Citizenship class, employment services, housing referrals, translation and interpretation, parenting program – "Roots & Wings", information workshops, and the annual free TAX clinic with the help of volunteers.

## **Growing (1995 to 2005)**

The Centre grew and stabilized with increased and continuous funding from the Federal and provincial governments. Not only did the Centre expand its settlement and language training services to newcomers, it also offered new programs and services to Chinese families. Building on the success of the "Roots and Wings" project in the 1980s, the Family program expanded and developed two new programs in 1997- "Nobody's Perfect" and "Let's Grow Together". In early 2000, the Centre also offered two new programs for children and youth, "Towards a New Generation" and "Smart Choices – Recognizing

Problem Gambling". For seniors, the "Golden Senior Wellness Enhanced Program" became a favourite during this period.

To reflect the increasing diversity of our clients and services, the Centre changed its name to ASSIST Community Services Centre on July 18, 2001. We also moved to 9649-105A Avenue into a building we owned. In 2001, our annual budget grew to over \$400,000 and we offered more than 10 programs and projects, with more than 20 employees and even more volunteers serving our clients. While we continued to serve people from the Chinese community, including the immigrants and refugees from Indo China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, we also piloted services and activities to other ethnic communities. In 2003, ASSIST offered our first multicultural program – The Multicultural Breast Health Education Project (MBH) for Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic and South Asian women, which we then extended to include African, Filipino and Latino people.

## **Maturation (2005-2017)**

ASSIST grew throughout this period, particularly over the last 10 years. With funding from the three levels of government, our overall annual operating budget increased from about \$1 million in 2007 to over \$3 million in



2017; from 20 staff in 2007 to 72 now. Following the Alberta economic boom in 2006/2007, more immigrants moved to Edmonton. The demand for settlement services increased significantly starting in 2008. In 2008-2009, we provided more than 10,000 services to clients through our various programs and activities. By then, we had 38 staff and over 200 volunteers working as a team



to provide services and programs to diverse multicultural communities.

The Centre also introduced a new family literacy program "Raising Children Through Songs, Stories, & Books" in 2009. With the funding support from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, ASSIST expanded and opened a second office in the south-west of the city. It became the first immigrant serving agency to serve newcomers living in southwest in 2012. Opening our second location was a major milestone for ASSIST in the growth of the organization, staff, funding and programs/services. With increased FCSS funding, our TANG youth program also expanded to the Southwest office in 2016. There, it provided programs and activities to

immigrant youth and refugees living in those communities and enabled ASSIST to fulfill our objective of including a more diverse group of ethnic youth in this program.

ASSIST is now a multicultural and multilingual agency, and has developed a strong multicultural platform of staff, expertise and ethnic networks for helping newcomer families. Included in our team are over 400 volunteers who enable us to provide our services and programs to diverse communities. ASSIST also forms alliances with other community agencies across sectors to better meet community and public needs. Presently, we have 13 on-going programs and one project running in the two offices. In 2016-2017, we provided more than 20,000 services to immigrants from over 100 countries around the world.

# To the Far North

by Nathaniel Bimba

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Originally from Liberia, Nathaniel Bimba and his family settled in Edmonton in 1997. He has been a teacher and is a founding member and former President of the Liberian Friendship Society of Canada. He is completing a Master degree in Educational Leadership and currently serves as Acting Director of the Clareview Multicultural Centre.*

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Our journey to the far North, as we jokingly referred to Canada, began with a shocking Focus on Africa report Liberians heard on the British Broadcasting on Christmas Eve of December 1989. At the little-known village of Burtu in Nimba County, rebel forces had invaded the country. Far into the future, the theme sounds of the Focus on Africa program on BBC would bring back memories of our scramble to listen to the radio reports on the brutal war as it started and continued.

We fled the war to neighboring countries. Some of us thought our departure would last only a short. But no. We would relinquish, it turned out, that well-known Liberian refrain, 'born here die here' to accept the reality of our flight to peaceful places like Canada.

For historical reasons, Liberians always

preferred to migrate to the USA to Canada. In the late 90s, Edmonton had less than 5 families from Liberia. The first two families, who came to study, hoped to return home. In those days, people who returned to Liberia from abroad were well received back.

The other 2 families, including me, settled here through the Canadian Refugee Protection program. We came from our prior country of refuge, Zimbabwe, not knowing where in Canada we would settle. However, the joy of freedom and security made us accept to go anywhere. The only information that I and my family knew was that our destination would be 'ED, AB' What on earth, we wondered, did the acronym stand for?

We learned the answer upon arrival, after a 21-hour flight, on February 13, 1997.

And we learned more as, embarking, we gazed through the plane windows at the snow that covered the fields, the buildings, and just about everything in sight. Fear crept into us at the thought that this would become our new home. How can this place sustain us, this place with nothing resembling the life of the green grass and dense forest we knew back in Liberia?

Settlement workers received us as we cleared immigration and customs. When we arrived at our destination, the settlement workers prepared pasta and mincemeat, a strange dish for us from Liberia who were used mostly to rice.

'liberty', prominent in the United States constitution. Liberia's capital, Monrovia, derives its name from an American president, James Monroe. In Zimbabwe, our children had gone to good schools and obtained educational foundations, including that for English.

Our priority on arrival, as it is to this day and with newcomers here in general, was to connect with folks back home, which we did. We informed them of our safe arrival. We sent money and told them all about our new home in Canada.

To this day, people of Liberian origin in Edmonton, entertain this strong need

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***“The very name of the country itself, Liberia, comes from the English word ‘liberty’, prominent in the United States constitution.”***

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We were hungry and exhausted, though, and ate eagerly. The food tasted nothing close to our palm butter and dried fish, making us nostalgic for Liberian cuisine. But ...

We found settlement less difficult than non-English speakers normally do. Language presented no barrier for us. We came from an English-speaking country, through a deep historical association with the United States. The very name of the country itself, Liberia, comes from the English word

and desire to send help back to relatives in Liberia, and furthermore to help resettle desperate families to Canada.

As a result, we have formed a family resettlement group. The group also aims to support one another in our community here. Churches have also joined settlement organizations and the community in these efforts. We have raised money through potlucks and golf tournaments, and in other ways. In the process of such fund-raising activities we have discovered a few things. A golf

tournament is the greatest fun one can have! We also, Liberian-born and others, enjoy potlucks very much, which always include traditional Liberian dishes.

Due to Overseas Settlement and Family Unification programs and secondary migration, the number of Liberians have grown by hundreds over the years in Alberta, including Edmonton. With those numbers, the Liberian community has stepped up its participation in the life of the larger Edmonton community. An example of such participation is our involvement in the Heritage festival annually, with displays of Liberian food, culture, dance, and music; and the establishment of inclusive Liberian church groups in Edmonton.

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***“We also, Liberian-born and others, enjoy potlucks very much, which always include traditional Liberian dishes.”***

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# Embracing Our Differences

by Mila Bongco-Philipzig

In 1984 I came to Canada alone as a graduate student. Assimilation was much harder back then. My lack of information on inter-cultural interactions and general naiveté due to my young age made for huge cultural gaps and difficulties in communicating with others. Social media and the internet were not publicly accessible then, which may have aided in moderating my feelings of isolation and homesickness. So, the strong pull of family and friends, along with the overall comfort and familiarity

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Manila, Philippines, Mila now lives in Edmonton with her husband, son, and two dogs. Before settling in Edmonton, she has lived and worked in various countries and has grown to love connecting with people from various cultures and backgrounds. She has published children's books that reflect her love for family, travel, languages, and multiculturalism.

of the sights, tastes, and ways I knew since childhood kept drawing me back to my homeland. I wanted to go back

badly. But considering my opportunities and the future I could provide for my family, the decision to settle in Canada made more sense. Eventually I decided to stay—not an easy decision to make. I was conflicted because I thought the choice to move to Canada meant that I was giving up on my home country: that I was betraying the values and traditions instilled in me by my family, and that I would forever live my life straddling and navigating between two cultures while never belonging to either.

I have now learned to embrace this decision to stay. Fortunately, Canada allows me to embrace multiple cultures.

division, prejudice, and inequity. Right here in Edmonton, just 2 months ago, someone hurled a racist insult at me personally. I know we still need to fight against ignorance and misinformation and even unfounded hatred; however, when compared to what is happening elsewhere, I still feel lucky to be living in Canada, as it actively encourages understanding and tolerance.

I feel that my journey from a lonely graduate student in the early '80s to now having a multicultural family reflects Canada's journey towards becoming a more multicultural place. I come from Asia, my husband is

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## ***“Canada allows me to embrace multiple cultures.”***

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Culture is commonly equated with a country or a race; but, culture can also encompass belief systems, social class, economic standing, religion, gender, political views, age and generational differences, along with much more. Yet, with so many facets of culture to navigate, there is still a tolerance for multiculturalism in Canada that I have not seen present in many other countries. Of course, we still hear news in Canada of intolerance, even violence against race, religion, women, homeless people and others. Canada is not insulated against an increasingly fractured world currently battling fears,

European, and our 16-year-old son was born in Edmonton. One of my son's good friends has parents from El Salvador and Ghana, while another has parents from Germany and Vietnam. We did not intentionally seek them out. We met them by chance and have been meeting similar multicultural families everywhere from the community soccer field and school, to city events and work. Even my own friends reflect this diversity. Not only do they come from all over the world, but they range from late 20s to early 70s. Some friends are gay or lesbian. Some friends don't care for religion or faith; while other's beliefs

span the gamut of global faith systems. I am now close friends with people who I see regularly and who know my family well—friends whose contact information is with my son in cases of emergency when he cannot reach us, because I know they will help him no matter what. I never thought it was possible to have such close friends with such cultural differences, but here I am.

I now know that there is no need to fear losing my identity, values, or culture when accepting other people's different perspectives and values. There is no need to always compare who or what is better or feel superior or smug in what is most familiar or what feels most right. I believe, that what we need to do is be curious and open-minded, to be humble and actively reach out, instead of thinking about what we would lose or need to give up in adapting to a new culture. It is possible to focus on what can be gained and learned in all the richness that a diverse community offers. As a graduate student back in the late '80s, I became a member of the International Students Association, a choir, and a sports team in order to help get me out of my isolation so that I could enjoy what Canada had to offer, and to open my mind to understanding different perspectives. I intentionally joined groups with a variety of interests to expand my horizon, but also, I joined an international group rather than just limiting my encounters to people of my

own race.

I find that one tendency of new immigrants is to seek out people from the same country, about the same age, from a similar educational and economic standing, religious belief, and so on. There is nothing wrong with getting to know people from similar backgrounds. Sharing experiences help us navigate and settle in a new place. But we should be cautious in gravitating only to circles that confirm the same perspectives we already have. Sometimes, this can lead to an unfortunate cycle of biases being confirmed, to prejudices and negative experiences magnified.

Diversity in Canada is thriving and will only grow. There are many ways to get to know and understand people who are different from us: reach out to a neighbour, try ethnic foods, attend cultural and indigenous events, volunteer at a senior's home, help people with learning or physical challenges, watch the Pride Parade, travel with an open mind, or learn another language. Actively learning about other cultures can arm us with knowledge to identify and fight discrimination. In embracing diversity, we have so much to gain, so many opportunities to enjoy; and, in Edmonton, it can be as easy as inviting and participating in the many different worlds already right at our doorsteps.





# Lado Luaala

by Barizomdu Elect Lebe Boogbaa

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Barizomdu was born in Nigeria. At the age of 6 his family moved to Benin Republic. He moved to Canada in 2006. He works as a tutor at Nilotic Academy under Nyarkenyi Development Foundation of Alberta. Barizomdu is in his 3rd year of a BA degree studying French at Athabasca University.*

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Lado Luaala is a Sudanese Bari Elder born in the Nyarkenyi region of South Sudan in 1968. He is a holder of traditional knowledge and culture of the Bari Sudanese people, an attribute he has carried into the Edmonton community. Luaala is fluent in Arabic, Bari, and other Nilotic languages spoken over large areas of Central Equatoria in South Sudan. Growing up with an observed leadership gift from a very young age, Luaala has always been determined to improve the lives of those less privileged in society, especially the youths and families with little to no income.

On May 17, 2010, he founded an organization known as Nyarkenyi Development Foundation of Alberta (NDFA). This organization, of which he is the Executive Director aims "to build stronger and healthier African and multi-cultural communities through a building process that fosters citizen participation and action, to improve the health of the communities, locally and internationally." Furthermore, Action for Healthy Communities has employed him as a Community Animator/Community Initiatives Animator for several years. Luaala

has been a cultural advisor for many community organizations, including Action for Healthy Communities and REACH Edmonton (Council for Safe Communities). It is noteworthy that Luala has been volunteering since his arrival to Canada in 2005.

Ever since 2005, Luala has helped elevate the status of the Sudanese cultural impact and on Edmonton society through diversified creative arts presentations and Sudanese youth and family development initiatives, to great success. More so, he has been active in the revitalization of Sudanese drumming, dance, song, drama, ceremonial dress, and beadwork techniques for the past 20 years. His cultural dance and songs have been featured amongst Sudanese events in the city of Edmonton at local public establishments and internationally. Luala's humanness and integrity towards the betterment of communities around him earned him the 2015 Men of Honor Award.

Currently, Luala is working on several projects for various ethno-cultural and

Canadian groups across Edmonton. He is also working with several community organizations to produce a collaborative work on preserving Sudanese culture, tradition, and community here in Canada. He is a man who 'walks the talk'. In addition to his community involvement and leadership, Luala is also a source of encouragement and joy. He happily shares his life with others and he is a great mentor. His humble yet dedicated leadership style is infectious, as is his passion to create a positive change. He is happily married with four children.

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***“He is a man who ‘walks the talk.’”***

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# My Amazing Race

by Ninfa Castellanos

At 61, I feel my life has been an amazing race. I am originally from El Salvador the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America. I love my country and it never crossed my mind I would ever leave, even though most of my extended family -- aunt, uncles and cousins -- always encouraged me to move to USA. Life is unpredictable, and so in 1981 I had to leave my country to save my life. El Salvador had always endured chronic political and economic instability, characterized by coups, revolts, and a succession of authoritarian rulers, culminating in the devastating Salvadoran Civil War (1979–1992).

I left El Salvador to Costa Rica, then Nicaragua and Honduras and finally at the end of 1981, I settled in Mexico City where I attended University Autonomous of Mexico for 4 years. I was hoping that by the time I finished my education, the civil war would have ended. Sadly, that didn't happen. Many Salvadorian students in Mexico in the same situation were immigrating, under refugee programs, to Australia, Sweden and Canada.

My newlywedded husband suggested that I apply to one of these programs, a suggestion that at first sounded crazy to me. Even though I have over hundred relatives there, I had never wanted to move to USA. Why, even with all those relatives scattered around that country, should I consider moving to a far-away country where I didn't know the language, and I would have no one to speak to?

But after months of struggle – collapse of the Mexican economy, earthquake, immigration issues, etc.— I gave up staying in Mexico and agreed to apply for the Canadian refugee program. We were accepted in one week and left Mexico for Canada on October 17, 1985. It was one of the most painful days of my life.

My first years in Edmonton were some of the most difficult and disheartening ones of my life. I didn't speak a sentence of English, I knew nobody, and I had to cope with miserable weather. But 5 years later I had given birth to two beautiful children, my English had improved, and I was graduating as a social worker

from Grant MacEwan University. Now I have 27 years' experience working in the human services field, ranging from community-based and non-profit organizations to educational institutions, and the Government of Alberta.

My field of practice encompasses: employment, immigration and career development, which includes leadership and management, research and planning, education and training, and monitoring and evaluation. I've been part of teams developing and implementing a wide a range of programs and services for newcomers to Edmonton, to ease their transition to living and working in Alberta, e.g. bridging programs for foreign trained professionals, youth employment programs, community integration programs, and language and learning. I have extensive experience working in cross-cultural and cross-functional teams, networking among settlement services agencies, ethno-cultural groups, industries, community agencies, educational institutions, and government departments. Some of my job positions include:

- Economic Immigration Specialist
- Temporary Foreign Worker Advisor
- Strategic Career Management for Engineers
- Outreach and Youth Initiatives Coordinator
- Youth Internship Project

Coordinator

- Outreach Worker
- Employment Readiness

Coordinator

- Job Finding Club Coordinator
- Career Exploration for Women

Project Coordinator

- Employment Counselor

I've been participating in different national and international conferences in the areas of community economic development, cross-cultural communication, prior learning, career development, and personal growth. My experience as a former refugee helped me to understand better the situation of newcomers to Edmonton, particularly as it pertains to women's issues. My personal background has provided me with first-hand knowledge, strength and commitment to personal growth and healing, and to reach out to others. In 2016, I obtained the international license as a certified 'Love Yourself- Heal Your Life' workshop facilitator to share the philosophy and teachings of personal development author Louise Hay.

Now I can say Edmonton is my home, and I LOVE living here.

# Chinatown

*Adapted from an Article by Brian L. Evans*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Adapted with permission from the Chinese Benevolent Association of Edmonton, from an article by Brian L. Evans, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta. This adaptation appears here in memory of Dr. Brian Evans, historian and friend of the Edmonton Chinese Community. The article, "A Brief History of Edmonton Chinatown" by Dr. Brian Evans, was printed in the Edmonton Chinatown Centennial Publication 2013, entitled Edmonton Chinatown 100: Past, Present and Future, by the Chinese Benevolent Association of Edmonton.*

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Edmonton Chinatown began when the first Chinese arrived in Edmonton in 1890 to establish a laundry on Jasper Avenue near 97th St, called Namayo Avenue then. The population grew slowly. In 1899 it numbered 13. By 1911 it reached 130 and 518 in 1921. The Chinese engaged in businesses such as cafes, restaurants, laundries, hotels, and market gardens. They also worked in hospitals, hotels, cigar factories and peoples' homes. Others worked as laborers on railroad work gangs or around coalmines. Those who owned property in Edmonton could, by law, vote in municipal and provincial elections. Except for merchants and their families, or students, most Edmonton's Chinese had paid what was called a head tax on entering Canada for the first time, a

requirement for them then, one which became controversial with time and would eventually be dropped.

In 1923, Canada ended the head tax, but introduced a revised further Chinese Immigration Act which virtually excluded further Chinese immigration to Canada. The exclusion Act and the Great Depression hit Chinese communities hard. Many Chinese left the Prairies to return to China, or moved to Eastern Canada looking for work. Edmonton's Chinese population dropped in 1931 to 467 and in 1941 to 384.

During these early decades of the century, Chinese association offices, and other community services, could be found on Rice St. (101A Avenue) between

96 and 97 Streets. Most Chinatown businesses were concentrated on 97th St. stretching north from Jasper Avenue to 102 Avenue. They formed the backbone to what was known as Chinatown. As Edmonton's Chinese population declined, Chinatown remained frozen in time until after 1947 when the Exclusion Act was amended and some reunion of families was possible. The aging community suddenly received a small injection of younger arrivals.

Though slow at first, community renewal gathered some strength in the early 1960s when the Diefenbaker government ended the white priority

Canada's 100th birthday, the Federal Government decided to consolidate its Edmonton and Northern Alberta Services in one large building. It chose the site on Jasper Avenue at 97th St. All the core businesses of Chinatown were destroyed to make way for the new Canada Place. Some Chinese business moved further north along 97th St. while others moved eastward, closed, or relocated elsewhere.

To rescue the situation, the Chinese community worked with the City of Edmonton in the late 1970s to devise a Chinatown development plan. It outlined the area between 95 and 97 Streets and from Jasper Ave. north to

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***“The Chinese community worked with the City of Edmonton in the late 1970s to devise a Chinatown development plan.”***

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immigration policy. Further change was brought after 1968, under the Trudeau government's policy to place Asian immigration on the same point system as others. Students from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia, further enriched the community. Many, who came to study, remained to help develop the resources of the Chinese community and the City of Edmonton.

Chinatown, however, received a severe blow when, to commemorate

102A Ave., to be known as Chinatown for future development. Here, the Chinese Community invested over \$100 million in a Seniors residence, secondary care facilities, a Multicultural center and library. Other community services such as home districts societies, clan and other organizational offices clustered around. To mark the new Chinatown's western boundary, Edmonton's twin city of Harbin in Heilongjiang in China, built a traditional gate at 97th St. and 102 Ave., now renamed Harbin Ave. Mayor Decore



officially dedicated the Chinatown Gate in 1987.

Meanwhile, a new commercial Chinatown was developing. After 1975 in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese Boat people of Chinese ethnic heritage came to Edmonton. They added their entrepreneurial skills to expanding the range of commercial establishments on 97th St. between 105 and 107 Ave., needed to serve the growing Chinese population in Edmonton, which by the mid-80s had reached 25,000. A new Chinatown, commercial and touristic, had formed. It is this area to which most non-Chinese now refer when they say 'Chinatown', a commercial and tourist attraction.

Edmonton entered the 21st Century with two Chinatowns, the result of the destruction of the original Chinatown's commercial center to make way for Canada Place. The approved Chinatown Development Plan called for the revival of the old Chinatown focused on the axis of 96 St. and 102 Ave. This is now the cultural heart of the Chinese Community, particularly its long-established members whose roots go

back a century or more. It is here where the community's activities and facilities are concentrated.

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***“Edmonton entered the 21st Century with two Chinatowns.”***

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# A Pebble on the Beach

by Shreela Chakrabartty

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edmonton born, Shreela Chakrabartty is the film director half of the Shreela & Kash storytelling duo, rising stars capturing global audiences with their box office hit, ROCK PAPER DICE ENTER, a thriller with a peace mission. Recently, they celebrated Canada 150 with SPIRITS, a documentary examining Canadian history from a perspective unifying colonialism, indigenous practices, and the Vedanta philosophy of non-dualism.

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The life of Sujit Chakrabartty has been crafted on reality experienced, churned, cemented and cracked by his expanding knowledge and life rooted in culture, philosophy, science and hard knocks. By retirement, he reduced his perception of himself to a pebble on the beach. Surpassing his 8th decade from his home in Edmonton, he has learned how to successfully push boundaries of what he thinks is possible.

This pebble first hit Earth in 1928, spring, in Rangpur, Bengal, British India, where world events would irrevocably rattle the paradise of his childhood. First, the Bihar Earthquake of 1932 that tore his house apart. Then the North Bengal flood that washed away large areas of their family owned properties in 1937. It had been the main source of their family income. An epidemic of malaria and typhoid

swept the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, ultimately impoverishing the family into bankruptcy. World War II and the 1943 Bengal famine, induced by ruling policies not nature, that reported deaths from starvation and disease of 2.1 million people, leading to the War of Indian Independence. For my dad, participating in the freedom movement, served a literal blow to his jaw from a riot baton but the blunt force impact imprinted more of a resilience in his mental make-up with role models like Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore to back him up in the bigger picture. While these events scattered his family in search of employment and shelter away from their ancestral life, the young Sujit, nicknamed Bhanu, continued to strive for higher knowledge, uninterrupted by scarcity. His dream was very practical. He wanted a doctorate in chemistry

to serve his country, with advanced technologies. He knew that to achieve this, he would have to go overseas.

By 1948, at the age of 20, Sujit earned a Bachelor's degree with distinction in chemistry from Calcutta University in the new Republic of India. He got his first research job at the West Bengal Department of Fisheries and then advanced to the Central Fuel Research Institute of India in Dhanbad, Bihar. Jobs in his field were good stepping stones but he never lost sight of his goal of a doctorate certificate. The news came

The pebble bobbed along towards Europe on an ocean liner, then lobbed into the air from Italy, landing in North America in the autumn of 1960 in Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America. Into his thirties now, his student life got extended by another year, isolated from his blossoming family, his brain focused on Natural Products Chemistry.

He could have continued for another four to eight years at Brandeis but this accredited pebble skipped across to the University of Pittsburgh into a

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***“He ventured to America with the hope to expand his family prospects.”***

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at last from the graduate program at Brandeis University in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. However, due to a lack of funds and family responsibilities, the opportunity remained remote for some time. Following the prescribed course, he married in 1959. That same year his father passed away. The US offer was still on the table. With determination and growing responsibilities, he pooled support from his in-laws and friends, and was finally green lit to go. Then he received his other good news: he was becoming a father. He ventured to America with the hope to expand his family prospects.

Doctoral program that emphasized research more than course work. While completing his thesis on nitrogen heterocyclic chemistry, he was joined by his wife and son. He graduated in 1965.

Approaching the horizon of his student visa and post-doctoral fellowship, he began to plan his return path to India. This third skip in the pond would shake his foundations again. At his PhD farewell celebration, organized by students in the department, a surprise phone call came from a Dr. Berkowitz in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The young Dr. Chakrabartty was offered a full-time job at the Alberta Research Council.

Instead of using the plane tickets he booked to Calcutta, he switched to bus tickets to Ottawa, Canada's capital. His journey began by crossing the Peace Bridge in Niagara Falls, New York, in February, 1966. With meagre means along the way, he arranged to stay with friends, hotels, and motels for a month until their immigration, visas, travel and lodging waded out uncertainties. In 1967, his homecoming became his first leisure holiday in Europe with his wife and son before bringing the good news home and to return the debt he owed his father-in-law.

The Research Council, associated with the University of Alberta, flourished for decades under Dr. Chakrabartty's innovative research. He contributed to slow-release nitrogenous manure fertilizer to improve agriculture and bovine growth that makes Alberta Beef so famous. He did the research on components to improve bear spray repellent, making forests a little safer for human exploration. His research helped estimate coal reserves, its quality and utilization options, and the application of fossil fuels for pollution-free, climate-friendly technologies.

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***“The Research Council, associated with the University of Alberta, flourished for decades under Dr. Chakrabartty’s innovative research.”***

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His wife's family however, had a custom to never take money from daughters and to maintain the legacy of feudal landholders by gifting their sons-in-law properties. His father-in-law took that debt money and bought a piece of land in an adjacent neighborhood and gifted it to my father. Sujit, a son-in-law to the Sabarna Roy Choudhury clan, devised a plan to build a house in his wife's name, where this new Chakrabartty house could serve as a permanent home for his refugee mother, while he could serve and set roots in Canada.

He was recognized as a research expert in the US Department of Energy and the promotions bureau in Japan's Department of Science and Technology. He often went on lecture tours, talking about the contributions made by the Alberta Research Council in the field of energy. He was highly appreciated in Japan where he worked with Japanese government researchers and corporations on three occasions. In 1988, he served for a year as the Project Director in a World Bank project in Bandung, Indonesia, evaluating the utilization of *Ashbuton*, a natural bitumen

source. 1992 marked the completion of his 25 years of dedicated, loyal and creative service to the Government of Alberta.

During the period of his working life, his extended family in India found their own footholds, availing him the freedom to expand his family and substitute some of his duties to society-at-large. Parallel to his scientific work in Edmonton, and conferences and appointments around the world, Sujit spent his spare time establishing ethnocultural, linguistic and philosophical societies, namely Hindu, Bengali, and Vedanta with the hope that

assisted mobility affords him the luxury of snow-birding to his wife's ancestral neighborhood. As the painful grind of movement increases, the pebble reminds him from where it actually comes. His fully alert mind continues to expand its possibilities and to defy health limits with the knowledge that he, indeed, is separate from his body. It is the body that is the pebble. It is his mind that perceives the life lived, that is the pebble. Whatever his struggles, he is the pebble of creation and the source of the creation itself. And with these musings, Sujit Chakrabartty happily shares the details of his experiences in

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***“Whatever his struggles, he is the pebble of creation and the source of the creation itself.”***

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generations to follow would reap the benefits of knowing their heritage and have access to sound methodologies for leading successful lives. His eventual family of five had the privilege of serving the community as volunteers, employees, heritage language teaching and society executives for decades.

His current identity is that of the Canadian 'grandpa,' who hobbles slowly with a cane, with a few more teeth lost, which he no longer bothers to hide, and often he does not hear what you say. Perhaps, the hardest knock is yet to come? A bundle of pharmaceuticals and

his published memoirs and manuscripts: 'A Pebble on the Beach', 'Hindu Diaspora and Vedanta', and two more works in his native language of Bengali.

# Edmonton Chinese Garden

by Marty Chan

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*In 2016, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts named Marty one of the 25 most influential artists in Alberta. He writes plays for adults and books for kids. His latest series is Keepers of the Vault, a fantasy thriller for reluctant reading teenagers. He has been writing books for kids for the last 13 years. He has been a kid for the last 50 years.*



Nothing fills my heart with dread more than the question, "Where are you from?" As a Chinese-Canadian, I know that when I answer "Alberta," this will prompt the inevitable follow-up query: "no, where are you really from?"

As I stand on the stone bridge in Edmonton's Chinese Garden, I wonder if I belong in this city. The dozen Chinese zodiac statues which ring the pond offer little help. The dragon and tiger sculptures look as out of place in Louise McKinney Park as I do.

Even though I was born and raised in Alberta, I've felt like a visitor ever since I was young. The only Chinese kid at a Morinville school, I was the lone button in pocketful of toonies. The only time I didn't feel out of place was on the Sundays my parents made their weekly

pilgrimage to Chinatown. The highlight of the outing was dim sum.

I remember fidgeting in my heavy green corduroy pants while I waited on the stairs leading up to the second-floor restaurant. I willed the seated customers to eat faster so we could get our table. My mom must have sensed my impatience, because she gave me two quarters and sent me to the Chinese grocery store below to kill time.

The sharp aroma of thousand-year-old eggs greeted my nose as I hurried into the store. I shimmied between the clay pot of pungent eggs and a plastic tub of floating tofu patties in search of Haw Flakes, sweet purple disks of gummy hawthorn goodness.

Next to the candy were a collection of

Chinese magazines. When I couldn't decipher the writing on the covers, it dawned on me that I was a visitor in this world. In my mind, my true home was across Jasper Avenue in a drugstore that housed a treasure trove of comics. There, I could read about Superman and lose myself in a world where aliens were revered as heroes.

But the drugstore owner had no patience for me or my purple-stained fingers. My Haw Flakes and I were not welcome in the store. I'd never find Haw Flakes in the drugstore, nor would I ever see Superman swoop into the Chinese grocery store. The two businesses were separated by a cultural gap wider than the street between them, and I was stuck somewhere in the middle.

Over the decades, the gap has narrowed. The City of Edmonton has made room in the river valley for this tribute to the Chinese immigrants who helped build the railroad. As I glance at the skyline from the garden, I'm taken by the fact that the park is just a few hundred metres from the Chinatown of my youth.

A poetic dedication to the Chinese Garden is inscribed on the open pages of a stone book near the gazebo; one page for Chinese characters and the other for the English translation. I am like the stone book. I write about my Chinese heritage in plays, books and radio programs; the stories are about

the Chinese, but the writing is in English.

Like the Chinese Garden, it took great effort for me to gain acceptance as a writer. In the face of countless rejection letters and patronizing explanations about why there was no audience for my stories, I persevered and reached out to young readers with books like *The Mystery of the Frozen Brains* in the hope that kids would be colour blind when it came to my characters' racial backgrounds. To my delight, audiences from all cultures have embraced my stories.

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***“Audiences from all cultures  
have embraced my stories.”***

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Encouraged by this acceptance, I wrote *The Forbidden Phoenix*, a musical with composer Robert Walsh, to tell the story of the early Chinese immigrants who helped build the railroad, and for whom the garden is dedicated. In my research, I learned these immigrants faced the same struggle for acceptance as I did. Amid the heartache, however, I also found an enduring spirit of perseverance.

The Chinese Garden stands as a testament to these early immigrants but for me, it will always serve as a reminder that what I've struggled so hard to find has been right under my nose all along. This is my home.



# Cleaning Sarah's Room

by Leilei Chen

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*An academic, a writer, and a translator, Leilei Chen is author of Re-Orienting China: Travel Writing and Cross-cultural Understanding, nominated for several awards and which she is translating into Chinese. She translated Steven Grosby's Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction into Chinese. She teaches English literature, Writing Studies, and Chinese-English translation at the University of Alberta.*

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*Sarah's room needs cleaning.* At the thought, guilt wells up in me. When Sarah was small, I was a PhD student at the University of Alberta, preoccupied with studying travelogues about China and with grad student duties. She was just eight years old when she left Guangzhou, China, with her dad to join me in Edmonton. An 8-year-old suddenly ripped out of all the comfort and pampering of home and dropped into a new life, a new culture, a new language. Surely, that little girl had needed her mother, who was always preoccupied.

I began dusting her bookshelf. At the start of her schooling, we had lived in a cramped one-bedroom apartment on the university campus. My study was her bedroom, and the living room. As I worked, she slept behind me on

a tatami we had rescued, still in its packaging, from the garbage. I sat at my desk, immersed in the first of several assignments.

"Mummy, can you help me?"

As the dust cloth in my hand traced her books, I felt again the light touch of her tiny hand on my back. She was struggling in school and needed help with her homework.

I turned briefly to face her. "Mom is busy, honey," I said. "Try again. Work at it yourself." And I went back to my own work.

Now, much too late, the softness in my belly was calling. What had I been thinking?



My heart ached.

In China, I had been a good mom. When Sarah was born, my mother had offered to take care of her so that I could be free from the chores of raising a baby. But I insisted on raising my daughter myself. I rigidly followed the nursing protocols in a babycare encyclopedia. Once I even made my husband pull the car over beside the highway so that I could measure exactly 200 ml lukewarm water for Sarah's milk formula bottle on a completely level surface. I took her to

had mothered her more? If I had cooked three meals plus two snacks a day like I had done in Guangzhou? If I had taken her to the playground everyday here too? Would it have been easier for me?

But something was wrong. I should have been pleased to have an understanding and well-adjusted child, shouldn't I? Who said a mom pursuing her own career was no longer a good mom? Wasn't it me -- the same mom -- who brought Sarah here so that she could have the privilege of speaking two

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## ***“Would it have been easier for her if I had mothered her more?”***

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the playground every day to make sure she got enough outdoor exercise. When she tried to grab a little bucket from another boy playing in the sand, I shook my head, like a good mom should, and gently said no. Though she was only one year old, she understood my gentleness didn't undermine my resolution.

She was always an understanding daughter.

Even after she came to Canada. She had never complained about me not giving her enough care. She had done well at school and had even made some good friends to play and sleep over with. Would it have been easier for her if I

languages? Of knowing two cultures? Didn't her strong sense of independence come from me, her independent mom?

My eyes caught the framed photo on her bookshelf. Sarah with her birthday cake all over her face was glaring at me with a naughty look. She held her hands up beside her ears, making a lion-roaring pose to the camera. I thought back to a conversation about this photo. We were having breakfast in our new house.

“I changed a lot after moving to Canada,” she had said. She was in her first year of junior high then. A strange thing for a teenager to say on a Sunday morning.

"Oh? Why do you think so?" I was still thinking of Yi-Fu Tuan's *Coming Home to China* but wanted to sustain the conversation.

"Well, look at the picture on the fridge. I was such a spoiled little brat back then."

Her words had startled me. It was her analysis. Her self-reflection. Her self-criticism.

"You were a little princess then." But hadn't I been the ridiculously meticulous

permitted to torment me. It was like watching her branch out of the tree of me into a separate life, independent and vibrantly healthy. Her transformation mirrored what I saw in the travelogues I was researching.

It was also my own transformation from a mom with a confining view of motherhood, to one able to take pride in her own independence and to savour that of her daughter. I wiped down the glass frame holding the Edmonton Youth Orchestra poster featuring Sarah

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***"It was like watching her branch out of the tree of me into a separate life, independent and vibrantly healthy."***

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mom who had made her a princess by following the encyclopedia's mothering rules?

"How have you changed?"

"I think I'm a better person now. Less self-centred. I like who I am now better." She told me a story then about her friendship with Emma, what she did to grow it, how she had compromised, and how happy and grateful she felt after all the conflicts and frustrations.

I listened to her in wonder. Her maturation, her understanding, and her comfort in Canada mocked the sentimental, rigid maternity I had

as the soloist playing Mozart's Piano Concerto in D minor. I felt very proud of her.



# Pakistani Canadians in Edmonton

by G. Nabi Chaudhary

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Born to a farming family in a village in Punjab, Pakistan, Mr. Chaudhary joined the University of Alberta for post-graduate studies in 1972. He began working for the Alberta Government Department of Agriculture in 1974, where he retired as a Manager in 2011. Mr. Chaudhary has volunteered for many community organizations in Edmonton and across Canada.*

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Pakistanis began migrating to Canada in mid 1950s and early 1960s. In 1950s a very small number of education, engineering and medical Pakistanis professionals came to Alberta and settled in Edmonton. During these years there were more Pakistani students attending University of Alberta and NAIT than immigrants. Pakistan Students Association (PSA) on campus facilitated all community activities well into the early seventies and beyond. Most of the students from Pakistan stayed together primarily for companionship and dietary

issues. A house on University Avenue and 109 Street called "Pakistan House", housed only students from Pakistan. On the weekend, a few immigrants would come to the house to socialize and play cards.

In 1973, Pakistan Canadian Association of Edmonton (PCAE) was established, to facilitate settlement of new immigrants, and to promote and maintain Pakistani culture, language and heritage. With the 1976 revision of the Immigration Act which gave preference to people with

advanced education and professional skills, Pakistani immigration to Canada increased. Pakistanis who came during the 1970s and 1980s, generally had graduate, post graduate and doctoral degrees. Many of them were only money earners or students who intended to return home after a period of time. Others remained, however, and founded the community in Edmonton. As the community grew, it established a community-based organization to address issues of settlement and to promote and preserve Pakistani culture and heritage.

For praying purposes right up to mid eighties, only the Al Rashid Mosque

numbers of Pakistani professionals working in the Middle East also moved to Canada. After settling their families in Edmonton, a few continued to work in the Middle East, visiting families in Edmonton once or twice a year. Due to lack of Canadian experience, a small number of Pakistani professionals have faced challenges in finding employment in their areas of expertise. Some have been forced to drive taxis, work as security guards, start small retail businesses or take up odd jobs to support their families.

Before the introduction of Internet, communication with loved ones back home was a great challenge. Phone

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***“Before the introduction of Internet, communication with loved ones back home was a great challenge.”***

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existed in the city, near the Royal Alexander Hospital. The first mosque in Canada, it had been built in 1938. After the prayers, men would stand in a circle in the main hall to greet each other. Ladies would do the same in their respective prayer area. After the greetings, all would go down to the Mosque basement to share refreshments. These activities helped to bond the congregants from different ethnic backgrounds.

In the late seventies and eighties, large

calls were booked through a telephone operator. Connections were difficult and charges high. An important aspect of Pakistani participation in the Canadian economy has been the increasing number of Pakistani-Canadian women who work outside the home. The need for two incomes has required many women to seek employment, leaving the cloistered home life customary in Pakistan. The situation has created problems within families, and particularly between couples, but it has also given women the opportunity to participate

more fully in Canadian society. Many have enthusiastically embraced the change. In Edmonton, Pakistanis have been active in promoting and preserving their culture and language. They hold weekend classes for youth, seniors and women. Community members interact on a regular basis with other ethno cultural and inter-faith communities, to develop mutual understanding.

In 1992, the community initiated the formation of Islamic Family and Social Services Association (IFSSA). IFSSA provides a holistic approach to community well being that is culturally and spiritually sensitive to Muslims, yet open to all. IFSSA runs programs that address food security, family violence, refugee sponsorship and settlement, emergency financial relief, preventative youth programming and more. Children of Islamic Nations (COIN) was created by Edmonton volunteers more than 35 years ago. COIN has completed more than 100 global projects overseas related to children's education, health, and relief efforts through generous donations by Edmontonians. Multicultural Women and Seniors Services Association (MWSSA) is a non-profit organization that is administered by a Board of dedicated volunteers. Persons from all cultures are welcomed here.

Pakistani Canadians in Edmonton are an integral part of the Muslims and

South Asian Christian communities and have been very active in building places of worship across the city. During the last 35 years, congregational prayer facilities for the Muslims in Edmonton have increased to about twenty five. Pakistani community has constructed a Community Culture Centre on 39 Avenue and 92 Street to facilitate various community activities for adults, youth, women and seniors. It is also available for use by other communities at a very nominal charge.

Although the community has thrived in Multicultural Canada, it continues to face challenges of under employment and non-recognition by the Canadian system of credentials in certain areas. Some seniors complain of loneliness and resent their decision to immigrate. Parents leave seniors to babysit children. Some seniors who came to live with their children left quickly, feeling demeaned and alienated.

My advice to new and aspiring immigrants is that "all that glitters is not gold". Get your credentials from a relevant institution evaluated and certified, then seek the required experience. It may be tough and time consuming, but there is no other way around such requirements.



# Our Immigration Story

by Odittee Das Choudhury

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Odittee holds an English Literature Masters degree from India where she was an Elementary teacher. She is pursuing her Early Learning career in Canada, which she made her home in 2014. Raising two wonderful kids with her husband, Odittee loves to cook and write and to give back to the community.*

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My journey here in Canada started in 2009 when my husband was deputed on a project by IBM, where he had worked for many years in Bangalore, the "silicon valley" city of India. He would be here for at least 3 years so we decided to tag along. And that's how our journey began. In 2011, while we were still here in Canada on my husband's deputation, I gave birth to our second child. During my pregnancy, I received remarkable care and support from the doctors at the hospital at which our younger child was born. Before my pregnancy, however, I was sitting at home, and that was when I decided to volunteer as a supervisor at my elder son's school. That was my first Canadian professional experience of any sort. It was 2012, and at the end of the 3-year period of our stay, we decided to move back to our home country, India, as my husband's project had concluded. We missed our family and friends back

home. Two years passed, and by that time we had found ourselves in the usual rhythm of daily urban life in India. One day, my husband got a call from his professional circle in Canada. They were wondering how he felt about coming back to Canada on another opportunity. The stakes were high. On the one hand, we had already settled back in our home country. We loved it here, our son was enrolled at a good school and we were all caught up with friends and family. On the other hand, Canada beckoned. After giving it much thought for over a year and half, we decided we wanted to take the opportunity, and in 2014 we moved back to Canada.

This time around, I enrolled for my professional degree certification in child care education. Life was hectic as we prepared to gear up for life in Canada. We found ourselves juggling priorities,

anxious to do everything we could, as fast as we could to set for ourselves that same standard of living we had been used to in India. While we missed home and family, our new found friends here in Canada helped make up for a lot of

true, but it also meant I had to make that hard decision to leave my career behind, as a well established elementary teacher back at India. But when I finally decided it was time to move on, I did so swiftly and with determination. I've

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***“But when I finally decided it was time to move on, I did so swiftly and with determination.”***

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our home sickness. Besides, there was always something to look forward to, in so many ways and so many walks of our lives as we interacted with kind folks here.

We did not forget to take some time off especially during the gorgeous summers of 2014 and 2015 to visit Banff, Jasper, Mt. Robson, and the Athabasca river with our friends.

Canada is a celebrated diverse country, and we soon found ourselves a part of that diversity. Through the Bengali diaspora we connected with the local cultural club here in Edmonton, where they observe *Durga Puja* for three days every year. We were simply so amazed at the vibrancy and the variety that experience offered, that we forgot we were at a place halfway around the world. For those three days of festivities, we felt completely at home.

Coming to Canada was a dream come

come a long way here in Canada. Today I am a practising professional child care educator, but I couldn't have done it without my wonderful family and friends, and the professional support that Canada gave me.

All in all, this has been an experience worth living.

Thank you Canada!



# Dream Country

by Shambhu Nath Chowdhury

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Dr. Chowdhury is a happiness mentor and works with a mission to transform illness to wellness. He is an Outreach Social Worker in Edmonton. He was an academician and a banker in India before immigrating to Canada in 2010. He has presented papers at the UN's Conference at Grant MacEwan University in 2013, Grey Matters Conference (2017).*

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To see the unseen, to know the unknown is the mystical pull for many people including me. I was born in Pakistan, saw the birth of Bangladesh and migrated to India when I was a teenager. I completed my studies with a terminal degree in management in India and worked for a government of India owned bank for over 25 years while serving as adjunct faculty in MBA programs of three universities.

hand against an uncertain dream of establishing myself in Canada. Prior to landing in Canada, I had no relatives, friends, or acquaintances in the country.

It was truly an adventure to come to Canada. My wife and two children and I didn't know where to land. Initially, I thought of landing in Vancouver, then Toronto. Finally, we decided to land in Edmonton. I googled further to know if I

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## ***“It was truly an adventure to come to Canada.”***

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When a friend described to me Canada as a land of opportunity, I applied for a Permanent Residence (PR) Visa to go there. It took almost nine years to get my PR. It was the most critical time to decide what to do- to leave a prestigious job with lots of power and potential in

could find any sort of connections. I got a few names of people belonging to my native community.

I e-mailed three of them to see if they could in help me in my preparation to land in Edmonton. I was thrilled when

all of them responded to my e-mail. To add to my wonderment, one of them phoned me in India and answered my queries. I requested if he could see an apartment for us. He agreed to do so and asked me to pay for two months' rent. Without knowing much about the person, I risked and remitted the money to him. In another two days he sent me the rent receipt and advised me to apply for electricity and phone and quoted the amount required. Without a second thought, I again remitted money.

To add to my surprise, he told me that he would be in India within a week and would be returning by the next week. He suggested that if we wished, we could buy tickets on the same flight. We thought something amazing was happening and we could not believe the coincidence of his sudden visit, with our journey to Canada. It was June 13, 2010 that we met him at Netaji Subhas International Airport in Kolkata and boarded the Lufthansa flight for Canada around 12:30 a.m. We reached Edmonton via Frankfurt and Calgary. While in Calgary, he left for Edmonton and we missed the flight for immigration checkup. We boarded next flight about two hours later and reached Edmonton around 6:00 o'clock in the evening.

From a public booth at the airport, we phoned him and left a message that we were waiting for his help. Within an hour he had arrived at the airport. Loading

our luggage half in his car and half in a rented taxi, he brought us to his house for coffee and snacks, and let us stay in his home for the night.

Next morning to our amazement, a neighbor called Mrs. Mukhopadhyay, belonging to our ethnic community, brought us delicious food. Then the host who had put us up for the night brought us to our rented accommodation. There we found out that he and his wife had bought all the groceries, beds, and all primary necessities. Finally, he took us to complete an application for health care, open a bank account, and to other places we needed to go. After that he left us for his job in Fort McMurray, but offered to let us stay at his home for two weeks. Before he left, he suggested to us to get my daughter admitted to Duggan Elementary School.

The neighbor verified our address and found that my daughter's school would be Rideau Park Elementary school. Accordingly, we went to that school after making an appointment with the principal over the phone. He drove us to the school and spoke with the principal and my daughter got admitted. From that day to this, the wonderful hospitality, courtesy, respect and support have been continuing from him. The wonderful experience of our arrival in Canada caused us to love this country. We will continue to love and serve it from the bottom of our hearts.

# You

by Alison Clark

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Alison Clarke is a young adult fantasy author of the Sisterhood Series, so far consisting of The Sisterhood and Racine. She experiences life as a spoken word artist and enjoys painting and drawing. She is of West Indian background, her family tree containing Ghanaian, Irish and Chinese ancestries. Common themes run through some of her poems. A few: change, questions of home, and multiplicity of identity.*



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Fire Flame A Circle Who are you? What are You?

Robes of - The Druids... A Hum... A Meditation: Headdresses of Fuchsia, Indigo...

Reminiscent of AN ART FORM

They SPEAK Swirl In Circles

Words A Song Words A Symphony Mnemonic Teutonic Sonic

Ships that Scream WAVES Chains

A new world...

Surrounded by Sun

Who are you? What are you?

Robes Red Dragons Bound feet.

Voyage Ocean A Realm Inundated With Sun

Who are you? What are you?

Voyage Ocean Going Back And Forth In Time...

Aerial Cerebral Celestial...

I was only... Fleeing from Reverberations of ones like Enoch Powell...

Words were Rivers Of – No Inclusion, but Walls of Ignorance, that created  
Floodgates Of –

My parents wanted to escape The Tide...

And Then Arriving – Alberta: An Unknown that felt like a Precipice... An Unknown...

Then, More Struggle, More Obstacles.... Holding on To Possibility...

Sometimes, Victory...

But The Ancestors Called Loudly, The Ancestors became a United Force, A Collective,  
They called, and said: Stay Your Ground, Forge Your Path Of Light... And To...

Immerse Yourself in

Synergy

Harmony

ONE.



# Home is Where You Are

by Anne Cloarec

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Anne Cloarec has done many different things before becoming a teacher, such as coordinating music and theater festivals, working with Roma people in Europe, and doing public consultation about urban planning. She grew up in the south of France and moved to Canada in 2017. She likes surprises, and she enjoys the uncertainties of life.*

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It all started with a flip of a coin...

I was living in a shared flat in Marseille in south of France. My roommates and I flipped a coin to decide who, among candidates who had responded to our ad requesting a roommate, we should choose. Malcolm Roberts won! He was in France, from Edmonton, working on a project as a mathematician. And that's how, 6 years ago, the story of Malcolm and I began, first only as flat roommates.

In September 2016 Malcolm and I decided to move to Calgary, where he

had got a job. I was pregnant, with a boy. I was leaving behind my family, I thought, and my beloved profession as a teacher. To settle in Canada, a foreign country! It scared me.

We applied for a permanent residency for me, but got a tourist visa for starters.

Two things in Calgary I didn't expect proved difficult for me: the administrative situation and the city urban planning. I had been naïve to think I would enjoy the same rights as a Canadian citizen, such as to volunteer, work, go back

to university, or even travel to visit my family. With only a tourist visa, I couldn't do any of those things. I felt lonely away from my family. I didn't expect any relative to be here to share our experience of the coming birth of Flynn. I had no opportunity to meet people or make friends. I emailed my family that I wouldn't be able to travel for a couple of years, so they wouldn't be able to meet my son.

Now, regarding the matter of urban planning – first, you may ask: how can the way a city is organized impact your life? Mh, I'll tell you by giving a picture of two cities: Montpellier, in France, where I lived, and Calgary. I lived in Montpellier for over 30 years, a small city located between the Mediterranean and Cévennes mountains. Because of its

drinks we would talk for hours and hours. We enjoyed hanging out between old stones, on café terraces, under trees; we listened to water flowing from the fountains...

In Montpellier, you can go to many places a reasonable distance from where you live: to grocery stores, pools, libraries, cinemas, restaurants, music, theatre, dance festivals, to work offices...

Now, in Calgary I was surprised that you needed a car for everything. I do remember once when I had to get an ultrasound. My goodness! How I had to struggle! I felt trapped in Calgary. How, I would ask myself, could I get downtown on foot? Was there any kind of interesting stuff to do there besides shopping? I felt so sad.

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## ***“How can the way a city is organized impact your life?”***

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warm weather, you can enjoy the beach for five months of the year. And you can get to the beach by tram! And this is the point. Montpellier is a kind of city where if you don't have a car or don't drive, you would still be fine. You can go wherever you want on a bike, by public transport, or on foot.

Oh, and Montpellier was friendly to people, and particularly to me. After work, I used to meet friends and over

One evening, Malcolm and I decided to go out. We went to a French restaurant, an authentic one! I'll remember this evening my whole life. It was a very simple evening. As soon as we had ordered dinner the staff in the restaurant figured I was French.

The owner, coming by, said to us, “Hello.” We made introductions, and talked.

Funny, it turned out he was from a small



city, close to Marseille, where I had met Malcolm! The man said these few words which have stuck with me to this day. *"Tu sais je suis parti il y a longtemps, ma femme est aussi originaire d'Edmonton. Si tu cherches à comparer entre ici et là d'où tu viens, où que tu sois, tu seras toujours malheureuse."* ("I've been away from France a long time now. Like your husband, my wife is from Edmonton. If you always compare where you used to live with whatever new place you end up living in, it would make you unhappy.")

Since that evening I made many things work for me here in Calgary. I adapted myself to Calgary's urban planning, making a compromise: I use a car but only when I really need to, otherwise I take public transport. Many fun things happen in the Calgary area. No, I couldn't lie on the beach with my friends by a warm weather as I had done in Montpellier! Instead I took pleasure cross country skiing in minus 30°C, pregnant, with my partner

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We have Flynn now, born on April 14th,

2017. He has the right to dual citizenship. I'll be getting my permanent residency and in a few months, I will be able to teach. We'll travel to France soon.

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***"If you always compare where you used to live with whatever new place you end up living in, it would make you unhappy."***

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# My Canada

by Donna Coombs-Montrose

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Donna Coombs-Montrose has been an Archivist/Librarian (MSLS), Independent Researcher; Labour and Community Activist, Member, and Director of Alberta Labour History Institute. She has been deeply involved in the Caribbean Women Network, CARIWEST, Trinidad & Tobago Cultural Association, and Edmonton-based Living History Group.*



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My region of birth consists of a chain of islands from Bermuda and Cuba to Trinidad/Tobago. They had been part of the Spanish, Dutch, French, American, British, and Portuguese, and later United States, colonial empires. This foreign occupation, spanning centuries, wiped out most of the indigenous Carib people, after whom the Caribbean Sea and Region are named, and has created new societies with different first languages, cultures, and histories. I had therefore grown up on an island that was Spanish, French, English at different periods in its history. Our Mardi Gras, carnivals, and festivals like Cariwest had also grown out of this environment.

In recent colonial times, we were nurtured on rigid British educational standards and habits. Our societies

had also retained many practices from our slave heritage (like the worship of Yoruba deities) as well as Britain's indenture-ship experience which brought thousands to the region from India. The foods we eat, and the fabric of our societies, reflects these multiple heritages.

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The plane touched down in Toronto's Pearson International Airport on a September day in 1969. It had brought me to a new country and continent. My family, back in Trinidad & Tobago, were proud of my decision but felt shattered by my leaving home for the first time. I was following a childhood dream to study Library Science. Canada, which attracted students from various

Caribbean islands seeking higher education, suited my goals.

I expected Canada to warmly welcome us, new students from the Caribbean eager to achieve our dreams. But no. Toronto introduced me to racism: in housing, in human rights case hearings, education, and discrimination due to accent. I had arrived in Toronto a few weeks after West Indian students seized Montreal's Sir George Williams University's Computer Centre, an

men to be conscientious objectors protesting the Vietnam war. They had fled to Canada to avoid a draft into the US Army. Their resistance would mushroom into what came to be called "The Black Power Movement" in the US. These developments had a big impact on my region which had a shared history of slavery and oppression with African Americans. Furthermore, anti-colonial armed struggles taking place in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and elsewhere in Africa, stimulated us into solidarity with other

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***“Their resistance would mushroom into what came to be called “The Black Power Movement” in the US.”***

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event featured in a National Film Board documentary, “The Ninth Floor”, produced by Selwyn Jacob. Those students had all been consistently failing computer courses, falling short of medical school entrance requirements. Some of these protesting students did jail time. This event had tremendous impact on many West Indian students in similar postsecondary institutions, and on some Caribbean governments, which asked their students to return ‘home’.

At the time of that protest and in its aftermath, scores of young African-American men were also occupying space in my Ryerson campus cafeteria daily. I later understood these young

oppressed peoples, making us realize we were not alone in our struggles for justice, equality, and respect.

The complex environment created by this wave of political ferment caused students to meet to discuss and understand issues, and to create or join organizations. We formed cultural organizations, opened ethnic or specialised stores.

We wanted to represent who we were in our new society.

One of the best-known organizations to come out of our desire to represent who we were and that became internationally recognised, was Toronto's

Caribana Festival, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2017. This singular festival developed to bring \$400-\$450 million annually to the coffers of Toronto. Caribana/Toronto Carnival has spawned other similar festivals in Montreal (Carifesta), Hamilton, Edmonton (Cariwest), Calgary (Carifest), Vancouver, Winnipeg (Caripeg) and other cities in Canada. Caribana's influence also spread to many North American cities including New York (Labour Day), Miami

visibility.

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In conclusion, let me say that living initially in Toronto and understanding its dynamics as they affected my circumstances made me realize that others from different climes faced their own problems adapting to and winning recognition in this new society. Doing graduate studies and interacting with

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***“Others from different climes faced their own problems adapting to and winning recognition in this new society.”***

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(Miami Carnival), Los Angeles and Chicago. It has even spread to Notting Hill, England.

I myself did contribute to develop Edmonton's Cariwest to mobilise Western Canada's Caribbean communities. I presided over it as it grew into a pillar representing these communities' aims and aspirations. We collaborated to build costumes with schools, organized workshops at the University of Alberta, and created community oral histories that documented the earlier arrivals of West Indians to Alberta. We created linkages to attract skilled workers to migrate to this province. Increased public participation in our annual August festival enhanced Cariwest and its

other nationalities caused me to mature in my consciousness about many things, and to become a contributing member of the Canadian society. Overall, I think that the struggles of and contributions by those of us from the Caribbean and elsewhere, have made Canada a better country for all.





# Meet Sandeep Custnea

*A Conversation*

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**Editor:** How are you, Sandeep?

**Sandeep:** I am fine.

**Editor:** Where is Mauritius, many people may ask?

**Sandeep:** The short answer? It's an island that lies off the east coast of South Africa. When people ask me where I come from, I show them on Google Maps this tiny island in the Indian Ocean, and I sometimes use other countries, such as Madagascar and Australia, as

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Sandeep Cutsea comes from Mauritius island in Africa. Sandeep works as a public safety sheriff in Alberta. He has diplomas in Business Administration and Police Science/Law Enforcement and Protection and a degree in Criminal Justice, and is a graduate from the Mauritius Police Force Training School. The E-book Editor talked to him.*

points of reference. The only other thing that people then ask me is: "Why did you leave this beautiful place and come

to the cold?"

**Editor:** Yes, really. Why?

**Sandeep:** I had been planning to come to Canada since 2006. In the process of waiting, I found in newspapers that a company was hiring.

**Editor:** In Alberta?

**Sandeep:** (laughs) I had never heard of Alberta before. All we knew of Canada were the big cities and provinces: Toronto, Quebec, Ottawa, etc. Yes, my goal as far as I can remember, had always been to immigrate, maybe study in order to get a good job.

**Editor:** And then?

**Sandeep:** I immigrated in 2008 and was hired as a wage employee at Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre (FSCC) in 2010. Then I got a full-time position in 2011. In 2012, I was hired as a sheriff.

**Editor:** Sheriff?

**Sandeep:** Yes.

**Editor:** What do you find most enjoyable about your job?

**Sandeep:** One of the best things about working in my area is that anyone can bring their experiences to the table

regardless of gender, ethnic heritage or background. Sheriffs are given the responsibility to maintain public order. At the same time, they get the opportunity to engage with people, identify and solve problems and positively affect communities on a daily basis by serving and protecting them.

**Editor:** What kind of work were you doing in Mauritius?

**Sandeep:** In Mauritius, I worked as an orderly with the deputy chief of police and worked in the United Nations security building in 2005 for the Mauritius Small Islands Development States Conference (SIDS). My career took me to different branches of police services – a central investigating department, anti-drug smuggling unit and a tactical team.

**Editor:** It must have been a big move to come to a place you had never heard of before.

**Sandeep:** Big step. To leave families, the life routines, paradise weather like the one we have in Mauritius.

**Editor:** Big step, and challenging too? What do you find particularly challenging here?

**Sandeep:** (laughs) The cold!

**Editor:** What have you gained by coming



to Canada?

**Sandeep:** Freedom, which is very important to us. Even from rich countries, people come to live here. Because of the freedom. In Canada, there are lots of opportunities. I'm proud to be a Canadian and proud to have a decent job.

**Editor:** Is there any advice you could give to newcomers?

**Sandeep:** Yes. Although Canada is a great country, nothing would fall from the sky for you. You have to work hard.

**Editor:** Last question. Who is your role model?

**Sandeep:** Mahatma Gandhi.

**Editor:** Why?

**Sandeep:** He was the preeminent leader of Indian nationalism in British-ruled India. Using non-violence civil disobedience, he led India to independence and inspired movements for non-violence, civil rights and freedom across the world.



# Meet Chenlu Dai

*A Conversation*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Chenlu Dai has done a six-year exploration of the Canadian land. She has a travel mania and is a risk-taker. Poutine in Montreal is her favorite Canadian food. One of her wishes is to leave her footprint in all provinces of Canada. Suraj Khatiwada, who works for Action for Healthy Communities talked to Chenlu about her life in Canada.*

**Suraj:** What do you feel you have gained by coming to Canada? Or lost?

**Chenlu:** There is so much packed in that question, Do you mind if I give you a bit of a long-ish answer?

**Suraj:** No. Go ahead.

**Chenlu:** First, when I think about it, I can't imagine I've been here 6 years already! Time goes so fast I haven't had a chance to sit down and review my Canadian life. I can still visualize when I first arrived, the excitement of starting a new life in this. I came to Canada as an international student to pursue my Masters degree.

I landed in Saskatchewan, and lived there for five years. It gave me complex feelings about Canada. Especially its harsh winters. The winters made me feel like I had burst into a frozen world. I do remember the excitement, many of us from warm countries feel, about seeing snow for the first time. Then reality hit me. I remember missing a bus in -40 weighed down by groceries, quivering, desperate and hopeless.

The foreign environment was also harsh for me in my first year. My English was horrible. I struggled in my academic life and daily life because of this language barrier. I remember standing in front of a Subway menu board, too afraid

to speak a word, since I didn't know the difference between a foot-long and 6-inch sandwich. I wished I had a translation machine in my brain. Many times, in the classroom I was at a loss as to what professor was talking about. When I did my first public presentation, I trembled, and palms sweated. All those challenges made me feel isolated. But they didn't block my way forward. On

My only sacrifice for my gain was the time I could have spent with my beloved family. In the last six years, I never got a chance to stay with my family in our Spring Festival, the traditional one for family reunion celebration. Sometimes in life, you can't choose. It's not a restaurant buffet where you can pick what you want. You cannot have your cake, and eat it too. So instead of complaining

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***“Exploring and absorbing experiences like a baby greedily does milk from a bottle, I began to get a sense of the Canadian society.”***

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the contrary, they motivated me to strive to connect and embrace this new world.

A turning point in my life occurred after five years when I moved to Alberta. In Edmonton, I enjoyed a huge change in my life, as well as in my career. I got a chance to get to know about the Canadian community culture. I worked and volunteered at Action for Health Communities (A4HC). The experience gave me a feeling I didn't get in the university setting. Here I connected with people with dynamic backgrounds. Exploring and absorbing experiences like a baby greedily does milk from a bottle, I began to get a sense of the Canadian society.

I felt lucky I had come here and gained so much when only in my beautiful 20s.

about how much I have lost, I would like to say I haven't incurred any loss. The positive or negative experiences I have had, have either been gains, or useful learning moments.

# Excerpt from “Us”, A Forthcoming Memoir

by Satya Brata Das

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edmonton-based Satya Brata Das is a writer, a strategic adviser to leaders, and a community volunteer. This excerpt is from a manuscript of a memoir called **Us**, timed for release on Oct. 2, 2019, the sesquicentennial of MK Gandhi's birth.

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*On meeting Vijayamma, mother of forsaken children, and his introduction to SOS Children's Villages in 1996, Satya Das leaves journalism at the height of his career, to make a difference in the world. After a life away, he returns for a visit to his land of birth and to see Vijayamma again.*

I reflect on why I feel so unsettled, so consumed by foreboding, so mindful of being disconnected from Home. And I admit to myself the apprehension I have all day denied: tomorrow morning I will return, after an absence of 17 years, to another village that shaped and informed my journey. I will return to the place that taught me, with startling clarity, two of the three essential foundations of a meaningful human life: freedom from fear and freedom

from want. And above all, I am to see the woman who infused the lives of her children with the third essential element, the bounty of unconditional love: Vijayamma. In all these years, I have wondered what became of her and the forsaken children she raised as her own. Yet I never dared to find out, for fear that all might have turned out badly in the end. To be sure it is an exile's cowardice. Yet it is more. My recollection of Vijayamma is entwined with my own sense of self, a central source of my own commitment to human dignity and the human right to a meaningful life. That fateful meeting in the course of my work as a foreign correspondent came to affirm the very purpose of my public life and its mission to make a difference in the world. The experience of Vijayamma and her village became a compelling

narrative in my advocacy of human rights as a way of life. It illuminated the why and how of seeking to evolve societies where women and men and girls and boys can live together with dignity, in community, in harmony with one another and with the natural world. My commitment to sustainability, to a new way of being and belonging in the world with dignity as its hallmark, always found new energy when I thought of her, and the hundreds of other mothers serving in SOS Children's Villages all over the world. Coming back to Aluva, to a village that left such a mark on my life's journey, I cannot bear the thought that the inspiration I took there might be shattered by disillusion. Yet now that the path is set, I know I must be prepared to

signal the imminence of the village, one would have been lost in the busy sprawl of Kochi, in a neighbourhood so transformed in 17 years as to bewilder and bedazzle. What was once a village distant from the bustle of the city is now surrounded by the thudding din of construction. The Kochi Metro line, apartment blocks, office towers, rising from a dusty haze of cranes and sweat and heat: the cement dust itself the new incense for the deity of newfound wealth.

It has been a long morning's drive indeed, from the bucolic houseboat jetty in Allapuzha to the emerging megapolis of Kochi, every kilometre moving us from serenity to chaos. My day began

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***“What was once a village distant from the bustle of the city is now surrounded by the thudding din of construction.”***

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accept with equanimity whatever I may find.

They are immense now, the spreading shade trees that announce the village: her village, Vijayamma's village. Trees that seemed little more than striplings all those years ago, bursting with birdsong in the blistering noonday heat of the humid Kerala coast, giving shelter to the ample homes ringing the village amphitheatre. Without the trees that

before the light, as I arose at the first brightening of the night sky, evoking the presence of the Mother Goddess in timeless Sanskrit verse while I waited for the water and the village to awaken. I completed my ablutions, my first pre-dawn bath in many years, emerged on deck to immerse myself in the stirring of a new day. During my dawn prayers and meditation I tried my best to quell the unease that always overtakes me during trips to India: knowing that I have

returned to the country of my birth, but cannot ever go Home. I snap my tablet shut, and look to the lightening horizon. A cargo-laden longboat, piled with gunnysacks, breaks the stillness of the day with the whirr of its engine, as the horizon brightens above the eastern banks. My traveling companion, a friend of three decades standing, emerges from his cabin. We watch the flotilla of school-boats pass by over a leisurely breakfast, sail by bathers on the ghats, a sari-draped woman pouring a brass jug of lake-water over herself with a sinuous grace, a school-bound boy being fussed over by a mother tucking in his shirt and handing him his tiffin-box before sending him off to the jetty with a little guiding shove. The morning light carries the

with Daliya, a colleague who has kindly agreed to interpret from Malayalam to English. Yet the warmth of Vijayamma's greeting needs no translation. She is radiant. From the first look I can see that her life has unfolded in grace, that the selfless commitment she made all those years ago has brought her the fulfilment and satisfaction that comes from making a difference in the lives of others.

Vijayamma had only been a few years at the SOS Children's Village in Aluva when we met in 1996. She was a young widow in her 30s who gave up any chance of remaking a life with another partner as she set out to devoting the rest of her own life to being a mother to children

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***“The morning light carries the burnish of old gold, as all around us the world comes alive.”***

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burnish of old gold, as all around us the world comes alive. Yet soon the charms of waterborne life are left far behind, as we dock, drive through rural roads, and lunge into the thundering, never-ending churn of highway traffic.

I know I have arrived when I see the garlanded bust of the village's visionary founder, Hermann Gmeiner, in the plaza, and step out of the car into the breezy arcade of the visitors' reception. I step into the open verandah, and there she is,

abandoned with nowhere to go. As we walk across the grounds to Vijayamma's house, she carries the ease of years of accomplishment.

Vijayamma is one of 15 mothers at SOS Children's Village in Aluva, women who dedicate themselves to providing four critical supports in a child's life: a home, a mother, siblings, and a shared and supportive community. This is the practical, hands on means to achieve the two foundational human rights:



Freedom from Fear, and Freedom from Want. Like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, SOS Children's Villages were born from the ashes of the Second World War. If the Universal Declaration made compelling promises of how human life ought to be lived, the SOS Children's Villages actually enabled that life to be lived. The experience of a life lived within the context of human rights and human dignity is deeply empowering and enabling, a way of life that in itself, is a vaccination against the corrosive impetus to violence. Indeed, as Gandhi reminded us time and again, non-violence is nothing more and nothing less than the absence of fear. The village itself provides freedom from want: shelter, clothing, food, education, a supportive family, the companionship of a community. And a mother's love.

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***“The experience of a life lived within the context of human rights and human dignity is deeply empowering and enabling.”***

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# Dad, I never say this enough -

by Kristina de Guzman

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Kristina de Guzman immigrated to Canada from the Philippines as a young child and it was from observing her parents' challenges of settling in Canada that inspired her interest to work with immigrants and newcomers. Having been to 20 countries, she also considers herself a cultural nomad at heart. "Dad, I never say this enough" is an excerpt from her longer poem, "I Am Not From Here".*

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I was only four  
when we had to stopover  
in Vancouver – December 1990 –  
during a wintry snowstorm

I looked up in awe  
as I saw these giant snowflakes  
settle on my father's head  
I did not feel much else  
as I tagged along with  
my parents and little sister  
to spend the night  
at the home of a Filipino stranger

I don't know what it feels like  
to make a decision so grand  
that you uproot your whole life  
say goodbye to years of time spent

with all the loved ones  
you grew up with

Compared to mom  
my father had it so much harder  
See, it was mom's side of the family  
who were already here  
Not his

I realize now that's why  
he returned every four years or so  
Weddings, funerals  
Any chance he got  
While it took my mom  
seventeen whole years  
to pay the Philippines a visit  
And when she finally returned  
she said it was no longer home to her  
But for him it would always be so

It was my father  
who had to give up  
his dream career for so long  
settle down to clean for others  
after years of working in highways  
building roads and other infrastructure  
in the Islands and in the Middle East  
All this so that my sister and I  
would never have to worry  
about finances or security

See, I don't know what it feels like



to have to uproot one's entire life  
like my daddy did  
but I have many memories  
of my childhood home  
Memories my sister is saddened  
she never got to form

But my father challenged the idea of  
what's good enough  
by swallowing his pride  
to make his way back  
to engineering his passion  
He went back to school

Like his love for basketball  
he jumped through all the hoops  
Even went to challenge an English exam  
whose necessity he questioned  
and thanks to the question and request  
he skipped the need to write it  
Now my dad is only one step away  
to be recognized as a professional  
with Canadian credentials  
and for this I truly can't help  
but admire my father

Dad I never say this enough  
but I have the utmost respect and love for you  
you sacrificed much but didn't give up on yourself  
You're really the first person  
I ever looked up to



# Lessons from the Schoolyard

by Natasha Deen

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Natasha Deen ([www.natashadeen.com](http://www.natashadeen.com)) loves stories—exciting ones, scary ones, and especially funny ones! Her stories include award-winning *Lark Holds the Key* and *Gatekeeper*. When she's not working on her books or visiting schools and libraries, she spends a lot of time trying to convince her dogs and cats that she's boss of the house!

Moving with my family from Guyana, South America to Calgary, Alberta provided me with a wealth of learning. I learned about snow and flannel, cowboy boots, and pancakes. And one day, while walking home, a group of older boys hurled snowballs packed with stones and taught me about racial slurs, the violence of hate, and what it meant to live in a city where my skin colour didn't match the other kids'.

It's a lesson I'm still learning, and recent events—from the hate signs at the university, the hate speech at rallies, and the hateful gaze of the woman who passed by me the other day—continue to serve as a painful refresher.

I am different, set apart because of the colour of my skin. Sometimes, the weight of my flesh feels heavy; the burden of carrying my skin's melanin seems a task even Atlas couldn't bear.

When I hear or experience a moment of racism, my memory goes back to the fateful day on the sidewalk, the thwack of snowballs hitting my coat, the sting of the stones catching my skin. As the hurt rises, I remind myself of the other part of the story.

I went home and told my mother, and she said, "Get your coat." We were going hunting, and our prey was the ring leader.

After days of walking the frozen ground and hours of knocking on doors, my mother found the name of the child. He was the newspaper boy for an older lady in the neighbourhood. We went home and my mother said she was going to phone his parents.

I wasn't sure what would happen. I assumed my mother would yell, scream, and threaten bodily harm. But of course, it was my mother, and I should have known better.

She invited the boy and his grandfather—with whom he lived while his parents were divorcing—to our house. Typical of my mother, she had snacks and drinks at the ready.

When the day came, and the boy and his grandfather arrived, I stood immobile because I was terrified. The boy now knew where we lived. Would he wait for me outside the door, snowballs in hand? Would he come into the house armed with hate and pebbles?

As the boy began to speak the grandfather interrupted, bellowing in a voice like thunder, "AREN'T YOU FORGETTING SOMETHING?"

The boy, my tormentor, my punisher—he who introduced to me words no one should ever hear, and hate no one should experience—sank to his knees and said, "I'm sorry." Then he began to sob.

He was sorry. He hadn't meant to be so cruel and hateful. He was angry because of his parents. Their divorce meant that he'd been uprooted from his life and his friends. None of that was my fault, he was quick to say. He only shared it so that I understood how broken he was and the darkness from which his decisions had been made.

He continued to cry. So did I. We hugged. I forgave.

The next day when I saw him on the field there were no snowballs in his hand,

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***“When days get hard, when the news gets bleak, I remind myself in the midst of the darkest moments that there is the potential for light and love.”***

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He stood in front of me and his grandfather said, "My grandson has something to say to you."

no hate in his heart. "Are you okay?" he asked. "Did anyone hurt you? Do you need my help?"



It was a daily routine for this boy, to ask, to watch, to protect.

When days get hard, when the news gets bleak, I remind myself in the midst of the darkest moments that there is the potential for light and love—because of stories.

I was willing to share the story of what happened, my mother and the grandfather were willing to listen, and so was the boy. Change and healing took place because we shared our stories and we listened with open hearts.

The idea of transformation is at the core of all the stories I write, whether it's for little ones like *Lark Holds the Key* or older audiences like *Guardian*.

Perhaps that is the most important lesson Canada has taught me: stories change the world because stories change hearts. Yes, things are difficult right now. There is hate and anger. But there is also light and love as long as we're willing to speak our stories and listen.

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**“Yes, things are difficult right now. There is hate and anger. But there is also light and love as long as we’re willing to speak our stories and listen.”**

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# Excerpt on a Few of the Early Scandinavians to Edmonton

by Kenneth W. Domier

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Adapted here with permission, this is an excerpt of a larger but still short history of the early Scandinavians in Edmonton and area, initially compiled in 2005 with the assistance of Sandra Jensen (Danish), Anne Sahuri & Kaisa Tekoniemi (Finnish), Robert Christopherson (Icelandic), and Lars Fahlstrom, Verna Larson & Linnea Lodge (Swedish). The history was revised by Kenneth Domier W. Domier, the expert for immigration for Norwegians, in 2016. For purposes of space, this excerpt only touches on a few of the early Danes and Swedes to Edmonton, but the 2005 compiled history includes early Finns, Icelanders and Danes to the city as well.*

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One of the first Scandinavians in Edmonton and area was a Norwegian named Gilbert Berg who operated a general store in Edmonton from 1894 to 1912. Originally from Farsund, Vest Agder, Norway, Gilbert Berg was born in 1857 and emigrated to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He came to Calgary in 1887 along with a group of Norwegians who started the Eau Claire Lumber Company. Gilbert Berg and family came to Edmonton in the 1890's and set up the General Store at Jasper Avenue and 98th Street. He also operated a bakery at his residence on Jasper Avenue between 104 and 105 Street. In 1899, the store was described as a Grocery and Confectionary store.

In 1903 he sold 4 "loafs" of bread to the Town of Edmonton for 20 cents. He also sold lemons to the Town of Edmonton for 20 cents. He was listed as a grocer and fruitier on Jasper Avenue in 1905 – 1906. Gilbert Berg had a summer cottage on Moonlight Bay at Lake Wabamun, west of Edmonton.

Peter M. Andersen, born in Denmark in 1868, came to Canada in 1888 and came to Edmonton in 1891. He was the owner and Manager of the Andersen Brick Yard. Peter's wife Marg was born in Ontario, but his three children, Jennie, Albert and Ethyl were born in Edmonton. In the 1906 Census another

daughter Merry was listed. When WW1 broke out, Peter Andersen was with the first Canadian contingent that went overseas. He was captured at the Battle of Ypres, imprisoned at Sachsen but made a daring escape after 5 months. Posing as a bricklayer, he worked his way through Germany. Returning to England, he was given an audience with



King George V and the Queen Mother Alexandra (herself a Dane). For his exemplary service he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O). In the 1930's he retired

to Vancouver. On August 8, 1945 the Edmonton Journal stated that " One of Canada's leading marksmen, colourful soldiers and long-time resident of Edmonton, Lt. Col. Peter Andersen, D.S.O. died at his home in Vancouver Tuesday. He was 77 years old."

In the 1901 Census in addition to Peter Andersen and his family, there were only a handful of families that were born in Denmark. Christian Sand and his wife Mary born in Denmark came to Canada in 1893. Two of their three children were born in Ontario, the third in Manitoba. His occupation was listed as a butcher. Another was listed as a farmer. In the 1906 Census there were 77 people that had either one or both parents born in

Denmark.

Christian Peter Marker, born in 1869, emigrated from Denmark to Canada in 1890. He came to Edmonton in 1897 where he was appointed Superintendent of Dairying for the North-West Territories. He was an outstanding pioneer of the dairy industry in Western Canada and was instrumental in the establishment of a creamery at an Icelandic settlement called Tindastoll near Innisfail in 1899. The settlement was renamed MARKERVILLE in appreciation of his services. In 1924 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Alberta. He was honoured as a Knight of the Order of Dannebrog by His Majesty King Christian of Denmark, thus being recognized for his achievements by both his native and adopted countries. His office was in Calgary until 1921 when he was appointed Head of the Dairy Science Department at the University of Alberta.

Holger R. Fabricius was born in Denmark in 1885. He had experience as a photographer before emigrating to the USA in 1903. In 1906 he homesteaded near Red Deer before coming to Edmonton. In 1911, he bought Alberta Studio. He was a leader in Dania and was leader of the Scandinavian Singers.

There were only a handful of Swedes listed in the 1901 Census for Edmonton and area, although like the Norwegians,

they were plentiful in central Alberta. By 1906 there were some 57 people with one or more parents from Sweden.

Emil Rikard Thure Skarin emigrated from Sweden to Canada in 1902, age 20, arriving first in Calgary, and then Edmonton. He worked on railroad construction and this may have been his impetus for studying engineering at the University of Alberta, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering in 1918. He formed a company called Crown Paving and

Paving Company allowed him to follow a fulfilling labour career.

In the 1914 Henderson's Directory for Edmonton there can be found "Stockholm Café", Scandia House, Swea Fruit Store and the Honorary Swedish Consul, Charles T. Johnson.

The Norwegians and Swedes, as well as the Danes, Finns and Icelanders who are not included here for lack of space, are proud of their contributions to the development and well-being of the city

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***“The Norwegians and Swedes...are proud of their contributions to the development and well-being of the city of Edmonton.”***

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Construction, which became very successful. Emil Skarin was appointed Swedish Vice-Consul in 1920, and he was the representative of the Government of Sweden until 1948. After Emil Skarin's death, his widow, Ada Skarin established the Emil Skarin Fund at the University of Alberta to provide financial assistance for worthy cultural endeavours.

Carl Emil Berg was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1888. He emigrated in 1904 and came to Edmonton in 1910. He worked in mining and railway construction and became very interested in the plight of workers. Employed by Emil Skarin's Crown

of Edmonton in the areas of business, music, theatre, education, sports, social services, and civic government.

# I Eat Strawberries Now

by Lisa Dublin

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Lisa Dublin, from St. Lucia in the Caribbean, is an award-winning poet. She has published a novella, How George Jones Saved Christmas, and a chapbook, Sani Baat – A Voice Throwing. She holds an Australian Institute of Business MBA and a University of Alberta English MA. She and her husband have three sons. Lisa gratefully acknowledges the artist Jonathan Guy-Gladding for letting the E-book make use of the image of his painting in this story.*

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My first job in Edmonton was a regular office job. I didn't spend very long there but one lunchtime experience resulted in a paradigm shift for me.

After living in different parts of the world for the last ten years, my sister and I finally reconnected in Edmonton, where I had moved not too long before from Saint Lucia. One morning she cooked coconut curry rice, and since I had missed her cooking for a decade I didn't think twice about what I would have for lunch that day. I enjoyed every forkful at lunchtime, the smell and taste of her cooking reminding me of home.

When my colleagues trooped in from lunch I was unprepared for their outbursts of dismay. Apparently our closed office space smelled different.

Too different. Too disruptive. Mind you, my Canadian colleagues are...polite. No one asked me anything. In fact, they asked everyone else, except me. But that only made me realize that everyone had figured out that it was my food that was so offensive, and so I said nothing.

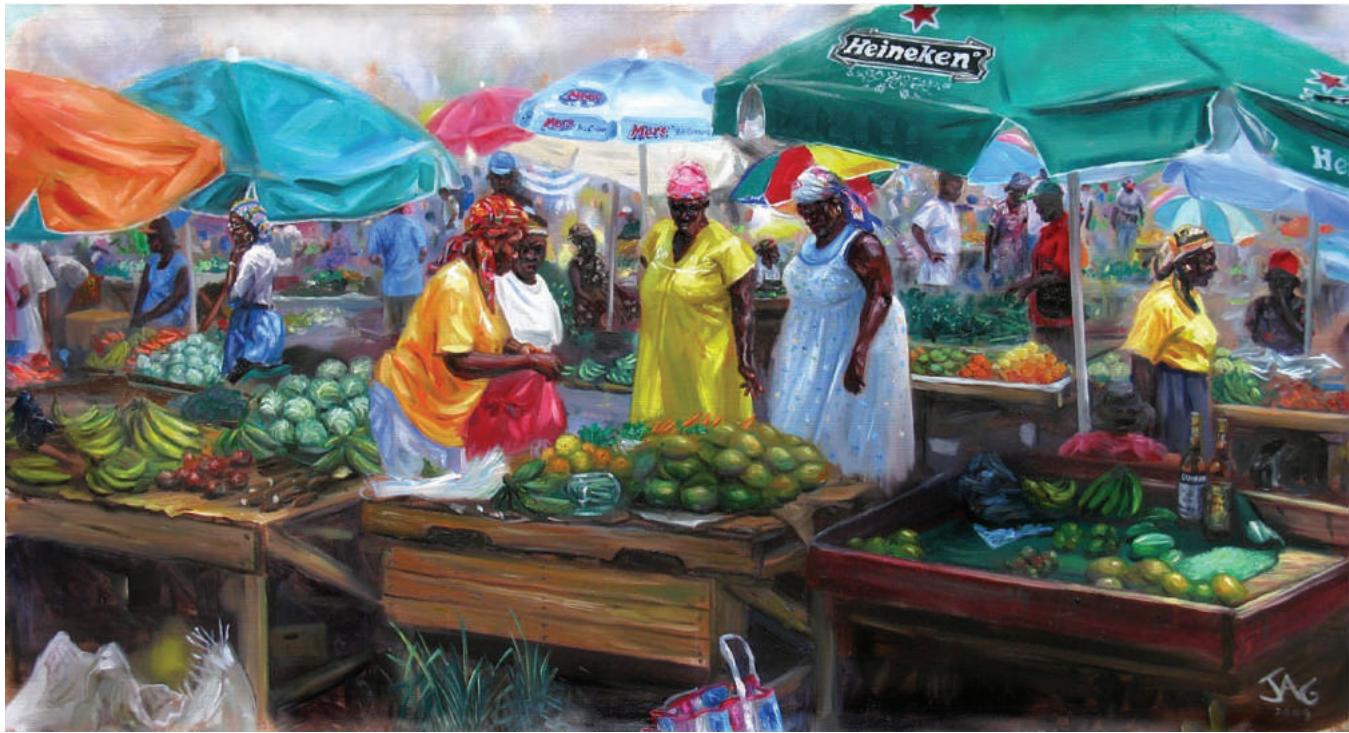
Windows were opened, laughter erupted then hushed, an efficient person brought in the air freshener from the bathroom. Someone on the other side of my cubicle went into a fit of coughing. The reactions were real and visceral, and so was my embarrassment.

I know that had I been in Saint Lucia the scent of my food would have been lost among the other savory and spicy smells in the lunch room or office space. But I'm not back home. I'm in a place



where I am a minority in terms of culture, race, religious beliefs, values, interests and food. I'm okay with that—I see it as a tradeoff—except that I now have to decide what to do with my spicy self.

to have the support of what comes readily and instinctively to me—my own culture and community. I began to reconnect more deeply with the current affairs back home and with my



Looking back, I don't think that I handled the experience well. I said nothing. A part of me folded away. I realized the huge difference between where I came from and where I'd found myself. In the days ahead I began to eat less offensive things like strawberries, cold salads and yoghurt. I was resentful at first, but something positive ultimately occurred.

I began to long for what was mine to the point where I concluded that as an immigrant it was as important for me to assimilate into my new culture as it was for me to seek out my own:

immigrant community here. Although I love Canada, I believe there has to be a space where you don't constantly sift your actions and language and food through the sieve of caution that comes with negotiating a new environment. There has to be a space where you are naturally not a stranger.

This is a basic workplace design question that employers will have to deal with as Canada grows increasingly diverse—not only spaces for worship but also spaces for eating and socializing will have to be thought out very carefully to account



for cultural differences. We all know the common etiquette about not bringing strong smelling foods like fish into the workplace, but what if I told you that my coconut curry rice smelled normal to me? Thus the more nuanced question for workplace design is who decides what is offensive and what is not?

I asked a fellow colleague, originally from India, whether she had ever experienced what I had. She said no, but cautiously asked me whether I had ever smelled her food when she brought it back to her cubicle from the microwave. I think she was relieved when I said I had not. She said with a quiet resolve, "I wouldn't even try to eat differently. I'll cover my food, but this is what I eat."

My colleague helped put the experience in context by suggesting that this could be a one-off situation as our workplace was quite pleasant and embracing of diversity. I concurred, and in typical Caribbean jocular fashion wondered what my sister had really put in that rice to create such a stir. Though to this day I keep the sun, the sand and the sea at bay till I get off work. After eating strawberries and cold, inoffensive

salads, I turn up the car volume to the pulsing beats of Machel or Kes, and hurry home to cook a good bouillon.

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***“Though to this day I keep the sun, the sand and the sea  
at bay till I get off work.”***

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# Remembering the Past, Looking Towards the Future

by Hue-Dieu Duong

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Hue-Dieu Duong is the chairman of the Chinese Senior Dramatic Club of Edmonton. He wrote this piece for the special centennial book published in May 2017 for the Chinese Dramatic Club of Edmonton that was established in 1907.*

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It has been more than thirty years since I joined the Chinese Dramatic Club of Edmonton. When I look back over the course of the past 33 years, with all the changes, trials and tribulations that occurred during this time, I am left with many mixed emotions and thoughts. Over the years, many talented musicians and singers have left the Club, leaving me with a sense of loss, sadness and frustration. When I look towards the future, I see a rough road ahead. I believe if our Club were to grow artistically and to produce an abundance of colorful blossoms, I must shoulder the responsibility for planting seeds, nurturing tender seedlings, labouring persistently and patiently. Words cannot express the overwhelming sense of burden I feel at times.

"With determination, all difficulties can be overcome", is my motto, etched deeply in my heart. My approach to everything has always been to be unwavering in my beliefs, work hard, move forward and face challenges head on, and to be optimistic that all difficulties can be overcome. With this conviction, I started a Cantonese Opera Beginner Class approximately five years ago. The purpose of the class was to introduce the fundamentals of singing Cantonese Opera to students who were interested in this art form, to cultivate their interests and hopefully raise their artistic standard. Personally, to be able to raise awareness and revive interests in a traditional art form is a meaningful and worthwhile endeavor. Today, much to my satisfaction, all students are making progress, each one of them shines in

their own individual strength. Our Club is now filled with a vibrant atmosphere, an artistic garden filled with many fragrant flowers.

Members of our Cantonese Opera group are talented individuals, each one of them. Some have professional careers while others are experts in their fields. They share a common interest in Cantonese Opera singing and acting. Together they learn and encourage each other. They view Cantonese Opera as a high form of entertainment. They view our Club as a warm and close-knit family, with deep friendship and congeniality. Whenever we have a holiday celebration, everyone participates without fail in making the event a success. Their spirit of co-operation is highly commendable.

Our Club's strongest assets are the musicians. Their musical expertise aside, they are gentle, polite and modest. Regardless of their different musical abilities, they are connected in friendship through playing music together. They can be described as models for their

peers. It is also rare and precious that all our musicians are principled and generous, willing to volunteer their time, to accompany our students without financial compensation. They also share their knowledge and experience, striving to make good and beautiful music for all to enjoy.

It is an honour that the Chinese Dramatic Club of Edmonton enjoys the wide support and esteem within the Chinese community. We are honoured to have been given the opportunities over the years to provide entertainments in various community functions. This year, 2017, our Club celebrates our 100th Anniversary by performing excerpts from Cantonese Operas as well as operatic duets in the Eva O Howard Theatre. To mark this special occasion, we have produced this commemorative publication to honour our Club's history and achievements. I also wish to thank all the community organizations, friends, and businesses for their sponsorship and warm wishes. Our Club pledges to continue to work on raising our artistic standard and to provide high quality entertainment to the community. Through our Cantonese opera music, we pledge to continue our service to the community by promoting and sharing the beauty of Chinese culture with the public, participating in various charity and fundraising activities. We shall do our best to serve our community with love and dedication.





# Home

by Arigo Dut

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in South Sudan and raised in Edmonton, Arigo shares her pain and hopes through multi-layered Spoken Word poetry. She volunteers through political and community work to empower marginalized groups. A holder of a Communications Studies Degree, she founded Dut Designs, a business that offers services from media management to graphic designs.



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*Home, home, home, home*

*h-o-m-e*

*/hōme/*

Maybe if I say it slowly,  
repetitively...

until it's embedded in my thoughts, my skin,  
my hair—  
in the air I breathe, the air I cling to for life—

maybe then I'll know where I belong—where I fit in—

maybe then I will know where home is.

*Home, home, home, home.*

Maybe if I read books,  
scan the letters one by one  
until they become a recognizable word,  
a comprehensible thought,  
a descriptive, illustrative image:

the warm sun basking on my skin,  
drying the crusty walls of the mud hut that my father built  
for my mother, for my sisters,  
for my brother,  
for me—  
maybe then I'll know where I belong—where I fit in.

Maybe then I will not have to search books  
scanning words,  
comprehending thoughts,  
visualizing images—  
maybe then I would not feel like a gust of wind passing through  
without a place to call my own,

shifting...  
turning...  
blowing...  
moving...  
wherever Mother Nature pleases.

Blowing from border to border,  
boundless...

searching...

seeking...

wanting...

Maybe then these words,

these thoughts,

these images

can transform,

alter

and distort

into boundless feelings that transport me back to Africa.

Back to the motherland.

Back to South Sudan...

*Home, home, home*

h-o-m-e

/hōme/

...But when I did go home—well,

what I believed to be home—

back to Africa,

the motherland,

Egypt—

I felt the sun basking on my skin but it was not warm and inviting,

but burning, as if it wanted to burn me to crisps.

To turn and transform my beautiful dark brown skin

into nothing but black, lifeless ash.

Home was not warm and inviting.



The motherland did not want me.

"White girl," they would say.

"Miss Canada," they would taunt.

I would lie in bed wishing to go back home:

back to North America,

the land of the mosaic—

back to Canada

*Home, home, home*

h-o-m-e

/hōme/

Maybe if I say it slowly,

repetitively...

until it's embedded in my thoughts, my skin,

my hair—

in the air I breathe, the air I cling to for life—

maybe then I'll know where I belong—where I fit in—

maybe then I'll know where home is.

Maybe I am a gust of wind passing through without hindrance,

shifting...

turning...

blowing...

moving...

Blowing from border to border to border

boundless...

searching...  
wherever my mind pleases

Maybe home is not Africa,  
the motherland—  
South Sudan.

Maybe home is not North America,  
the land of the mosaic—  
Canada.

Maybe home is everywhere.  
Maybe I am not bounded by borders.  
Maybe I am not bounded by my ethnicity,  
my religion,  
my uncontrollable birth rights.

Maybe I am the child of Mother Nature,  
a daughter of the wind.  
Maybe my home is the universe,  
every entity of its massive reach,  
every dark corner, unfounded frontier.  
Maybe that's where I belong,  
where I fit in,  
where home is.

*Home.*

# The Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association (ECBEA)

*by ECBEA*

The Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association (ECBEA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of volunteers dedicated to the ongoing success of Edmonton's widely acclaimed Chinese (Mandarin) Bilingual Program. The program was founded 35 years ago starting with 33 students in 1 school, to the current over 2000 students in 13 Edmonton Public Schools.

The English-Chinese (Mandarin) Bilingual Program provides the opportunity for any students within the Edmonton Public School system to learn both the English and Chinese languages and to share knowledge of the Chinese culture within the context of the Alberta curriculum.

This trending program is unique in North America, both because it is a complete continuum of studies from kindergarten to high school graduation, and it is accomplished all during regular school hours.

The Chinese Bilingual Program has

since been described as "the best Chinese language program outside of China" and "is respected internationally and Edmonton students' success at the recent language and culture competition demonstrates the quality of education here." "Edmonton is one of a few 'pockets of excellence' in Canada for the understanding of Asia.

The ECBEA is recognized internationally as a model volunteer organization. Parent groups and educators from other jurisdictions have marveled at their years of continuous service. This agency was the only parent-organization attending the First World Conference on Teaching Chinese in Beijing (2005). Researchers from as far away as China, Finland, Japan and the United States have consulted with this organization in regards to engaging members and the broader community in sustaining the programs and the values they support. Presentations have been made to various Vancouver- area school boards on the implementation of Edmonton's Chinese Bilingual Program. The ECBEA

has developed linkages with the China Institute and Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Alberta to ensure public school graduates in Mandarin transition smoothly to the undergraduate level of Chinese studies.

The ECBEA's goal is to enrich the lifestyle of Canadian families by promoting choice of their children's language acquisition and opportunities to learn Chinese as an international language. The ECBEA continues to explore opportunities to introduce the

engaging students and parents in an active lifestyle, sharing recreational pursuits through volunteerism for the broader intergenerational community. Each year, the Chinese bilingual schools perform at various Chinese New Year Carnivals around the City. The largest Chinese painting in North America produced by Chinese Bilingual students was gifted to the Royal Alberta Museum (2009). The ECBEA helps organize the Chinese Pavilion at the annual Heritage Festival. The ECBEA actively participated in many Edmonton

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***“The ECBEA’s goal is to enrich the lifestyle of Canadian families by promoting choice of their children’s language acquisition and opportunities to learn Chinese as an international language.”***

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colorful Chinese history and culture and to broaden community relationships with like-minded organizations. It is committed to equal opportunity, diversity, professional development and service to the community. The ECBEA is dedicated in the support of the students, parents, teachers and researchers of the Chinese Bilingual Program with volunteer time, organizational skills and resources.

The ECBEA organizes and promotes activities to showcase Chinese history and culture to a diverse community,

Chinese Community events such as the Chinatown Unveiled Conference, May 4-5, 2013, the Chinatown Street Market to celebrate Canada Day on July 1, as well as the Mid-autumn Festival in Downtown Edmonton every September.

Key long-term volunteers are positive role models – a second generation of volunteers from current students and alumni is emerging to sustain a culture of sharing, carrying on traditions, festivals and events. The ECBEA website, Facebook and Twitter sites ensure their visibility and presence, networking with

other communities (local and abroad).

ECBEA's vision, commitment and strength of character were recognized when the ECBEA was named a national finalist for the Donner Canadian Foundation Awards for Excellence (2008). And the Board of Directors, along with the Chinese Culture Club at McNally Senior High School, were recognized by the EPSB with District Recognition in the category of Parents, Community and Teaching Staff (2008). The success of the Chinese Bilingual Program was a key factor in locating the prestigious Confucius Institute in Edmonton (2008). The ECBEA was inducted into Edmonton's Salute to Excellence Hall of Fame with an Award of Distinction (2009), and was nominated for the Duncan & Craig Laurel Awards, recognizing the innovation and creativity of not-for-profit organizations, in 2011. In 2017, Canada is celebrating its 150 years old birthday and ECBEA's story was recognized as the top video entry in the Community and Cultural category at the Canada-150-in-150 (Alberta) Celebration.

The ECBEA's contribution to the community is an inspiration, evidence of education working both inside and outside the classroom at its best over 35 years of dedicated service.

## **Edmonton Chinese Bilingual Education Association**

Box 220, #21-10405 Jasper Avenue

Edmonton, AB T5J 3S2

Charitable Registration No:

130559941RR0001

[www.ecbea.org](http://www.ecbea.org)

# Forgetting Euskadi

by Luciana Erregue-Sacchi

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Luciana Erregue-Sacchi is a Canadian-Argentinian bilingual poet, who studied Law in Argentina. She holds a Master's in Art History from the University of Alberta and served for 3 years as a bilingual art educator at the Gallery of Alberta. Luciana is working on a multidisciplinary poetry project with Anna Marie Sewell, former Edmonton's Poet Laurette.*

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*Welcome to Canada*

*Thank you*

*Anything to declare?*

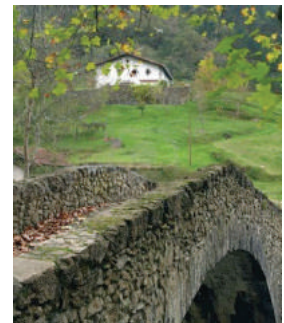
*No*

Plague, one lone survivor, famines and barren fields from Euskal Erria to Genoa,  
Moors Invasion, my great aunt's kinky hair and my Arab nose,  
Conversos and Marranos, shipped to conquer the Americas,  
Rosas Militias, scarlet serfs wrestling the desert from the Indians—  
forgetting Euskadi.

A ten-year-old boy hauling coal and his future wife, a young maid—mi abuela—  
pregnant by her master's brother: a piano teacher and a reluctant civil servant—  
my parents' marriage made in heaven.

Utter terror—*picana*—soldiers, my third grade, an unfinished law degree—whose  
laws?

*Baggage, dragged from the Pampas to Vancouver:  
images, my own private cinema  
my writing, my story—  
their future.*







# Culture Shock: My First Weekend in Canada

by Efa Etoroma

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Sociologist Peter Adler defines culture shock as “primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences.” Adler’s definition differs somewhat from that of many other scholars, including that of Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg who popularized the term and who saw culture shock as a form of mental illness. Thus, there is no consensus as to what culture shock

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Efa Etoroma (PhD) teaches Sociology at Concordia University of Edmonton. Nigerian born, Efa moved to Canada in 1978 and has lived in Edmonton since 1992. He has also lived in Winnipeg, Halifax, Calgary, Burlington, Hamilton, and Cranbrook. Efa and his wife Faridat are the proud parents of two sons, one daughter, and two daughters-in-law.*

entails.

But most scholars agree that there

are four stages of culture shock, and Adler categorizes the four stages as: Contact (or Honeymoon), Disintegration, Reintegration, and Autonomy. Experiences of culture shock tend to differ depending on a person's status in the host culture. There are four key categories of statuses in this context: tourist, sojourner, immigrant, and refugee. My account is that of an immigrant's experience of the contact phase, a phase that is characterized by excitement or euphoria as the newcomer tends to be pleased with the many new customs.

I arrived in Winnipeg, Canada from Lagos, Nigeria very late on Saturday, August 12, 1978. I arrived with a packed suitcase, a bank draft for \$4,500 in Canadian funds, and some Naira (Nigerian currency). I soon discovered

from both my teachers and my parents: I informed a police officer about my predicament. To my pleasant surprise (or to my shock, I should say), the police officer made some phone calls and then took me to a small restaurant in the airport where I was given a meal. After the meal, the officer informed me that she had arranged for some temporary accommodation for me downtown and that a police cruiser was ready to take me downtown.

The police cruiser (shockingly) took me to the YMCA in downtown Winnipeg early Sunday morning. The YMCA front desk staff assigned me a room and then lent me some pocket money which I promised to, and did, repay by Tuesday after cashing my bank draft. (I mention my shock because the police universally are not expected to act in

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***“I decided to do something I had learned from both my teachers and my parents: I informed a police officer about my predicament.”***

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that both the bank draft and the Nigerian money in my possession were generally not accepted by merchants in Winnipeg; moreover, banks and other sources of currency exchange were closed for the night. Thus, I was stranded at the Winnipeg International Airport.

I decided to do something I had learned

such a manner.)

When I asked the YMCA front desk clerk for information about Pentecostal churches downtown, the clerk informed me that at least one such church held services at the YMCA. While we were still chatting, we saw a Black family entering the building. The clerk beckoned to the

family and then introduced the Black man as Pastor Cornish and indicated that a second pastor was named Ken Allen. Pastor Raymond Cornish and his wife Muriel took me as a blood relative or close friend. Within a few minutes of our meeting, Pastor Cornish invited me to join him as he drove around town picking up congregants for that morning's service.

At the end of the service I met and conversed with virtually every one of the 25 (twenty five) or so adults present at the church. I had three clear invitations for Sunday dinner that day: from the Allens, the Cornishes, and the McLeods.

The evening service had a "testimony time" when individuals stood in front of the congregation to read scripture verses, sing, and/or give accounts of how God had blessed them in the recent past. I gave a brief testimony of how God made a way for me to be in Winnipeg.

I enjoyed the Contact or Honeymoon phase of my life as an immigrant, as illustrated by my first weekend in Canada. I liked the politeness and friendliness of Winnipeggers as well as the cleanliness and safety of the city. Although Winnipeg had a population of about 500,000 in 1978, it had the feel of a much smaller city. Incorporated in 1873,

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***“Although Winnipeg had a population of about 500,000 in 1978, it had the feel of a much smaller city.”***

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I went home with the Allens since they were the first to invite me. We chatted about Africa, Jamaica, Canada, England, etc. During our conversation, I mentioned to the Allens that I played the guitar and that I believed it would enhance the music at the church. To my delight, Pastor Allen brought a guitar from his bedroom and he and I took turns playing duets with Mrs. Allen who played keyboards and sang.

We took Pastor Allen's guitar to church that evening and I was thrilled to play along with the songs during the service.

Winnipeg, Canada has a well-earned reputation for being a friendly city.

# King of Kush

by Minister Faust

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Minister Faust is a novelist, journalist, blogger, sketch comedy writer, video game writer, playwright, and poet. He taught high school and junior high English literature and composition for a decade. While his father is from Kenya, a DNA test revealed to Minister Faust he has Egyptian, Sudanese, and Somali ancestry. This article was originally published in Vue Magazine in February 2008.*



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He's five-foot-middling, mild mannered, a restaurateur, a social entrepreneur, a community activist, and a decades-long crusader for international development. His name is Mohammed Maie. To me, he's the King of Kush.

Back in 1994, I began observing the transformation of 107th Avenue into the city's Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese and Somali neighbourhood. Riffing on Biblical geo-names, I baptized the area "Kush," plastering it all over the screenplay I was writing which later became my first published novel, *The Coyote Kings of the Space-Age Bachelor Pad*. Now it's Greater Kush, jumping north and then winding from 112th Avenue up 95th Street and down 118th. The leading community in this league of nations is, without doubt, the

Somali-Canadians.

According to Maie, there are more than 10,000 Somali-Canadians here already, although with typical family kid-counts at around seven, the bulk of the Somali community hasn't yet been glimpsed by average E-Towners. As those children enter school and the work force over the next decade and a half, E-Town will seem like a different place.

Maie spent most of his 20 years in Canada in Ontario, and ran for city council in 2007; he's currently standing as a Green candidate provincially. In 1988, he co-founded a group called African Experience along with African-Canadian leaders in Ontario dealing with immigration, poverty, and homelessness. He points out that the

hopeful tale of immigration is different from the harrowing story of escaping national collapse. “We are the refugees,” he says.

Maie is particularly proud of how Somalis have improved 118th Avenue, an area whose previous rep was synonymous with misery. “If you came to the area at seven o'clock, it was almost like a ghost-house,” he says. “Now you can see it's vibrant until 11 o'clock, sometimes 12 o'clock. You can walk ... it's becoming safe. So we are helping the safety of the neighbourhood. We are trying to bring a new menu, both culturally as well as food.”

In the hyper-yellow walls of 118th Avenue's Camel Boys Café, Maie's Somali-Canadian customers sip cups of sweet milk-brewed tea while sharing conversation and chow. The co-ed crowd munches on sambusas—the Somali cousin to or possibly ancestor of the samosa. The co-ed part is noteworthy because, in my years of eating at Somali restaurants, only Maie's current café and his restaurant, Sharifa's Sambusa House, have teemed with women. Not in the sense of a singles' bar; hijabs and pick-up lines, in my experience, are distant cousins who

don't even call on birthdays.

From what I can tell, it's Maie's commitment to family and community that helps his countrymen and countrywomen move beyond the gender separation I've seen in other Somali joints, where (apparently) single men gather to feast on succulent roasted goat meat and sabayat (chapatti) while watching CNN or Al-Jazeera (“politics is the passion of the people,” says Maie, in answer to why music is so rare at any Somali dining spot). Instead at Camel Boys, men and women gather breezily, sharing laughter and food while Maie tells me of his and his community's epic of survival and success.

While Canadians over 30 probably remember Somalia more for a Canadian military murder scandal there and for Ridley Scott's Pentagon-approved “true story,” Somalis would prefer people knew the real history of their ancient nation. The capital city, Moghadishu, has a lineage echoing back over 2000 years. Fourteenth-century historian Ibn Battuta wrote of the country's marvels just before Somalia's trade with China began. When Portugese and Omanis invaded, they obliterated many of the country's great trading cities. Somalia

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***“Somalis would prefer people knew the real history of their ancient nation.”***

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has produced award-winning writers such as Nurrudin Farah, and it's no surprise; scholar Ali Mazrui noted in his landmark series "The Africans: A Triple Heritage" that Somalis love poetry so much that candidates for public office often addressed their constituents in verse. From personal experience, I've never known anyone so capable and so willing to recite poetry as a friend of mine, a daughter of Somalia's long-ago ambassador to Libya.

According to Maie, Somali culture is also highly entrepreneurial. In Edmonton, the nascent Somali community has already birthed at least six restaurants; then there are boutiques, corner stores, money exchanges, butcher shops, barber shops, CD shops, a newspaper, and, of course, the transport industry, i.e., taxis, not to mention grocers, computer techs, accountants, and artists. Elsewhere Somalis have exercised their money-skills across Kenya and Tanzania, and own shopping malls in Toronto, Columbus, Ohio, and Minneapolis, the hub of North American Somaliland. Maie says it's the nomadic aspects of Somali culture that produce risk-comfortable adventurers who are always flexible enough to move to wherever the literal or metaphorical water flows sweetest. On a recent trip to Grand Prairie, Maie's coterie of Rwandese and Senegalese youth looked for jobs in the land of opportunity; it was the Somali youth who noticed there was no Somali restaurant

and vowed to open one.

Despite their capitalistic strengths, Edmonton's Somalis still face poverty; according to Maie, \$15 000 to \$20 000 annually is typical for typically large Somali families, and \$40 000 would be considered rich. Then there are the youth who see their often well-educated parents behind taxi wheels, mops or stoves, like Chef Ghal at Xamareey Restaurant who was a commercial pilot (and who's found that a Muslim-sounding name is a great interview-blocker at Canada's airlines); teens of such parents often wonder why their parents languish, despite Canada's multicultural claims, and turn away from education and legal employment in despair.

Still, Maie is optimistic. "Looking back from the last 20 years," he says, "I can see there is a growing acceptance [of Somali-Canadians], because we never threw away our values. We're telling everyone, this is who we are; please accept us. Especially in Canada, where

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***"This is who we are;  
please accept us."***

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everyone is trying to showcase their culture, so it's good for us to display our culture, rather than to melt within the system."





# Re-building a Life

by Idalia Ivon Pereira

I came to Canada in 1991 as a single mother with a 9-year old son. Activities filled my first days here. I visited an English-learning school for government-sponsored refugees, looked for a school for my son and for an apartment close to our schools. I found a family doctor, and a place to do volunteer work to gain Canadian Experience. I had brought with me a Sociology degree, courses toward an MBA and over 25 years experience of work on socio-economic development projects.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Idalia Ivon Pereira has over 30 years experience in Community Development. She is past Executive Director of Action for Healthy Communities. Before coming to Canada in 1991 from then civil war-torn El Salvador, she had done various social economic projects. She retired to Victoria, from where she does consultancy work and lives close to her son and his family.*

I had chosen Edmonton because my mother and my brother with his family were already living here. However,

family circumstances a little too complicated to get into here, made me move to Calgary.

There, I volunteered at many places supporting people from different backgrounds including aboriginal, new immigrants and the working poor. Volunteer jobs led me to get enrolled in two on the job training programs; two years with Catholic Family Services that included wages and 6 months with the Pastoral Institute. Both prepared me to become a Multicultural Therapy Counsellor. The on the job training led

human ecologist.

Through post-graduate studies, my son became a Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist. His education was a costly venture, with many sacrifices. But my son had become a doctor because of two things: No one had sugar coated the difficult path he was choosing, and he knew he'd have to fight, in a very competitive field, to attain his goal.

As for myself, volunteer jobs in Edmonton led me to paid jobs. A year after volunteering for Action for

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***“I made many friends from different cultures and became an active community member.”***

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to two paid part time jobs.

When my son entered high school, I returned to Edmonton. I made many friends from different cultures and became an active community member. As I bought a house in Edmonton and both my son and I entered University, we formed a deeper attachment to Canada. So, despite the cold weather, Edmonton began to feel like our primary home, and thoughts of returning to El Salvador and my doubts, which I had had, whether or not to stay in Canada for good, faded. After University, we both pursued our careers. My son became a medical doctor and I a sociologist and

Health Communities, I was hired as a Community Animator. 2 months later I got promoted to Program Coordinator and in a few months, to Executive Director, from which position I retired after more than 13 years with the organization.

Not everything has been good though. My two brothers, both of whom had also become Canadian citizens, passed away at 49 and 54 years old. Both are buried in Edmonton. My mother, who also became a citizen, is in the last stages of Alzheimer. Responding to my family culture, I took care of my ill mother for 5 years with financial



support from Alberta Health Services until time commitment and financial costs of her care overwhelmed me. My mother needed at least 3 caregivers, and due to Alzheimer's would now only respond to Spanish and eat food from her childhood. She has now moved to El Salvador where family members are able to care for her. My son is handling the financial burden of caring for her.

When I retired, I moved to Victoria, BC to be close to my son, who lives there, with my daughter in law and their son. However, I am still connected to Edmonton and to some family members there, and to Action for Healthy Communities employees. I plan to stay active, doing consultancy work. My preferred work place is Edmonton. With all current technology, it's now easy to live in one city and work in another.

On balance, my family and I have had a very successful life in Canada despite difficulties. We found a haven here. Walking through the streets in Canada just after I arrived, I was amazed at how, for example, drivers respected passersby, and transit regulations. For

to people in need. Canada, I concluded, had achieved the kind of system people in my country were fighting for.

Of course, I didn't like some things. Why doesn't Canada consider foreign credentials and instead force highly educated people to work as unskilled laborers. What is the point of that? What a waste of money! Take me, for example. I had a university degree and lot of experience. I wanted to use my training to contribute to society right from the beginning, but instead I was sent to upgrade my high school diploma. I accepted the rules but never lost sight of my goal. My determination to succeed led to my eventual acceptance at the U of A. My example inspired others to pursue further studies.

Canada is now my chosen home. I feel blessed for this opportunity to become a Canadian, for my more than 25 years in Canada, and for giving and receiving. I feel blessed that besides the security for me and my family, I have gained a chance to interact with people from all over the world and their history and cultures. Such an opportunity has

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## ***“We found a haven here.”***

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me, this reflected respect for human dignity. What impressed me the most though was the systemic support offered

broadened my mind and helped me to understand humanity and the world better.



# Finding Daddy a Job

by Joseph Feulefack

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Florent J. Feulefack, Cameroonian-born and now an Edmonton resident, is a research and development practitioner and project evaluation consultant. He's a passionate creative writer, and has composed award-winning poetry. In his Cameroonian community, he is responsible for preparing young ones to do cultural activities during community functions.*

A security check company at the International Airport was hiring. Fuekat was fortunate enough to have been one of the interview candidates. All the candidates had just been interviewed, one by one, and were waiting to learn their fate. They had been waiting longer than expected. Next to Fuekat sat another interviewee, a familiar Asian looking face. Fuekat and he had gone through the many challenging phases of the interview process together. However, for reasons they couldn't tell if you asked them, they had never spoken much to each other. They didn't even know each other's names.

The Asian-looking interviewee

introduced himself. "Hi! My name is Mahat. I come from Nepal. What about you?"

"I'm Fuekat, from Africa."

"You look worried. Why is that?" Mahat asked.

"It's my son, Junior Fuekat."

"What's wrong with him?"

Fuekat said, "I am worried he is becoming more preoccupied with my unstable job situation than even myself."

"Brother," Mahat said, "my daughter also

pities my jobless status every day."

"No, my case is more serious than yours, brother," Fuekat said. "Look, I recently discovered in Junior's class notebook a story he wrote for one of his class assignments."

Having nothing else to do but wait, Fuekat started reading from the notebook. Having nothing else to do but wait, Mahat listened.

Fuekat read:

*My dad and his family, immigrated to Canada early this decade, with my mom, Maria Fuekat, my younger sister and myself. He was 36. Since then, we have been living in Edmonton. Before coming to Canada, Dad was a scientist working with an international research organization. Since arriving in Edmonton he has been looking for a suitable job. It remains to me a mystery what exactly he does, besides looking for a job.*

*I must confess that I never knew what Dad had trained for in Africa, until recently. It all started like this. We were waiting for a bus, Dad and I. My eyes picked out some newspaper boxes close to the concrete chair by the bus stop shelter. A newspaper in a yellow box had the title "Hot Jobs". Grabbing a copy, I rushed to Dad, "You've been looking for a job. Look, this newspaper lists lots of them. Look, a journeyman, safety watch, a welder,*

*community disability worker, and many more. You just need to apply. Seize the opportunity, Dad! All you need to do is to choose one of them. With so many jobs listed you can have any one you want."*

*Glancing at the newspaper, Dad frowned at me, and I asked, "What's wrong with these jobs?"*

*Dad said nothing. So I asked him again.*

*He snatched the paper from me. "Here. I'll do the search on the bus."*

*Three times on the bus I reminded Dad to search for jobs and pick the one he wanted. He looked over the newspaper. But he was only pretending to search.*

*At our bus stop, my dad got down quickly.*

*I called out to him. "Dad! You forgot the newspaper on the bus!" I went back into the bus, saying to the driver, "Excuse me, sir. My dad forgot his jobs newspaper." Then I shouted nicely to the bus driver as he let me get down with the newspaper, "Thank you!"*

*I caught up with Dad, carrying the newspaper. "Here, dad."*

*"Thank you," Dad growled.*

*"Mom! Mom!" I shouted when we got home. "I have finally found a job for Dad." Mom was busy with home care kids.*

*"What do you mean?" Mom asked.*

*I grabbed the newspaper from Dad and showed Mom the listings. "Look, look, Mom! All these jobs. He can have whichever one he wants. There are so many he must be able to get at least one of them."*

*Mom glanced at the job listings in the paper. Then she inhaled noisily through her nose. She said, "Junior, none of the jobs here is Dad's right job!" She put her hands on her waist and said importantly, "Your dad is a seasoned scientist. He has a PhD in Entomology!"*

*I stared at her. "Mom, but you are also a graduate with a BSc from the School of Law. And look at the kind of work you're doing!"*

*Mom, Maria Fuekat, holds a degree in law. Unlike dad, she was not a salaried worker before immigrating to Canada. She was instead employed as an intern in a law firm and was just a few months away from becoming a full-practicing lawyer. But this year she is studying part time to become a health care aid. She also owns a children day home.*

*I said to Mom, "If you can study to become a health care aid while giving home care, and you studied to become a lawyer, surely Dad can take one of these jobs. He can become—" I went through the list of the jobs in the newspaper Dad could pick*

*from if only he chose to listen to me. "a journeyman, safety watch, an undertaker, community disability worker, a sanitation worker, a plumber, an electrician, a security guard at the airport, or even—"*

Fuekat, laughing hard, broke off reading from his son's notebook.

Mahat was laughing too. "What a story!" He asked, "How old is Junior?"

"Ten."

"Ten?"

At this point, a spokesperson from the human resource division of the hiring company came out smiling. "Good news to everyone!" he shouted to all the interviewees who had been patiently waiting, including Fuekat and Mahat. "You are all hired!"





# Journey Within

by Roger Fodjo

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Originally from Cameroon, Roger lives in Edmonton and works as a translator, interpreter, and fiction writer. He considers himself an activist who tries to spark political engagement among his fellow African immigrants.*

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Twenty-two years after leaving my native country of Cameroon, I've been living in the last ten years on Canadian soil. During this time, I have experienced many things, and have much to say. I don't want to write, with tears in my eyes, an immigrant's story like those of others, or to summarize misfortunes I have had in Canada to show how hard and painful my experience has been. Rather, I want to explore psychologically some things I have been through in Canada.

I arrived in Canada in 2007 with a good knowledge of western culture because I had lived in Europe, studying and

working. I knew enough about winters, for example, to be perturbed by them like many other African immigrants tend to be. However, like any visible minority person, I had my share of being treated differently because of the way I look, but this shouldn't be enough reason for me to state that Canada is a racist society. In the Canadian population, there may be some bigoted and uninformed people who still don't understand that immigrants are an asset. This handful of individuals do not make Canada a racist society in general. I think the fact that many first-generation immigrants work in our civil service is proof the Canadian

Government perceives immigrants to be an asset rather than a threat. I understand as an immigrant that integration is not easy anywhere in the world. In Canada, a land of opportunities, success is possible for hard working hands and brains.

Integration barriers are numerous. In addition to belonging to a visible minority, individuals like me – a relatively recent English learner -- struggle with language. We are the minority of a minority. Although I had good knowledge of English because I am a translator, I have come across English speakers with difficult accents, especially to

wrong to equate one's IQ with their language proficiency. Whenever I meet the minority of the minority newcomers, I find they are similarly frustrated. Some, furthermore, are troubled at being unable, at the very least, to express their thoughts due to the language barrier.

Nothing is granted anywhere, including in Canada. As part of the minority of a minority, I understood soon on arrival that Canada would never change to adapt to my needs. I would be the one to change my immigrant mindset to adapt to the Canadian society. I should therefore complain less, and work harder to fit in. Among opportunities Canada offers

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***“Among opportunities Canada offers immigrants, the right to citizenship is the best. But true citizenship is a spiritual journey involving sacrifice.”***

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allophones like me. In such occasions, the challenging part of the experience is not only to understand what the speaker has said, but the presence of people who may be witnessing your struggle with the accent. Many people, especially those who had never traveled beyond their native land, think you are stupid when they witness your struggle with a language. They forget or don't know that the person facing difficulties with English knows (an) other language (s) and/or can be a genius in their profession. I find it frustrating and

immigrants, the right to citizenship is the best. But true citizenship is a spiritual journey involving sacrifice.

In this spirit, I had to stop thinking my home to be only Cameroon. Canada is my home too. And as time goes by, I find my Canadian home taking over my African one. I realize too that what I have in Cameroon is just a house. Because one's home is where you raise your family and pay taxes, now home for me then is Canada. I no longer mentally hold myself hostage, as many immigrants

do, in the mono-identity prison that would prevent me from fully integrating myself. Multi-identity is possible. If after decades in Canada and you have taken the citizenship oath, you still say "Their National Day is July 1st", then it shows you do not consider yourself Canadian; you need to start an introspective cathartic trip. How can you work and pay taxes in Canada and still think that this country belongs to someone else and not to you too? Are you afraid of becoming a TRUE Canadian? I'm not. When I sing the two versions of "O Canada", I do so loudly, on purpose, to give people around me something to think about. I also take an active role in the political life around me while I try, as my personal mission, to spark a political awakening amongst African-descended immigrants. Canada will not accept or recognize me until I give myself the sense of belonging to Canada.

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***"Canada will not accept or recognize me until I give myself the sense of belonging to Canada."***

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# an instrument for escaping desolation

by Francisco Alexander Fwallah

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Francisco Fwallah- was born in Angola. He came to Canada in 1999, writes in Portuguese and English. Writing became to him a path to dream loudly. Through it, he has found a way to heal himself from past wounds. Writing poetry is drinking from different rivers.*



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A shelter to some escaping the constraints of hope showered by hardships,  
and a home to those pretending to be free from the heavy burdens of yesterday,  
a land lost to souls wandering, often aimlessly,  
but I find myself divided.

Part of me yearns for a sense of belonging,  
while the other is torn between hope and despair:  
hope for the innocent child's soul to remain pure, and that love for all is spread  
without the stain of greed, which has painted this canvas in delightful agony;  
but also despair, knowing what can and cannot be avoided  
as something lingers furled, leaving hearts loveless.

Canada—my sanctuary—wrapped within a tempo and tone of strength  
that demands the best of me as its blended culture without boundaries  
allows me to paint experiences and loud reveries with words—  
Here, far away from Angola I find a new blanket to cover the chain  
of fears produced by change;  
understanding life's sonnet—structured by society—  
I strive to decipher this sanctuary's deeper meanings.

A new home, its walls embrace my longings,  
its language kind and unkind to my poetry and politics.  
Here under this pellucid blue sky within the frame of changing seasons  
I find inspiration—endless possibilities of thinking.  
Here in this place where freedom dances,  
shaping itself with palpable and impalpable winds,  
as a layer of breeze becomes an instrument for escaping desolation,  
I smile with regret—this is my home now.

# Life in Canada

by Sergio Gaggero

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Sergio Leonardo Toro Gaggero is a social worker and community developer. He strongly believes in expanding his horizon by learning and engaging with communities wherever the Universe has chosen for him to live. He likes to follow his mother's motto: 'As el bien y no mires a quien' (Always do a good deed to everyone regardless of who they are).*



This journey started the day I had to leave my country due to political unrest in Chile, which would have caused a great deal of suffering to my family and myself.

I must take this opportunity to thank the Canadian Government for allowing me and thousands of my compatriots to relocate to this northern country in North America with its enormous multiculturalist heart.

I arrived in Edmonton through Vancouver on Friday October 1st, 1976, with a 26 years old spouse and two children -- a 7-year old boy and a 3-year old girl. I was 26 and had no clue what to expect. But I was glad to be in a country that took us in without questioning who I was, or what my political or religious beliefs were. It just OPENED ITS DOOR

and allowed me to build my home here.

The first few years were hard as I tried to establish and integrate my family into this new country, culture and language, as I also tried to maintain my own culture, language and values in a way that would not infringe or disturb the locals. After the first few months in Canada, I decided to follow the wise saying: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do!" I committed myself to fully build my new life here.

Please do not get me wrong, I never disregarded my upbringing beliefs or culture. On the contrary, I worked closely with the Chilean and Latin American communities to promote the understanding of our Latin culture among other cultures and our own children.



During my 41 years In Canada I have had ups and downs like you would expect with any other regular human being. However, if I had to put them both on a weight scale, the positives outweigh the negatives by miles.

As I mentioned earlier, life has not been all roses, but we all made the best out of what we got to play with. My spouse and I had one more child before we separated after 5 rocky years in Canada. And believe me, we weren't the only ones going through family earthquakes.

until they grew up and became more independent. That made life somewhat easier.

I graduated as a Social Worker, and on September 5 1985 I became GOA (Government of Alberta) employee for the rest of my working life in Alberta. Oh! I forgot to mention that in 1994 I remarried and had a new baby at 45. It was the best thing that had ever happened to me and at the right age. All my other kids were thrilled with the new sister and they helped us to reassemble

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## ***“We weren’t the only ones going through family earthquakes.”***

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Those were rough times for all of us but we managed to keep our and our children's sanity. Joint custody of our children allowed us to pursue our personal goals despite what had happened between us. My goal was returning to school to become a Social Worker.

I had to become Mother and Father for the time the children lived with me while we were all trying to grow up. I did the housekeeping, the cooking, I washed clothes, I helped the children with homework and put them to bed before working on my own school work. Years went by and the kids moved back and forth between Mom to Papa

as a family. We all got much closer, including my ex-wife and her husband with whom we are very good friends, and who is an excellent step father to my kids.

I reside now in the Saskatchewan Province at Jackfish Lake in a house I started to build about 6 years ago as my retirement home. 3 years ago I moved in permanently after taking early pension from GOA. By the way, I moved “Solo” as my second X decided not to move down here with me and I was not prepared to sacrifice my dream; or something like that. We had already grown apart. My younger daughter was headed to College for two years close to my new

house, and I was ready to move on with my life.

Today after 3 years living in what I call my Shangri-La, I continue to be involved in the Local Community of North Battleford, SK. I worked for half year full time at the Canadian Mental Health Association as Program Coordinator and currently Permanent Part Time Youth & Family Worker for North Battleford Youth Center.

My family grew from two children at my arrival, to four, one son and three daughters. My son now is 47-year-old and is a father of 6 girls and a boy. My daughters are aged 43, 37 and 22. Between them I have 3 other grand daughters. So in total, I have 10 Grandkids. All of them are successfully independent and are proud of their dual citizenship as Chileno & Canadians.

Not a bad contribution to the population increase this marvellous country needs, eh!

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***“Today after 3 years living in what I call my Shangri-La,  
I continue to be involved in the Local Community of  
North Battleford, SK.”***

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# No Easy Ride

by Shimelis Gebremichael

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Shimelis Gebremichael worked as a journalist in his native country of Ethiopia. He is pursuing a Master of Arts in Communications and Technology at the University of Alberta. A writer of poetry and prose, he aspires to continue his journalism career in both English and Amharic languages. Shimelis and his wife have two beautiful children.*



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Many people around the world, aided by the media, consider Canada to be a wonderful destination. For a while I too became victim to this portrayal of Canada by the media.

This is therefore the story of a young new comer to one of the most prestigious countries on earth, Canada. It started when I settled in Edmonton as a Permanent Resident in August 2013. I believe that the experience of my four years here, the toughest yet hope-filled of my life, especially the first one and half, is worth sharing as a possible lesson for those aspiring to come to Canada.

Things would have been tougher but for the welcome and help I received from supportive people and public institutions in Edmonton. Among those deserving

of my gratitude are the Settlement practitioners at the Edmonton Immigration Services Association, the Edmonton Public Library, and others. They have helped me to try and make something of myself, and to visualize success in my new life here. Here is an account of my brief tough but hopeful journey in Canada.

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Imagine an African-born man in his late-thirties. He lives in Ethiopia. He works full time to 5 pm, in an office, a very decent job by his country's measure. He goes to the gym occasionally. He enjoys hanging out with friends, and various social activities. He sleeps at least a solid 8 hours daily. He eats heavy, organic Ethiopian meal. He takes pleasure in the cycle of days in this land

he calls home. The sun, that is as real to him as everything else around him, rises in all its glory as early as 6 AM. It's soon in full swing, burning the earth, before it sets at 6:30PM or 7 PM. It has been thus since his childhood.

Now imagine this person moving to Edmonton, a place that couldn't be more different from his Ethiopian homeland: in weather, lifestyle, culture, technology, administrative and political setups – you name it. Suddenly great hustle and bustle is all around him. Days here, unlike in his country, consist of a rat race that demands he utilizes efficiently every bit of his time just to keep up with

outdoor manual labor. Imagine. In his home country, he had worked as a journalist, interacting with prominent people. Now, for a variety of reasons the biggest being the complicated system of his new country, he is denied the opportunities he enjoyed in the past.

Despite such challenges and many others in his first six months, the newcomer doesn't give up. He is not one to sit at home arms crossed. Challenges, coming down on him like merciless hammer blows, seem only to give him renewed strength. Far from discouraging him, these challenges sharpen his hunger for success. He

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***“Despite such challenges and many others in his first six months, the newcomer doesn’t give up.”***

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life. In this new place, people of different cultures and backgrounds 'intermingle'. They interact superficially, not with their hearts and minds. Irregularities reign here. Some days, the sun rises as late as 9:00AM, sets as early as 4 PM. Some days it rises at 4 AM, and sets at 10 PM. And the weather! Temperatures can drop to as low as minus 40!

Suddenly, as if things aren't bad enough, the poor newcomer finds himself begging for jobs, knocking for opportunities at multiple doors. To get by, he performs housekeeping jobs,

applies his good communication skills to interact with helpful people. He shares his experiences, asks the right questions to assist him in his new journey. He sniffs for opportunities, gathers information from as many sources as possible.

He dreams big.

To the surprise of many, he starts to make something of himself. He transforms his tiresome and low-wage cleaning job into something he somewhat enjoys. Thanks to another job as security guard and support he acquired from

a Sudanese-born Security Company Supervisor. He gets two other part time jobs. He volunteers for CJSR 88.5 FM radio. While busy with all that, he inches back to his previous profession – journalism. He enters the program of Master of Arts in Communication and Technology (MACT) at the University of Alberta. Tuition fees for the program, his adjustment to the North American academic system, a young family including two infant kids, facing prejudice here and there, have been some of the challenges he has faced in his tough four years in Edmonton.

he has had.

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From my four-year Canadian journey, I have some advice for new comers. As you arrive in Canada, prepare yourself well to adjust to this new complicated environment. To do that, try to understand what it means – culturally and socially – to immigrate to Canada. I believe some of the social crises that we see among newcomers stem from preconceptions about the country and incomplete orientation for life here. My

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### ***“One mantra guides the young man through his many challenges: ‘The Sky is the Limit.’”***

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One mantra guides the young man through his many challenges: “The Sky is the Limit”. Despite the fierce and at times discouraging competition, he searches tirelessly for jobs. He deems the results he has so far achieved at school and in life here portend well for the road ahead of him; he feels that things will get better. He believes he will triumph against all odds. His strong roots and faith in his ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church sustains his belief that God has been helping him and will continue to do so. Looking back on his journey and his struggles, he considers himself one of the lucky few for the opportunities and the blessings

last piece of advice. There is no easy ride. To achieve success, you need to work hard.

# The Bitter and the Sweet

by Giselle Quezon General

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Giselle describes herself as “blogger, immigrant, artist, and Indie author.” She is a University of Alberta Bachelor of Commerce Cooperative Education Program graduate. Her dream is to help reduce barriers through her community involvement. She volunteers and coordinates volunteers. During her spare time, she writes in her personal blog, makes upcycled arts and crafts, and plays board games.*



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August 2, 2017 is a milestone, as I celebrated my tenth year in Canada. A decade ago, I landed in the Toronto airport, sponsored by relatives. My mother, father and sister died in an accident in October 1999, leaving my brother and I orphaned and cared for by my maternal relatives. It was a bittersweet situation for me. It was bitter because I came first, and it was difficult to be away from my brother. The sweet part of the experience is my being in a completely different place that presented new opportunities. The relief of being away from the relative who sexually assaulted me is significant as well.

I remember in the introduction-to-Canada package that I received upon arrival that the country is a mosaic

of different people with different backgrounds, which contributes to how amazing it is. Turns out that, like Canada, I will be making a mosaic of myself, as well: choosing different pieces from what I learn and experience and integrating them into the fabric of my being.

The years were transformations for me: from teenager to adulthood and from a newcomer to a confident resident. On September 2007, after being here for a month, I went to Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School to register. The principal wanted to put me into Grade 10 along with English as a Second Language classes because I was only 16 and quite new here. I asked “*Can I please go to Grade 12? I already finished high school back home. And my marks*



*are good. Can I please take challenge exams so I can attend regular English classes?"* I just wanted to go to university as soon as I could. I was taken to the ESL classroom to write a few paragraphs to test my language skills and I passed! It looked like a positive sign early on. Eventually, I felt more comfortable navigating and embracing what this country could offer. It shaped how I can contribute to the beautiful and complex dynamic of living here.

With these experiences came some sobering realizations. Intense feelings

or after I did. During family gatherings, I receive frequent comments from them that my parents would be happy for me to be here. Then, there are times when I'm told that I'm being "more Canadian" in an accusing way—a technique used to squash arguments or a warning when I do things that they think are wrong.

These could be things such as going out with friends to bars on Whyte Ave, or when my new boyfriend, again, is not Filipino. Some of my elders seem panicked about the thought of me losing my "Filipino values," without providing

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## ***"Even elders can be broken, blinded, or flawed."***

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arose upon realizing that in some moments I deserved better as a child. But these came with an understanding that even elders can be broken, blinded, or flawed. The concept of some things being systemic or inter-generational had cast shades of gray in my perspective. I endured horrors that no child deserved, but the pain at the time resulted in valuable skills and life lessons.

Resolving conflicts of cultural values between here and where I came from also presented challenges. Navigating how my relatives think of me is an ongoing process with which I have come to terms. They have come to Canada at different times; either many years before

practical advice on how to navigate both what was learned there and what is being learned here. I realized several harmful aspects of my culture that I decided to reject. I embraced and applied concepts that I only learned here in Canada, like playing a conscious, active, and healthy role in my sexuality and reproductive health, the value of mental health and paying attention to it, and identifying toxic behaviors in relationships.

In recent years, technology has been playing a significant role in my communication with others, which has resulted in unexpected complexities and pleasant surprises. I made my first email

and social media account when I was in Grade 12, launching me into a frenzy of adding students from my school. Then I tried to connect with my relatives living all over of the world. Having the means to link up with my childhood friends from our quaint mining village is thrilling, and seeing elders opening accounts is amusing. These technologies helped to overcome time-zone differences and costs of connecting to people who are oceans away. When my brother's paperwork to immigrate to Canada was being processed, providing instructions and financial support for him became more efficient. When a family member passes away or gets gravely ill, or needs

called sexual assault. From the posters on campus and buses to the online articles and viral videos, the knowledge that there can be healing in these awful things eventually convinced me to act. Now I look forward to the emerging mosaic of myself. I had never imagined myself going through therapy or counseling; but, after taking the plunge, it has been a messy, overwhelming, and wonderful journey.

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***“Now I look forward to the emerging mosaic of myself.”***

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financial assistance, staying in touch and/or sending money is made much easier. And, these technologies will only continue to evolve and become more integrated in our lives over time.

There are pieces of myself that have always been broken that I don't know how to patch up, unsure of whether it is even possible. And with my upbringing, pursuing medical help is not my first instinct. There are multitudes of moments, big and small, when I realized that there are names for the bad things I experienced. It's called trauma. It's

# Reflections on Our Club's 100th Anniversary

by Jimmy Gin

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jimmy Gin is an Honorary Life Time Director of the Dramatic Club. He wrote this piece for the special centennial book published in May 2017 for the Chinese Dramatic Club of Edmonton that was established in 1907.*

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The Chinese Senior Dramatic Club of Edmonton is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. For an organization made up of amateur musicians and Cantonese Opera enthusiasts to have lasted for almost a century outside of China is indeed a rarity.

In the past ninety years, many organizations in the Chinese community had been established and dissolved. Some failed due to internal structural problems, others due to personnel conflict or internal power struggles, and many others ceased to exist because of financial difficulties or lack of resources.

When I arrived in Canada 70 years ago, I was a young man, feeling lonely and isolated, a world away from my family and friends. I decided to take

an active role in community activities, participating and organizing different charity groups to meet the needs of and to improve the quality of life for our community. It was my hope that these community involvements would give me a new direction in life. In those days, we all worked long hours for a living. What little leisure time we had was devoted to volunteering for different organizations. In my youth, I was idealistic and full of self-confidence, taking on many responsibilities, driven by a sense of duty and a mission to serve our community.

It is no simple task to establish and sustain an amateur organization devoted to an art form not always popular to the public. For an amateur Cantonese Opera club struggling

to survive outside of its country of origin, our club faced the challenge of finding artistic and technical expertise, maintaining a functional organization, working cooperatively with members who have different levels of training and background in Cantonese Opera, finding the time to meet regularly for practice and so forth. For the first 70 years of our Club's history, we faced the most difficult challenge of securing financial assistance to fund our Club's activities, such as stage rentals, purchase of different musical instruments, costumes, sound equipment, staging equipment and general administrative costs. When I look back on the accomplishments of previous generations of Club members, I have deep appreciation for their hard work and respect for their enormous contribution to keep our Club alive.

In the early days, as the first and only vibrant cultural organization within the Chinese community, our Club attracted many members from all walks of life. It provided a training ground for many people and cultivated their interests in the art of Cantonese opera. The Club prospered and grew as years went by. Many talented people from the Club ventured on their own to establish their own musical clubs. Currently in our community, there are many Cantonese Opera clubs. We also have professionals teaching the different aspects of this art form. This is a good phenomenon. As the different clubs strive to improve

their artistic achievement, it can lead to friendly competitions, thus raising the bar for amateur standard, thereby enriching the cultural fabric of our community. As we face changing times, we must keep up with new ideas, be creative and innovative, be renewed and keep this art form alive and accessible for future generations.

The Chinese Senior Dramatic Club of Edmonton in its 100 years of history has weathered many storms and overcome many challenges. We continue to be a fertile ground to nurture and support many talents. Today we are seeing our hard work bear fruit. The future of

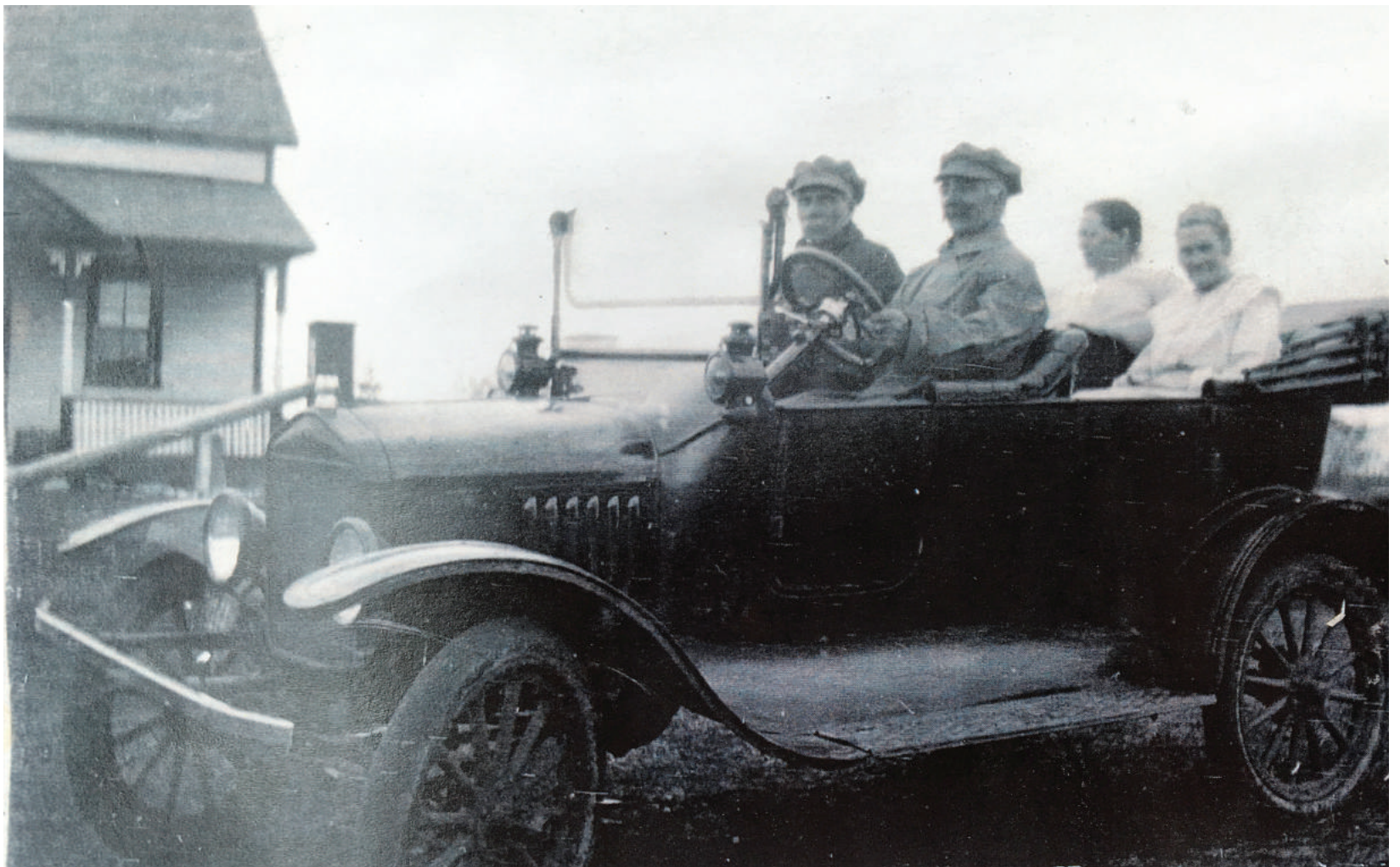
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***“Today we are seeing our hard  
work bear fruit.”***

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our Club is bright. May we continue to keep our confidence high, be united in hearts and spirits, work cooperatively to protect our “family”, singing the Chinese Senior Dramatic Club's marching song, and together march steadfastly into the next century.





# The Travels of Ofeigur Sigurdsson and Astridur Tomasdottir

by Karen Gummo

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Ofeigur Sigurdsson and his wife, Astridur Tomasdottir, new Icelandic immigrants, traveled in June of 1889 on foot and by ox cart over a muddy, bumpy path from Calgary to the settlement of Icelanders near the Medicine River north west of Innisfail. It took 4 days to get to the Red Deer River from Calgary. No bridges existed in those days, so they floated their ox cart across the river and coaxed the horses to swim. Neither Ofeigur

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*A storyteller, author, and illustrator who, for over 30 years has performed tales to all ages across and beyond Canada. Karen Gummo is descended from Icelandic and Danish adventurers who came to Alberta as early as 1889. These great storytellers left behind anecdotes into which Karen, a member and past president of TALES (The Alberta League Encouraging Storytelling), breathes new life.*

nor Astridur were swimmers, but they managed to cross safely.

By the spring of 1891, Ofeigur, Astridur, and little Runi had been settled for two years in the Tindastoll district. They had found a piece of land on the N.E. quarter of Section 10 Township 37 Range 1 west of the 5th meridian. Using timber they could cut in the vicinity, they worked to put up a log cabin. Soon baby Tomas was born.

According to the Census of Icelanders compiled by Baldwin Baldwinson in



1891 - 92, they had 1 acre of broken land under roots and vegetables, 3 cows, 7 young cattle, 6 sheep, 10 poultry,

and the value of their lands, buildings, etc. was \$900.00. Their capital at commencement had been \$150.00, and it was said that their net worth was \$1180.00.

To earn some cash to support his new farm, Ofeigur used the skills that he brought over from his homeland and that he had honed as a farmhand around Winnipeg. He was an excellent shepherd and sheep shearer. Luckily for Ofeigur and his fellow Icelanders, they could get work as shepherds at sheep ranches newly established by Scottish immigrants in the Nose Creek Valley near Airdrie. The only way for a frugal man to travel there was on foot - it took at least 4 days in each direction. The men would be away for months at a time, leaving the women at home to tend to the children and run the farm.

This new land was vast. Their milk cow could wander miles away when there were no fences - and she did! Astridur, Ofeigur's wife, would ride their faithful buckskin pony Blake, across the prairie listening for the sound of the bell around the cow's neck.

In those early years, Ofeigur would leave home in the spring and not come back until fall. Following the footsteps of the First Peoples, he came across bears, coyotes, and wolves. They were known to roam across the prairie in those days.



When he arrived at the ranch, Ofeigur Sigurdsson set a record by shearing 106 sheep in a day. The next job was to journey with the sheep over the prairie, fattening them up on the fine prairie grasses and clovers.

Living as a shepherd, he walked across the land herding the sheep, taking shelter where he could under rocks and in caves along creek beds and water ways. He had to know how to find food, how to ward off predators, and how to survive in the great outdoors. He fed on the plentiful berries that he could find in summer.

Early one fall, Ofeigur was caught in a fierce snowstorm. Rather than taking shelter in a cave, he decided to stay with the sheep so that he might keep them alive. He began to suffer from the cold. Before the storm was over, he found it necessary to slaughter four sheep.

"I'll sacrifice the lives of a few sheep so I can stay alive to keep watch over many more," he said to himself.

As the storm raged, he wrapped the sheep's warm pelts around his body, so he wouldn't freeze to death. He gave thanks to the animals who had kept him alive.

After four long months, Ofeigur journeyed home to his family. He had received a little cash that he carried

in his pocket and the rest of his pay in the form of groceries: bags of flour, sugar, and coffee. He leaned forward to balance the load on his back. They say he never walked, but ran with long low strides like a Laplander.

How relieved they felt that he was together with them again.

He made this journey south again for the next 2 or 3 summers. After that, he had little further need to earn cash so far away from home. Clever Ofeigur Sigurdsson soon made it possible for his own family farm to support him. This had not been possible in his homeland for many long years.

"How fortunate I am to have adopted Canada as my new home," he thought.



## To a Better Life

by Maria Hasek

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Because of the communist regime in the country one of my paternal grandmother's sons, Anthony Markowski, who had fought in World War II couldn't return to Poland, but stayed in England after the war.

In 1957 my grandmother, now widowed and aged 65, got a chance to go and see her son in England. By coincidence, her childhood friend – Michael Diakur – living in Canada, had found out she would be visiting her son. He went to see her in England.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Hasek (formerly Markowski), was born in Wroclaw, Poland. At age 13 she and her parents and siblings immigrated to Canada. She and her husband are blessed with two sons and two granddaughters. She has been volunteering passionately for many Polish organizations in Edmonton. After operating 5 successful franchise businesses for 25 years, she is now retired.

They fell in love. They got married.

Soon after, the newlyweds traveled to

Canada. For 5 years, my grandmother worked hard as a dishwasher. In 1962 after obtaining her Canadian citizenship, she suggested our whole family immigrate to Canada for better opportunities and a peaceful life. My parents quickly agreed. They had suffered enough during the war. It's impossible to understand the hardships endured during World War II unless you lived through it or heard stories from survivors. One night with no explanation, for example, Russian soldiers pulled my mother, her father and sister, and sent them to Siberia. During her 6 years there my mother lost her sister and father to hunger and hard labour. My father worked in a German-

In 1963, my mother gave birth to twins. By this time, my older brother and I seemed to have become adults overnight. We took care of the household. We cooked, cleaned, and did other chores. Because of the constant chores, we didn't have time or energy to learn English properly or later to get higher education. I was good in mathematics, however, and took accounting.

In my first class, my accounting teacher said, "This is the land of opportunity." Five years later when my parents, my siblings and I received our Canadian Citizenship, my mother, moved to tears, said the same thing. "We are so fortunate to be

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***"In my first class, my accounting teacher said, 'This is the land of opportunity.'"***

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occupied mine throughout the war.

My parents, my 15-old brother, 9-year old sister, and myself aged 13, arrived in Edmonton, a small city then, on August 8, 1962, one warm summer day. We were nervous. We didn't know what to expect. I didn't know English or French. And what will people think of my heavy accent? In September, my siblings and I enrolled into Sacred Heart school. We didn't know yet a word of English. Then we learned something that made me feel a little bit at home. The city had a Polish church and hall.

able to live in one of the best countries in the world."

I moved to Toronto in 1969 for a better job. In 1970, I met the love of my life Mark, who had immigrated from Czechoslovakia to escape persecution. He had been one of the students who had protested the Communist party in that country in 1968. We got married in 1971 and over the years, we had two sons, David and Robert.

We came back to Edmonton in 1975 when Mark got a good job here. Working



hard over the years, we became senior managers in many fast food franchises. We opened our own franchise in 1990. Eventually we had stores throughout Alberta which we ran for 25 years. We feel that we ran a very successful family business. In 2015, we both retired.

As for our sons David and Robert, we made sure they got the opportunity to go to University that we never got. We have taught them: "To succeed and have your dreams fulfilled, you must work hard. Life doesn't come easy." We have also encouraged our sons to travel to other parts of the world to experience how other people live. The most memorable trip I went on with my sons was to Poland and the Auschwitz museum. I wanted them to know that it was through my parents and grandparents' past hardships that we fortunately avoided the horror and indignity that people do to others, of which Auschwitz was an example. I wanted my sons to understand why we all came to Canada and to be grateful for that. Through their travels and education, they learned that Canada is the most unique, diversified, and peaceful country in the world where one can accomplish their goals. David has become a medical doctor and Robert a teacher/businessman.

As a family, we have devoted our lives to helping others who are vulnerable and in need. I personally am involved

in many Polish organizations and other community associations in Edmonton, to make sure Canada continues to open its arms to people from different cultures, backgrounds and religions. Our mission now is to give back to communities.

We should all feel blessed we live in a country where we are not prosecuted, and we have freedom of speech. We should feel blessed to live in a country that respects human rights, is multicultural, tolerant, generous, peaceful, and treats everyone equally.

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***"We should feel blessed to live in a country that respects at human rights, is multicultural, tolerant, generous, peaceful, and treats everyone equally."***

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I'm glad to have this opportunity, in honor of Canada's 150th birthday, to share my family's journey. To my heroes – my grandmother and her husband who sacrificed their lives and brought us to Canada for a better life – I am forever grateful to you.

For their love and support and sacrifice, I would also like to express my gratitude to my Markowski Family, on behalf of whom I've written this story.

# Kim Hung – 1951-1996

by Mei Hung

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Mei Hung is the widow of the late Mr. Kim Hung*

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Kim Hung was a simple man with a caring heart. That's how the Chinese Community, to this day, describes him. Throughout his life he dedicated his time to looking at needs of the community.

Kim came to Edmonton from Hong Kong in the late 1960s as a student to study at the University of Alberta. While at University, he saw the need for a Chinese Library where lonely students could go and read news of their homeland and to gather and meet. He established the Chinese Library Society which is still in use at the University of Alberta. He saw the need for a Chinese Community Services Centre in late 1970s that could assist all new immigrants coming into Edmonton. The Edmonton Chinese Community Services Centre was thus established and, renamed ASSIST, still provides assistance to new immigrants to Edmonton.

In the mid-1970s, the plight of the

Vietnamese people fleeing their country caught Kim's sympathetic attention. With a group of friends, he organized a massive collection of used clothing for the refugees. He gave up many hours of sleep to go and meet the refugees from Vietnam at the airport, help them settle into their new environment with their clothing needs met.

In the early 1980s, Kim started looking at the need for a Chinese bilingual program within the public-school system. He aggressively developed proposals outlining the need for Chinese language in the school curriculum. He involved members from the Chinese Graduates Association of Alberta and Professors from the University of Alberta to help explain to the Edmonton Chinese Community why they should send their children to the Chinese Bilingual program. This Chinese Bilingual program in Public Schools is very successful and has over 2000 students

going from grade 1 to 12 in 13 schools across the City of Edmonton.

With the influx of more new immigrants into Edmonton, Kim saw the need for a centre where Canadian Chinese can maintain their culture. He sought support for this project from the community, and at the city, provincial and federal levels. He led massive fundraising for a Chinese Cultural Centre in downtown Edmonton. And that was how Edmonton Chinatown Multicultural Centre was born, completed in the early 1980s.

At the same time as he was working on

cooking, washing and cleaning, all on their own. Kim saw this need ahead of time and started a plan to build a seniors' complex with accommodation not only for seniors who still managed independent living, but also for those who needed assisted living and medical assistance.

Kim worked tirelessly, talking to the community and officials from the various levels of government. He coordinated fundraising activities for the purchase of the land for the lodge and the continuing care facility. The government supported these projects but the downturn of

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***“Kim worked tirelessly, talking to the community and officials from the various levels of government.”***

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the cultural centre, Kim started looking at the needs of the aging population, feeling that seniors who had worked and contributed so much during their younger days, deserved a place to enjoy their old age. His efforts brought about an apartment building for seniors. Through further efforts by Kim, another apartment tower for seniors was built in downtown Edmonton, completed in the mid-1980s with room for over 200 seniors in two complexes.

As seniors age, they need to rely on an environment where they do not need to have to do the daily chores of

the economy in the early 1990s put a damper on them. Despite this, Kim fought on. So the turning for the seniors' lodge took place in September 1996, with 1997 as the planned completion date.

Unknown to anyone, the constant and tireless work for the community had affected Kim's health. While Kim was doing all this community work, he still had his regular job which involved much traveling overseas. On December 17, 1996, he suffered a fatal heart attack. But his dream of completing a continuing care facility, left to



others in the community, would soon become a reality. The facility was under construction with 2004 as the planned date of its completion.

The success of the Chinese Community in downtown Edmonton was the result of many years of dedication and perseverance by Kim. Kim was an individual who worked for the community, without looking for monetary compensation for the many hours he put in. He built a window of opportunity for future generations. He cared for the young and the old. Kim should be a proud man as he achieved, in a short span of about 20 years, what many take decades to do. Sometimes it is not the length of one's life that is important. It is what one does in one's life that is important. For his dedication to helping others, Kim won the achievement Award for Services to the Chinese Community and the Citation award from the City of Edmonton.

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***“Sometimes it is not the length of one’s life that is important. It is what one does in one’s life that is important.”***

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# Preserving Africa in Canada

by Wunmi Idowu

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*A talented performing artist, dance instructor, and choreographer for over 20 years, Wunmi Idowu grew up in Nigeria immersed in the African dance culture. She touches many with her innovative expression of traditional and modern African dance. As director of Woezo Africa Music & Dance Theatre, she aims to bring to the mainstream, African dance styles as they exist in performance today.*

I did not know what to expect when we relocated to Canada in 1992. I was a 10-year-old, leaving a familiar place, friends, and family in Nigeria. All I knew was that being in Canada would grant me many more opportunities and advantages than I had before, particularly in education. I really looked forward to going to school there.

In Elementary School in Canada, I was one of only 3 black students in my school. In the Elementary higher grades to High School, when we learned Humanities – Social Studies, History,

and Geography – we only did so about places like Britain, Russia, Asia, and others. We learned nothing, however as far as I can remember, about Africa.

In Nigeria, the school I attended was in Badagry in Lagos, close to “The Point of No Return,” one of many historical sites in Nigeria that marked past major slave ports in West Africa. The cells and shackles in which slaves were held that I saw at “The Point of No Return” are etched indelibly in my memory. The absence in the curriculum of African history in Alberta, including for

example that of the slave trade, is a glaring omission that disturbs me. So too does the omission of, say, history of the Northern American "Underground Railway" or of contributions that black people have made to Canada.

In contemporary times, African-Canadians have made inestimable contributions to Canada in Arts, Politics, Technological Innovation, Military Service, Business and more, in the face of lingering racism. These great Canadians endured, and succeeded. Their fortitude has inspired me. It made me want to contribute to Canada in my own way. I decided that I would contribute by ensuring that I didn't forget or leave behind my heritage as an African and Nigerian. I may have become a Canadian citizen but I'm also a Nigerian and an African.

I started dancing and performing at the age of three. I did not stop when we came to Canada. At school performances or talent shows, I made sure to do an African dance, music or theatrical act every chance I got. The colorful and intricate African dance movements and music I did excited and intrigued

audiences. What I did, they found to be completely new to them. Their reaction may have been because they had been used to negatively perceiving Africa, through the eyes of the media, as only a place of poverty, squalor, misery and war.

From Elementary to High School, I attempted to infuse cultural elements I found to be uniquely African into whatever I did, in Language Arts, Social Studies, History, and other subjects. After High School, I decided to continue to use the performing arts to uplift African communities, and as a social enterprise to engage other communities. I went to University to study business so that I could have the skills to become an entrepreneur.

In November 2006, I founded Woezo Africa Music & Dance Theatre (The word 'Woezo' means 'welcome' in the language of the Ewe people in the West African country of Ghana. So the name of the group signifies 'Welcome to Africa'). I knew I had the capability, passion, and motivation to create something through which I could display the vibrancy of African culture and arts. I have been

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***"I knew I had the capability, passion, and motivation to create something through which I could display the vibrancy of African culture and arts."***

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using Woezo Africa as a platform to enrich the global dance community through the infusion and celebration of African performing arts into world-class initiatives.

Our mission in Woezo Africa is to preserve the purity of the cultural values from Africa. We do so by providing quality entertainment and education about the history of Africa to our communities. This will help promote a better understanding and appreciation of African culture and its contributions to today's society.

Woezo Africa is our tool with which we attempt to raise a sense of community involvement in our youth, especially the

workshops, dance classes, and more. I would love to see Africa become part of the school curriculum. That would help to change the negative historical perception of Africa, this continent with its richly diverse cultures spread across its 54 countries. Keeping knowledge about Africa from mainstream education would isolate a vital segment of our population – African-born Canadians – from society at large. I believe that we at Woezo Africa have so much knowledge that if shared will contribute to bringing understanding and unity in our Canadian society.

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***“Woezo Africa is our tool with which we attempt to raise a sense of community involvement in our youth.”***

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Canadian-born generation, by teaching them about our culture and heritage. Both my daughters were born in Edmonton. All they know about Africa is what I have taught them. If I weren't their mother, they wouldn't know anything. The school system doesn't supply that knowledge through its curriculum.

I am proud to declare that in the past 10 years we have taught in communities and schools. We have educated audiences about Africa through performances,

**403.390.8904**  
**info@woezoafrica.com**  
**www.woezoafrica.com**

# A Filmmaker's Journey to an Untold Story

by Selwyn Jacob

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Selwyn Jacob is a Canadian filmmaker whose work has often explored the experiences of Black Canadians as well as other stories from Canada's multicultural communities, as both as an independent director and since 1997, as a producer with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB).*



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In 1976, I obtained a teaching position with the Lac La Biche School Division in Northern Alberta. It was a decision that would forever change my outlook on being Canadian, and ultimately define the films I would direct and produce.

I had immigrated to Canada in 1968, and obtained a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta in 1970, but my goal had always been to become a filmmaker. I subsequently attended the University of Southern California from 1972-74 where I pursued a Master's Degree in Cinema. Upon my return to Edmonton in 1974, I found it virtually impossible to get any kind of film or television-related job. Capitalizing on my Bachelor of Education Degree, I became a teacher.

As a teacher, I found myself elated, frustrated, and dejected all at once. On the one hand, I was happy to be able to start paying down my student loans. On the other hand, I was disappointed in a system that denied me the opportunity to work in my preferred line of work. The fact that even at my second career choice, of teaching, I had been forced to go out of Edmonton for a job like many immigrant teachers at the time, made my disappointment only deeper.

But I kept looking on the bright side. I was hopeful I would find some filmic story that might evolve from working in that kind of, as it seemed to me at the time, isolationist environment. Two years later, by which time many people knew I was a film school graduate aspiring to

be a filmmaker, a colleague urged me to consider making a film on the Black community just south of Lac la Biche, close to Athabasca Town. A black community in this neck of the woods? The idea intrigued me. I couldn't wait to venture into the project. The following summer I was in the community of Amber Valley, to learn the history of these pioneering Black folks who had fled racial discrimination in Oklahoma, all the way to Northern Alberta, to establish an all-Black community.

With grandiose vision and a naïve sense of filmmaking, I set out to tell this epic

experience in Alberta, their integration into the larger white Athabasca community, and about their beloved baseball team.

Carrying out the project, I encountered people from all over North America, all of whom were working variously on the Amber Valley story. I met a producer from Montreal writing an opera about the Amber Valley Saga, a filmmaker from Toronto who had successfully convinced the Alberta Government to fund a series of documentaries about historic Alberta communities, including Amber Valley. And I also met Charles

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***“With grandiose vision and a naïve sense of filmmaking,  
I set out to tell this epic story in all its glory.”***

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story in all its glory. That is, until a producer from the newly-established Edmonton's National Film Board office suggested to me that maybe I should consider telling the story as a documentary. Most aspiring feature film directors, he told me, used the documentary as a stepping stone to other projects involving more dramatic storytelling. I heeded his advice.

With a small grant from Alberta Culture, I proceeded to interview some of the surviving residents of Amber Valley about their story. I asked them about the exodus from Oklahoma, their farming

Irby, now deceased, a history Professor from California State University, who was completing his Doctoral Dissertation entitled, *All That Blood: The Amber Valley Saga*.

Eventually in 1984, with a total budget of approximately twenty thousand dollars and the help of a film coop and volunteers, I completed my first film, *We Remember Amber Valley*, a crudely crafted documentary. It told the story of the Amber Valley community as seen through the eyes of its baseball team. Besides documenting an important episode in



Alberta's history, the film managed to touch a sensitive chord with people of varying interests and backgrounds. I remember a gentleman commenting, when I showed it to representatives of the Alberta Government, that although he considered himself an authority on Alberta history, he had no knowledge of this group of Black migrants living in Northern Alberta. A former School Superintendent for the Athabasca School Division, called Dr. Swift, heard an interview I did on CKUA Radio about the film, and wrote a letter which said he was possibly one of only a few people who had first-hand knowledge of that community. As Superintendent he interacted with Amber Valley because not only did the community have its own school, it had its own Black School Board as well.

Twenty years later, I still get requests for this very simple but evocative documentary. And whenever I do, my mind goes back inevitably to those early days in Edmonton when I was told by some producers that nobody would be interested in a documentary on Black farmers on the prairies!

In addition to that film and others made since, I feel strongly about those black stories, to do with belonging and identity, yet to be acknowledged and told filmically. Future generations may eventually gravitate to other stories reflecting the Black Experience, or they may choose to tell those that are simply Canadian and not rooted in any ethnicity. Either of those two options would be a positive indication that the Black Experience is being viewed through multiple lenses.

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***“Twenty years later, I still get requests for this very simple but evocative documentary.”***

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# The Edmonton Jewish Community

by JAHSENA

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JAHSENA (Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta) preserves and protect the Jewish heritage of Edmonton and Northern Alberta through archival documents, artifacts and audiovisual materials, and promotes knowledge of and use of those materials through outreach activities such as exhibitions and educational programs. This is an excerpt from the book **Generation to Generation: Jewish Edmontonians as Heritage Builders** by (JAHSENA). It has been adapted here with the kind permission by JAHSENA.

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Edmonton's first Jews, Abraham (Abe) and Rebecca Cristall, arrived in 1893. At that time Edmonton had 700 permanent residents. Abe became a successful businessman. He helped to bring more Jews over from his native Bessarabia. By 1901, Edmonton had 17 Jewish citizens. In 1904, Edmonton became incorporated as a city, and in 1905, Alberta officially became a province and the CN Railway arrived.

That same year, William "Boss" Diamond came to Edmonton, to join his brother Jacob, Alberta's first Jewish citizen in Calgary. He set up in the clothing business in competition with Abe Cristall. The two of them, however, worked together to lay the foundation of Edmonton's budding

Jewish Community. Together with eight other men they formed the Edmonton Hebrew Association in 1906. They hired Rabbi Hyman Goldstick of Pilton, Latvia, to be rabbi, shochet and mohel for both the Edmonton and Calgary Jewish Communities.

In 1907, Cristall purchased land on the south side for a Jewish cemetery and the Chevra Kadisha (burial society) was formed. In 1912, the foundations were laid for the Beth Israel Synagogue. Abe Cristall served as the first president, and William Diamond as the second, a position he held for 31 years. In 1912, the Edmonton Talmud Torah Society was founded, and classes were held in the basement of the Synagogue. In 1925, the Society erected its own building,

and in 1933 it was incorporated as the first Hebrew day school in Canada.

In 1928, a second congregation was started in the basement of the Talmud Torah building, which later became the Beth Shalom congregation (Conservative). In 1932, the congregation engaged Rabbi Jacob Eisen. He became the first English-speaking Rabbi west of



Winnipeg. At that time also, the Peretz or New Yiddish School was organized and opened in a building at 10135-95 St. An offshoot of the Arbeiter Ring, which started in

Edmonton in 1922, it had its heyday in the early 1930s, but had to close in 1939 due to declining enrollment.

By 1941, the Jewish population stood at 1,449, Edmonton's at 93,817. In the post-war years the Jewish and general population of Edmonton grew rapidly. As a result, a new Beth Shalom Synagogue was built in 1951. A new Beth Israel Synagogue building was constructed in 1953. So was a new Talmud Torah School that same year, reflecting the population shift of the Jewish Community from downtown to the West End.

In 1954, the Edmonton Jewish

Community Council was formed as an umbrella organization for the community, and served as such for 28 years. On September 20, 1982, the Community Council merged with Edmonton United Jewish Appeal to become the Jewish Federation of Edmonton.

Alberta's booming oil-based economy brought increased Jewish and general immigration over the next two decades, with major influxes from elsewhere in Canada, and from Hungary, Russia and South Africa.

All of these new immigrants brought with them the organizational life that contributes to Edmonton's vibrant Jewish Community. Local branches of many Jewish organizations exist in the city today, including the Canadian Zionist Federation, Edmonton Hadassah-WIZO, and chapters of ORT, Nornat, B'nai Brith and Emunah. Local offices of the Jewish National Fund and other organizations are located at the Edmonton Jewish Community Centre, which was founded in 1970. The Edmonton chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women was responsible for founding the city's Jewish Senior's Drop-in Centre (formerly the Golden Age Club) in 1954, and Jewish Family Services. An all-Jewish Curling Club, the B'nai Brith Menorah, existed briefly in the 1960s and '70s.

The community's third congregation,

Temple Beth Ora Reform Congregation, was founded in 1979, and incorporated in 1980. It rents space at the Chevra Kadisha chapel. In 1996 Congregation Beth Tzedec, a break away from Beth Shalom, incorporated and began to hold services at the Talmud Torah. Chabad Lubavitch arrived on the scene in 1991. In 1993 a second Hebrew Day School, the ortho-dox Menorah Academy, was founded.

A new building for Edmonton Talmud Torah was erected in 1999. The next year, a new Beth Israel Synagogue was built reflecting a further westward shift in population.

In the fall of 2004, Edmonton elected its first Jewish mayor, Stephen Mandel. The Edmonton Jewish Community has always had a strong tradition of civic involvement. Its members have been serving on the boards and executives of many local arts, cultural, educational, and fundraising organizations, and in the judiciary.

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***“The Edmonton Jewish Community has always had a strong tradition of civic involvement.”***

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# New Pathways

by Nariya Khasanova

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*“Change is within us,” Nariya believes.*

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I arrived in Canada not long ago to reunite with my husband. My long-awaited journey from Washington DC to Edmonton was more than the physical trip. It started long before my Washington, DC departure: a long wait for my Canadian visa amidst a bureaucratic to-and-fro between the Canadian embassy in Washington and Moscow; a missed conference opportunity in Istanbul; and an almost expired J1-visa that could easily have made me subject to deportation. All of that prompted me to think deeply about international borders and hierarchy of citizenships.

So, my flight, with a visa finally secured and sleepless nights and stressful days behind me, felt like a reward, as I approached my destination. My heart pounded as we landed. I was finally in Canada, steps from my loving and supportive husband who had also gone through a lot of stress until I had

got my passport and ticket. I walked out into a nice and cozy airport with welcoming messages. A nice friendly lady processed my landing papers. As I headed out, my excitement and beautiful image of friendly Canada were ruined by a strict looking customs lady who aggressively kicked the bags of a senior woman in hijab standing in front of me, then turned to me, smiled, and directed me to the exit doors. I still regret that, feeling silenced, I said nothing to her. Had it happened today, I would probably have behaved differently. I had mixed emotions: happy I would finally be with my husband; bitter I had failed to react to the incident. This is not what Canada stands for, this is just an exception, I told myself. But even though I haven't witnessed similar situations at Canadian airports again, that image is still in front of my eyes.

In Edmonton, struggling to find a job in accordance with my professional

experience, I applied for a youth leadership program to run various social change projects. I had been part of similar initiatives at the United Nations Office in Uzbekistan, leading several youth projects. For this Edmonton program, however, I was told that, being

I deserved the position I held, and I felt less comfortable living in my new country – Canada.

My belonging here was constantly contested, which made me highly sensitive even to questions people asked

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***“My belonging here was constantly contested, which made me highly sensitive even to questions people asked out of curiosity.”***

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new here, I didn't qualify. The news over the phone left me devastated for days, before I discovered a coordinator position with the United Nations Association in Canada. I applied for it with no hope. But I got the position and with it the friendship of a great woman called Sarah Kambites, one of three women who would play a significant role in my life in Canada. In that position, I ran great diversity-oriented projects which helped me feel accomplished. But my happiness was occasionally marred when, for example, some of the teachers and educators who I happened to encounter in my role, asked who hired me, and when did I plan to go back home? This was all happening as I continued to do professional job interviews, during which some interviewers commented on my accent and asked how long I had been in Canada. These comments were eating away at my confidence, to the extent that I began to question whether

out of curiosity. I recall overreacting to some of those questions only to realize later that they had been innocent. As time went by, I learnt to distinguish innocent from racist comments, but I still felt alienated, hopeless, and lost. I felt that way until I attended “This is Our Canada” Retreat with the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, where I met the amazing human rights advocate Renee Vaugeois, who inspired and keeps inspiring me to speak the truth and promote diversity. What I've learnt about empowerment in books while pursuing my studies at the UN University for Peace had started to become my own reality now. My voice was brought back along with the confidence and willingness to drive the change I wanted to see, to be there for those who also felt alienated, hopeless, and frustrated as I had been before. My new network of great people coming from both within and outside Canada,



with whom I could have very open and uncomfortable conversations and run intercultural/interfaith initiatives, kept growing. It gave me strength to come up with more and more ideas, and to explore more pathways.

The moment I decided to continue my graduate studies, I knew with certainty that my research would consist of reflecting on my personal experience as a new immigrant woman. It was naive to believe though, that it would be easy to separate research from my personal experience of contested belonging. But having as my supervisor Dr. Yasmeen Abu-Laban, a talented researcher and mentor, has really helped. She has been teaching me how I can reclaim my voice in writing, occasionally reminding me of my own privilege and misconceptions. She encourages me to pursue my goals, and to keep going.

My story of coming to Canada might not be as colourful as I had imagined, but it has been enriching and transforming. Ignorance and racism unfortunately, are still a reality in Canada, yet one always has a chance to find inspiration

and support like I found in these three talented, outspoken, and amazing women leaders, who have played an important role in my life and those of many others.

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***“My story of coming to Canada might not be as colourful as I had imagined, but it has been enriching and transforming.”***

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# Pursuit of Happiness

by Suraj Khatiwada

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Grandma tearfully said to me, "You are leaving us like helpless orphans." Mom plucked and put colourful flowers on my head. "My son," she said, "smile like this flower wherever you go."

Grandpa and dad stood silent behind us.

"I have to go," I told Grandma.

As I jumped into the cab, Kabya told my parents and grandparents, "Don't worry.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Suraj Khatiwada came to Canada from Nepal in 2010. He is a holder of a Humanities and Social Sciences MA degree, and has taught English for over five years in Nepal and Canada. Working as a project coordinator at Action for Healthy Communities since 2013, Suraj lives in Edmonton with his wife, Dikshya, and son and daughter, Aron and Aarya.

Everything will be fine."

It was June 2010 and I was heading to Canada, leaving Kabya behind in Kathmandu. As we flew to Toronto, I wondered whether I had made a good decision. I remembered telling my mom and grandma a few years before that I wouldn't go abroad and leave them alone. This was my first time to leave my family and beloved country, all because of my ego and my dream to go to Canada. I felt anxious. I would be in a foreign environment. But I also felt optimistic. I would have English language skills, the company of two colleagues and friends, who were also on the plane to the same destination as me, and of former university classmates already living in Toronto.

However, when we got to Toronto, I was the last person among the three of us to get a survival job. It didn't help when one day a middle-Sri Lankan man I met, told me, "Well, in Canada, don't trust three Ws – wife, weather and work."

A funny joke, but the truth. I changed

doing survival jobs. A night job I took on caused me to develop some health issues. My doctor suggested exercise to lower my cholesterol level. I joined a gym but got into an accident after a month, which landed me in St. Michael Hospital's emergency ward, and caused me to lose my memory for a few hours. I lost my job. When Kabya took a day off to look after me, she was terminated for absence from work. Prakash, a university classmate, and his wife, with whom we shared an apartment, greatly supported me.

Despite those challenges, Kabya and I completed school in April 2013. As we were looking for jobs after graduation, some friends in Edmonton I knew suggested we move there. We did, in June 2013. I got a teaching job as an ESL instructor in a community college. Kabya got a job as a childcare supervisor job. We were happy with our first professional jobs in Canada. When some community members asked me how I happened to get a teaching job so

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***“When some community members asked me how I happened to get a teaching job so quickly and without a teaching license, I replied: ‘NETWORK’”***

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jobs three times in three months.

Kabya came to Toronto in November 2010. Both of us enrolled in schools while

quickly and without a teaching license, I replied: "NETWORK".

My passion, however, was not teaching,



but social/community work, which I had studied, and an area in which I hoped for a dream job. Out of three interview offers on the same day in November, I got two jobs. I chose one of them, a job supporting newcomers as they settle, but I also continued my teaching work, which I quit a few months later because of conflicting schedules.

With Kabya and me both settled in terms of jobs, we decided to get permanent residency. We bought a house in 2014, a successful year for us because we also happened to visit our parents and relatives in Nepal. 2015 was even more successful. We got a new member in

are the living God and Goddess for our family. So I sent Kabya and both children to visit my grandparents.

But despite our parents' periodic visits and our occasional travel back to Nepal, I feel I am still missing a lot. Our parents can only be here briefly each time they come. And how often can we afford to visit Nepal? I feel like a pendulum: I can neither go back nor bring our parents here permanently. I have my house here, but I am far from home. I have my wife and children, but I am distant from my family. I am familiar with the communities in Edmonton but a stranger to my family and friends in Nepal. My

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***“Amidst all my conflicting feelings though, I have one comfort. Canada has given me a lot.”***

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the family. My parents-in-law came to Canada to look after Kabya and our son, Aakash. We surprised people and relatives with another pregnancy 10 months after Aakash's birth. This time, my parents came to look after our new baby girl, Sabya.

My grandparents are in their mid-90s and now need good care. Whenever I call, they ask, “When will you send your children to Nepal? We want to bless them before we die.” Granting my grandparents' wishes, I thought, would be a real blessing for my children who

grandma's words haunt me. I try to smile like the colourful flowers with which my mom blessed me, but because away from my family in Nepal, I feel like I am falling apart. I struggle for a happiness that only staying connected with my origins and family, can bring. Amidst all my conflicting feelings though, I have one comfort. Canada has given me a lot. It has enabled me to live a simple but promising life, as I had always wished.

# My Success Story

by Bhupendra Lamichhane

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Bhupendra Lamichhane is a Social work student and Research Assistant at MacEwan University. He received his M.A. degree in Political Science and Rural Development from Tribhuvan University in Nepal, where he also taught for six years. A member of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE), Bhupendra is doing research in the areas of social work, civic engagement and gerontology.*

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I was born and raised in a small village in the western part of Nepal, a country of great natural beauty, land of historic cities and of Everest, world's highest mountain, and the birth place of Lord Buddha. As a child, I liked swimming, jungle walks, bird and animal watching. To this day, I can spend many hours looking at flowers as they blow in the wind, watching birds fly, and listening to the song of the river. Honesty, industriousness, discipline, and ethical values are qualities my parents instilled in me. I understand my responsibilities as a father, husband, society member, student, and as a citizen.

As a student of literature, political science, and development, I have explored issues of culture, gender, caste system, sexism, ageism, and racism in contemporary Nepal. I was a college

teacher for seven years in rural Nepal. Working as a teacher, I observed with my own eyes a society under oppression. On my students' faces I saw marks that social and structural oppression from poverty, health problems, gender, and the cast system, had left on them. As a member of a social service agency and a teacher, I actively participated in helping to overcome this problem through charity fundraising, and a campaign to raise awareness. With the spread of education and modernization through the nation, calls for freedom and human rights have changed many social and cultural structures of my community, even though a lot of things remain to be done to achieve social justice.

For the last three and half years, I have been living in Edmonton as a landed immigrant, struggling to become part

of the Canadian system. My arrival in Canada was an innovation to me. On the one hand, social, cultural, and structural problems of Nepal were pushing me to immigrate. On the other hand, thoughts of enjoying better facilities, infrastructures, health and education systems, better human rights and social security, were drawing me to Canada. Now I feel like a global citizen.

At present, I am a volunteer and leader at Action for Healthy Communities.

With me in Canada are three members of my family. My parents have recently arrived in Edmonton for a visit. My son, who is in Grade 4 at Mount Pleasant School, is very smart in his studies and other extra-curricular activities. Following her Account Technician Certificate from Norquest College, my wife is working as an accountant in a community organization. She is happy and satisfied with her job. She takes good care of our family. My wife and my son both are happy in Canada. After coming

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### ***“Now I feel like a global citizen.”***

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It is an organization that helps new immigrants, refugees, youths, and children to access various available social services. My role as a Community Initiative leader (seed grant leader) for Cultural Dance for Nepalese Children and Youth and other participation from the same organization, helped me to develop my strong leadership skills as a listener and advocate. Working at Bissell Center as a volunteer, I came to know the true story of homeless, aboriginal, disabled, and elderly people in Canada. The experience motivated me to get into the field of social work. Feeling I needed more practical community and social development, I enrolled in MacEwan University for further studies and research in a community-based environment.

to Canada, I am getting help from different resources for my settlement i.e. social services, student loans, health benefit, child subsidy. Despite all the success, I am not content; I feel immigrating here has disconnected me from my culture, parents, and language. I feel lonely and alienated.

Overall, however, I have gained more than I have lost. I am on the path to becoming part of the Canadian system. I have enrolled at MacEwan University for further education in social work. I am assisting my professor on a research project as part of my study. I am happy with my family, friends, and the faculty at the university.



# The Birthday

by Juhua (Manna) Liu

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Juhua (Manna) Liu is an immigrant since 2003. She was a librarian in China. She worked at Chinatown Library in Edmonton for six years, and is an ESL student at NorQuest College. She loves Canada. The country, she says, has changed my life. She loves writing. Her final goal is to write her story in English.*

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I think that I'll sleep in this weekend, but I can't. My internal clock has set the older I get.

It's a typical Saturday morning. I sit in front of the desk. Through the window, the sky is a little gloomy. Maybe the BC fires are still burning. A few weeks ago, the gloomy smoke crossed The Rocky Mountains into Alberta. People joked, "Smell! BBQ everywhere. Everybody will be a smoked sausage."

It is so early, nobody is on the street. Far off outside my apartment, I see a red roof on top of a white building. The young people celebrated a big game last night. They are still sleeping away their sweet dreams.

Quiet! It is so quiet that I can only hear the air blowing. Edmonton is a baby in a cradle rocked by the wind. The baby has

not been woken yet.

The sun gradually attempts to shine through heavy clouds. Now and then, a sun ray filters through the clouds. It's soon covered by another cloud. The sunshine and clouds are two naughty boys playing a game.

Slowly, the entire city wakes. A white car is on the road. A tall man is walking by, talking on the phone, and a woman with short hair is running on the sidewalk.

"My heart is smiling." The words from my daughter describing her happiness to me, run through my mind, as I keep pace with the jogger. Ever since I got a phone call from the flower shop that my daughter will send me flowers for my birthday from Toronto, my heart hasn't stopped smiling. My first gift of flowers for my birthday.

The sun cracks a ray though the window,  
a small knife across the desk shadows.  
I am grateful that my dear daughter  
has learned her mother's favorite gift.  
Grateful she has learned people need  
spiritual nourishment too.

The heat of the sun cuts my eyes.  
Friends have made plans for my party.  
A farm, in an enormous field of yellow  
canola. We'll eat noodles and they will  
wish me longevity.

The sky is of the deepest blue. Clouds  
are shifting. Some gather, a flock of  
chatting sheep. Some clench their fists  
One drifts by like a long-haired, beautiful  
lady.

Suddenly, I break into tears. I miss  
my mom, who is in heaven now. Gone  
two years after the day she gave me  
life. I am wondering if she is a cloud. Is  
she looking at me? Is she saying what  
she would usually say? "Today is your  
birthday my dear daughter, I wish you  
happy birthday!" My eyes clear and the  
woman in the sky is gone. Just clouds  
now.

My daughter is old enough to buy her  
mother flowers. People are growing up;  
time and tide are passing. Most people  
think a birthday means getting old. The

thought of the party made me wince. I  
never wanted to have a birthday party. I  
never wanted to be old!

My thoughts drift to Sherry, my friend. I  
told her about a time I dared to joke with  
a police officer on duty on the street.  
Sherry said, seriously, "I have discovered  
two people in your body. One was born  
in China, the other one was born in  
Canada."

A jolt of realization, like lightning, hits me.  
That is why I always feel awkward. Here  
is another young body hiding in me, a  
young Chinese-Canadian girl. Maybe  
I'm celebrating the wrong birthday.

The girl will be fourteen years old!  
Canada has given her a new life. I use  
her eyes to look through the window  
again. Through the girl's eyes, the clouds  
become sheep and a woman reforms.  
Everything is wonderful. The girl smiles.  
She always smiles at others. It doesn't  
matter. The girl does not understand  
what the adults are saying or thinking.  
She'll do what she wants. Others might  
have felt embarrassed, but she just  
feels free.

Newborn calves are not afraid of tigers.  
A Chinese proverb, I heard that when I  
was young. Maybe from my mother.

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***"People are growing up; time and tide are passing."***

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Quiet settles over me despite my excitement. I squint my eyes and will the clouds into a tiger.

It becomes clear. I am the cloud, the whole of me is. Growing. Expanding. Drifting. Reforming. I am digesting the world, ethics, morals, education, cultures, languages, foods. Many things conflict and threaten to pull me apart. I need my daughter to teach me the Canadian ways.

Yes there is another me hiding in my body in my new country.

Most people have one life. I've lived two, here in Canada and the other across the ocean. Another country, another life.

Sherry's voice again, "Be yourself. When something happens, the adult needs to help the young girl." The old me needs to help the young me.

The wind rattles the window and the flock of sheep are no more. What will they be next?

My phone is ringing. Someone's knocking. Roses arrive at my door, a cloud of citrus perfume. They smile at me, fragrant and green. They are singing to me,

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to Canada...."

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***"Most people have one life. I've lived two, here in Canada and the other across the ocean. Another country, another life."***

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Fourteen is young for a person, and 150 years old is young for a country. We are both celebrating a birthday. Obviously, we have a lot to learn. What will shape us? Languages? Cultures? History? Secrets left to uncover?

My road ahead is still longing, and uncertain. Where should I go in my new life? And how should I go? I wish my mother were here to guide me.



# My Journey to the Drum

by Reckie Lloyd

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Born in Liberia, Reckie Lloyd fled the civil war there with his family. They lived in Ghana as refugees for six years before coming to Canada where, exploring the arts of African drumming, he founded an African music and dance group.*

I'm founder and leader of Sangea Academy. Born in Liberia, West Africa, I and my family fled when I was young due to civil war at the time. This was painful, being forced to leave my motherland. For six years we lived in Ghana as refugees, before we came to Canada. Passionate about music since I was a child, I nurtured a dream of becoming a musician. In Ghana, I recall, I would hear drummers play their drums, right outside the house. My heart ached that I couldn't join them. Drumming is an essential part of Liberian, and indeed African, culture. I love drumming. Everything from the rhythm to the sound to the symbolism one finds in music, excited and inspired him.

It has been a long and difficult journey for me to realize my dream to become a musician. In Canada, I put aside my dream for a while, to make a living. I worked at many other jobs: customer service, cleaning, construction, building houses, car mechanics. You name it. Life was tough but I never gave up on my dream. My desire to do music grew stronger and stronger.

Then one day I caught a break. In 2012, I heard that Action for Healthy Communities (AHC), through the Community Capacities Building Program, was providing initiative seed grants to assist ethnic groups to maintain and develop their culture. I formed the African music and dance

group, Sangea, and applied for the seed grant, and got it. On top of awarding me the money, AHC also provided a room for our practice. This was a turning point in my life. I was very excited to achieve my dream. Since then, my wife Ereni Perez, who also is a musician, and I have been working very hard to lead the group. At the beginning, we only had three members in our team. With AHC's support, our group developed rapidly. Currently, we have about 15 members. In 2015, we registered our group, with the drumming school that Ereni and I run, as "Sangea Academy".

Ereni and I are now self-employed musicians. My journey to become a fulltime musician has come true. We teach African traditional musical rhythms and techniques and history in schools and after-school programs. And we do performances and organize children's performances as well. We get invited to perform around the city: at community fundraisers, weddings, festivals and at other events. We have been winners of the "2015 Fil Fraser Award for Outstanding Performance",

from Action for Healthy Communities. As a professional drummer, I facilitate a drumming workshop called Drum Speak which has been very effective in team building. We have also worked with international musicians.

Besides relaxation and satisfying my urge for celebration, I get other benefits from drumming. It grounds me, placing my body and soul into the supporting arms of Mother Earth. When I drum and dance I feel I am in total control of myself. But the benefits of what I do go beyond myself. I conduct African drumming and dance workshops in which participants benefit in various ways. Those workshops aim to improve their heart and cardiovascular system, enlarge their lung capacity, burn calories, increase the good cholesterol levels, control blood sugar, and strengthen the bones. They also aim to contribute toward community becoming more active and cohesive. I believe drumming does not just entertain, but it can be used as a tool to unite the community. Music speaks to the heart and can be effective in building cultural bridges. We use our

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***"Music speaks to the heart and can be effective in building cultural bridges."***

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the 2014 "Afro Canadian Heros, Artist of the year 2014", and several "Excellent Community Initiative Group Award"

energetic music (Drumming, Singing, Poetry & Dance) as a tool to build such bridges.

My family and I came to Canada for a new and better life. Living in Canada has allowed me an opportunity to explore the arts of African drumming and to celebrate, preserve and share my culture through music and the arts. I'm lucky to have made my childhood dream come true in Canada. I realized the dream through God's grace, hard work, and perseverance. Most of all, it came through the loving collaboration help of my wife Ereni Perez, the members of the band SANGEA and the continued love and support from organizations like Action for Healthy Communities.

I would like to conclude with some advice I have for anyone with dreams that seem too difficult to accomplish, as was my case. Persist, work hard, and build good relationships along your journey. The harder it is to achieve a dream, the more worthwhile it would be when realized. May everyone become a dreamer and a dream achiever!

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***“The harder it is to achieve a dream, the more worthwhile it would be when realized.”***

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# Meet Eveline Luki

## A Conversation

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Eveline Luki comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She arrived in Edmonton in 1999. She is a businesswoman and member of the Immigrant Women Leadership Program. She does volunteer work assisting newcomers and organizing activities for children in the community, parish and in youth organizations. The E-book editor talked to Eveline about herself.*



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**Editor:** Greetings, Evelyn Luki.

**Eveline:** Greetings.

**Editor:** You are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Did you come straight here from there?

**Eveline:** Ha ha. No. Before that I had spent three years in Madrid, and five years in Montreal.

**Editor:** How would you describe yourself?

**Eveline:** A leader. A leader who takes entrepreneurial and innovative risks.

**Editor:** How so?

**Eveline:** I'll give you an example from

a few years ago. A year after I arrived in Edmonton, I opened a store, Tropical House LTD. It specialized in selling African grocery items as well as African beauty products. It was a gamble, for it was the first of its kind in Edmonton. But it encouraged others to open similar stores. That is what a leader does. Inspire others by example. I didn't stop there. At the same time as I was running the store, I created a small cleaning enterprise.

**Editor:** How did you run both the store and the cleaning enterprise?

**Eveline:** At the cleaning enterprise I had fifteen employees. The majority were Francophone immigrants, who had just arrived in Canada.

**Editor:** Why them?

**Eveline:** It was a way to help them get started. To help them adjust to a new country, despite the language barrier. That is what leaders do. They help people to help themselves. There is something else that a leader does.

**Editor:** What?

**Eveline:** A true leader always moves forward.

**Editor:** How did you move forward from the store and the cleaning enterprise?

**Eveline:** I opened a second store.

**Editor:** A second one?

**Eveline:** It was called Adorable Hair. It served both as a salon, especially for African-Canadians, and as a place to buy hair extensions, beauty products and quality clothing.

**Editor:** And how did things go?

**Eveline:** Very well. But life doesn't always go in a straight line.

**Editor:** What do you mean?

**Eveline:** Remember the economic crisis of 2008-2009? It forced me to close both stores.

**Editor:** And?

**Eveline:** That was not the end of the story. For a leader a crisis can create an opportunity. I always had an interest in event decorating, something I had done on the side, almost as a hobby, you know. Well, I figured it was time I did it seriously, as a job. Well, I headed out to Toronto, to the Institute of Wedding and Events Decoration (IWED), for training. Then, with the new-found knowledge after training, I headed back to Edmonton. Through perseverance, I created a small business called Riverwood Decorations Ltd. I hired myself out to decorate for weddings and other special events. It is something I am still doing.

# Edmonton

by Junhong Ma

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Junhong holds a BA Economics degree and an MA Classical Chinese Literature degree from China. A doctoral student in the Anthropology Department at the University of Alberta, Junhong credits her husband, Winston, for supporting her academic pursuits in the last 10 years.*

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People call me Summer. Since there are only two seasons in Alberta, July, and winter, I always get a warm welcome from new friends when they get to know my name. Lol. I'm now an Anthropology Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta. My husband and I came to Canada in 2013 after receiving the offer from UoA. Before I applied for the Ph.D. program, we never heard of Edmonton or Alberta, but the longer we live here, the more we love this city.

As a student, I tend to look at Edmonton from an anthropological perspective. Like the other newcomers, weather was the biggest challenge to me at first. Although I was born in northern China and minus 10 degree in winter was quite usual there, the coldness in Alberta completely shocked me. Even now I can still remember the frightened face of the department staff when

saying 'it's coming!' Snow removal work was entirely unfamiliar to me as well. The snow removers looked quite interesting to me when watching them blowing snow with fancy gear. Not until my husband, Winston, started doing the same job, did I realize that it was the most important and common job in winter here.

Contrary to the cold weather, people in Edmonton are very friendly to us. Contrary to the indifference among strangers in Shanghai, the metropolitan city where we came from, here, strangers tend to be unimaginably helpful to each other. A smile is the most common expression on everyone's face. People hold doors for others, greet newcomers, say thank you to the driver on getting out of a city bus, and say sorry for everything. As a country of immigrants, Canada has people almost

from every country in the world and from every province. But unlike the USA where the people get influenced by the US culture and become American, here, there is a respect for the preservation of different cultures. I tell my local friends how surprised I am to be in Canada while maintaining a Chinese lifestyle, like shopping at different Asian superstores, keeping my Chinese culinary habits, and proudly extolling China in my conversations with people.

One feature of Edmonton that both my husband and I love so much is its scenery. It is such a scenic city. Gardens and forests are abundant here, and almost every time we go out for a walk, we encounter one or two lovely friends from nature: birds, deer, bunnies, squirrels, beavers, you name it.

It's never an easy task to settle down in a new environment, but Edmonton and Canada obviously have given us enough reasons to embrace the country with our whole hearts.

Happy 150th Birthday, Canada!

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***“I tell my local friends how surprised I am to be in Canada while maintaining a Chinese lifestyle.”***

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# Identity and Integration

by Savithri Machiraju

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Edmonton-based Savithri Machiraju was born in India, and has lived mostly in Canada and the U.S. She has published fiction, non-fiction, and poetry in Telugu, her mother tongue, and in English. She is also a film maker, currently finishing a documentary on the Telugu community of Edmonton.*

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The Telugu community of Edmonton, who emigrated to Canada from the state of Andhra Pradesh in southern India, have made Edmonton their home for over 50 years. Telugu is the language of the people who were known as Andhras from the time of the Vedas (1500 - 2500 BC). The name of the state, Andhra Pradesh, means "place of the Andhras." The words "Telugu" and "Andhra" were used interchangeably for centuries in India.

Mine was the first family to settle and stay continuously here, so we have been first hand observers of how this community evolved over time. Within a few years of our arrival, enough families lived in Edmonton to start, in 1969, the Andhra Cultural Association (ACA). ACA aimed to provide a cultural home for Telugu people, where they could share their language, foods, literature, and

favourite movies. The first generation saw ACA as a way to deal with cultural displacement and homesickness, and a means to pass on their cultural heritage to the next generations. They could maintain their identity while integrating into the larger Canadian society. Thus ACA fit in well with the cultural mosaic model prevalent then.

Soon Telugu associations started in many cities in Canada and the U.S. But ACA in Edmonton had three unique features: (1) It was the first in North America; (2) It was the only one that called itself "Andhra" Cultural Association, not "Telugu" and (3) its members were extremely close knit. The association served as the main gathering point of all Telugu people coming to Edmonton.

From about 2000, however, the situation changed. Newcomers were unaware

of, or uninterested in, the association. Several factors caused this situation. First, the number of new arrivals had increased quickly and they were geographically wide spread, making it harder for existing association members to become aware of or keep in touch with them. Second, some newcomers who did join, felt unwelcome due to the existing close ties of the older members, which may have made some of them feel like outsiders. Others found the association's programs uninteresting or irrelevant. Again several reasons can explain this. Emigration was now a routine aspiration, and people started the assimilation process even while in India, adopting the English language and American culture. The Telugu language

was added to this mix. In 2014, the state of Andhra Pradesh in India was split into two, with the new state named Telangana. This was the culmination of a decades long effort, sometimes violent, by the people in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Those who wanted to maintain a unified state for all Telugu people were identified as "Andhras", and designated the enemy. Throughout the agitation for separation, the cause was also pursued in Telugu communities all over the U.S. and Canada, resulting everywhere in the splitting of cultural associations into two separate entities.

In 2015 in Edmonton, the ACA executive learned that a large Telangana population was searching for a cultural

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***“Emigration was now a routine aspiration, and people started the assimilation process even while in India, adopting the English language and American culture.”***

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and culture, which the earliest members had sought to preserve, were not things with which the modern generation could identify. Communications technology such as Skype meant people could visit with friends and family without the need to travel, and the internet and satellite made access to the culture “back home” always available. Thus, there was no need for them to integrate into the ACA.

By 2015, an additional complication

association to join, but were reluctant to join one associated with the name “Andhra”, as they felt it did not represent their identity. They wanted, following other North American cities, to form a separate association. Given the cohesiveness of the ACA, the executive felt this would be against all the principles of inclusion and togetherness that the ACA stood for. They tried to persuade the Telangana people to join the existing organization. Failing this, the



executive embarked on a search for a workable solution, a single association

and tried to be fitted into Canada's multicultural model? Is such a fit even

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***“The traditional idea of emigration was to start anew, to build a new life, to form new allegiances. Is such an idea still viable in the present interconnected world?”***

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that would represent all the Telugu people in Edmonton. A suggestion came up to change the organization's name, from “Andhra” to “Telugu” Cultural Association, to accommodate the Telengana people. The motion, after discussions, was passed. The conflict was thus resolved in a constitutional (and very Canadian) way.

possible? Or should a new model of inclusion be developed?

In my view, the changes and developments experienced by the Telugu community over a half-century are reflective of larger trends in Canada over this period. The “cultural mosaic” model was clear; official multiculturalism was successful. But now, some people, outside and inside Canada, are declaring that “multiculturalism is dead.” The traditional idea of emigration was to start anew, to build a new life, to form new allegiances. Is such an idea still viable in the present interconnected world? If people are still tied to their “old country”, can they put down new roots in their new country? If new immigrants bring the politics and prejudices of their original country with them, should this be treated as just part of their “culture”,

# Zimbabwe Community in Edmonton

by Munya Madzinga

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Zimbabwe-born Munya Madzinga has lived in Edmonton since 2006 and before that in Toronto and Yellowknife. He is a former chair of Zimbabwe Cultural Society of Alberta Board, and currently chairs the Clareview Multicultural Centre Society Board. A Financial and Business Analyst, he has worked for ATCO and is now with Wipro Ltd. Munya acknowledges Dr. Emmanuel Mapfumo's contribution to this article.*



Migration of Zimbabweans to Edmonton has progressed steadily since the early 90s. In the early 90s the inflow consisted mostly of students. Dr. Emmanuel Mapfumo, one of the young Zimbabweans who came to Edmonton in 1994 says, "I came to Edmonton on August 1, 1994. Like many Zimbabweans that I met at that time, I came for graduate studies at the University of Alberta. When I got here there were less than 30 Zimbabweans in Edmonton that I met. Most of the Zimbabweans at that time were students in universities and colleges, and many went back to Zimbabwe soon after completing their studies."

The economic, political crisis and

human rights violations in Zimbabwe in the late 90s accelerated the movement of Zimbabweans to Edmonton. A large influx of Zimbabweans occurred around 2002 when many arrived in Edmonton from Montreal and Toronto, largely because of the high-paying jobs in the oil and gas industry in Alberta. More Zimbabweans arrived around 2007/2008 many of whom had lived in the United States or other parts of Canada.

Even though the majority of Zimbabweans came to Canada as refugees, they have high levels of education. The majority possessed high level professional qualifications upon entry and some retrained or upgraded.

The Zimbabwe Edmonton community is employed in several professions that include university and college professors, medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, mechanics, electricians, information technology, health care workers, bus/truck drivers, musicians, locomotive engineers, technicians, small business owners, and other professions and trades. The Community cohesion and interaction has helped build the Zimbabwean community in Edmonton and has enabled those who are new, to integrate easily into the greater Edmonton community.

Zimbabweans in Edmonton maintain strong social, religious and cultural links amongst themselves. Several Zimbabwean Churches are now established in Edmonton. To name a few: Forward in Faith Ministries International (FIFMI), United Methodist Church Edmonton, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Oasis of Life Church, Eternity Interdenominational Church, and Trinity Harvest.

The majority of Zimbabweans in

Another aspect that makes Zimbabweans shine in Edmonton, is their love for sports. A lot of Zimbabweans, men and women, play soccer and quite a few were professional players back in Zimbabwe. In Edmonton alone, we have four soccer clubs registered with the Edmonton District and Soccer Association (EDSA) whose players and coaches are predominantly Zimbabweans: Bossolona FC, Sahara Sports Club, Zim Queens and Amazulu FC. Through soccer we interact on a regular basis and often have social dialogues and gatherings after games to discuss issues that affect our daily lives here in Edmonton. We also have a Zimbabwean men's and Masters (over 35) national teams made up of players selected from teams in Edmonton, Calgary, Yellowknife and Medicine Hat. The national teams participate annually in the Africa Centre tournament, PUSHA cup, ZCUSA tournament (in Edmonton), and Nations cup (in Calgary). The Zimbabwe Masters Team has dominated in all the Masters Tournaments in Edmonton and Calgary. In short, soccer has allowed many Zimbabweans to meet and get to know each other.

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***“Soccer has allowed many Zimbabweans to meet and get to know each other.”***

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Edmonton speak Shona or Ndebele or both as their first language.

Golf is also another sport that has connected Zimbabweans in Edmonton.

Zimbabweans and friends from Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray and Yellowknife participate in two annual golf tournaments: Zimbabwe Masters Golf Tournament and Zimbabwe Open Golf Tournament.

Zimbabweans connected with one another, and to the whole Alberta community.

There is a strong sense of community among Zimbabweans. In Edmonton, we contribute tremendously to the community. We have volunteers who coach kids' soccer in various soccer clubs and community leagues. Some Zimbabwean soccer coaches have played major roles in developing soccer players in academies who are now playing professionally in Canada and internationally.

A lot of Zimbabweans volunteer and participate in various community events and organizations across Edmonton. Zimbabweans in Edmonton have also taken leadership positions in community organizations.

The Zimbabwean community in Edmonton has remained united. We acknowledge the efforts of the Zimbabwe Cultural Society of Alberta (ZCUSA) founded in 2004 to keep all

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***“There is a strong sense of community among Zimbabweans.”***

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## KEY COMMUNITY CONTACTS

### **Zimbabwe Cultural Society of Alberta (ZCUSA)**

Regis Vusango 780 266 7604  
jumbojates@yahoo.ca

### **Clareview Multicultural Centre**

Munya Madzinga 780 902 1270  
munyah2000@yahoo.com

### **Forward in Faith Ministries International (FIFMI)**

Overseer Kuzamba 780 399 1826

### **United Methodist Church Edmonton**

Reverend T Nyarota 780 802 3681

### **Seventh Day Adventist Church**

Pastor Simbrish Charumbira  
780 802 1292

### **Oasis of Life Church**

Reverend Sam Lufiyele

### **Eternity Interdenominational Church**

Elder R. Muguraguri 780 680 4311  
rabson@live.com

### **Trinity Harvest**

Pastor Nyathi 780 531 4640

### **Bossolona FC**

Mduduzi Dallas Gumbo 780 680 8377  
mduduzi25@hotmail.com

### **Sahara Sports Club**

Emmanuel Mapfumo 780 716 8633  
EMMANUEM@nait.ca

### **Amazulu FC**

Mhlomlele Nelson Ncube  
m.nelson.ncube@gmail.com

### **Zim Queens FC**

Monica Hwende

### **Beam Of Hope Church Canada Edmonton**

Pastor Chengetaimufaro Lovemore  
Bere





# Cultural Tour

by Fatima Mammadova

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Dear reader,

*Are you ready to delve into a culture that will mesmerize you with its uniqueness? I hope you will enjoy this cultural tour of my community and background. I will first tell you about the highlights of my culture, the history and background of Azerbaijan. Then, I will talk about the immigration of Azerbaijanis to Canada. Finally, I will share with you information about the Azerbaijan Cultural Society of Edmonton (AzCSE).*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fatima is a first generation Canadian who has moved to Edmonton to pursue her passion. She gained her degree from University of Alberta and has chosen Edmonton as her home since then. Fatima enjoys volunteering and dedicates her spare time to various non-profit organizations including Azerbaijan Cultural Society of Edmonton (AzCSE), where she currently serves as a president.

*Azerbaijan, Land of Flames, is a mixture of ancient and modern values, where you can experience a blend of Eastern and*



Western cultures. It is a land of favorable climate, rich history, culture and lifestyle, and organic food. Azerbaijan was historically located on the Great Silk Road, its major cities of Shaki, Shamakhi, Derbent, Baku, Ardabil, Tabriz, Maragheh, Ganja and Nakhichevan serving as centres for art, handicrafts, and trade. Azerbaijan maintained trade relations with many countries over the centuries. It provided a significant link between different worlds – East and West. Today, Azerbaijan is world-famous for its carpets, traditional dances and music, hot springs, mud volcanoes, and many natural, historical, and cultural sites.

Did you know that Azerbaijan has more mud volcanoes than any other country in the world? At Yanar Dag - Burning

and aromas. In Azerbaijani house, a host welcomes you with a cup of tea which is associated with friendliness and warmth. For Azerbaijanis, tea is a must have and usually drunk with various kinds of homemade jams and desserts. One of the most loved fast foods for Azerbaijanis are Qutab - filled pancakes. The most favorite and popular desserts to be tried are Paxlava and Tabriz Qurabiya. Dolma and Plov are the most popular main dishes served in major events and gatherings, celebrations, and holidays.

Azerbaijanis all over the world are proud of their Turkic origins, their hospitality, their rich traditional music and dances. They are particularly proud of the democratic values that the establishment of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in

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## **“Did you know that Azerbaijan has more mud volcanoes than any other country in the world?”**

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Mountain -- gas fire burns continuously on a hillside near Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. Gobustan National Park is home to one of the oldest ancient rock art engravings of humankind. Mugam and Ashiq music are the heart of Azerbaijani folk music.

Azerbaijani culture is also famous for its hospitality through which you can partake a rich cuisine that features sweet and sour tastes with tempting flavors

1918 brought about. The birth of a nation granted voting rights to all citizens regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, and gender. It was one of the first democracies in the world to grant women voting rights.

Currently more than 50 million Azerbaijanis live all over the world, mainly in the Republic of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijani Provinces of Iran. Unlike other cultural groups like Ukrainians

and Chinese, Azerbaijanis immigrated to Canada only in the last few decades.

Economic factors are among the main reasons behind the immigration of Azerbaijani people to Canada, including Edmonton. They come to this wonderful multicultural country following prospects for better employment, with eagerness and hope of building a brighter future for younger generations and in pursuit of a means to fulfil their educational and

particularly younger generations, to engage themselves in Azerbaijani culture. At the same time, AzCSE strives to educate people through cultural programs and activities, public performances about Azerbaijani culture which is new and therefore not well known in the Edmonton area. Azerbaijanis are reconciling themselves to Edmonton as their hometown. They are making it their permanent place of residence. They buy houses here, find employment,

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## **“We have adapted smoothly to this new society that is now our home.”**

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career goals. Because the Azerbaijanis are relatively recent immigrants to Edmonton, we have adapted smoothly to this new society that is now our home, thanks to technological advances and constant communication and ties with friends and family back home, and the help and support of cultural societies in various cities of Canada. Azerbaijan Cultural Society of Edmonton is a non-profit organization founded by Azerbaijani Turks from the Republic of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan provinces of Iran in order to introduce and showcase Azerbaijani culture, to build intercultural connections, and to help newcomers to reconcile themselves to their new home, Edmonton

AzCSE provides an opportunity for people from all kinds of backgrounds,

and register their kids in schools. They volunteer, participate and attend city wide festivals, holidays and gatherings, exchanging cultural values with other individuals and groups in Edmonton. Some of the important celebrations for Edmonton Azerbaijanis are Novruz Celebrations (Solar New Year), New Year Event, Mother's Day, and Cille (Winter Solstice). AzCSE celebrates them every year, and welcomes guests and groups of all cultural backgrounds.

I hope you've enjoyed this brief cultural tour of my culture and community. AzCSE always welcomes you to programs and events that we organize and hold all year round here in Edmonton. You don't have to go far to find us or what we are up to. Please check our Facebook

*page ( <https://www.facebook.com/pg/AzCSEdmonton/community/> ) or our website at [azcse.com](http://azcse.com) and you will find all about us and our activities. Join our Novruz Celebrations, New Year Event and Cille; you will be one of many guests we will look forward to welcoming and to host. I wish all of you the best, and Happy 150th Birthday, dear Canada!*

# I adore those yellowish leaves on trees

by Anamol Mani

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Anamol Mani is a poet, story teller and author of five books in his native language, Nepali, and in English. He has lived in Canada since 2013. For him, writing is a way of conversing with and comprehending the times in which he lives. He has worked as a journalist for almost two decades.*

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I adore the yellowish tree leaves scattered on the ground in Edmonton in the fall. The sight of it possesses a beauty beyond my imagination.

I hadn't noticed such a scene while landing in the last week of October 2013. The trees were naked with their leaves already on the ground. Brightness of summer had long been replaced by layers of snow.

A plane from Kathmandu, Nepal, had traveled the blue sky 14 thousand miles toward this land. Leaving Nepal, I had noticed the yellowish sun moving to the west. Now, as we approached Edmonton, I noted the sharp rays coming through the plane windows, and I acknowledged the closing of

the Nepalese chapter of my life, and I wondered what new chapter of life awaited me.

I was heading towards Canada as a permanent Resident. I had been a journalist for 17 years. Who could stop the tears at leaving friends and kin? I too couldn't as I parted from dear ones.

Before my departure well-wishers -- on Facebook, Twitter, and email -- had questioned me. "Why leave the country, you a popular and well-known writer like you?"

I had it all in Nepal. Name, wealth, professional work. My status gave me opportunities to enjoy the taste of foreign lands, now and then, without

having to immigrate.

Yet I left.

Dissatisfaction from political instability, corruption and the dishonesty of politicians in South Asian countries, Nepal included, has caused most young people to migrate to developed countries. That for me was not the main reason I left. My main reason for leaving? Confidence. Confidence that I could achieve whatever I wanted wherever I went. I wanted to face the challenges

an immigrant, the life of a self-chosen path.

Why?

Well, the knowledge and skill that I have, I didn't gain in Canada. Life in Canada for me, therefore, is like swimming in a new ocean. To swim across this new ocean of opportunity, I need to grow new fins.

Ever since childhood, I haven't been friends with the English language. In Nepal, I studied English, but it was

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***“Every challenge, I believe, teaches and leads to new discoveries.”***

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coming to Canada would present. Every challenge, I believe, teaches, and leads to new discoveries.

Life, in my view, is a lab. Gaining knowledge in this lab is way better than at a university or through a curriculum. I am trying to color my life a color different from that of my past. Life is uncertain. Nobody can pretend to know what life holds now or in the future.

Birds adapt their nest to the weather. I too am a bird. A free bird. I love to fly endlessly, taking my own path, without hindrance.

But it is difficult to lead a life like that as

Nepali English. I can't speak English like a native English speaker. I cannot manipulate my tongue around the language as a good English speaker can.

I force myself to speak in a clear manner, trying to wield my tongue the right way but the native speaker of English still doesn't understand me. And when they speak, I always request them to repeat.

I can imagine why, as a student at Assist in Edmonton, I irritated my English teachers, Marilyn and Alison, with my English. In the end though, they always encouraged me, with love, to speak slowly. It helped me to become familiar

with the English language.

I still can't help thinking, however, that hearing my English, somebody may say to themselves of me, "What a damn fool he is, for not knowing English!"

The problem of language, the English language, is a common one for all immigrants who don't speak English well. I know I should get over this problem, but the fact is, I can't just skip over it, much as I would like to.

I am happy, though, to say that as poor as I am with English, nobody has ridiculed me or made fun of me. People just smile at me, and say hi. On learning I am from Nepal, the country of Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain, people always ask me, "Did you ever climb the mountain?"

is not a long period. My immigrant experience has shown me that it is not easy for a person to stand on his own feet in such a short time. I still feel everything is new to me. When I see the Canadian multicultural society around me, with all the different languages, cultures, dressing traditions, different ethnicities, I sense the different stories with which the numerous immigrant communities from all over the world have come. Every one of these immigrants has his or her own story. Reflecting on this fact, I feel that these various immigrants are all characters in my stories.

Life here has taught me a lesson that I would like to pass on to others: no matter what corner of the earth you have come from, never give up your fundamental values. Mastery of language is not something you must have before you

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***"Mastery of language is not something you must have before you feel love for another human being."***

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I smile back cheekily as I answer, "Not yet, but I have made it to the base camp."

People learn until they die. This is the truth about learning. I have a long way to go. To learn and sustain myself in my new life, I need to travel a long path, face many difficulties.

Four years, the time I have been here,

feel love for another human being. We can feel love and emotion without language. But, to discern another person's entire life, you must know their language. Some people may disregard language as a factor in life, but it is very important.

I don't have ambitious dreams. Or big aspirations. I aim for a modest future. I



wanted to be a writer. That is what I was.  
And that is still my passion; what I want  
to become here. I love lights, so I can  
see life clearly with a little brightness.  
My passion is a small ray of light. It can  
light the way to a new home or place I  
need to go. Light always illuminates for  
us things we need to see.

And so, I adore those yellowish leaves  
on trees.

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***“My passion is a small ray of light. It can light the way to  
a new home or place I need to go.”***

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# An Immigrant's Wings

by Bakar Mansaray

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edmonton-based BAKAR MANSARAY ( <http://www.mandingoscrolls.blogspot.com/> ) is a Sierra Leonean – Canadian author of *A Suitcase Full of Dried Fish* and other stories and *My Afro-Canadian Chronicle*, and stories in anthologies and magazines. He is winner of the 2017 Afro-Canadian Heroes Award and founder of Mandingo Scrolls Series.



One wintry afternoon in January 2001, I arrived at the Toronto Lester Pearson Airport. A Sikh Canadian Immigration Officer with a turban attended to me! What a cultural shock!

The next day at a Service Canada office teeming with culturally diverse clients, I completed official immigration forms. The way Service Canada officers readily assisted me and their efficiency, thrilled me.

My first job in Canada consisted of unloading 53-foot container trucks in winter. In Sierra Leone, I had held a supervisory administrative position in the country's Airlines.

Feeling like a failure, in less than one month in Canada, and without second thought, I packed my personal

belongings to go back home with my return ticket.

"I'm coming back," I told my wife in a call. "Expect me in Sierra Leone very soon." I spilled my frustrations to her. "I can't find a job in my field. The rent is draining my budget. And I hate waiting for a bus in the cold."

In Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital city, I had been a landlord and a car owner. Life is tough here, I told her.

She pleaded with me. "There is nothing for you here in Freetown. Tough it out, for the sake of the children." She reminded me of the suffering we went through during the civil war in Sierra Leone. I stayed put in Canada. I got a part-time job as a filing clerk at a bank. And a second job as a night shift sorter

at a courier company. My long-held Canadian dream was finally coming true, I thought.

But the two jobs proved more of a challenge than I had imagined. My night courier job would end at 1 a.m. Waiting thirty minutes in the cold for the bus, I

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My family and I came to this country as permanent residents, in search of peace and security. Ask me what motivated me to come here. Multiculturalism, I would answer, which advocates equal respect to the many cultures in Canada,

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***“Ask me what motivated me to come here:  
multiculturalism, I would answer.”***

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would get home at 2 a.m. I had to wake up early to get to my other job at the bank, far from where I lived. Sometimes I would fall asleep on the bus, to wake up past my stop. I realized quickly that I couldn't last with the two jobs. I decided to keep the bank job.

My hope was to use the wages from this job and sponsor my family to Canada. I had, alas, counted my chickens before they were hatched. The job lasted two months. After a good cry getting home on the last day at the job, I called my sponsor with the sad news. He urged me not to despair.

“Getting laid off in Canada is a common thing,” he told me. Then, he joked, “A job in Canada is like the weather. You can't rely on it.”

Time for me to try my luck again. I searched for another job.

and which provides for diversity. The Canadian winter has not dampened my enthusiasm for the country.

With its multiculturalism, Canada reminds me, in a way, of the religious tolerance around me as a schoolboy. Both my primary and secondary schools were Christian-run. As a Muslim, I recited verses from the Holy Quran at home. At school, I prayed by reciting verses from the Holy Bible, although my Muslim faith was not suppressed. The Christian-run schools allowed me to wear my Muslim faith on my sleeve. I relished this mix, as I value the diversity in Canada.

\*

Like most Anglophone African children in the mid-sixties, one of my dreams had been to acquire professional education in England or America, and return home to build our newly independent nation.

My other dreams were to grow up and become important, and to improve the lives of my parents, relatives, and society. I wasn't much into sports, but I learned an important lesson from observing track and field athletes: winners were not the fastest persons at the start of the race but those who endured to the end. Apart from that important self-learned lesson, my parents and mentors taught me another: in victory, I should display humility; in defeat, I should prepare myself for future success.

But my dream of returning from abroad armed with an education for nation-building has not worked out. In Sierra Leone where I grew my immigrant wings, the civil war exacerbated the poverty and corruption that had always been there. Jungle justice became part of daily life.

During my first visit to Sierra Leone in 2014, after thirteen years away, I was taken aback at the sight of the still war-torn Freetown. I felt like a stranger. The population explosion boggled my mind. I saw a chaotic town of hustlers hungry for profit and pleasure. The high rate of unemployment was staggering. Massive traffic jams of people and vehicles

on streets. The apocalyptic scenes, reflecting the town's urban problems, hit me like a ton of bricks. While a petty thief was lynched or languished in jail indefinitely with no court hearing, the poverty-stricken populace bowed to masters of ill-gotten wealth, big thieves stealing the government blind.

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By and large, Canada feels like home to me. I've gained a respect for multiculturalism, peace, and security. I live nonetheless with mixed emotions. I feel I've lost some basic, yet important, traditional values that helped to mold my African and spiritual personality.

Has the trade-off been worth it?

Well. That is something I'm unable to assess. Not now. Perhaps far into the future.

For now, this is what I can confidently say: I don't regret the pursuit of my Canadian dream. No, it's not something I regret. It is, rather, a source of joy in my life.

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***“I don’t regret the pursuit of my Canadian dream.”***

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# Conversations Toward a Reconciled Life

by Kemoh Mansaray

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Born in Sierra Leone, Kemoh came to Canada in 2002. He holds a Nursing diploma and a Human Service Administration Bachelor's degree. Kemoh has dedicated himself to helping his Sierra Leonean community, which he served as President, and other Edmonton's African communities. He has also served on the boards of Edmonton Multicultural Coalition and Clareview Multicultural Centre.*

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Understanding my journey taught me how to live life anew. I learned that one could still rise from ashes. Reconciling with myself and my past is how I can change my 'destiny'. This not only helps me but others as well.

I have three sisters and a step brother, and come from Kabala in the Koinadugu District in the Northern part of Sierra Leone. I was in Form Six (pre-university), in my mid-twenties and ambitious, when the war broke out in my country. My education and my ambitions – I had aspired to be a lawyer and not a civil engineer like my dad had wanted me to become – were disrupted. I lost my mother and my father, who was my role model, my light and inspiration, and in that senseless war. As for myself, I was

shot in the neck and left for dead. It was a civil war that would leave thousands dead, displaced and injured.

Thinking of the past reopens my wound of suffering, and reminds me of the hopelessness we felt then.

We fled from the civil war to Ghana. The doctor who operated on my neck where I had been shot, called me "the Cat Man", meaning I had nine lives. "You have eight more lives; use them well," he said. We lived in a refugee camp under terrible conditions in Ghana for two years. But those conditions were way better than living in a place where you were constantly in fear for your life. Then, after those two years, through the sponsorship of the Marah Family, I got

resettled in Canada. They sponsored me under the Marah family Class sponsorship.

I will forever be grateful to the entire Marah family and the courageous work of Mr. Augustine Totor Marah and my adopted dad Mr. Kolloi Daniel Kalawa Marah after whom I have named my son. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to UNHCR, and to Ghana and Ghanaians who played a role in my settlement in Canada.

I arrived in Canada on June 19, 2002 and I was welcomed by the Marah family. I was lucky because I had a family who

After six months I decided to become a nurse or doctor, something the Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross had inspired in me when they saved my life after I had got shot in the neck in Sierra Leone, and the lives of many others. I was moved by the courage, passion, humanity and love that strangers can show in their treatment of people they don't even know. Those doctors saved my life and I wanted to be like them. So I upgraded and was accepted into the Accelerated Nursing Diploma at Grant McEwan College. I graduated in 2008 and practiced for about three years. I went back to school and graduated in 2013 with a bachelor of Applied Human

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***“I was moved by the courage, passion, humanity and love that strangers can show in their treatment of people they don’t even know.”***

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already had some experience where to find things, though it was still too tough for all of them. Some were still looking for jobs, some worked at KFC, McDonalds, some as security guards and others in factories. I joined the cue within two weeks of my arrival. My cousin had taken me to his work place on his day off to show me around only to get an interview and be hired right then! I didn't even have my social insurance (SIN) card, only proof that I had applied for one.

Service Administration. I excelled in my academic life, to the extent of getting an Excellent Academic Achievement scholarship Award, from the Ministry of Higher Education.

One of the blessings I encountered while at the nursing school was meeting my lovely wife. We now have two beautiful children, a boy and a girl. The boy loves hockey and plays with the KC Bullets (Pewee), while my daughter is a Ballerina and a Figure Skater. I never dreamt of being involved in sports like that before



coming to Canada. Because of the opportunities Canada has offered me, I have been honoured with nominations and awards for the volunteer work I have done to help newcomers and immigrants. Looking back, I still miss my home country, but I have come to appreciate what I have achieved here. I see that sometimes we have to let go of our past to integrate into a new country. The process might be slow and frustrating but learning to adjust speeds up our integration, something we have to do for our children and families and others.

I have learnt that there is injustice, unfairness, racism and discrimination even in systems that are far more civilised than where we come from. But giving up is not an option for immigrants because how then will you shape the future of your children and others? I build on my resilience, love, passion and desire to succeed no matter how long it takes. I learnt that I am not alone and my situation is not unique. All I need to do is to get to know the system, and to adapt to it. Engaging yourself gives you the opportunity to be heard and to belong. Contributing to the society you

belong to helps to gain you respect and connections that will propel you.

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***“I learnt that I am not alone and my situation is not unique.”***

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# First Aboriginal Police Officer to Wear Braids

by Ian Manyfingers

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Ian Manyfingers is of Blood/Cree descent. He has a passion for studying history and has great interest in learning about other cultures. He is a former professional track and field athlete who represented Canada in athletics internationally and 5 time Champion of the St Paul Rodeo Mile.*

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I dedicate this story to the indigenous people of Canada wearing braids that represent strength, wisdom, and which also a reflection of their identity. The original people of Canada traditionally wore braided hair to achieve a deep spiritual connection to their aboriginal ancestors and the creator.

In March of 1990 Constable Norman Manyfingers, an 8-year veteran of the Calgary Police service, requested to wear his hair in braids. He was turned down. It was against the Calgary Police department regulations, he was told. Manyfingers refused to cut his hair and was assigned a desk job and told not to wear his uniform. Faced with racism and discrimination while on the job. Manyfingers had to fight to keep his job while practicing his culture. It made

national headlines, as a human rights case, and inspired many aboriginals and new Canadians in Canada to support him. Manyfingers became a star; people came up to him to shake his hand and sign autographs. He received large amount of support from the public.

On July 15, 1990 the Calgary Police commission announced Constable Manyfingers could wear his braids. Norman Manyfingers is Blackfoot Indian from Kainai Nation in Southern Alberta. Manyfingers' courage to practice his culture by wearing braids was a pioneering move for Police forces all over Canada. It helped to create the change toward cultural acceptance and cultural diversity among Canadian police forces in Canada today. Most importantly, Aboriginal police officers

in Canada now have the right to wear their hair in braids. Norman Manyfingers' story is significant in that he was the only aboriginal police officer on the Calgary Police force at the time. Shortly after his victory to wear braids, another aboriginal police officer who joined the force, wore braids with his uniform. Manyfingers was a valuable member of the Calgary police for over 20 years. He could speak fluent Blackfoot and was very successful in foot chases. Manyfingers had a successful career in Canadian Policing spanning over 25 plus years, with the Blood Tribe Police force, Canada Pacific Rail Police, and Calgary Police.

Norman Manyfingers is a residential school survivor, a veteran of her majesty's Canadian Armed forces. He has served in the Canadian Airborne regiment as a paratrooper, training all over Canada and Edmonton from 1974-77. Before joining the Calgary Police Manyfingers was also one the first members of the Blood tribe police force. It was the first self-policing force on a reserve in Canada created in 1980. Police Officer Manyfingers' story is an inspiration to Canadians everywhere to be proud of who you are and your cultural. We must remind ourselves

that our cultures and diversity are what make us proud to be Canadians.

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***“We must remind ourselves that our cultures and diversity are what make us proud to be Canadians.”***

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# The Last Game

by Jared Matsunaga-Turnbull

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jared is an Edmonton-based theatre artist whose playwriting credits include the Theatre for Young Audiences plays Paper Song; Harusame, The Little Bird; and Lig & Bittle (co-written with Elyne Quan). A former Artistic Co-Director of Concrete Theatre, Jared is currently the Executive Director of the Alberta Workers' Health Centre, which produces professional theatre for young people on their workplace rights.*



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I am Japanese-Canadian, considered a 'happa' (half) in that community because I'm the product of an interracial marriage. My parents' relationship faced resistance from family and the public at large, but they ultimately decided that their love for one another was worth it. Growing up, I learned a great deal from them about social justice and the importance of standing up for one's beliefs. "Always do the most humane thing," they would tell me.

My father's grandparents settled in Alberta in 1902. They came from England, looking for a new life as farmers in Canada. They became homestead farmers near Onoway, northwest of Edmonton (on Treaty 6 territory) where the family farm property still sits. My

mother's grandparents settled in BC in 1911. They came from Japan looking for a new life in Canada too, to be farmers and labourers in Mission, BC.

In 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and everyone in Canada of Japanese descent was treated as an 'Enemy alien.' Japanese-Canadians were forcibly moved away from the West Coast and relocated into internment camps, P.O.W. camps and farms throughout Canada. Their possessions were taken and sold by the government of the time. My mother's family property (on unceded territory of the Stó:lō people) still exists, but has not been "ours" for over 70 years.

After meeting at university in Edmonton, my parents eloped with a plan of starting

a new life together in Australia. In the late 1960s, however, that government prohibited someone who looked like my mother from entering the country. So my parents moved somewhere they could both get jobs—Regina, Saskatchewan. Eventually, they started a family.

In the early 1980s, Regina (on Treaty 4 territory) did not have a lot of other Japanese-Canadian families around, and it was a time and place before sushi and ninjas were considered cool. I don't recall much racism directed towards me in my early days, despite my brown skin colour and Asian eyes. This may have been partly because I had no

Indigenous children were taken from their families to be assimilated into "mainstream Canadian" culture.

My new classroom was set up very differently from my old school: five straight rows of desks facing the teacher's at the front. The rows on the right and centre were scattered with neighborhood kids, many of whom were boys I knew from our community league soccer team. The rows on the left were made up entirely of Indigenous kids.

At recess, all the boys played an exciting game on the field. A variation on "tag" with two teams, the game was

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***"The school, I would learn decades later, was named for Nicholas Flood Davin, one of the architects of the Residential School system."***

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accent and partly because from ages 4-7 I attended an alternative school that was big on creating a respectful, child-centred learning environment. Each day began with story sharing circles led by teachers with first names, some of whom even looked kind of like me.

In grade three I moved to a public school just a few blocks away, Davin Elementary. The school, I would learn decades later, was named for Nicholas Flood Davin, one of the architects of the Residential School system where

called "Get the Wagonburners." I got to be on the "tagger" team with my soccer buddies and when someone yelled, "Get them!" we all scattered and ran as fast as we could to tag the other team. It was great fun and after a few rounds I decided that I wanted to take a turn being chased.

At this point the game paused and one of my soccer buddies stepped forward with a confused expression on his face and said, "You can't."

"But I want to be chased," I explained.

"You can't," he said, and there were nods from my teammates.

"Why not?"

"Because you're not a Wagonburner."

I remember looking around me and for the first time noticing that all the kids on the other team were Indigenous kids, and that my team was entirely made up of white faces except for me. Even though I had never heard the term "Wagonburner" before, and despite not knowing where the term came from, I knew that it was derogatory.

How could this be? My soccer buddies were my friends and had never hurled a racial slur my way. It didn't make sense to me. The Indigenous kids and I had similar features and skin tone, yet they were somehow to be singled out as being different? Where did that leave me? I felt caught in the middle, between my friends and a bunch of kids who had no power in the schoolyard or in the classroom.

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***"I felt caught in the middle, between my friends and a bunch of kids who had no power in the schoolyard or in the classroom."***

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At 8 years old it was the first time I recognized that I had the power and therefore the responsibility to stand up against what I knew was wrong. I also understood that I could lose my friends: that doing what I believed in could have real consequences. With a deep breath I slowly took a step towards the other team. "Well," I said to my soccer buddies, "well, I'm going to be a Wagon--- I'm going to be on *this* team now."

In the Hollywood version of this story someone would have started a slow clap, building and building until finally erupting into cheers. Both sides would have stepped towards each other, shook hands, and vowed to live together peacefully and respectfully for evermore. In reality, all that happened was the game stopped, the bell rang and we all went back inside to sit in straight, harsh, separate rows.

We never talked about what happened on the field. I don't think any of us really knew how, or even that we should talk about it. I wish I could say that I started up meaningful new friendships with some of the Indigenous kids, but I didn't. I continued to hang out with my soccer buddies. But we never played that game again.



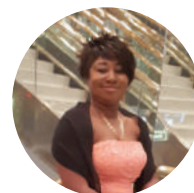
# Meet Monique Mbakopa

## A Conversation

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Monique Mbakopa is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She came to Canada in 2007. The E-book editor talked to Monique about her life in Canada.*



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**Editor:** How are you, Monique?

**Monique:** I am fine.

**Editor:** Why Canada? What brought you here?

**Monique:** I came here as a refugee.

**Editor:** What were you doing back in Congo?

**Monique:** I was a registered nurse.

**Editor:** What was your biggest challenge when you got to Canada?

**Monique:** English. When I got here I had to go to a school for learning English. No, that wasn't the biggest challenge. There were many challenges. Another big one was immigration.

**Editor:** Immigration?

**Monique:** Yes, I had to go down to Calgary for interviews. Every day I did interviews. To get papers for refugee protection. From 8 am to 4 pm. It was tough. My lawyer told me I did very well. After 6 months, after all the interviews, I got a letter...

**Editor:** What did it say?

**Monique:** That I was not approved for refugee protection. If I disagreed with the decision and returned to court to fight the letter, I would have to leave Canada. I didn't go back to court.

**Editor:** What did you do then?

**Monique:** I applied for humanitarian compassion. It cost \$4,500.

**Editor:** \$4,500?

**Monique:** Yes. But that wasn't even my

biggest challenge.

**Editor:** What do you mean?

**Monique:** In July 2010, my husband died of a heart attack. Back home. I didn't go. I couldn't go because...

**Editor:** Because you had no papers?

**Monique:** If I left Canada, I wouldn't be able to come back. Yet my husband was everything to me, in my life. So here I was, I was working two jobs, hoping immigration would change their minds. Every time I called immigration, they said they were still processing my papers. All through the years I kept hoping. 2011. 2012. 2014. 2015....

**Editor:** Why are you smiling, Monique?

**Monique:** In 2015 I...got married. And I got pregnant with twins...but...

**Editor:** You're crying, Monique. Why?

**Monique:** One baby was in hospital for months. Then he died.

**Editor:** Sorry.

**Monique:** I didn't have much time to mourn my baby, as a mother should.

**Editor:** Why?

**Monique:** Immigration had still not

approved my application.

**Editor:** No?

**Monique:** No, but I decided I owed it to my late husband. I owed it to my dead baby to keep on fighting. My lawyer went to the NDP. I got my church and friends to write a letter to immigration. I got my hospital where my baby had died to write a letter. I got everyone to put pressure.

**Editor:** Did it work?

**Monique:** In July 2016 immigration gave me permanent resident. After 9 years! I got it, because I didn't give up.

**Editor:** One last question. What kept you going?

**Monique:** I was stronger than all my challenges. And God is my provider.



# The Cloverleaf Key

by Peter Midgley

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Peter Midgley is a playwright, poet, non-fiction writer and children's author. He was born in Namibia and lives in Edmonton This excerpt is from his account of the Namibian genocide, Counting Teeth: A Namibian Story (Wolsak & Wynn, 2014).*

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From the minute I stepped out of the plane and walked toward the customs building with my daughter, I knew I would love this place. The woman at customs examines my papers carefully. "Why do you have this passport?"

"Because I am a South African citizen?"

"Yes, but it says you were born in Okahandja. Why don't you have a Namibian passport?"

"It was stolen."

It's the truth. It was stolen in South Africa

in 1991. I tried to get a replacement right away, but the Namibian officials were adamant that I had to apply in person in Windhoek. With each passing year, the chances of getting a new passport seemed more remote. By the time we moved to Canada, I had given up on my Namibian passport, but Namibia followed me across the ocean, just as it had followed me on road trips throughout my childhood. The road to Port St. Johns was filled with stories of the time we travelled to Swakopmund; the trip down to East London was about the time we drove through the Namib Desert. Any dirt road would remind

Dad of something Namibian. And yet, although these stories filled my life, I knew many of them only as words that accompanied photographs and from a collective family memory, and I longed for my own Namibian experiences and for something tangible to tie me to the country I'd always considered home.

I cannot recall Ma or Dad ever looking at a map because the names of places were so ingrained in their minds. Somehow, they just seemed to know which road to take. And they remembered where

with the cloverleaf head and the faded woven leather tassel attached to it, and walk to the caravan to pry open those memories once more and give them a new life. Opening the caravan's door was to find solace in the imagined roads and stories of past journeys as they retold themselves over and over on the lines of the map that covered the fold-out table.

The table map stretched as far north as Zimbabwe and the lower half of Zambia, showing me the location of places with

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***“I cannot recall Ma or Dad ever looking at a map because the names of places were so ingrained in their minds.”***

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they'd been. They knew each place and in each town, behind every Karoo bush and every camelthorn tree, they had a connection. And always, Ma had a story to tell. Every tale she told meandered until it returned, safe and complete, to where we had started: in Namibia.

When we came home, we would unpack the driftwood of our holidays at the florist shop, where Ma could give these gifts of the sea, a new life in floral arrangements. Then, we would manoeuvre the caravan into a corner in the backyard, where it rested until it was called to duty again. When the memory of the trip had receded somewhat, I would take the key, the one

magical names like Kitwe and Kariba and Cahora Bassa. From Mozambique, the map stretched west until it hit the Atlantic Ocean somewhere north of Luanda and Moçamedes. At the end of 1975, after Angolan independence, Moçamedes became Namibe, and the thud of land mines and soldiers' footsteps would ring in the ears of a generation of children as they were maimed into adulthood. But in the caravan in our backyard, I was unaware of such changes. The names on that map were simply places beyond my back garden, places I knew from reciting them over and over again as the storm clouds passed, places I knew I wanted to visit one day. And squashed in the

middle between these far-off places and the dot that marked our hometown with the caravan in our backyard, off along the west coast of Africa, lay Namibia.

Even in Canada, Namibia kept inserting itself into my life, reminding me of that year I spent there in 1990, the year of independence. One evening during dinner, I mentioned that I would love to go back. Between mouthfuls of food, our youngest daughter, Sinead, planned the trip.

"There's an awful lot of 'we' in your plans for me," I said.

"By the time you leave, I'll be done high school. I'm coming with you."

And so here we were, Sinead and I, waiting to get our passports stamped.

"Well, you're back now, so you have to apply for one, nè?" The customs official's voice startles me out of my reverie. "And who's this?" She looks at Sinead's passport. "You've been in Canada, I see. That's okay. Your dad's Namibian. You're one of us. Welcome home."

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***“You’ve been in Canada, I see. That’s okay. Your dad’s Namibian. You’re one of us. Welcome home.”***

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# Sgt Masumi Mitsui MM 1887-1987

by David R. Mitsui

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*David Mitsui and older brother, Victor, are sansei (3rd generation Canadian) born in Hamilton to George and Nancy Mitsui. Both parents are nisei (2nd generation Canadian), born in Vancouver. David is President of the National Association of Japanese Canadians, Past President of the Edmonton Japanese Canadian Association, and a member of the Japanese Canadian War Memorial Committee in Vancouver.*

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Growing up in Hamilton, Ontario, my grandfather, Masumi Mitsui, never spoke about being wounded in action or the Military Medal for Bravery he had received for "conspicuous bravery and distinguished conduct in action" during WWI. He never talked of his family's experience of being uprooted, having his 17-acre Port Coquitlam farm confiscated and being incarcerated in a



BC Internment Camp during WWII.

In 1908 at 21 years of age, Masumi Mitsui emigrated from Japan, and began his new life in Victoria, BC as

a dishwasher and chauffeur.

When WWI commenced, a group of Issei in Vancouver, eager to show their patriotism to Canada, tried to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. However, the Government of British Columbia refused due to the systemic racism and prejudicial attitudes against Orientals at that time, and especially denying them the right to vote.

Undaunted, 227 Japanese Canadians from British Columbia travelled to southern Alberta to enlist. Masumi Mitsui voluntarily enlisted on September 1, 1916 in Calgary and proceeded to France with the Calgary Highlanders 10th Battalion on March 5, 1917.

After winning the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the CEF set their sights on Hill 70,



where Masumi Mitsui was awarded the Military Medal for Bravery. My dad, one Remembrance Day, recounted the only story I have heard about my grandfather's experience during the war.

"Whenever grandpa led his men into battle," my dad said, "he found a way to motivate them and to reward them, especially after gaining some ground or after a successful attack. Any time they found shelter in a farmhouse or village, he looked for whatever alcohol he could find and filled his canteen. With the alcohol he cleaned and sterilized his mens' wounds, and lifted their spirits with a drink from his canteen."

Like all other Canadian soldiers, he received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal and was Honourably Discharged on April 23, 1919.

The Japanese Canadian community

In 1931, Masumi Mitsui was President of the newly formed Royal Canadian Legion Local Branch # 9. The contingent including Saisonuke Kubota, Saburo Shinobu, Naburo Murakami, Rizuko Hoita, Nobuhei Watanabe, and Legion Provincial Secretary Robert Macnicol, travelled to Victoria to lobby the BC legislature in an effort for all persons of Japanese ancestry to obtain the right to vote. Their efforts partially succeeded as only the Japanese Canadian veterans of WWI won the right to vote in BC. It would not be until 1949 that all persons of Japanese ancestry got the right to vote in Canada.

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941, the Canadian federal government determined that all persons of Japanese ancestry living along the BC coast were deemed to be enemy aliens. Regardless of being a new immigrant or being born in Canada, all were to be sent to an internment camp in the interior of

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***"It would not be until 1949 that all persons of Japanese ancestry got the right to vote in Canada."***

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in BC raised money and constructed the Japanese Canadian War Memorial, unveiled in 1920 in Stanley Park. It has become the centerpiece for remembrance and commemoration of the Japanese Canadian soldiers in Canada.

BC or they could choose to be put on a boat to Japan.

So outraged by being told to report to Hasting Park, my grandfather, a decorated Canadian soldier, threw down his WWI medals on the floor with

disgust and exclaimed, "What good are these?"

The Mitsui family was incarcerated in the Greenwood Internment Camp and my mother's family, Kawamura, was interned in New Denver, the current site of the Nikkei Memorial Internment Centre.

My grandfather did not attend a public

Canadian War Memorial in Stanley Park. In his final salute, he remarked, "I've done my last duty to my comrades. They are gone but not forgotten".

My grandfather fought for a public apology and financial compensation. It took the effort of many leaders in the Japanese Canadian community, the National Association of Japanese Canadians, and the National Coalition

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## ***"My grandfather fought for a public apology and financial compensation."***

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Remembrance Day Service after being re-located to Hamilton after WWII. However, he was a very proud Veteran and never forgot his fellow soldiers. I recall that every Remembrance Day he would wear his uniform, his beret, and his WWI medals and have a private day of remembrance. When I was about 5 years old I had asked my grandfather for his shiny medals. Upon his death, I received them in his will.

The racist policies, the confiscation and dispossession of property, the incarceration, the separation of families, and the dispersal of families after the end of WWII, came to an iconic moment on August 2, 1985. Sgt. Masumi Mitsui MM, at the age of 96 years, was invited to Vancouver to rededicate and re-light the eternal flame atop the Japanese

for Japanese Canadian Redress Committee, for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, on September 22, 1988, to finally make a public apology to the Japanese Canadians for the injustices experienced during and after WWII and announce a redress package of compensation.

Masumi Mitsui never forgave the government for its decision to incarcerate the Japanese Canadians during WWII and what they did to his family. He died on April 22, 1987, 5 months before his 100th Birthday and a year before the signing of the redress agreement. The government would make financial compensation to those who were interned.... but only if they were still alive.

As a lasting legacy of the Japanese Canadian veterans of WWI, the Honourable Peter Kent, on July 21, 2011, declared the Japanese Canadian Soldiers of WWI Winning the Right to Vote in 1931, as an event of national historical significance, as being the first persons of Asian ancestry to win the right to vote in BC. The plaque recognizing this event was unveiled on the site of the Japanese Canadian War Memorial in Stanley Park, Vancouver, in 2016.

Even today, unfortunately, the uprooting of 22,000 Canadians of Japanese ancestry during WWII, their forced removal, incarceration, the dispossession of their property and the dispersal of the Japanese Canadian families and community across Canada after WWII, continues to be an unfamiliar part of Canadian history for many Canadians.

# Snowy Experience

by Desh Mittra

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Dr. Desh Mittra came to Canada as an immigrant in 1977. He was an instructor in Grande Prairie Regional College, Alberta from 1980 to 2011. He is the founder member of the East Indian Cultural Society, Multicultural Association and the Hindu Society of the Peace Region in Grande Prairie. He has three daughters and lives in Edmonton with his wife.*

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I came to Canada from India on January 23, 1977 as a landed immigrant. I landed in Toronto where my maternal aunt and uncle lived. My younger sister lived in Chatham, Ontario about 295 km from Toronto. The next day, my aunt and I took the afternoon Greyhound bus to Chatham to start my first job that she had arranged for me. A new job in a country totally unfamiliar to me! Heavy snow slowed down the bus, which instead of arriving in Chatham at the regular time of 9:00 pm, did so after 10:30. That turn of weather happening after dark denied me the enjoyment of my first experience of a snowfall.

But it didn't deny me the experience of its aftermath. In the morning, when I called my employer, Mr. Green, and asked when I should go in, he told me to wait for a couple of days. "All roads and streets are heavily covered with

snow," he said. "Terrible to drive on them." Two days later when I went in Mr. Green, driving me around, gave me an overview of the surrounding area. I was shocked when he told me that a snowfall had totally cut off a village near Lake Erie. "It was cut off for 5 days," he said. Many houses had been buried in the snow but all the services – phone, power, water and gas – were intact. Lake Erie is one of the five biggest lakes in North America and it was totally buried under white snow. I could not believe it when Mr. Green told me that in winter a one-meter thick layer of ice forms on the lake. Trucks and cars drive on the lake.

The next winter I drove to Lake Erie with my family, who had joined me on June 10, 1977, and saw vehicles driving on ice. What a sight!

When, after they had arrived, I told my family the story of the snowfall, they got excited and couldn't wait for their first winter in Canada. The first snowfall my family experienced with me was beautiful. It came down from the sky like white flowers. My daughters ran in the snow, enjoying it. They made snow angels, and threw snowballs.

Ice fishing was another totally new experience for us. One Sunday we drove out to frozen Thames River and saw people, seated on stools, ice fishing. They had drilled holes through the ice, into which they had inserted their fishing lines. They would sit there for hours, we would learn later, to try and catch a few fish.

We decided to park the car and watch. The road was covered with snow and it was hard to judge its width. I had pulled carefully to the side of the road when the car tilted. The wheels on the passenger side were suddenly in a ditch and the car chassis partly touched the ground. We were stuck.

I needed help but that was the time before cell phones. And I couldn't see a public phone anywhere. I was thinking of asking the ice fishing guys for help when I heard someone say, "Oh you got stuck, eh?" Getting something from his car, the person said, "Ok, let me call some friends." Going to the riverbank, he shouted "Guys, come here! Someone

needs help." In a blink of an eye three men came, strong guys, and they didn't feel the cold as I did. The five of us lifted the car on one side while my wife, who had never driven a car before and was very hesitant and scared, handled the steering. The car was running well but my wife could not steer it properly. One of the guys shouted to my wife, "You can't do it, come out!" He asked me to handle the steering. I did, while four of them lifted the car. In two minutes, the car was back on the road. Amazing help!

When I later related our experience to my sister, she told me, "During blizzards when cars get stuck on HW 401 (one of the major highways in Ontario), people from the nearby villages and towns come on skidoos to rescue them. Sometimes they may even invite the stranded motorists to their homes and house them until the roads are cleared."

"What a wonderful, helping attitude!" I said.

During our forty years in Canada, we have seen long winters, heavy snowfall, blowing cold winds, and extreme temperatures. But the first snowfall of the season is always as beautiful as the one we experienced in 1977.



# Canada Dry

by Tololwa M. Mollel

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Tololwa M. Mollel is a story seeker, maker, and sharer. He has published books for children and adults, with some stories translated into Korean, Serbian, and other languages. Tololwa has been an actor in Canada and Tanzania, where he was also Senior Lecturer at University of Dar es Salaam. He performs stories and writes plays he acts in.*

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Growing up in Tanzania, I learned of this country through a drink – Canada Dry. Ice cold and hugely welcome on hot, dry days. I relished its sweet and potent bite, but above all its miraculous cooling effect. It became my favorite soda (pop) through the perennially scorching years in Tanzania. Canada, I thought then, must also be perennially hot and dry for its inhabitants to have named the refreshing drink (my favorite to this day) after their country.

Well, Canada is far from perennially hot, I would find out. Dry yes – in Alberta

at least. It also turned out to abound with what would have been other astonishing surprises to little me in Tanzania. Surprises through Inuvik, for example, which I visited one May: its nearly twenty-four hours of daylight even at that time, long before summer; its Mackenzie river on which you could drive in winter, over an ice highway (which an all-season one is about to replace)!

But the biggest surprise, even to my aging self in Canada?



Amin, an Inuvik-residing Swahili-speaking Sudanese-born cab driver!

That, besides languages from his native

had with him, for all of which he insisted on paying. He stopped dead, every time, my attempts to chip in. It's how we do it, he said at our first lunch, which set

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***“Swahili is spoken very little or not at all in Sudan, despite its shared border with Uganda.”***

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Sudan, Amin spoke Swahili, the lingua franca in the East African countries of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, intrigued me. Though used also marginally in pockets of states neighboring those three countries, Swahili is spoken very little or not at all in Sudan, despite its shared border with Uganda. Amin told me, at the first of several restaurant meals we had together in Inuvik, that he had been a truck driver, driving all over Africa. From Cairo to Zambia, back and forth numerous times. It sounded true. Besides Arabic and a couple of Sudanese languages, he knew other African languages. That his Swahili was limited and broken intrigued me no less. I've met Somali, Congolese, Burundi, and Rwandese who spoke Swahili, but never Sudanese.

I took my encounter with Amin for granted. I didn't strive for answers to questions that began to occupy my mind. My short and busy stay in Inuvik and his demanding cab driving job and his poor English and Swahili, did not help. I contented myself with the meals I

the tone for the following ones. Back home in Sudan. The mwenyeji – 'host' in Swahili – always pays, he said. He was after all, he pointed out, the host, being far more an Inuvik resident than I would ever be. I was the *mgeni*, 'newcomer', a passing guest for a week in that Arctic outpost.

Questions about Amin belatedly bubbled in my mind.

Where and how had he learned Swahili?

What had been his experiences as a truck driver in Africa?

What was the range of his experiences in Canada?

How had he ended up in that frozen outpost of Inuvik?

Despite leaving Inuvik without full answers, my meeting with Amin got me thinking actively of Canada, this country consisting of a visible and invisible tangle of heritages unified by our desire

to co-exist and to grow together. From literally every part of the world, old arrivals, and relatively recent ones like me, and those who had just come, imprint on one another our stories, some more complex than others: stories of who we are, where we come from, and of lives we're building here. In turn, we imprint and have imprinted those stories on foundational heritages, those of the First Nations prominent among them, from which Canada emerged.

This is the reality I see defining today's Canada. As a story maker, I couldn't be happier. Such reality offers bounties of untold stories with which story makers can work. As we celebrate it, therefore, to me Canada 150 implies a need to enable and animate untold stories such as those that possible answers to my questions about Amin could have suggested; stories that could be validated, celebrated, and disseminated in the interest of broadening our Canadian heritage.

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***“To me Canada 150 implies a need to enable and animate untold stories.”***

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# Family Life Challenges

by Maria Antonia Motel

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Maria Antonia “Maritoni” Motel, born in the Philippines, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting. She was inspired to do her studies by her mother and step grandmother. Maria is open minded to new ideas and opportunities in life. One of her dreams was to go abroad. And here she is in beautiful Canada.*

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In December of 2005, I received a letter from the Canadian Embassy that my Live-in Caregiver Application was in process.

I was speechless. I couldn't believe it. My prayers had been answered, I told myself. Coming to Canada would be a great opportunity for me, providing greener pastures for my family and mother. I have a big family. My husband Manny and 7 children: Emmanuel Jr.- 20 yrs. old; Michael, 18; Mary Grace – 16; Mary Angelie, 13; Nathaniel, 12; Mary Faith, 7; and Raphael, 4.

The children were growing up and needed college education soon. Life in the Philippines was tough for me and my husband. We were earning just enough money to survive. Luckily as parents, we were proud of our awesome children. They were smart, talented,

athletic and scholarly. They were good in table tennis sports. This helped the children get free tuition in school. But we needed a big budget for monthly room rent. They went to college far from home. We also needed money for food and school expenses like books and projects. Sometimes we had to borrow money from a close friend just to send our children food allowances.

This was what made me arrive at a very firm decision to come to Canada even though it would be far away from my family and my mother.

In December of 2006, I got a final letter from the Canadian Embassy that my application to become a Live-In Caregiver had been approved and I was ready to go. Leaving my children, especially my 2 youngest children, was a pain in my heart. It was a very

difficult challenge for me as a mother of 7 children. As the days went by, I felt nervous, scared and I became doubtful if I could make it without my family nearby.

But then I decided: I had no choice. I needed to be firm, strong and courageous so I could do my best for the good of my family.

On May 13, 2007, I arrived Edmonton. I could see how beautiful Canada was. A great place to live, but I was sad. None of my family was with me to share the



feeling of how awesome Canada is. I had to work for 24 months under the Live-in Caregiver Program. I had to support my family by sending money twice a month. The money I sent was not enough for a big family with all 7 children going to school. But this was much better than when I was still in the Philippines. I also had to share some money with my mother. She needed medicine for her diabetes.

It was tough for me being alone. I felt homesick. But I had to stay strong for the sake of my family. To keep myself busy and "homesick" free, I did a lot of volunteering work. I volunteered at the YMCA, at Shepherds Care Foundation, Filipino Society for Growth and Change, a charity organization, and at other places. I also joined different religious organizations.

On February 22, 2010, I was very happy to receive my Openwork permit. I thanked the Lord I was one step ahead, I could now work for any employer. Together with applying for my Openwork I had also filed Application for Family Sponsorship to bring over my husband and 6 children. Our eldest son, who at 24 was over age and not eligible for sponsorship, was excluded. To cope with the finances needed to process our documents and to support my family, I had to work 2 to 3 jobs.

For 3 years our papers were in process, without any positive results. I was upset with God. It seemed he hadn't heard my prayers and petitions to be together with my family here in Canada. I felt hopeless.

But something unexpected, unbelievable and horrible happened in the Philippines. November 8, 2013, we had a super typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines. Our province Leyte was hardest hit by the super typhoon.

Most of the houses were destroyed. No power, no communication, no food, no water. Everything was a disaster.

I was worried about my family back home. I could not contact them. I didn't know what had happened to them or to my mom.

3 or 4 days later, my husband Manny successfully called me, but the connection was very, very poor. I could hardly hear his voice. But at least I was relieved that they were all alive. My mom's home was totally damaged. Part of our home was damaged too. It was an awful tragedy.

But that tragedy turned blessings for me and my family. Immigration Canada helped speed up the processing of applications of those in the affected area, for those whose Applications of Family Sponsorships were already in process before the super typhoon happened.

Again, I couldn't believe it. It was a disaster for most families in our place, Ormoc City, but God had answered my prayer that I had for a long asked him in a petition. Immigration Canada contacted

Manny for immediate processing of their documents.

Three months after the tragedy, February 24, 2014 - my family (Manny and 5 of my children, Michael – the 2nd to the eldest was not able to come, he was already over age by that time) arrived here in Canada.

What a GREAT BLESSING for us...

That tragedy – the Typhoon Yolanda – reunited my family together again here in Canada.

Nothing is impossible if we will have faith and believe that God answers Prayers.

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***“That tragedy – the Typhoon Yolanda – reunited my family together again here in Canada.”***

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# Story of My Life

by Rama Moued

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Rama Moued comes from Syria and attends Queen Elizabeth High School in Edmonton. She dreams of becoming a teacher. For hobbies, she likes to run, swim, and read. She attends theater classes at Action for Healthy Communities.*

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People go through lots of things in life. Sometimes it's hard, sometimes less hard.

One day I was walking on autumn leaves with the sun on my face when I remembered things I did as a child in Palestine. Though I was born in Syria, I grew up in Palestine until I couldn't live there any more because of war. To this day, I dream of visiting Palestine.

From Palestine I went back Syria, that now had become my second country. In Syria, I did grade two to grade six there, but I couldn't keep up with my studies, because of the war there also. It wasn't safe. I also found the curriculum to be hard. I didn't give up though and studied at home. Because I like photography, I went to study at the Institute of Photography.

I feel happy when I am taking photos

but feel sad sometimes because I miss Syria.

From Syria, we went to live in Lebanon, which was safe. Then my uncle helped us to come to Canada. I arrived in Canada on June 1, 2015. Coming to Canada, a new country, has been a big challenge for me. I had no friends and I didn't speak English.

We landed in Toronto then moved to Edmonton. I felt lonely the first week here, even though Edmonton is a very nice city, with many ponds, I noticed. On our second day in Edmonton I went to West Edmonton mall, one of the biggest in North America. The mall is huge, with lots of people. I liked it so much. Going out like that and meeting people, and listening to them speak, gave me a good feeling. After some time, I went to summer school. The experience scared me. I did not speak English, and I had no



friends.

Then, I met new friends from Syria and felt happy practicing English with them. I now have new friends from all around the world. I like Canada. The weather was nice. But starting grade 10 in the Autumn was a big challenge for me. At school I didn't get as much time as I thought I would get, to learn English. I met many friends there though. With some help, I joined new clubs at Action for Healthy Communities. This is enabling me to learn more about Canadian culture. I've joined the theater club where I've met my best friend, Marwa. We have a good time together acting and speaking our language and going out together.

We went to Heritage Festival, where we did volunteer work. It was fun meeting people from different countries with their different cultures.

Canada is a very good and enjoyable country to live in. People here are respectful and friendly, and they have helped me to become part of the Canadian culture. I feel safe and secure, away from war in my country. Living here is the most beautiful thing that has

happened in my life and I appreciate it. Canada is my country now and I am proud to live here and work here. I would like to work hard to achieve my goal, which is to become a teacher, so I can teach new students, as my teachers had taught me, to help them as I was helped when I first arrived in Canada.

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July 1st. Canada Day. Canada celebrating its 150th birthday. I still remember the day, when my best friend Marwa and I went to see the fireworks. I felt happy and proud to witness the celebrations. How enjoyable the day was! The occasion gave me a very nice feeling. I wish the best for Canada, where I would like to continue to live. May it always stay as safe as it is now. I look forward to finishing high school and going to university to achieve my goals. So that is the story of my life. From challenging and sad times to happy times in Canada.

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***“Living here is the most beautiful thing that has happened in my life and I appreciate it.”***

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# Meet Elisa Nazar

## A Conversation

**Mery:** Hello Elisa.

**Elisa:** Hello Mery.

**Mery:** Your journey to Canada and settling in Edmonton, what lessons have those experiences taught you?

**Elisa:** I have learned that you have to be open to new opportunities in both your personal and professional life. Also, be open to meeting new people and embracing new cultures.

**Mery:** Who are your role models?

**Elisa:** Here? In Canada?

**Mery:** Yes, in Canada. Or anywhere else.

**Elisa:** My role model is my father.

**Mery:** Why?

**Elisa:** He told me to always be honest. And never give up. And to always do my best to help people.

**Mery:** Words to live by. Any advice or words of wisdom you have for other

newcomers?

**Elisa:** Yes. Words from my father. He always said where you go, do what you see. In other words, embrace the rules and style of life of where you go. As newcomers you can keep your traditions, but you have to engage the Canadian culture and its multicultural community. If you want to be part of this beautiful country, you have to live as Canadian. If you want to continue living and doing what you were used to do in your country of origin, you probably won't belong hundred percent to Canada.

**Mery:** What has surprised you about Canada?

**Elisa:** The many different cultures that you find here. I really like that. I enjoy about learning from different cultures.

**Mery:** What agencies or organizations have had an impact on your life in Canada?

**Elisa:** Immigration and Citizenship Canada and Service Canada.

**Mery:** How has your education, training or profession, or your volunteer work, affected your life in Canada?

**Elisa:** My education and professional experience have been the key to success in Canada. I have a Business Administration Bachelor degree and I had more than ten years of professional experience when I moved to Canada.

**Mery:** What is the most memorable or pleasurable experience of your journey and life here?

**Elisa:** It's in my personal life. My meeting my current husband and the birth of our daughter. My oldest daughter and I are very lucky that we were able to form a family in Canada. In my professional life, I have been very lucky to find opportunities. At the present time, I work for the Government of Alberta in Service Alberta.

**Mery:** How much does Canada feel like home to you? Or does it?

**Elisa:** Canada is my home. And I feel proud to be a citizen of this country.

**Mery:** What dreams made you come to Canada? How much have they been fulfilled?

**Elisa:** I had a good life in Mexico, where I come from. However, I wanted a different life for me and my daughter. Mission

accomplished. We are established successfully in Canada and we both have a good life, good schools for her and I have a great job.

# To My Adoptive Father, Mr. Canada

by Celestin Niyonizigiye

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Niyonizigiye Celestin is a Burundi-born poet who has been in Canada since 2009. As a refugee in Kenya, he taught French for 14 years. He has published a book on compassion and reconciliation and other themes, titled *Au coeur de l'Afrique, quand la colombe chasse les vautours* ('At the heart of Africa, when the dove hunts the vultures'), part poetry and part romantic story.*

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From the outset, it is easier to receive  
than to give. It is very easy to conceive;  
one prefers to be praised by others  
than to praise them or recognize them as masters.

Carnal as we are, we persist more in life  
than in death. And we say, "we shall remain delighted  
on earth. Hell? Let us forget! Long live the present!  
Courtesy? It is the trick of the gangsters!  
After this flesh there is no accountability  
concerning the Good Samaritan: he has only to realize  
the service provided was part of his duties—  
as our submissive he must not get anything."

No! Never will I be one of those who forget  
the chef after the meal. Cursed fold!  
May Heaven forgive their dirty ungratefulness.  
Hands joined, as is my habits,

here I am bent before this benevolent soul,  
recognizing from his heart all his pleasant actions.

As well as your own children, you feed me  
and accommodate me, to my whims you smile,  
sniveling you hurry to comfort me,  
snot-nosed or drooling you do not want to isolate me.  
Rather, your attractive hands serve me as a bib  
and of your tie you make me the towel.  
In my dark paths your elites are lights.  
In the desert of ideal your wise men are rivers.  
Your lynx eye is ready to seize my crimes,  
and your sweet hands, with a tender heart, chastise me.  
With your own beloved offspring  
I always share the breast without mockeries.  
With your core family I have inherited  
your heritage yet undeserved.  
Your reason dominates, and what you did not offer  
is not—I do not have to make you arm-wrestle.

Such unbelievers I shall not dare to say  
“your uncle is not your father.” That is to be banished.  
Foreigner! I do not feel it any more,  
especially as my comfort sparkles on the roof  
when your heart embroidered on the pillars of my soul  
flickers of high-end affection and joy.

Bouquet of multicolored and mystic flowers!  
In all the universe you are unmatched, unique  
my mind burns to cover you with medals  
for your compassion. Dear Father! On you I have my eye!

Of course praising you is not compensated.  
Giving you my life? You'll lose it. This is thought wrong.  
It is corruptible, fragile and ephemeral.  
My brilliant choice is not a temporary present.  
Be always kept under the wings of the Creator,  
your Life, your Shield and Faithful Protector.



# Taste of Japan in Edmonton

by Sanae Ohki

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Sanae came to Canada from Japan to attend UBC in 1965. She moved to Edmonton in 1974. She taught at the Japanese Community School 1977-2005. After working at Alberta Health as a system analyst from 1979, Sanae is now retired. She volunteers at the Edmonton Japanese Community Association. She and her husband Takashi have two sons and two grandchildren.*



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I was born in 1941 in Japan and worked for the Institute of Statistical and Mathematics at the Ministry of Education until, following my fiancé, I came to Canada. In Canada, I enrolled in a Master's program at the University of British Columbia. Getting married, Takashi and I lived in Vancouver till 1969. Then, after Takashi taught at University in Lethbridge in Southern Alberta from 1969 to 1974, he got a job with the Government of Alberta in Edmonton in 1974, and we moved there. By this time, we had two children.

In Edmonton, we met several young Japanese who in 1975 created a social club called "Tomo-no-Kai" (Friendship club) that we joined. Beginning with 10 members, the club quickly grew. The newsletter the club published provided

current political and social information about Japan for our members, information we couldn't get otherwise in a timely and reliable manner. We also established a system to lend each other Japanese books. We started a Kendo club, held homemade udon noodle parties, went on picnics together, and did other activities. But gradually, as members tended to their own lives, the club dissolved, then ended in 1979.

In Edmonton, Japanese Edmontonians supported our family, inviting us to Christmas parties, where our children were delighted to see a large western-style Christmas tree and to receive gifts from a live Santa. Never having had such experiences growing up in Japan, Takashi and I thought buffet style foods at a big Christmas party was

a very Canadian tradition. We joined the Edmonton Japanese Community Association (EJCA), which provided an environment where members shared Japanese language, culture and food. The association also enabled members to introduce Japanese culture to Canadians in general.

In 1975/76, resulting from a new immigration law, more people with their families came from Japan to Canada, for work, business, and for studies. In April 1977, four individuals including Takashi, organized an association to start a Japanese Language School. Parents had become concerned about their children's Japanese language education. The school has been operating classes from 17:45 to 20:45 every Friday right up to now.

The late 1970's was a time of strong economic growth in Japan, and many people were leaving Japan to work abroad. More and more students enrolled in our Japanese Language school. Recognizing the importance of Japanese language education for

our school. I have taught classes and took care of this school for 25 years since it started. Our two children studied Japanese at this school. Maintaining language skills and cultural sensitivities from the "home country" made living in Canada a richer, more sensitive experience for the 2nd and 3rd generation.

In Edmonton, I took a "Computers and Business Data Processing" certification course at the University of Alberta. Upon completing my course in 1979, I joined the University of Alberta Hospitals Information Systems. My colleagues at the Information Systems were kind to have me: a middle-aged woman from a foreign country with not very good English. On my first day at work, my director – who would become my mentor for many years – said to me, "Thank you for joining us! I look forward to working with you." After that first day, I concluded that in Canada, people can work free of discrimination regardless of one's nationality, age, and gender.

The University of Alberta Hospitals were

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***"After that first day, I concluded that in Canada, people can work free of discrimination because of one's nationality, age, and gender."***

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children living abroad, the Japanese Government supported and certified

pioneers in their early implementation of computers in their systems. But

when I started in 1979, accounting and human affairs were the only areas that were computerized. We kept on developing hospital related software such as patients' records, medicine management, operating room management, medical equipment management, and meal systems. I worked with various project teams consisting of people of different professions like doctors, nurses, accountants, human affairs personal, pharmacists, the hospital director, and so on. In doing so, I learnt much about Canada. Formation of "working teams" that included new immigrants helped us "become Canadian."

While my husband worked with the Government of Alberta and I worked at the University of Alberta Hospitals and our Japanese Language School, our two sons finished their education to become productive members of the Canadian society. Now retired, I volunteer at EJCA to promote, among other activities, Japanese culture to Canadians. Through projects such as "Japan Today", we introduce Japanese culture to junior high school students. With the "Explore Japan" program, we enable

high school students to learn Japanese language. I help with our library system, the Edmonton's Japanese/Japanese descendants' history project, Japanese classes for EJCA members, publishing our newsletter, and managing a website. Helping other Canadians explore "Japaneseness" enhances in us the feeling of belonging to a truly multicultural Canada.

As Japan grew economically prosperous from the late 1960's through the 1980's, so too did the interaction between Japan and Canada. Hokkaido and Alberta governments became sister provinces with many exchange programs between them. When my parents first visited us here in 1973, they liked Canada so much that they visited us 13 more times, often staying for long periods. My children enjoyed traveling in Japan as well.

Now in the 21st century with the decline of economic prosperity in Japan and in many other parts of the world, Canada as a cooperative "mini-world" of the larger world may be an ideal place for birthing new human "landscapes" where people who come from different parts of the world can co-exist in harmony.

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***"With the 'Explore Japan' program, we enable high school students to learn Japanese language."***

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# Footsteps Into Leadership

by Chinwe Okelu

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Chinwe Okelu earned a Honours Bachelor of Arts, a Masters in French Literature, and a Masters in International Business. He worked as a Sessional Lecturer at University of Alberta, then for the Alberta government before he retired. Living in Edmonton with his wife, two sons and grandsons, Chinwe is principal at Dynamics Mediators Inc.*

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I came to Edmonton from Nigeria for graduate studies at the University of Alberta. When I landed at the airport, Yves Puzo, a representative of my department and doctoral candidate, welcomed me. He took me to his apartment, harbored and fed me and allowed me time to get over jet lag. This generosity from a total stranger I was meeting for the first time, taught me a lesson: how interdependent as human beings we are. Yves' kindness reminded me that one does not have to be kin to another person to extend a hand to them. Yves stood behind me until I could stand on my own feet in this city that I had known only on a map until then. That first experience with Yves made a lasting impact on my life, in how I should relate to people I know or those I don't.

Registering at the University of Alberta, I

rented a room in a house that belonged to a grandmotherly lady of Ukrainian origin, who introduced herself by telling me in her Ukrainian accent, "Call me Baba."

I quickly trained myself to speak English with Baba's accent so I could communicate with her. I lived with three other foreign students in that house. The lady, bless her soul, treated all four of us as part of her family. A good storyteller, Baba narrated to me experiences of Ukrainians in Edmonton. She told me of the difficulties with the English language the Ukrainians faced.

One day when she told me how Ukrainians were discriminated against when they had first arrived, I couldn't help saying with surprise, "Discriminated against? But you're white!"

I listened with interest to most of what Baba told me. Her stories reminded me of the discrimination or worse that black people before me in Edmonton had also been subjected to. They had not been alone! Because of that, I sympathized with the Ukrainians. Injustice is injustice no matter who suffers it or where it occurs.

jargon, sufficient points to qualify. The experience convinced me the system was fair and working.

After I graduated, my wife and I moved into a house in a new neighborhood. Coming back home from work one day, we found a package in our mail box. The words "Welcome Wagon" on it stared

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***"Injustice is injustice no matter who suffers it or where it occurs."***

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I became a permanent resident. By accident. In the summer vacation of that year, I went to the immigration office to apply for work permit, as was required of foreign students every year.

In the process, I asked an immigration officer, "Is there a way I can do off-campus jobs without applying for a work permit every summer?"

"Here is a form," he answered simply. "Fill it out."

Days later, I was invited for an interview at which I was grilled as if I were in court. I felt like the interviewer was looking for a reason to turn down my application. I answered all questions truthfully. Weeks after the interview, I received a letter making me a landed immigrant, as one with a permanent resident status was called then. I scored, in immigration

back at us. No name of the sender on the box. No names of the recipients. The box, when we opened it, was all the information we needed to know about our new area. The Welcome Wagon was indeed welcoming. We found soon where the "Welcome Wagon" came from. From the Community League in our area. I promptly and gratefully joined it. I immersed myself in it, eager to learn and serve. Over the years I held various positions in the league, including that of President.

From there, I went to serve on the Council of the ten Community Leagues in Mill Woods and the Meadows. I later served as Chairman of this council of volunteers where I led the formation of what became known as the Mill Woods Multicultural Board. This Board introduced the Canada Day celebration in the subdivision, and other community

enhancement programs. With all humility, I can say that the initiation of the Mill Woods Multicultural Board, under my leaderships, paved the way to the City of Edmonton's embracing of diversity.

I moved on to serve on various City of Edmonton volunteer boards. Our involvement was beginning to gain traction. I became a recipient of the City of Edmonton's Salute to Excellence. This recognition was followed over time by other awards, including Citation for Citizenship by the government of Canada; Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal; Governor General's Commemorative Medal; Alberta Centenary Medal; and Alberta Premier's Award of Excellence.

In 1985 we started the Nigeria Association of Alberta (NAA). I served as President. It was tough. There were few of us Nigerians then. We had no

Edmonton Heritage Festival. We invited the Ghana Friendship Association to share with us this nascent experience, and a pavilion. We became the first two African countries south of the Sahara to participate in the Heritage Festival.

In the early 1990s, political parties in the province asked me to run for public office. I declined, for calculated tactical reasons. Nonetheless, when some businesses and individuals I had worked with encouraged me to run for a municipal office. After agonizing over whether to accept, I did.

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I sought a place on City Council, albeit unsuccessfully, out of the following lessons I learned through my various leadership experiences before: Getting ourselves involved in the system is a powerful tool with which we can create a culture of engagement. For

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***“Getting ourselves involved in the system is a powerful tool with which we can create a culture of engagement.”***

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money. We had the will, however, and the trust of the members. And we were bold. Our NAA members worked hard. The networks I had developed over the years, in my various leadership positions, yielded positive results. We soldiered on. The NAA decided to participate in the

starters, leadership must include a desire to serve those you lead. Effective communication is always essential. We must pair vision with action. Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a potential nightmare.



Something else motivated my run for a City Council seat. In the early part of the 20th century, Western Canada preferred immigrants from the United States, to settle here as farmers. While the Canadian government did not enact a law to exclude blacks, white settlers insisted that the Prairies be kept white. Even the Edmonton Municipal Council passed a resolution urging the federal government to "take all action necessary to prevent the expected influx of Negroes". The resolution directed the City's Board of Trade (Chamber of Commerce) to petition the federal government to act immediately to prevent any black people from immigrating into Western Canada.

Aware of these past exclusionary tendencies against blacks, I saw my City Council run as a way of opening wider doors closed for too long. I do believe that I have opened some doors a tiny bit for black people in Edmonton. A time will come when more black people will be sitting in Council Chambers in Edmonton and other cities, in Legislative Assemblies and the House of Commons, in the interest of building Canada.



# Finding My Food 8000 Miles from Home

by Eileen K. Omosa

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kenyan-born and Edmonton-based Eileen K. Omosa (PhD) is a Development Consultant specializing in food security of immigrants, and cultivates vegetables at a community garden. She writes How-to books on change and choice-making in an urbanizing world. She has also published six books in the series “Grandma Stories”. Her other books are *An Immigrant’s Guide*, and *Africa’s Billionaire Heirs*.

### MUM, WHY ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR FOOD ON SHELVES FILLED WITH FOOD?

“Mum! When are we going back to the house? I don’t want to walk in the snow when it is dark,” my daughter said, looking at her Dad, not me.

I responded as I had many times before. “We’ll go once I find the two food items I told you about, flour for ugali and some ethnic vegetables.” *Ugali* is East African-style cornmeal.

“I want to go home before the sun disappears.” My daughter crossed her arms, tilting her head up to show me the unhappy expression on her face.

I pushed the loaded shopping cart. The family followed as we went through our first grocery shopping in Edmonton, at a well-stocked Safeway store. We wandered around the store, filling our shopping cart, as we had done back in Kenya without worrying of cost then, as we do now.

Afterward, the children eagerly ate the cereal from Safeway. They found it to be different from the one they had been used to eating in Kenya, and therefore exciting. The abundance of all these new foods was what had led my daughter to grow impatient with me in the store. Why search for food, she must have wondered, when the shelves brimmed with all those novel foods?

More than a decade after my first days in Edmonton, I still walk the aisles of grocery stores in search of food I desire to eat. The comforting part is that I am no longer alone in the search. Whenever I turn to the next person at the “ethnic” food aisle, they too would be searching for food items they like.

### **WHY I SEARCH FOR FOOD ON STORE SHELVES FILLED WITH FOOD ITEMS**

1. Food is not just there to satisfy hunger.

items in grocery stores can't satisfy.

2. Many immigrants to Canada, especially from Africa, find their favorite food items not readily available in regular grocery stores. For example, it's only in the last five years that I came to know of a grocery store that sells green cooking bananas I grew up eating in a region of Kenya known for such produce. But such foods that immigrants like me seek are hard to find, like the rare bananas flown in from Uganda to Edmonton every fortnight. The other popular hard to find foods include maize and millet flour, guavas, food spices, fish, and African vegetables.

3. In this era of climate change, it's hard to sustain immigrants' search for specific food items from their countries of origin. Such food items need to be transported over long distances. That necessity conflicts with the need to eat local food

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## ***“Food is not just there to satisfy hunger.”***

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Most people acquire food taste through their socialization process. By the time one is old enough to prepare and cook food, they have an established taste, preference for particular food items, including even what it should look like – its appearance. Adult immigrants arrive in Canada with a defined sense of what they like, which many unfamiliar food

items in order to minimize our foot print on the environment.

### **HOW I OVERCOME THE CHALLENGE OF FINDING FOOD I DESIRE**

1. Whenever people migrate, they leave behind familiar foodstuffs and related social networks. They must start

building new food networks at their adopted environment. When I arrived in Edmonton, I realized I needed to belong to established social networks of people to make the transition into my new city. I connected with families from various parts of the world. As a result, I received information on grocery stores and restaurants (conventional and ethnic) which stock food items I like to prepare for my family diet.

2. Through a friend I learned to access a community garden where I cultivate a variety of the foods I like but are unavailable or pricey.

3. Canada being a multicultural society, my social networks include people from African countries and beyond, including those who arrived before us. Whenever I visit their homes and eat a food item new to me, I ask questions to establish where to buy it, and what recipes to use it in. As a result, I have over the years added new food items to my family diet. The new knowledge on location of food stores, new items and community gardens, has helped cut down our food budget. We eat foods in season and prepare and store (frozen or dried) enough food, especially vegetables, to last us until the next growing season.

## **CONCLUSION**

Looking back over all these years, I can say that my search for food has

been beneficial in more than one way. The social networks I built to facilitate my search for desired food ended up providing guidance and support in many other sectors, subsequently enabling us to make a transition into the larger Canadian society. I look forward to sharing detailed information with newcomers on food networks and their role in facilitating a faster transition into the immigrants' new environment.

# Community Animation

by Madhu Pandey

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Nepal, Madhu Pandey moved to Edmonton in 2013 with his family. He has a Masters of Arts degree in social sciences, and did social work and taught in Nepal. Currently, Madhu works with YMCA and volunteers in Nepalese communities. He likes to travel and read biographies, among other hobbies.

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March of 2014. Sunny but still frigid day. Families are enjoying their weekend. Mobile phones of Madhu, Rambabu and Nawaraj ring simultaneously. A text message to all three from Narendra. "I have something good to share with you, guys," it says. "Let's meet at Tim Horton."

The text includes the location.

On his way there, Rambabu picks up Madhu and Nawa. The three friends talk.

*Rambabu: I'm curious about the message.*

*Madhu: (laughs) May be jobs for us. Let's finger cross!!*

*Nawaraj: We'll know soon. Something special, I hope.*

At Tim Horton, Narendra greets his three

friends. He asks what would they like to have.

*Madhu: A double double for me.*

*Nawaraj: Me too.*

He orders something for himself too. Then—

*Narendra: I'll tell you why I called you. A \$1,000 small grant is available for a community group project. If you guys are interested, let's design something for our community. Action for healthy community will support us.*

*Rambabu: That's a really good idea. Madhu and Nawaraj can really help with the project. They had done project work in Nepal.*

*Madhu: (sarcastically) This is not*

*Nepal.*

*Nawaraj: Yeah, Yeah, We can do it.*

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As the project team (Team), Nawaraj, Rambabu, Madhu and Narendra came up with a small proposal they called "Cultural Transformation through Musical Initiatives". They submitted it to Action for Healthy Communities. The proposal aimed to promote Nepali folk music and transfer it to the new generations. Reviewing the proposal, the Action for Healthy Communities Selection Committee asked the project members to do a presentation session. The Team did, describing the objectives and activities of their project. The review committee assessed and approved the project.

The Team shared this information with Nepalese community members. They explained to the community how the project would look like and how it would be implemented. Excited with the news, community members expressed their commitment to see the project succeed.

To kick off the project, the Team proceeded to gather traditional Nepali folk musical instruments. They contacted people in Nepal who were there for a vacation from Canada, requesting them to bring musical instruments, such as, in Nepalese

language, *Madals, Mujura, Chai Chai* etc. The Team obtained a Harmonium from an Indian shop in Edmonton. After collecting musical instruments, they arranged for a music teacher for the community. They targeted music classes to the community youth. They hoped that, upon learning the music, the youth would integrate it into community celebrations and festivals.

After a month or so, community members succeeded to play some instruments on their own. A great



achievement. Whenever community members celebrated their birthdays, family feasts or held festivals, they incorporated Nepali folk music in the programs.

Apart from musical skills, this project brought other benefits. It helped family members to organize themselves, to hold meetings and interact regularly. In those meetings, people discussed different topics. The project helped community members to make



connections, and get information on employment, settlement and other matters. In such gatherings, the Team organized musical entertainment for the community. Artists performed Nepali songs and dances.

This musical project helped to enhance engagement and organizational skills of community leaders. Apart from helping with the musical initiative project, the community leaders became active in other areas. They did various other follow-up activities with community members. With support from Action for Healthy Communities, they helped the community with two projects. One was a women's project called "Yoga for Well-being". Another was a Table Tennis, sport for development project for youths.



They mobilized the community around these three projects oriented toward music and culture, health, and sport.

After these successful projects, community leaders led discussions to establish an organization to promote

Nepalese culture, to be named "Nepalese Canadian Cultural Forum". This forum, which has been running various cultural promotional activities, is in the process of being registered.

This community animation has been like a journey. It started with the musical project that the team of Rambabu, Madhu, Nawaraj and Narendra initiated. The project enabled community members to organize, plan and implement various other community activities. These activities led to the establishment of a community organization. This journey has provided, with the support of Action for Healthy Communities, a good outcome for the community.



# A Requiem

by Minister Faust

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There is a hole in my heart.

Once, not long ago in E-Town, there was a man and his wife who made me stand tall by letting me sit down. By replenishing my stomach, they sealed the wound in my soul. What I wouldn't give to have them back, and the humble palace they built for Afrikans and everyone else who knew the miracles they wrought by transubstantiating *njera*--Ethiopian flat bread--into the sacred body of a community.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Minister Faust is a novelist, print, journalist, blogger, sketch comedy writer, video game writer, playwright, and poet. He also taught high school and junior high English literature and composition for a decade. While his father is from Kenya, a DNA test revealed to Minister Faust his Egyptian, Sudanese, and Somali ancestry. This article originally appeared in *See Magazine* in November 1999.

Let me tell you about Derege and Rosemary, and their sadly-no-more Ibex

Ethiopian Restaurant.

American sociologist Mitchell Duneier wrote a passionate book--reads like a novel--called *Slim's Table*, about a Chicago restaurant where Black men ate and shared wisdom and charted their universe and held each other together and upward as moral exemplars for their neighbourhood and above the turbulence of their nation, ennobled by a code of honour and dignity that was made flesh by their deeds and brotherhood.

That's what Ibex was, that's what it still means to me: a place where Afrikans met and ate and drank and laughed and sometimes even cried, where baptisms

blankets that became table cloths (the owner Derege gave me one before the Fall of Ibex, and now it is my piece of the lost ark). A lady comes to greet you, to ask what you'd like, and you explain to her that you've never had Ethiopian food before.

So she explains the food, makes suggestions, and before you know it, you're doing like she does: tearing shreds of the white pancake-style bread called *njera* and scooping up morsels of butter-happy carrot and potato or beef and chicken swimming in succulent gravies. *Doro wat* is what she calls the chicken, and it tastes like the promised land. And you don't use a fork or a spoon, and your entire party eats from

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***“And suddenly you see how uncivilised it is not to eat with your hands.”***

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and ancient coffee ceremonies and ballads-sung-live inhabited a simple off-Jasper interior, where murals of Ethiopian women grinding maize or of the sparkling soul of the continent called the Nile spoke of a world where Afrikans were not despised, but where they thrived.

So what do you see on a given walk-in-sit-down-pleased-to-meetcha night at Ibex? The dark insides shimmering with copper and the rainbows of Mexican

the same plate. And suddenly you see how *uncivilised* it is *not* to eat with your hands. How you are connected by one plate, one dinner. One heart.

And by the time you're drinking Ethiopian tea wafting with the honest pucker of cloves, you've gotten to know the people who make this place--who made it, excuse me--what it... was. Rosemary--that's her name, co-owner with husband--maybe she tells you that she's not even Ethiopian, unlike her

husband. For a Tanzanian from Zanzibar, she's one hell of an Ethiopian cook, and the Ethiopians who come back night after night are testimony to that. You

This was a place where people came in just to say hello, where folks drank and ate well into the morning. A community lived inside its walls: young people and

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***“This was a place where people came in just to say hello, where folks drank and ate well into the morning.”***

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come back and Rosemary's likely to give you a hug like she's known you her whole life.

old people, families and singles, lone writers and jubilant parties came there, loved there.

These people, Derege and Rosemary and the others who work here, are as delicious as the food they give you. One night it's the baptism dinner for their new-born; the little girl is lucky to have Derege for her father, a man who tells me that he loves nothing more than to place his sleeping daughter on his belly and simply watch her rise and fall with his breath. Another night it's Derege--yet again--offering me dinner, on him. And when I refuse, as I have a dozen times, he tells me that if I keep refusing he'll stop offering as he'll be insulted. So I accept. And gratefully. On a Saturday night it's the beautiful waitress Himanott in a different role, as night club singer with exotic Ethiopian ballads of romance, seemingly singing to me alone in a scene that could be from Spike Lee.

And then one day, due to a needless dispute with a landlord and an unforeseeable family tragedy, it was all gone. What had been much more than “Cheers” to countless East Afrikans and others became a hollow shell, and two years later it still stands empty.

There was beauty and harmony once on Jasper Ave.

And now it's gone.



# Finding the Teacher in Me

by Nelson Pereira

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Born in El Salvador, Nelson was brought to Canada in 1993 at 2 years old. From Grades 1 – 4 he went through ESL. Living in Edmonton, he works at Action for Healthy Communities with newcomer youth, and is a university student studying for an education degree.*

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I did not have one sole teacher at school who inspired me to teach. Rather, I got my inspiration from experiences working at a non-profit job after graduating from university. In this job, I worked with immigrant youth and their ELL (English Language Learner) teachers.

I'll explain briefly what I did in this job. The organization I worked for aimed at helping newcomers to settle, integrate and contribute to their new communities. I was involved in a program which focussed on immigrant and refugee youth who were in junior and high school. We had partnerships with various schools and arrived weekly to run sessions or fieldtrips with ESL classes. We wanted to help students practice their English skills, and to assist them get through their culture shock of moving to Canada. We also helped them to become familiar with their new environment: to get to know the city,

the cultural norms here, to meet new people and make friends, and to feel generally welcomed.

During the six years I did this job, I met many teachers whose professionalism and caring of their students I admired. Slowly, working with them on a regular basis, I built good friendships with a few of these teachers, and began to consider whether a teaching career would suit me. The encouragement and constructive feedback I received from these teachers is what led to the development of my facilitation skills, which motivated me to consider teaching as a career. These teachers demonstrated a professionalism and care of students that I admired, and also found in the *Alberta Teaching Quality Standard*, namely: *"Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based on ongoing analysis of contextual variables."* These variables,

parental and societal, accompany ELL students: their background and how it can lead to cultural misunderstandings, their socio-economic status (requiring resources such as Leisure Access Program), prior-learning (differences between Permanent Residents and Refugees), mental/emotional (for those fleeing war) and multiculturalism/cultural pluralism (what it is, how it works and how do they believe it applies to them). It is important to take all these different criteria into consideration for the benefit of ELL students. This important and effective attribute I saw in those teachers I admired was accompanied with a belief in students' abilities, and a perception that these students were no less capable of achieving success than those born and raised in Canada. Those teachers believed in *"mutual respect, trust and harmony.... (and) the importance of respecting students' human dignity."*

I think that for many people who wish to go into teaching from their decision to do so in their K-12 years. If that is the case, my choice came relatively late. Even so, I believe that I have something to offer the demographic ELL students belong to as I myself was once in their position. I came here at a young age and went through an ESL program through my elementary years. Because I went through the program that young, my difficulty in learning the language was less severe than for some going through it at an older age. I am familiar

though with the rest of the experiences that come from being from a "first generation" Canadian family.

It's important for me to mention that I see myself as a cosmopolitan person, a self-perception that has influenced my perspective and probably my aspirations. I would like to contribute to a society that can treat everyone as fellow people no matter the difference in background and lifestyle. While I like to think this to be an obvious and innocuous goal, the current political climate does leave me thinking that this may not be as widely believed as I had imagined, and that as a society we do have a lot of work to do. If I can contribute to this future, I am more than willing to do so.

I would also like to mention the kindness shown to me by my first teacher, who was not only the first one to help me with my English but who also took the time to visit me (with another teacher!) in the hospital when I had appendicitis. Those kinds of gestures I will never forget, and that good role model in the form of that teacher at a young age did help keep me grounded. Despite whatever difficulties I would go through as I got older, at least I obtained an idea at that time of the kind of person I would like to be in the future and how that person would strive to respond to a variety of situations.



# Healing Society with Music and Dance

by Ereni Perez

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Ereni Perez is a co-founder of Sangea Music & Dance Group, a dancer, and a singer.*

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My mom decided, as a single parent, to try her luck in Edmonton. She and I and my sister migrated here in 2007. It was a life changing experience. Attending St. Joseph Catholic High School, I met my now husband, Reckie Lloyd. Our love of music bonded us. Even as a child, art and music occupied a big part of my life. I sang and danced at schools and festivals. How I loved the stage! I grew up dreaming of helping to heal the world somehow with music. How would I do this? I had no clue. All I knew was I wanted to do something big with music.

It took many years and the right life partner, Reckie, for me to figure out the answer to that bothersome question.

In 2015, Reckie and I took a bold, wild risk. We both quit our jobs and invested our life savings into Dance and Drumming classes.

We wanted to champion and pass on the West African culture, from which my husband Reckie originates. We wanted to do that respectfully, and with love and dedication. It has been a big challenge. It has been more so for me who is a non-African, coming from Mexico, but I've striven to learn the West African music and traditions from Reckie, who is among the best in the city. I've now immersed myself in the West African traditions in our performances and workshops, working side by side with him, doing my best to fulfill our goals.

Traditionally, my community and Reckie's have a lot of cultural and social similarities. There is NOTHING, however, like West African drumming and dance! And I've heard lots of different kinds of music in my life. I love many things about West African music, including the instruments. Of all the instruments,

I love the “Djembe,” the West African hand drum. There is nothing like it. I think people underestimate the power of the “Djembe.” The “Djembe” is a gift from Africa to the world. It unites. It welcomes you into music and all that music means to us. The West African

and Canada have continued to become. Our group has members from various cultural backgrounds. Because of that, I can say that Edmonton and Canada have helped to make our group what it is, a multicultural entity. Equally, we in turn are helping Edmonton and Canada

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***“The “Djembe” is a gift from Africa to the world. It unites. It welcomes you into music and all that music means to us.”***

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traditions of music and dance, which date back hundreds of years, have become my passion. I also consider them to provide some form of healing, for myself and for others, and much more than that. I also love sharing what I've learned. What motivates me to want to share is a wish to spread the energy and love that comes from music, especially West African music and dance, and performing traditions. I want to help heal our society, in which people can preoccupy themselves with causing division, labeling, and excluding others, particularly during hard times.

become a diverse, multicultural society, tolerant of people from everywhere.

That is what we try to do within Sangea Academy. We hope to heal and change the world through West African music and dance. By its very nature, Sangea is a symbol of the healing and uniting we want to do. It is also a symbol of the diverse society of people who come here from all over the world, which Edmonton

# A Path to Reconciliation

by Dr. Sentsetsa Pilane

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Sentsetsa Pilane is a mother, a life-long learner-educator, mentor, and community builder who believes in leading by example to create opportunities that empower children and youth to find meaning and success in life. Born in South Africa, growing up in Botswana, Sentsetsa draws from and brings to her work approaches enriched by the uBuntu philosophy she learned from her elders.*

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My story of reconciliation starts with my acknowledging that I exist as a complex being with many different stories. Many of these stories are intertwined with the lives of others I am in relationship with. It is these complex relations with others that ultimately contribute to who I am. I can, therefore, say "I am because you are" which embodies the Southern African existential philosophical positioning often articulated as "Ubuntu", that I learned from my elders. When we define our existence with a "single story", we make a mistake that reduces our humanity to stereotypes. We can at some level reconcile our being with reality when we can reconcile our many stories.

When I was in Secondary School in the 1970s in Botswana, I studied world geography, including Canada. I knew

about the world's "Bread Baskets": the Ukraine, US Midwest, the Prairies, I knew about the great lakes; the "HOMES" – Lakes Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior. I knew about the CN and CPR railways. I knew about the Tundra permafrost, the coniferous and deciduous forests, about logging and fishing. Little did I know that all this would one day be part of my identity.

My love of teaching and learning led me from a high school science teacher to a university lecturer, to Canada and to my successful doctoral studies. Coming to Canada to attend school while raising a family was a life lesson. For many years, my husband, our three children, and I were in one or other learning institution -- kindergarten, elementary school, or graduate school. You see, etched in everything we knew and have learned,

education opens pathways to success wherever we choose to live. In Africa, our sense of commitment, resilience, tenacity, and service constituted the hallmarks of our upbringing. We are stronger learning together.

I learned another very good life lesson when we lived and worked with several First Nations communities and schools in the Peace Country. As an educator and mother, who grew up in apartheid South Africa and with the inferior Bantu Education forced on "blacks" from the 1940s, I thought I could make a contribution among the First Nations communities. I knew the similarities between Bantustans in South Africa and the Reservations in Canada and the state of education in the latter. I had not realized that my effort would be like trying to stop the activity of the plate tectonics that had built the Rockies. My

continue to teach, but I would also endeavor to influence systems in small ways. Drawing from my experience as an immigrant mother and educator who worked on Out of School youth programming, I could apply my learning, experience, and use my position of influence to mentor, build partnerships and to continue teaching and learning with others. My current role opened opportunities for me to explore initiatives that are responsive to the changing needs of children, youth, and families in diverse communities in Edmonton; to expand my cross-cultural study; and to continue to learn about and contribute to the changing complex human existence, as a way of reconciling my many selves.

The biggest assets I had growing up were courageous women mentors. My mother and my aunts taught me

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***"The biggest assets I had growing up were courageous women mentors."***

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contribution, it dawned on me, would have to start outside "the systems".

Relocating to the city gave me the opportunity to operate more at a community level; to learn, to mentor and to build bridges within communities and systems. I could make a difference by engaging strategically where I could

that there was nothing too difficult for me to achieve. In marriage I gained strong mentors including my mother-in-law. Brought up with strong values of respect, honesty, hard work, humility and gratitude, education would become the tool to traverse the chasms of inequity, ignorance and prejudice that plague the world and divide humanity.

All these teachings are deeply etched in the principles of uBuntu (botho) which encourage human beings not only to celebrate each other's successes, but to be socially responsible and accountable for the rise and fall of one another. Our elders repeatedly pointed out that the principles of uBuntu are virtues of a well brought up human-being. My mother always said, "Identify yourself correctly, do not hold a grudge and serve with a smile."

*Education, in all its forms, elucidates a sense of who I am. Learning offers me the tools and sustains my strength to deal with life's challenges, to adapt, to live and embrace others.*

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***“Learning offers me the tools and sustains my strength to deal with life’s challenges, to adapt, to live and embrace others.”***

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# Taste of Canada

by P.K.

I had no family or friends in Canada before I arrived for my graduate studies. Checking into a hotel, I looked out of my window and wondered why cars were parked in the middle of the road, only to realize a moment later that they were moving slowly in one direction -- bumper to bumper traffic in perfect order. That's the Canadian way. Order.

I checked out of the hotel and came

He said, "You must be crazy to have left your tropical paradise for Canada."

But little did he know how I felt. For the first time in my life I felt truly free, even though it came at a price of leaving all my friends and family to move here. Sure, it was extremely difficult to make friends in the beginning and I got stuck in Saskatoon for the first year in Canada, with no money to travel anywhere. But

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***"For the first time in my life I felt truly free, even though it came a price of leaving all my friends and family to move here."***

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out shivering in the 20 degrees Celsius summer weather. I boarded the shuttle to get to my University residence building. When he saw me shivering, the shuttle driver thought I was sick with something and worried he would catch whatever I had.

"This is like winter back home," I told the shuttle driver. I said where 'home' was.

that same experience made my first visit to the Rockies, when it finally happened, that much more special.

I was working three jobs and taking Grad level courses at one point and I somehow didn't die. I made a few friends, no girlfriend, and graduated from University in a year. I didn't land a job right away because I didn't opt for Internship. Students who choose and



land an internship get a job more easily. Try and not make that same mistake twice. Also learn from your mistakes, if you make any (as you most definitely will). If you have moved here for school, savor school life, enjoy the experience. Of course, there will always be courses to keep you busy. But take some time to enjoy the Canadian way of life: camping, hiking, road trips, and night life. Life is good if you don't complicate it. Take it easy. People are friendly but don't be stupid. Talk to people, make friends, exchange cultures, get involved in recreational activities, and learn.

You'll experience culture shock for sure, for at least the first six months. It took me almost a year to get completely used to being free! I can say anything I want (but don't say racist/ sexist/ misogynistic stuff, that's not what free speech means) with no one judging me. It is a very powerful feeling. Canada might not be for everyone, but it is one of the most beautiful countries on this planet. Immigrants are welcomed here, even though some racism still exists here and there. I've taken the good things from my experiences here. You can choose who you really want to be. Me? I'm happy here.

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***“It took me almost a year to get completely used to being free!”***

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# A Journey

by Rambabu Poudel

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Rambabu Poudel immigrated to Canada from Nepal in 2012 with his wife and their 4-year old daughter. He holds a Masters' Degree in Humanities and Social Sciences and was a College teacher in Nepal. Rambabu is currently completing his final year of Engineering Design and Drafting Technology at NAIT.*



"Your order, please." Rishi is asked.

"Medium Double Double and a 12-grain bagel toasted with herb and garlic cream cheese," Rishi says in one breathe.

Tim Hortons on south-east Edmonton looks as busy as it does every Sunday morning. Mr Laudary is alone at a corner table. This is his regular Sunday routine after he has dropped off his children at "Juneli School". He is staring at his white Sante-fe parked outside the window and thinking deeply while waiting for his friends, Mr. Karki and Mr. Khadka, to join him for coffee.

"Time flies", Rishi recalls. It was only like yesterday that he came to this strange land. 26th of October, 2009 was when he first landed at Pearson Airport, Toronto, with his wife Purba, 4 year-old Rashmi

and a year-old Rasik. An employee of Valley Guest House received them from the airport. A teacher, one of the staff there who was good with computers and the Internet, had helped him book this guest house from back home. After staying a week in the guest house of this busy suburb of Brampton, Ontario, Rishi realized that life in Canada was not as smooth as he had thought. Although an assistant-lecturer in English-linguistics, he was facing difficulties in verbal communication, unable to understand the broken sentences, slangs and greetings Canadians used.

As the days passed, Rishi and Purbi found a basement of a house to rent. They bought milk, eggs and groceries from the store. They walked to and forth to the nearby park. But still, Rishi was not able to find a fitting job. Purbi

was more occupied with the household arrangements and taking care of the kids.

In his home town in Nepal, Rishi, an extrovert had been involved in different social organizations besides teaching in two colleges. He had come to Canada with hope he would adjust easily. But after several weeks now, he finds himself confined in the basement. Sometimes, Rishi feels like flying back home, but he knows it won't be easy. The dreams that he and Purbi had had about Canada had begun to fade. Their first couple of months in Canada were filled with chaos, dilemma and confusion.

mental trauma and homesickness as he was going through. Soon after that, Rishi found help to prepare his resume, search for jobs over the internet and apply online.

Within six months of his arrival, Rishi got his first job in Canada. He was hired by a manufacturing company of machine parts. Steel toe boots, yellow vest, hard hat, safety glasses, gloves became the new attire for someone who had been an Assistant-Lecturer. After a long day at his new job, Rishi would come home late in the evening, with no energy left in his body. His job demanded full time physical involvement with his

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***“Their first couple of months in Canada were filled with chaos, dilemma and confusion.”***

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Rishi was closely monitoring his bank account. His savings were running out as the only transaction occurring was withdrawal of money. One evening with a feeling of urgency, Rishi went to see his house-owner and shared his state of mind. With his help, Rishi went to a recruiting agency in downtown Toronto. Luckily, he met a fellow-immigrant from his country. After a few days, Rishi met with a bunch of guys his age. They were experiencing similar situations and problems as Rishi. That convinced Rishi that he was not alone in this race. Other immigrants were facing same

cumbersome safety gear on, which was very tough on his body. Purbi was not happy with Rishi's new job, but they had no choice.

Purbi, a school teacher of Mathematics, had become a complete housewife in Canada. Daycare facilities were hard to find. There was a long wait list and they were expensive. She was not able to step out of her basement without her children. One night, Rishi and Purbi made a hard decision to drop the kids back home with their parents. Purbi left Canada for a few weeks with the

children.

It was hard for Purbi to leave her children behind but she had no choice. She told herself that when she got a job and the situation improved, she would go and bring them back. Purbi was very focused. She applied everywhere, to every position that she thought she could handle. She was called to a few interviews but was unable to get a job. As she was seeking a job, she heard Alberta was accepting the Overseas Degree of Education for child care worker. Since Purbi had a Bachelor's

his schoolmate, colleague, workmate or neighbor, the only thing they said to him was the question they asked: "How can we go to Canada?". Rishi realised that in a year's time the country's economy would be sinking, and the youths would have no job opportunities. All the lads of the new generation wanted to flee the country. But Rishi was swimming in the opposite direction of the flow. Even some of his fellow lecturers and the principal of a college told him that they had already applied to Canada.

During the festivals, Rishi and Purbi

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***"In a year's time the country's economy would be sinking, and the youths will have no job opportunities."***

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degree in Education, they thought of moving to Edmonton.

But just then, they got news their son Rasik had been hospitalized with viral fever. With a heavy heart, Rishi and Purbi decided to leave Canada forever. They bought a one-way ticket to Nepal, leaving Canada in September 2010.

Upon arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport, they were met by all their kin and friends who thought Rishi and Purbi had come to celebrate upcoming festivals. Rishi and Purbi did not mention the bitter experiences they had had in Canada. Whoever Rishi met, whether

found themselves in great dilemma. Finally, they decided to try their luck one more time in Canada. This time, they planned to move to Edmonton, Alberta. So, after a few months, all four of them landed at Edmonton International Airport with some hopes and excitement. Since some of their friends from Toronto had already moved to Edmonton, this time they settled into Canada and the new city without any hassle.

In a few weeks time Purbi, after recognition of her Bachelor's Degree in Education, obtained a Certificate of Child Care Supervisor Level III. Soon after that, she got a job in a daycare

facility near their residence. Rashmi started her kindergarten in a nearby catholic school where Rasik followed his mom to daycare. After realizing the value of a local Canadian degree, Rishi enrolled at McEwan University for his Diploma in Social Work. He managed full-time study and a part time job over the weekends.

Last year, Rishi and Purbi bought a brand-new duplex in south-east area of Edmonton. Rishi is now working as an assistant manager in a reputed social organization. Purbi is continuing her position as a daycare supervisor.

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Rishi smiles at a thought that has come into his head. "Life is a journey through thorns and roses." He doesn't realize that his friends, Mr Karki and Mr Khadka, had taken their seats next to him with their medium Double Double.

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***“Rishi smiles at a thought that has come into his head.  
‘Life is a journey through thorns and roses.’”***

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# Quest for Home

by Garth Prinsonsky

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Having grown up in Namibia, Africa, I toured the world with a choir until I visited Canada where I met the woman who eventually became my wife. Years later I moved to Alberta where we now raise our son and daughter. In the early years I found it especially difficult to integrate as there was no Namibian community to join. Due to its population size, and the fact that Namibia is a safe and stable country, few Namibians have had a reason to look for greener pastures.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*With his unique blend of singing, dancing and community building, Namibian-Canadian musician, Garth Prince, teaches audiences of all ages about African culture. The increasing popularity of his African music workshops and residencies in Canadian and Namibian schools is the subject of the documentary feature film "Music of the Motherland".*

Yet, I still meet many people who assume that because I am from an African country I must be happy to have



'escaped', to go and live in a western country. But anyone who has visited Namibia will tell you about the wonderful atmosphere there. It's in the air, the way people greet each other, and in the way the desert meets the ocean. Because of this, I have always been happy to return to my motherland. I miss the very land on which I walked; and now that I have moved away permanently, it sometimes feels like a part of me is lost forever. My dream is to take my children there, so they can walk on the Swakopmund beach and see the ocean that I spent much of my youth staring out at—maybe

Still, to retain some of my own culture, I started teaching and performing Namibian (and other African) music to Canadians. Being from a part of Africa previously plagued by segregation in the form of "apartheid," I am proud and thankful that I'm heading an African arts project—albeit a small one—with a group of white Canadian band members eager to have me lead and instruct them in African music. I've seen far too many African arts projects and ensembles led by non-Africans, so being involved with such professionals who care about Namibian (and African) music,

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***“My dream is to take my children [to Namibia], so they can walk on the Swakopmund beach and see the ocean that I spent much of my youth staring out at.”***

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then they'll understand why I often stare off thoughtfully into the distance.

However, I may not have a Namibian community in Edmonton, yes, but there is a large African-Canadian community to which I belong. Through organizations like Africa Centre I have met Africans from across the mother continent, and I am pleased to have grown in my knowledge of countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. I find it ironic that I had to travel across the globe to learn about my fellow Africans and their countries of origin.

immediately boosted my morale and helped me feel at home. But somehow, I still found myself feeling down at times.

Nine long years passed before I could travel back to Namibia for a visit and to get "refueled." The economic reality of raising a family simply made returning sooner impossible. At one point I wondered if it would ever happen. But with the support of the Edmonton Arts Council, I eventually made the trip to obtain more music, and visit friends and family.

Like most music entrepreneurs, at the outset my music couldn't pay my bills. Although the financial aspect has improved, I've still had to maintain employment outside of music, while working to try and build a self-sustaining music career. And, like many newcomers, I have worked many difficult jobs for low pay because I didn't have any Canadian work experience. I eventually had to choose between jobs that had some sort of meaning and those that paid well, but flexibility was always

that lie ahead, but feel more confident in my ability to create a better life for my family. My struggles have made me more resilient and determined than before. Each job I've held has taught me to better understand and relate to Canadians of different backgrounds. In closing, I have words of encouragement to the newcomer in Canada: even though this wonderful new country may never take the place of your first home, it is one of those rare places that will truly welcome you. With time and patience,

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***“Even though this wonderful new country may never take the place of your first home, it is one of those rare places that will truly welcome you.”***

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a priority. Fortunately, working for a car rental agency at the Edmonton airport in the evenings and on weekends now provides that flexibility. I would often do a workshop at a school, then work in the evening until 1:00 am, only to wake up at 7:00 am for another workshop followed by another evening shift. I mention this because I know what a common scenario it is for many hard-working immigrants who are trying to survive in our city.

As yet, my dream to take my children to Africa is unfulfilled. And though each day brings me closer and gives me something to strive for, I am realistic with my expectations and the challenges

it will become your home away from home.



## Road from Vietnam

by Michelle Lu Prinsonsky

My parents were born and raised in Vietnam. My dad was from Ho Chi Minh and my mom was from a small village called Cai Bay. Never having met each other before, their first encounter was during their escape from the communist regime when they were fatefully united on a stowaway ship that landed them in a refugee camp in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand. In hardship, they found each other and spent 3 years at the refugee camp, during which time I was born.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

2017 marks Michelle's 10th year of teaching. She has taught many subjects including Elementary Music, Personal Development and Finance, Food Studies, and ESL to all ages, from toddlers to adults, in Edmonton and in China online. She has also mentored many student teachers. Michelle is married to Namibian singer and artist in residence, Garth Prince. They have two lovely kids, Lily and Grant.

In 1985, when I was one year old, my parents received sponsorship to



immigrate to Canada. They were young and scared, and knew very little about Canada, but they were hopeful that it would provide opportunities for a better life.

Having very little money to call their own and with some support from my dad's sister, they were able to rent a

but to walk to the store over 11 blocks away, carrying me in their arms.

After the shopping trip, they ended up pushing the groceries, along with me, in the shopping cart back home. Seeing that my lips were blue and that we were all shivering cold, my parents decided to splurge and take the bus the rest of

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***“They were young and scared, and knew very little about Canada, but they were hopeful that it would provide opportunities for a better life.”***

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2-bedroom apartment in the Boyle McCauley neighborhood in Edmonton. My parents received \$20 per week from my aunt as an allowance. It was very difficult to stretch out that allowance among groceries and other basic needs. My dad soon acquired a job working as a dishwasher at a local restaurant. Still, with the meager allowance and little pay at the end of the month, keeping up with rent and living expenses put a lot of weight on their shoulders. And yet they still managed to get by with what little they had, taking things one day at a time.

I remember a story my mom once told me about their trip to the grocery store. It was in the dead of winter and we were all ill-equipped with clothes and proper footwear. Without a vehicle and with very limited money, they had no choice

the way. They tried to push the shopping cart across the LRT tracks to get to the bus stop on the other side. In the difficult feat my dad slipped and fell, but finally we managed to get across. Soon the bus arrived but when my parents went to take the groceries out of the cart one of the bags broke and produce scattered across the ground. My mom held up the bus with me in her arms, while my dad frantically stuffed the spilled produce into his jacket and hauled the rest of the groceries onto the bus.

Over the next few years my parents gave birth to my three younger sisters. The six of us still got by living in our little 2-bedroom apartment—the sisters and I shared bedrooms while my mother and father slept on the sofa bed in the living room. Both my parents continued to work very hard to meet our basic needs.

I recall them doing a lot of shift work and not having much time for themselves. We lived a simple life and did not experience many frills. Christmas was memorable for us because we would get visitors from Santa's Anonymous at our door presenting to us a big black garbage bag full of toys. My parents did the best they could and started to reach out for support from others as they became more familiar with the community services and support programs in Edmonton.

Fast forward to 2002, my parents finally had enough courage to say goodbye to our 2-bedroom apartment rental. They used their life savings to buy their first 3-bedroom, 2-story house with a basement and backyard. My parents were never frivolous and always put in a lot of thought before making major investments. Being their first major life investment, this was a big deal for them, and for us daughters obviously.

To this day my parents still live in the same house, and having raised four self-sufficient daughters who are now living out their own journeys, my parents are living proof that hard work and perseverance can take you a long

way. Their success is measured by the many years of focus, determination, and sacrifices that they made to give us daughters a better life, and we could not be more grateful. And to think that once, a long time ago, two frightened young adults met on a stowaway ship.

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***“My parents are living proof that hard work and perseverance can take you a long way.”***

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# The Prelude to My Journey

by Rupa Ray

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Rupa Ray is originally from India now settled in Edmonton with her husband and only son. She is a MSW (Master of Social Work) student at the University of Calgary, due to graduate in the summer of 2019. After completing her MSW, Rupa plans to pursue her dream career as a social worker.*

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I came to Canada from my homeland India in July 2006, with my husband and our thirteen-month-old baby boy. The purpose of coming to Edmonton was my husband's job at the University of Alberta, where he had a position of assistant professor in the computing science department. Before our visit to Canada, we lived in the USA for six years. In those six years, we spent five years in today's infamous Charlottesville, an extremely beautiful small city surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains. In our last days at Charlottesville, I had the most beautiful and precious gift of my life, my only son Nilarnab. We moved to Los Angeles with our newborn baby and lived there for about a year. The next year we moved to Edmonton.

My husband encouraged me to evaluate my credentials I had from India and the USA. Since I had my major in Education

and minor in Science, and plenty of work experience with children, I earned a level-III Day Care staff certification just by evaluating my credentials. I would say that was the prolog to my endeavor in the land of equal opportunity, Canada. I started working with children as an early childhood educator. I also worked with respite care children and started to understand the system of Child and Family services in Canada.

Since my childhood, I had a very keen interest in human rights. At a very early age my father explained to me what the basic human rights are and why it is equally essential for every single person on this earth. However, he always discouraged me from getting involved in direct social work. In 1992 after the communal riots in India and Bangladesh, a group of Bangladeshi Hindu refugees came to India. For the first time, I had the



opportunity to participate as a young volunteer to work with Bangladeshi refugees without any hint of political influence. Although I was born in independent India and democracy, I never enjoyed my freedom of speech, expression, and thoughts in my native land. Rather, as a young woman, I had to go through the subjugation I suffered through social prejudices, based on gender bias and discrimination in the Indian society.

Another issue which since my teenage days made me anxious was the brutal worldwide exercise of capital punishment or death penalty. In 2010, I joined Amnesty International, a renowned human rights organization. I became an active member of Amnesty International. My work experiences with this organization not only gave me enough confidence to demand the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, but taught me to fight against other oppression, such as violence against women, children and other vulnerable communities such as refugees and indigenous people.

My involvement with Amnesty made me aware of world politics and current affairs. In the mean-time, I started to get assimilated into Canadian society, while still retaining my ethnic identity. I realized that Canada's notion of multiculturalism was completely different from the USA's melting pot ideas which may deny

immigrants exercising their ethnicity. From the beginning, I appreciated Canada's perception of multiculturalism and its benevolent political nature in accepting refugees. I thought once again I might have an opportunity to work with refugees. I also realized this time I needed a rigorous training to enable me to stand beside these vulnerable people. With this belief, in 2015, I applied to the Master of Social Work (MSW) foundation program at the University of Calgary. I successfully completed the foundation program with a practicum at Action for Healthy Communities. This Fall, I started my clinical specialization in the MSW program. Since resilience of refugees is my field of interest, I want to work either on refugee mental health or on policy making for refugees. I am very excited to see my dreams come true. I earnestly hope that Canada, this

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***“I am very excited to see my dreams come true.”***

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land of equal opportunities, will always let me practice my freedom of speech, thoughts, and expression as a social worker. And it will always be able to maintain its political and social fabric of multiculturalism.

Thank you, Canada for everything you gave me.



# Not Welcome in the Room

by Bercham Richards

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I don't remember my parents ever pushing Caribbean culture on us as I was growing up. Rather, they lived it and we experienced glimpses of it through them, in the way they prepared dishes like Salt Fish and Ackee, ox tail stew, jerk chicken or curry goat, or in the games they played like dominos or gin rummy, the dances they took part in, the way they spoke the language and their expressions, in their home remedies, and in their beliefs. They hung on to their cultural ways in order to share them with us.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bert (Dirt Gritie) Richards is an Edmonton, Alberta born Entrepreneur of Jamaican/Vincentian heritage who owns a small moving and delivery service. He has served as Production Manager for the Cariwest Caribbean Arts Festival. An accomplished HipHop/Spoken word artist, he co-founded Music for Mavericks Entertainment and The Breath in Poetry Collective. Most recently Karen & Bert Richards appeared on Season 5 of The Amazing Race Canada.

For a long time, as a first-generation Canadian, I felt that I have been a bit of a

cultural disappointment. I had believed that one had to have a Jamaican accent to be black. Still, it's my lack of a Jamaican accent and white sounding name that has made me into what I call an "acceptable black." I learned that no black man can enjoy "White Privilege" like one with a white name and accent. However, on the other side of that coin, no black man can suffer not fitting in like one with a white name and accent.

Recently my wife Karen and I appeared on *The Amazing Race Canada*, Season 5 as Karen and Bert Richards "The Married Couple". I believe the producers selected us in part because we were "acceptable black" people. I also remember being welcomed amongst a group of Caucasians because I spoke better English, while a Nigerian with a Nigerian accent wasn't. Now, to be honest I wouldn't close any of the doors opened to me because of my colonial sounding name and my accent. Still, it's hard for me to see what opportunities I can enjoy when getting through that door doesn't mean one is welcome in the room. So naturally someone in my

heritage and our shared experiences as a visible minority with people of my culture of birth, it is expected I would find empathy there.

Growing up, I had to research my heritage. The resources available to me often came from Caucasian authors, which meant the information could have inherited bias. Still it seems to me that for each generation born under the North American system we grow further away from understanding our heritage. However, like the Caribbean people who are of African descent, we must take glimpses of culture and apply them in new ways to strengthen our communities. So, one volunteers for The Jamaican Association of Northern Alberta, The National Black Coalition of Canada, Council for Canadians of Caribbean and African Heritage, and after spending 3 years as the Production Manager with the Edmonton Cariwest Caribbean Arts Festival, like I did, imagine my surprise when, attending a meeting of black intellectuals, I am devalued as an Uncle Tom because my name and accent sound white. It strikes

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***"It's hard for me to see what opportunities I can enjoy when getting through that door doesn't mean one is welcome in the room."***

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position could turn to their culture of birth to find acceptance, right? Given my

me that within the so called "Black Community" we harbor prejudices

against one another. I remember hearing discriminatory language used around the house, whether intentional or not, and just as often as it was directed at Caucasians as it was also directed toward Africans.

So the plight of the visible minority Canadian seems to be that while you can be welcomed into the circles of your birth nation's peers, you would still be viewed as the other. You find yourself trapped between two cultures and constantly challenging what it means to belong and not just to fit in. You are let in through the door, yes, but somehow you don't quite feel welcome in the room. Lastly, what difference does a name make? I don't have the answer to the question, but I sometimes wonder: had I gone through life using my given name of Bercham, what doors would have been opened or closed to me?

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***“So the plight of the visible minority Canadian seems to be that while you can be welcomed into the circles of your birth nation’s peers, you would still be viewed as the other.”***

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# The Blood Racing Through My Veins

by Karen Richards

This is a story on writing my own story. My husband, Bert and I are first generation Canadians. My family is from Ghana. My husband's lineage spans past the countries of his parents' birth, Jamaica and St. Vincent, all the way perhaps also to Ghana. Racing through our veins is the blood of the Motherland. Roots to the Motherland run deep, pulsing underneath the Earth all to the notion of our parents leaving their homes in the spirit of emigration. They left all that they knew, to unknown challenges in hope of a better future for

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Richards is an Edmonton-based Alberta Government Contract Consultant. Karen (with her husband Bert) was a semi-finalist contender on Season 5 of *The Amazing Race Canada*. She volunteers with community organizations, and works with families and youth. Family is important to Karen as a mother, wife, daughter, sister, Social Worker and as a conscious black woman.

their children, and to develop their story.

As volunteers with various cultural and

neighborhood associations, my parents have always been community oriented. They taught me at young age that we are individuals first. As individuals we come together to make families. Those families become a community. Then a community blossoms into its own culture. This is the essence of the immigrant experience. Our parents braved a brand-new world so that my husband and I could benefit from a community spirit.

In our story, Bert and I faced a challenge. We are in an uncomfortable space, between our need to honor our ancestral heritage, and our obligation and right to maintain pride in being Canadian. Another wrinkle compounds this challenge. In passing on our need to honor our ancestral heritage to our children, we find ourselves teaching them about the cultures from which, we are removed physically and in knowledge. This complex challenge however, does not discourage us from the view that pride in our African roots and our Canadian heritage are not mutually exclusive.

This dual pride was never greater in my heart than in the summer of 2017, when competitively selected, my husband and I participated in *The Amazing Race Canada, Season 5*. This is a grueling television series filmed all over Canada, and around the world. The Race is a test of physical and mental stamina

and abilities, spiritual endurance, and the ability to succeed as a team. We completed death defying challenges. We walked on a tight rope between building towers; we jumped off a bridge, and swam in a river; and fought a fire as a team. We successfully took on Morse Code, mathematical calculations, a



maze, and a Canadian citizenship test, which was a testament to our immigrant parents' experience embracing Canada. We learned the true humanity of Canada - how beautiful and diverse Canada is in terms of terrain and people, a welcoming but also challenging country, full of opportunity for many but also poverty for some. We travelled to China, Thailand, and Panama. We saw many of the same traits of Canada in these countries,



qualities I had previously seen also in Ghana and Jamaica.

*The Amazing Race Canada* was an opportunity for us to make our families proud, to make our community proud,

through our humanity. The raw and competitive challenges we face are like a race. We are all vying for first place, hoping we can work to build something worthwhile for our children. We struggle to determine how leaving

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***“In this country, and everywhere in this world, we connect with each other through our humanity.”***

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and to prove to ourselves we can successfully confront challenges. Through the legacy of our immigrant spirit, we have learned to push ourselves forward against all odds. Even with forty-two cockroaches on his head, my husband Bert fought to overcome the challenge. Lost and lonely in the hot Panamanian sun, I fought not to give up. Like our parents had stuck to their goals before us, we strove toward what we had set out to achieve in entering *The Amazing Race Canada* challenge. Rather than watching the world happen around us, we challenged this world. Moving out of our comfort zone, we ventured into unknown lands and territories, believing we could conquer all challenges in our way. We followed our parents' example of persistence and focus in fulfilling one's goal. We represented ourselves, our families, and our community well.

In this country, and everywhere in this world, we connect with each other

home can result in winning. On the way, this journey entails so much loss - yet we trudge along. This kind of journey makes building a community difficult. As first-generation Canadians, we can easily forget who we are fighting for - our children. Our parents worked hard for us partly to teach us to work even harder for our own children. The kind of people our parents were, the cultures they came from, and the stories they forged for us, are what motivated Bert and I to participate in *The Amazing Race Canada*. We are living our lives to honor our parents and their positive legacy to us; we are also, however, forging our legacy, writing our own stories as we reconcile ourselves to Edmonton and Canada as home to us. And one day, all those of us first-generation Canadians will leave our legacy to our children who will also write their own stories.

# Edmonton's German Town

by Kate Rittner-Werkman

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Kate was born in Hamburg, Germany. She immigrated to Canada settling in Alberta in the 1960s. She has written for a variety of newspapers and cultural organizations and is working on her first book based on the search for her biological father. Kate lives in Edmonton with her husband and two children.*



Back in the late sixties, Edmonton's infamous Whyte Avenue was full of German merchants. Their shops stretched west from 96 Street to 104 Street.

As a youngster I called it German Town.

Rain, snow, or shine, my mother and I would walk down the avenue of German Town, usually on Saturday mornings. Later I realized the positive effect it had on my mother's mental health. As the ethnic aroma of German gingerbread, Franzbrötchen and garlic sausages filled the avenue air, German chatter did, too.

We would stop in at Erika's delicatessen for creamy buttery torte. Then, The House of Imports to look at and talk about German magazines, listen to music of the latest German language singers,

feel and smell in the imported textiles of the European culture a thousand miles away. At Charley's German Meat and Sausage I would listen to my mother discussing meats in German. When you ordered Frikadelean from the butcher, he knew what it meant. No explanation needed, he mixed the meats perfectly.

This avenue in Edmonton connected her to the Hamburg boroughs of Altona, Eimsbüttel and Hamburg-Mitte, which held the family, friends and memories she had left behind.

My mother, my stepfather and I arrived at Lester B. Pearson Airport in Toronto from Hamburg in the fall of 1962, a few years



after Immigration Canada removed Germans from the enemy alien list.

The impacts of the First World War and the Second World War made coming into Canada's culture a wee bit difficult. We didn't arrive with a group and were not attached to a church. We were invisible minorities, seen for labour and not to be heard due to the ill-will from the wars. In school I started rebelling against being German due to all the bad press. All Germans were painted with the same brush back then. My wanting to leave the culture of course ran directly against my mother's need to maintain it and her desire to return one day to Germany.

My stepfather had promised my mother that, if things did not work out in this wild land, she or all of us would be able to return home to Germany. But this was not to be. My stepfather, from Cologne, had his own reasons for being here, determined to make a life away from his family in Germany. Also, he was in love with the Rocky Mountains.

So once Ottawa cleared the documents proving I belonged to my mother, we travelled west.

We moved first to Calgary, near the Rockies. Soon, my mother wanted to leave. She could not speak English and my stepfather was on the road selling Volkswagens. She could not understand

questions from the neighbours and found it hard to manage daily life. She became afraid of the wild prairie, the northern plains and everything that roamed within it -- the cold, the wind, the customs, the Indians and other people.

Where the edge of the grasslands kissed the foothills, rolling into mountain forests, my stepfather and I became enchanted with the terrain. He would

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***“I became enchanted with  
the terrain.”***

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take me on many hikes to the mountain tops.

My mother had never experienced anything like it, coming from a Hanseatic ocean city full of relatives and history and war and fish and white sandy beaches not far off.

After all, the Port of Hamburg sits on the Elbe River, which links into the North Sea and has been a trade hub for centuries. Hamburg is built on these waters, was once a castle -a fortress that successfully warded off the Vikings back in the day. It boasts more canals than Venice with over 2,000 commuter bridges in the city.

“Können wir jetzt nach Hamburg?” She

asked my stepfather in Calgary in 1964. But instead we moved further away, west to the Pacific Ocean. "Maybe you will be happy by this sea," my stepfather said.

But it was a different ocean, it was not like the North Sea. We lived there for a while but soon drove back to the prairie, settling in St. Albert, just north of Edmonton. The need to keep moving was on the agenda and soon we settled in Edmonton next; finding haven in neighbourhoods on the southside close to Whyte Avenue and German Town.

Now new ethnic businesses have moved to Whyte Avenue. No one would ever know but for stories like this that this was once a German Town. There is no plaque that stands dedicated to what once was.

Thankfully, K&K Foodliner is still there on the avenue, selling German and other European goods. It's a place where I can eavesdrop on conversations in a rich language I once knew better. Germans discussing the topics of the day and the merits of good schnitzel. It is here one can pick up the *Albertaner*, a monthly German-language newspaper.

And Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, which stands a block south of Whyte Avenue on 100 Street, offers services in both German and English. It also houses the Historical Society of Germans in

Poland and Volhynia, a library full of history, family stories, books and other materials from the area. A golden find for German historical research.

Sadly, my mother passed away and is buried in a cemetery east of Edmonton, in the fertile farmland of the Prairies, lying amidst hobby farms and estates, where, in the fall, the small hills roll in billowing sunflowers. Her ashes are now mixed in with the soil of this Canadian landscape, the one she could never embrace.

How I long to walk with her again down the Whyte Avenue of German Town, to see her face light up when she spoke with the German shop keepers once there.

And to express to her what I know now. Which isn't really much more than I knew then. Except that I really don't mind being German, Mutti.

Becoming Canadian has allowed me to embrace it.

# Meet Geeta Saboo

## A Conversation

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### ABOUT THE STORY

*Ankita talks to Geeta Saboo about life in Canada.*

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**Ankita:** How are you, Geeta?

**Geeta:** I'm fine. And you?

**Ankita:** Good. How much do you feel you belong to a community?

**Geeta:** I don't feel particularly strongly that I belong to a particular community. Tolerance, live and let live is my attitude toward everyone. I have given my mind many opportunities to remain calm and cool in different situations.

**Ankita:** How has your relationship with your cultural/ethnic community changed since you moved here, as compared to when you lived in your country of origin, or elsewhere?

**Geeta:** The country where I belonged in was also open to newer cultures and ethnicities, so we have been brought up to observe and accept all the goodness in everything around us.

**Ankita:** How has the relationship with the younger generation changed since you moved here?

**Geeta:** I have observed that the younger generation are maturing quite earlier with respect to their inter-personal relationships, education, career, entertainment and recreation. They are more open and they adopt newer things faster and they do not have many preconceived ideas in their minds. They also embrace each and everyone with equal respect and acceptance.

**Ankita:** How has your relationship with the older generation changed since you moved here?

**Geeta:** The arrival of old age brings along lots of physical and mental challenges. What matters, and I try to bring this into my relationship with the older generations, is tolerance, patience, compassion, love, and respect. This for

me hasn't changed as I moved here.

**Ankita:** What does society get wrong about you as a newcomer, or your community? What does it get right?

**Geeta:** That a person belongs to a particular line of thought, with a different background, different social status, unheard of education or religious upbringing, a different color, different eating and living habits, manners of attire, has a different humanity from the mainstream. When people come together, live, eat, work, and study together, these differences gradually dissolve. When that happens things will start going in the right direction for everyone.

**Ankita:** What does your community have in common with other immigrant/newcomer communities? Or with the society at large?

**Geeta:** There are a very large number of people who have been working hard and have come from diverse backgrounds who wish to lead a good life in this country. They face the same challenges and suffer from similar issues. I think these things are faced by every other newcomer or immigrant, or by people who have lived here for generations.

**Ankita:** What feelings do you have regarding presence of people from all the nationalities and ethnicities that we

have in Canada? How much interaction have you had/do you have with people from other cultures?

**Geeta:** I feel that we are all human after all. We have the same problems and face similar issues in our day to day lives. Everyone wants a peaceful and safe life. We are all trying in our own ways to adopt and get accepted in this part of the world. We do meet and interact with people from all the different nationalities and different walks of life at our place of work, education, and social community places.



# Meet Vinit Saboo

## A Conversation

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### ABOUT THE STORY

*Ankita talks to Vinit Saboo about life in Canada.*

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**Ankita:** Hello, Vinit.

**Vinit:** Hello, Ankita.

**Ankita:** What is your family situation in Canada, compared to what it was before you came here?

**Vinit:** It's not significantly different.

**Ankita:** How do you and your family relate, if at all, to your traditional cultural practices?

**Vinit:** We are able to follow our customs freely. There are no restrictions imposed by society related to personal or religious beliefs.

**Ankita:** Who were the first (or latest) members of your family to come here? What is their story?

**Vinit:** My wife and son moved to Canada in 2016 and lived for a year in Toronto.

My son enjoyed the experience of attending Grade 6. The cultural diversity is very evident in school and my son has friends from diverse backgrounds. He also relishes the new-found freedom as well as responsibility. My wife was able to find a job in her area of interest and this gave her a sense of pride.

**Ankita:** Who is the oldest member of your family here? What is their story?

**Vinit:** I am the oldest in the family. My wife and son left for Toronto earlier than me and were there for a year. I joined them a year later. My son joined school there and were staying alone with my wife. He adjusted quite well to the new school environment and the new city. He made many good friends and pursued his hobbies like ice-skating, French language lessons, piano music lessons in Toronto. He performed well in his academics at school and participated in a Piano recital.

**Ankita:** How has the relationship with your family changed since you moved here?

**Vinit:** We were having a feeling of separation and anxiety about each other as to how we would lead our lives without each other's support and cooperation. Now once reunited we have learnt the value of living together as a caring family unit, sharing the pleasures and facing all the challenges as a team.

**Ankita:** What new lessons has your journey to Canada, and your experiences and life here, taught you?

**Vinit:** Learning to live on our own and facing all the issues with proper planning and organisation can help us achieve our goals. Giving importance to relationships, independent living along with maintaining the importance of community was what I learnt here.

**Ankita:** Any advice, or wisdom, you have for other newcomers here?

**Vinit:** Whoever wishes to lead a life with peace of mind, needs to keep working towards achieving his goals in whatever aspects of life like education, career, family life, day to day regular routines. The ability to pursue their hobbies can be obtained in the great country Canada, this is what a human being craves for everyday everywhere. They need to do

this by bringing about some changes in their attitude and incorporate discipline, sincerity, dedication, hard work and maintain focus .

**Ankita:** What thing or things have surprised you about Canada? What culture shock have you experienced? How have you dealt/are you dealing with it?

**Vinit:** The outstanding infrastructure, the planning and implementation of all Government processes, all was quite surprising. I did not feel a great culture shock as such as the communities and people here never interfered in my daily life. I was and I am able to follow and pursue whatever I feel comfortable doing on a daily basis.

# Love after Enmity

by Maitham Salman

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Maitham Salman is a fiction writer and a photographer, and holder of a Media Bachelor degree from University of Baghdad. He has published, in Arabic, Husks as big as my Country and The Dirhams of Caliphate, and other writings in Arab print and online publications and, in English, in Malahat Review Magazine. He is a Writers' Guild of Alberta member.*

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The minus 31-degree weather shocked me as I stepped out of the Edmonton International Airport on Dec 1, 1998. My excitement at immigrating quickly turned to disappointment. I had never imagined it could be this cold. The coldest I had ever felt in Baghdad was perhaps plus 10. My extra heavy winter jacket didn't help at all—it froze against my skin, crackling, when I bent my arms. This intense cold stabbed my bones with sharp pins. A shroud of snow covered everything.

My first unpleasant experience in Edmonton.

More challenges followed as I settled into the city: my inability to pursue my career as a writer or to utilize my skills, working at random jobs, and the difficulty of getting my university degree in mass

media recognized. My struggle to muster another language at the age of 28 made things worse. With all those challenges, I found myself in no mood and with no time to do my writing projects or to read Arabic literary books, as I had done regularly before. Furthermore, these various difficulties lead to failure to seek better living prospects somewhere else. While attending school to learn English, I worked a part time job, one that as a highly skilled university graduate, I would never have done in Baghdad. Though I realized my situation to be a necessary sacrifice to enjoy important human necessities of safety and freedom of speech, I felt trapped. I felt destiny attacking me. I saw the city as an enemy.

Two things changed my feelings about Edmonton.

The first occurred when I got married. My wife, an Iraqi, helped me overcome my homesickness. Equally important, she encouraged me to resume writing in Arabic. Since then, I've published articles and short stories through Arabic media outlets. The second event was the birth of my oldest son, Uruk, named after the first city in ancient Mesopotamia. Becoming a family man began to bond me to the city. Finally I was planting roots here, I felt. I started to look at the city with new eyes.

I had never, for example, thought I would

articles and writings to Arabic print and online publications.

My involvement in literary culture helped to strengthen further my bond to Edmonton, and gave me a growing sense of belonging in the Canadian society. I've now read, in English, books by Margret Atwood, Alice Munroe, Haruki Murakami, Paul Auster, and others. These readings lead me to try and translate some English texts into Arabic. One of the biggest Iraqi newspapers published one of my translations. I felt proud to have introduced the poetry of

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***“I felt proud to have introduced the poetry of Erin Moure, one of the great Canadian poets, to an Arabic audience.”***

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enjoy playing in the snow. But suddenly, when my son one winter asked me, “Dad, can we build a snow man?” I joyfully said, “Yes, let's do it.” We went to the backyard, and rolled snow into two balls. Using a carrot, I made a nose for the snow man. “We did it, papa!” my son shouted. I experienced even further joy when I took my son tobogganing. We sped down the hill on a foamy round disk, and Uruk shrieked, “We're flying, dad. We've grown wings!”

Gradually, as my homesickness faded, I wrote more in Arabic. By 2012, I had written four books, two of which I published in Jordan. I submitted other

Erin Moure, one of the great Canadian poets, to an Arabic audience.

I've also, because of the readings, developed an interest in translating my own works into English, and to do some writing directly in this language. Despite the challenges, I've found writing in English to be interesting and beneficial. Through support of the writers in residents at University of Alberta, the Edmonton Public Library, and some local writers, I've significantly improved my English writing skills, to the extent that one of my works has been published in The Malahat Review.

As all these accomplishments made me feel I was winning the battle against alienation and other challenges, my hate for the city gradually turned to love. This changing relationship with Edmonton reminded me of an Iraqi proverb: "Love comes after enmity."

My participation in literary events around the city has further helped me develop this love: events such as LitFest festival, Edmonton Story Slam, and the Mill Woods Artist Collective's activities. Additionally, I was lucky enough to gain a spot in the Writers in Exile program for 2013/2014, and to receive an Edmonton Arts Council grant that helped me write a book.

Now I feel Edmonton is home. I have a wonderful wife, three adorable Edmonton-born kids, and a lovely cat. I own a home. I work in a highly qualified job. I'm as content as I feel whenever I've cleared the pathway of snow all the way to my door!

Nineteen years ago, I wouldn't imagine that I could ever love Edmonton. Sure, it still gets snow-covered in winter,

but I don't see the white stuff to be a shroud as I did when I first arrived that December night in 1998.

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***"This changing relationship with Edmonton reminded me of an Iraqi proverb: 'Love comes after enmity.'"***

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# Smokey Lake

by Leo Sam

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Leo Sam attended the University of Science and Technology and the University of Ghana earning a science degree and a diploma in education by 1962. He taught in Opoku Ware Secondary School, becoming Assistant Headmaster in 1965. In 1968, he immigrated to Canada to teach science, math, and computer literacy in the County of Smoky Lake. This excerpt is appearing here courtesy of Leo Sam from his autobiography, Do Teachers Count?*

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In 1968, I applied for and was awarded a professional teaching certificate to teach in Alberta. Before that, I had graduated with a science degree in Ghana in 1960, and went to teach at Opoku Ware Secondary School in Kumasi, and eventually became Assistant Headmaster. At the news of my appointment to teach at H.A. Kostash School in Smoky Lake, Alberta, I applied to the Bank of Montreal for a loan for the airfare for my wife Agnes, my daughter Grace, and myself. The bank loaned me \$2,500. I was surprised at the speed with which the bank had acted. I began to wonder why our banks in Ghana were so slow in conducting their financial transactions. The loan was enough to cover our trip to Canada and provide funds to live on for three months, before

I had to start paying back the money in January 1969.

We left Kumasi for Canada on July 22nd, 1968, with a stop in London. On July 26th, 1968, we boarded an Air Canada DC 9 in London for Edmonton, where we landed at about 8 p.m. local time. I was surprised to see full daylight that late. In Ghana, the days and nights are each 12 hours long all year round. Early in August 1968, we left Edmonton by a Greyhound bus to Smoky Lake, just over 100 kilometers to the northeast. At Smoky Lake, I met Mr. Bacon, the school superintendent. He introduced me to the staff in the office and handed me over to the assistant superintendent, Mr. Weleschuk. I expected Mr. Weleschuk to take me over to my residence as



had been the custom in Opoku Ware on the arrival of a new member of the teaching staff. I had the greatest shock when he asked me whether I had made arrangements for accommodation. I told him in Ghana the school authorities

to reach him failed. I therefore decided to live in the county trailer until I got a suitable house.

The school year was to begin on the 1st of September, but I had decided to be in

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***“I had the greatest shock when he asked me whether I had made arrangements for accommodation.”***

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usually made housing arrangements for new teachers. He told me that in Canada, teachers made their own arrangements. School authorities had nothing to do with where teachers live!!!

However, he told me that the County Board had a 40-foot trailer which was unoccupied, and so if I wished it would be rented to me until I found a suitable place to rent. I accepted the offer as I had no choice. Mr. Weleschuk was very helpful to us. He got a copy of the local newspaper and made a list of houses for rent in town. He drove me around to see those houses. Out of the six places he showed me, there was only one which I liked. It had the same facilities as the bungalow we occupied in Kumasi, Ghana. I was told it belonged to Mr. Kostash, a former superintendent of schools in Smoky Lake. He had retired and was living in Victoria at that time. Apparently, the person in charge of the house was unwilling to rent to me. He was living in Edmonton. All attempts

Smoky Lake early to familiarize myself with the surroundings. One afternoon, as I strolled along an avenue, I saw an elderly gentleman standing on a long ladder doing some sort of repair work on the shingles of his roof. He came down as I approached the house. I said hello to him and introduced myself as a new teacher in town. He also introduced himself as Harry Holowaychuk. He added that he was the principal of H.A. Kostash School, where I would be teaching. I was so surprised to see a principal of a school working on shingles on his roof top. This would never happen in Ghana. That type of work was to be done by anyone, but not a principal. I began to examine myself and our Ghanaian mentality regarding getting involved in blue collar hard labour!!! I later learned that Mr. Holowaychuk was an expert in installing furnaces in new houses. In Canada, I realized very quickly, people with University degrees could also do blue-collar jobs efficiently. I learned another lesson. In Canada, one had

to serve oneself. If you don't do things yourself, then you have to be prepared to pay somebody to do it for you. There are no servants to rely on.

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We had the first snow late in October. Our daughter Grace adjusted to her

to be quite easy, compared to the first. We now knew our surroundings better and had become acquainted with some more people through the church and the school. I realized that many of the teachers I worked with were competent farmers, carpenters, electricians and plumbers. They had expertise in the blue-collar jobs. Subsequently, I

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***“Though I came to Canada as a teacher, I became a student of a new culture and its traditions.”***

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new environment faster than my wife Agnes and I did. Moving from a large, fully-furnished bungalow that we lived in tropical Ghana to a small 40-foot trailer was not easy. The condition was made difficult for Agnes because she had to stay in that confined trailer all day long, when Grace and I were in school. Mrs. Kozub, a neighbor, was our savior. She often invited Agnes to her house and also drove her around to reduce boredom. There were many days when I pondered over the decision to move to Canada.

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Early in June 1969, our neighbors, the Woytkiws, decided to move to Edmonton and so they rented their two-story house to us. We moved in and prepared for a new baby that was due in July. Our second year turned out

decided to learn carpentry. Though I came to Canada as a teacher, I became a student of a new culture and its traditions. (visit: [www.mrleosam.com](http://www.mrleosam.com))

# The Deadly Tournament

by Ahmed Sawan

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Ahmed Sawan is a 17 years old young man who came to Canada from Syria in January 2016. He loves soccer, basketball, and swimming. He plays for Action for Healthy Communities Nabi alshabab soccer team. Ahmed loves Canada as he does his mother country.*

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One day, like any normal child, I was playing soccer on the dirt, when something happened that changed everything in my life. We were in this soccer tournament, a challenging one, but with our team leading, and I had an open net ready to score, when suddenly a rocket struck a place next to the field.

I look around, scared, ready to run away. My mind tells me, I must help the wounded. But wait a second. I can't move. My leg suddenly feels very weak. It has a big wound from the bomb.

What's the deal now? Shall I run away, or go to help others? What am I talking about? I can't even move myself. Oh, Allah the merciful, I pray, cover us with your mercy. You know everything. You're the wisest. Give us life. A minute later around one hundred people, our families, are here. Out of nowhere. Just to help us. We are safe now, I thought.

But moms are on the ground wailing. Dads are trying to pick up what is left of their kids' bodies. And other people just stand shocked. They need help too. Nobody is strong enough to help the way they are supposed to.

I look around. Nobody I know is here to help me. I expected to see at least someone from my family. But no. Well, I guess I'll try to stop the bleeding myself, and then I'll crawl home. But, oh, it really hurts. I have no choice though. I start crawling like a toddler or a worm, running away from that carnage, at the same time thinking about my soccer future, feeling sad about the goal I didn't score. I hear the sound of moms weeping and dads shouting at bodies that were their kids before. Then I hear a huge sound that overwhelms every other noise.

Another rocket!

Suddenly I realize one thing. I am alive! I just survived two rockets, while everybody around me has died or is injured. How lucky I am! But how can I be happy in such a situation?

Moments later, everything around me is quiet. Let me close my eyes, I say to myself, and just rest in peace.

My god, what's this other noise now? I open my eyes to see three helicopters flying 10 meters above me. I take a close look at the helicopters. Cool! No, it isn't cool. Suddenly, from the helicopters, soldiers start shooting people with a machine gun.

Oh, can I just die? I think again, and again. What am I thinking? If I allow myself to die my parents will beat me up for that when they meet me in the sky, then what would I do?

I can't run or even use my legs. I am in trouble. All right, I'll just pretend I am dead then, until this situation cools down. I close my eyes again with the helicopter noise above me. I start thinking: what else besides soccer can I do if my legs are disabled? Become a doctor? No, I wouldn't want to be a doctor who goes to help people and suddenly die from a rocket bomb. What else can I do? That

doesn't need me to use my legs too much. Nothing, I realize. I can't think of anything about that, or what to do right now to stop these deadly helicopters.

Since I can't do anything, well, let's just wait then.

The sun began to go down. The helicopters would leave when it gets dark, I thought happily. And that was what happened. The sun went down. It got dark, then darker and darker. Peace came down around the dead people. I started crawling away again. I had to go and see somebody about my wounded leg. Then, what! The helicopters returned. Did they leave just to refill their ammo? But how could they see in this darkness? Anyway, this time I knew I was in real danger. I had to do something to keep myself safe. I drilled a hole in the dirt. I buried myself. There, I was dead now. I closed my eyes to surrender to death. I quickly fell asleep right under the dirt. It felt warm and tight like a mother's womb. Allah accepted my soul and generously blessed it.

*This is a story that a friend told me. His name was Zayn. Because of what happened that day, he died six months after he told me this story.*

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***“I can’t run or even use my legs. I am in trouble.”***

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# Beautiful Imperfection: Living as a Muslim in Canada

by Asma Sayed

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Asma Sayed is a writer, scholar and academic. Her interdisciplinary research and activism focus on social justice and inform her work within the academy, where she is invited to speak on a range of issues. Her publications include five books and numerous articles in periodicals, anthologies, and academic journals. Sayed is a professor of English at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.*



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It was 1998. I landed in Vancouver. The sun was shining on a beautiful day in May. Arriving in Canada, I didn't intend to stay. As a spouse of a Canadian resident, I had Permanent Resident status, but I considered myself a visitor in Canada, planning to return to India after a maximum of three years of an adventure living abroad.

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Three years later, in February 2002, sectarian violence between Hindus and Muslims erupted in my home province of Gujarat. I remember the day as a graduate student. I was reading the Times of India online, in a lounge at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Images of people on the streets wearing saffron bandanas holding swords, tridents, and torches, filled the screen. According to the reports, every part of the province was burning. Marauding vandals used Electoral lists to identify Muslim shops and houses and burning them to the ground.

Tears flowing down my cheeks, I rushed home to call my family to see if they were safe. Many of my non-Muslim friends in Gujarat offered to provide protection to my parents. Thank goodness for those friends willing to take risks for us! The three weeks the unrest lasted was a period of helpless worry, stress, and fear.

The three weeks also changed my life forever: the way I viewed the world and humanity, and the way I viewed India and Canada, and the way I make decisions in the interest of protecting my children. In those three weeks I saw Canada as a sanctuary for me and my children.

\* \* \*

The Gujarat pogrom forced me to think seriously what my Muslim identity means to me. What does it mean to be a Muslim in the twenty-first century? In the West after 9/11? What does it mean to be a Gujarati Muslim in India,

by sectarian violence seems highly improbable. It has a culture I could relate to, I could imagine living in, because like India Canada is highly multicultural.

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Despite some stereotypical perception of it in the West, India is a diverse nation. My own household, in my childhood, held together many complexities of the culture. My upbringing was intercultural and interfaith, while also secular. I was raised by a Sunni mother, once devout, but whose attitudes and beliefs became influenced by almost

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***“I’d never been forced to think about identity issues in such an intensely personal way, that would define the trajectory of my life.”***

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post-2002? I’d never been forced to think about identity issues in such an intensely personal way, that would define the trajectory of my life. A life it seems, now, that would be spent in Canada. Of course, life in Canada comes with its own tensions. In the wake of 9/11 when Muslims were being profiled and stereotyped, the death of more than a thousand Gujarati Muslims in what numerous human rights activists have called a well-orchestrated pogrom, barely got a mention. But, for all its imperfections, Canada, as opposed to India, is a country where death

fifty years of marriage to my atheist-rationalist writer-professor father. I grew up in a predominantly Hindu society. I visited more temples than mosques, celebrated Hindu festivals with more pomp than Eid, and studied in Christian convent schools. Growing up this way meant understanding multiple cultures, languages and identities from a very young age.

\* \* \*

My family in Canada also represents similar complexities. The heritage of my



children is Shia, Sunni, Hindu, Christian, atheist and agnostic. Hopefully, they are learning to embrace all these aspects of themselves, growing up in a multicultural Canada, learning about the beliefs and non-beliefs of others. They have all grown up in a post-9/11 world, a time of heightened Islamophobia. Debates about hijab and niqab – head and face coverings – erupt occasionally, and I see the internal and external struggles of young women the age of my daughters. The image of the terrorist, that the media perpetuates, has become visually synonymous with Muslim men, and I wonder how this impacts my son and boys from our community.

\* \* \*

It is because I call Canada 'home' for me and my children that I speak up as a public intellectual about Islamophobia, racism, sexism, and diversity in Canada. A well-meaning guy has said to me: "Don't you feel safer here? Why are you complaining?" It might be true that I feel safer in Canada. But just because things are worse elsewhere, does this excuse

us from improving conditions in our own communities here? Our home deserves our love, also our anger, and action from us. Just as it is our right as Canadians to enjoy the abundance and the good that this country offers, it is also our responsibility to stand up for our rights, particularly those of the marginalized.

Canada has provided my children with an opportunity to grow as global citizens. When I see them volunteering on our city's youth council or with the Mustard Seed, or as they debate various socio-political issues at their school and beyond, I see them embodying plurality and intercultural dialogue. I hope they understand that Canada that we all call home will become what we collectively shape it. With its beautiful imperfections, Canada is a work in progress.

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***“But just because things are worse elsewhere, does this excuse us from improving conditions in our own communities here?”***

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# Mosaic Gift

by J. Marilyn Scott

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*J. Marilyn Scott is an Edmonton based freelance writer, since 1974. Her writing covers a wide variety of subjects and she has had over 100 film/video scripts produced. She believes that caring for each other and all life is the most important job we have.*

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In Norway there is very little arable land. In my grandfather's time the inheritance laws meant that the oldest son inherited the land. If you were a younger son you could stay and work for your brother or go somewhere else to seek your fortune. My grandfather was a younger son and emigrated to join relatives in Minnesota, USA in 1887. His letters convinced my grandmother to join him. They were married in Minnesota in 1902 and started a family. However, Canada, with vast amounts of land for very little money, was a dream they could reach for. They bought a homestead in Saskatchewan in 1905 and later farmed in Alberta near Camrose. It was a hard life. I have a photo of my grandfather staring forlornly at a crop destroyed by hail. Unfortunately, my grandparents had several crop failures and struggled to survive with their seven children.

My mother didn't speak any English

until she went to school at the age of seven. Mum loved school but when she finished grade eight she had to quit school and go to work to help support the family. She was determined that her children would have an education in whatever field they desired. She cashed in her life insurance policy so I could go to university to get a teaching degree. I taught school for several years in the USA and British Columbia but when I got married I returned to Alberta. Alberta Education would not recognize my teaching degree so I shifted focus and became a freelance writer.

Although our immediate family has kept a few Norwegian traditions like having *lefse* at Christmas, our extended family includes those with ethnic backgrounds that are German, Ukrainian, French, Dutch, Scottish, Welsh, English, Italian, Polish, Jamaican, Chinese, and South African. When we ask family members

to bring dishes from their ethnic backgrounds to family gatherings we have amazing feasts. Thinking about Ukrainian Auntie Frances' tiny cabbage rolls, Karen's English trifle, Connie's German dumplings, Jordan's Jamaican patties, makes my mouth water. For me, such diversity is the Canadian way.

In 2016 our family members and friends sponsored a Syrian family from Homs, where their home was destroyed and their children's school bombed. They

manage. Their hospitality is amazing. Everywhere we go we are treated to tiny cups of strong sweet coffee, cookies, cakes, chocolate and heaping plates of fruit. We are invited to lunches, dinners, and family events. We have become "Canada mother and Canada father" to several families. I have such a lovely time holding babies and having small children crawl in my lap and give me hugs. The connection between us and many of the families remains strong. We saw many tears of thanks as we gave

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### ***"We have become 'Canada mother and Canada father' to several families."***

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are now an important part of our lives. At first, they said "everything is new and everything is hard" but with support and assistance they have thrived.

While we were waiting for our Syrian family to arrive I began volunteering at Action for Healthy Communities. In the past year my husband and I have delivered blankets, jackets, household items and friendly visits to over 50 Syrian refugee families. There are doctors, engineers, tailors, teachers, farmers, bakers, clerks, mechanics, all working to adjust to a new life in Canada. All have heart-wrenching stories of having to leave the land of their birth. I don't know Arabic and they struggle with English but with smiles and body language we

items we gathered from friends and family that helped in some small way.

M came from Aleppo where his tailor shop was destroyed, two of his brothers killed and his small son injured. He rejoiced when we arranged for him to have a sewing machine so he could start his tailoring business again. His wife makes the most delicious swirl patterned cakes and yogurt. Visiting the family is a joy.

Teaching five women English on Wednesday mornings has been a challenge and a treat. One of the women hosted the class in her home. Two of the women had never gone to school. Now, three of the women are taking full time

ESL classes. The sweetest challenge was three tiny babies and four toddlers who also came to the class.

Over the years I have had the privilege of having First Nations, Asian, African, and people from many other cultures come into my life. Now I can add Syrian to that wonderful mix. I am so glad Canada is a mosaic instead of a melting pot. It has made my life full and vibrant in many ways and enriched my spirit beyond anything I could imagine.

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***“I am so glad Canada is a mosaic instead of a melting pot.”***

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# From China to Canada

by Dr. Jacqueline Shan

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Dr. Jacqueline Shan has two doctorates in pharmacology and physiology from China and Canada. She co-founded CV Technologies Inc. which launched COLD-FX®, Canada's top-selling natural cold and flu remedy. Dr. Shan has also launched Allergy-Rf ([www.allergyrf.com](http://www.allergyrf.com)), a natural product for allergies. She has won over 25 prestigious national and international awards and honors for business and science.*

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I was born during the Cultural Revolution in Jiuniang, a small City in southeast China, a middle child with an elder brother and a younger sister. With our parents at work my grandma, who lived in our house, looked after us. Like many children during those challenging times in China, I was very skinny. I also got sick easily. When I did, my grandma tended to me. I watched intently as she concocted curative herbal remedies in our tiny family kitchen, using medicinal ingredients she carefully selected from the local farmer's market.

Herbal medicine was a major part of the health care system in China, as it still is.

I was a curious kid. I wondered what was in herbal medicines. I wanted someday to figure out why herbal medicines worked, as they did some of the time. But during that period of the Cultural Revolution, I couldn't hope to go to university. In my second year of high school in 1977, however, the Cultural Revolution ended, and I finally had the chance to go to Shanghai Medical University for my undergraduate degree. Later, I obtained a Doctorate in Pharmacology from The Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences. I hoped through that specialization to research traditional herbal medicines. I held onto that dream until, when China opened up

to the West in 1980s, I came to Canada as a graduate student to train further in western medical research.

In 1987, I arrived to train in the top medical research labs in Edmonton at the University of Alberta, headed by a Yale-trained, Hong Kong immigrant: the late Dr. Peter Pang, a professor and Chairman of the Department of Physiology. I learned a lot from Dr. Pang, and not just about science. Dr. Pang had gone through his own immigration journey from Hong Kong to the United States to Canada. Having him as a mentor helped and guided me as I experienced my own culture shock and language barrier on arriving in Edmonton. I barely spoke English and was shy, too shy to seek help from anyone else.

At the sight of large open fields which surrounded the city and the strangely blue sky above it, my instincts told me this would be a land of hope and opportunities. I was terribly lonely for the

I presented my research at Western Pharmacology Society meeting in Banff. I was nervous! I gave my presentation memorized, having mentally translated my thoughts from Chinese to English. During the Q and A, I could not understand the questions from the audience. It was such a humiliating and embarrassing experience I cried when I got home.

The educational system was another challenge. In China, I had trained differently to how we were expected to do research here. In Canada professors encouraged more independent thinking and research than in China. Despite the challenges I faced, I realized I needed to, and could, learn many things here. First of all, I needed to improve my English and overcome culture shock. To do that, I recorded lectures when I attended classes. Later I played back the recording over and over, writing out every single word on it. Eventually, I graduated with my second Ph.D. in

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***“My instincts told me this would be a land of hope and opportunities.”***

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first six months. Only recently wedded, I missed my husband. Thankfully, my husband joined me soon. However, I continued to face other challenges, particularly the language barrier. A few months after I had arrived in Canada,

Physiology.

In 1992 with Dr. Pang's encouragement, I became a biotechnology entrepreneur. The two of us founded a company called CV Technologies Inc. where I



served as Chief Scientific Officer (CSO), and later President and CEO. Leading a team of researchers and using modern medical research, we developed a new paradigm of medicine from plants and other natural sources. Our research led to COLD-FX, Canada's number one selling cold and flu remedy.

It took us almost 10 years of research to bring Cold-FX to the market. We actually did our first clinical trial with the Edmonton Oilers! Having grown up in China, I knew nothing about Hockey, but I was curious what impact COLD-FX could have on highly trained professional athletes. Despite success in research and clinical trials, the company struggled for years financially. At times we even sold office furniture to help

the company and to myself. Tens of thousands of Canadians love Cold-FX, including many celebrities. The legendary TV personality Don Cherry, who became our spokesperson and supporter has commented: "Jackie Shan is a story of courage and determination. Think of it: a little girl from China arrives in Canada with no coat and \$5 in her pocket, and with sheer will and determination she builds an empire that is worth millions. It is people like Jackie Shan who make Canada great. "

Canada has done much for me too, for which I'm tremendously grateful. In this adopted home, I have found the freedom to create, to think, to innovate, and to raise my family. At the same time, I am free to be proud of my Chinese

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## ***"We actually did our first clinical trial with the Edmonton Oilers!"***

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make ends meet. In the early 2000's, as President, CEO and CSO, I led the company in launching COLD-FX onto the market. It became Canada's number one cold and flu remedy, outperforming even some top multi-international brands. In 2012, we sold our company to Valeant Pharmaceuticals, Canada's largest pharmaceutical company.

The success of COLD-FX has brought numerous honors and awards to

heritage. My husband and I want our sons, Nicholas and Alex, to be proud of their heritage, too. We want them to know it well: to become familiar with their extended families, our birth places, where we studied, and proudly with China.

# The Jamaican Community in Edmonton

by Etty Shaw-Cameron

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Etty Shaw-Cameron is a retired public-school teacher who taught widely in Alberta. She graduated from Shortwood Teacher Training College in Jamaica, and holds a University of Alberta M. ED degree. A member of the Jamaica Association, she also volunteers for other organizations and major sports events. Etty enjoys working within the community and interacting with people.*

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The first wave of Jamaican immigrants took place around the 1950s under the "Domestic Scheme." Unmarried women came to take care of children and do housekeeping in the homes of Canadians. After serving for three years with one employer, they obtained landed immigrant status. They then could either stay with the same employer or move on to work in other fields. Most took advantage of educational opportunities, which enabled them to compete in different fields of work.

The second wave in the 1960s consisted of professionals – teachers, nurses, lawyers, doctors, and others – and tradespeople like welders, machinists, carpenters, and others. Most of these

people worked in outlying communities and, except for those who came as a family unit, were plagued by isolation and distance from any of the major centers. The professionals worked in the private and government sectors. Though equally qualified like their colleagues, they were frustratingly often overlooked for promotions. The few Jamaican students at the University of Alberta aligned themselves with Jamaicans in the community.

The third wave, most recent and including working women, came in response to Alberta's labor shortage in the service, trade, farming, and oil industries. This third wave of Jamaican immigrants benefited from

an established Jamaican community, services of an honorary consul, a center for meetings and cultural events, and ethnic stores with provisions from the island.

So, what led to the development of the Jamaican community?

The nucleus of the Jamaican community began when students at the University of Alberta lived together in a campus building they named West Indian House. It quickly became a recreational, entertainment and eating place for West Indians in general and their friends. Bi-racial relationships developed in these gatherings. Unfortunately, trouble also developed. Profiling of black men by law enforcement officers, for example, which goes on to this day, reared its

one wanted to sit beside a black person. Communication between a Jamaican and a host community member almost resembled police interrogation, with the former facing a fusillade of questions: "Where are you from? Where is that located? Why would you leave a warm place to come to this cold? Can I touch your hair? Does the blackness wash off your skin? Why is the palm of your hand different from the rest of your skin?"

Back in the West Indian House, residents soon faced the problem of overcrowding. To alleviate it, Jamaicans and others formed dance bands and featured in clubs. Renting community halls like Eastwood and Hazeldean, they provided entertainment to all regularly. Canadians quickly gave in to the rhythmic beats of soca, calypso, and

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## ***"And so, music – the universal language – broke down barriers."***

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ugly head. Black men become suspects driving a new car, wearing dreadlocks, or when in company with a woman of another ethnicity.

It was a time of widespread but subtle racism. Jamaicans, for example, had a hard time finding rental accommodation because of being black. It was common for a Jamaican to occupy an entire seat on a crowded bus during peak hour. No

reggae. And so, music – the universal language – broke down barriers. Jamaicans began to feel more accepted and spread their wings.

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Jamaicans have adapted well to Canada, and most Canadians have developed a fondness for the Jamaican way of life. Jamaicans' strong work

ethics, their fun loving, friendly, and indomitable spirits are assets that help them cope in the society. This is a good thing too, because they are scattered throughout the community and have limited support systems. They lack the extended family that exists on the island. While living scattered like that makes for a healthy blending into the larger community, Jamaicans are deprived of the accustomed drop-in visits. Instead they rely more on invitations to visit, or social media rather than face-to-face contact. As a result, they have lost much of the camaraderie they used to enjoy on the island. Their resilient nature and their positive attitude help them survive an environment that is so different from life on the island.

Food, too, has helped Jamaicans to feel

of ethnic products are available, and competition in the marketplace is fierce. The Jamaican community in Edmonton also supplies food through the annual Heritage Festival in which it is one of the oldest participants. At this festival, the Jamaican community pavilion is also favored for their cultural displays, syncretic music, and other things.

Apart from the third and most recent wave of immigrants, most Jamaicans enjoy benefits of Canadian citizenship. Jamaicans want to see that the community thrives and contributes to a multicultural Canada. In this 150th year of Canada, let us join hearts and hands to leave a legacy of peace and love for humanity. Putting aside our differences, let us work to become more compassionate. Only then will we

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***“In this 150th year of Canada, let us join hearts and hands to leave a legacy of peace and love for humanity.”***

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at home here. In the early years of the community, West Indian foods were hard to find in Edmonton, although the older generation found ways to spice up their cooking to make it taste like the food ‘back home.’ As the community grew, a few enterprising Jamaicans opened food shops, restaurants, hair salons, and barber shops. Soon the larger grocery stores started bringing in different ethnic products. Nowadays, a potpourri

experience the fullness of life and the rewards of making the world a better place.

# Life & Lego

by David Shepherd

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*David Murray Shepherd was elected in the Alberta general election, 2015, to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta representing the electoral district of Edmonton-Centre.*

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I remember Lego. When I was young, it was one of my favorite toys. I could lose myself for hours building and creating with my Lego spread out around me on the floor of my bedroom. When I got a fresh set, I'd dump out the pieces and carefully reading through the instruction book, build the car, castle or spaceship, keep it around for a few days, and then cannibalize it for parts. Because for me, the best part of Lego was seeing what I could make for myself.

I wasn't a very outgoing kid. I had high anxiety and was very awkward. I didn't understand the rules of social interaction. So I preferred to get lost in books or the world of my own imagination. At the same time, I was taking piano lessons. I learned simple songs at first but progressed quickly. Then when I was 13 years old my family moved and I got a new teacher, Mrs. Miller, who suggested a new direction for me—learning to play

by ear.

My first assignment was to figure out a song we sang at church. I went home and tried. After hitting many wrong notes, I began to find the right ones; and in the weeks that followed, I learned how to add chords and accompaniment. Once again, a whole new world began to open for me. I realized that, just like with my Lego, there was a whole realm of possibility beyond the instructions. I could take what I'd learned about notes and rhythm, theory and technique, and use it to build anything I heard or imagined. And that's how I came to love music. By letting go of the notes on the page, making mistakes, and learning from them, I found I could do far more than I'd ever thought.

That love and knowledge led me to the music program at MacEwan University. Unfortunately, I was still

struggling because my anxiety and social awkwardness hadn't improved—indeed, they'd gotten worse. By the time I reached college, I was significantly struggling with my mental health, consumed with fear and anxiety that kept me constantly on edge.

I'd grown up in a very strict religious home. My father came to Canada from Trinidad in 1967 and my mother from the Netherlands in 1948. They both found their community and social supports in the church. Growing up there, outside my room, I learned that there was only one way to see the world and a very strict code to live by. I lacked the confidence and belief in myself to connect with people and handle the pressures of life. And so I sat there with the pieces of my life spread out around me unable to put them together in any way that made sense.

It wasn't until years later that I really began to gain ground. In 2006 I sought

Then, in 2011, I began to build more confidence through a job at the Canada Revenue Agency's Business Enquiries Call Centre. I made friends—people with whom I could be myself and make mistakes without fear of rejection or judgement. I earned praise and began to believe in myself. I started recognizing that I had a skill set to work with. I was good at talking and explaining, sorting through complex information, and working with angry callers and sending them away happy. I began to realize I could draw on these skills and that the creativity and thrill of improvisation I'd found in Lego and music could be applied with people too.

And that's how I began to start loving my life.

Before long, I was training new hires and using my creativity to develop training materials. I finished a BA in Professional Communications and began a new career. I got involved in community

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***“I sat there with the pieces of my life spread out around me unable to put them together in any way that made sense.”***

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help for my severe anxiety and enrolled in a four-month intensive group therapy program. It didn't solve my problems, but it did equip me with the tools to start.

advocacy where I discovered I was a natural leader and organizer whose creativity and improvisational skills lent themselves well to crafting campaigns. So I kept pushing my boundaries and



taking steps to realize my new dream: to get involved in politics and someday run for office.

In late 2015, I offered to volunteer with the Alberta NDP and they asked if I'd like to be a candidate. I said no, feeling I didn't know enough yet. But a month later, after a conversation with now Minister of Education, David Eggen, I decided to take the risk and throw my hat in the ring anticipating a short campaign, definitive loss and an opportunity to work towards running again in 2019. But my expectations changed as momentum built and I found myself knocking doors with an army of volunteers and felt the winds of change at my back.

I tapped the skills I'd honed at the keyboard, on stage and at the call centre—the confidence and instincts I'd built over years of life experience. I stared down my fears, leapt in with both feet and I've been riding that wave ever since.

And now the joy I felt surrounded by Lego or at a piano keyboard is regularly with me as I use the systems, resources

and opportunities at my disposal to tackle issues, solve problems and help people. While I was once afraid of not having complete control, I've learned to embrace uncertainty and see where it can lead; because, in the end, we aren't defined by our challenges but rather by what we make of them.

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***“While I was once afraid of not having complete control,  
I’ve learned to embrace uncertainty and see where it  
can lead.”***

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# Meet Jane Sewali-Kirumira

A Conversation

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jane Sewali-Kirumira works with the Alberta Government. She believes everyone is on earth for a purpose, which can grant them limitless opportunities. The key is finding that purpose. Jane has been a teacher, journalist, and motivational speaker. She has lived in Uganda, Germany and Canada, and now lives in Edmonton with her best friend and husband, and two daughters.*



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**Ninfa:** How are you, Jane? I know you're from Uganda. Did you come straight here from Uganda?

**Jane:** I'm fine, Ninfa. No, we actually came from Germany.

**Ninfa:** Germany?

**Jane:** (laughs) I know. It's a long story. We lived and went to school there for 13 years. Our girls were born there.

**Ninfa:** Ok. Questions about Germany will wait for another day. I want to ask you a question to do with Uganda. How do you and your family relate to traditional cultural practices of your country of birth, Uganda?

**Jane:** Let me talk about the girls, in

relation to how we have raised them. They have only been to Uganda a couple of times and cannot relate to the country. They do speak their mother tongue although not perfectly. We have raised them in a liberal way. Example. In Uganda traditionally, when grown-ups are talking kids just watch and listen. But our kids? We have always made them part of the conversation whether we have guests or not. For them it is the norm and they contribute to the conversation.

As for me, at the age 8 I realized life for a girl\woman like in many societies would be impacted differently. One of the traditions in my tribe is that when women are greeting men, they must kneel down. That bothered me at a very young age especially seeing

that my brothers who were younger than me were not required to kneel when greeting their elders. With that I determined in my heart at an early age that I had to leave my country if I wanted to do something meaningful in my life. My family members especially the girls are okay, but when it gets to the traditions they gave in and do not bother to fight against some of those that don't make a lot of sense. In regards to kneeling, their response is "Just do it, what does it take away from you!" They live with many of these traditions that make no sense to me

**Ninfa:** Who was the first member of your family to come here? You're laughing.

**Jane:** Yes, I am. We are the first and only people here in Canada from our larger family in Uganda. I have a cousin who was living in Ontario back in the day. But that is the closest we have come to having family in Canada

**Ninfa:** How has the relationship with your family changed since you moved here?

**Jane:** With my family back in Uganda?

**Ninfa:** Yes.

**Jane:** We did not really get to know each other that much because I moved away when I was quite young. I am still in touch with some of my siblings but we

think differently because we have lived different lives. I grew up in a large family in total I have \had 25 siblings both on the maternal and paternal side.

**Ninfa:** Who is the oldest member of your family here? What is their story?

**Jane:** In North America, you mean?

**Ninfa:** Oh, yes. Sorry. You said you are the first and only ones here in Canada.

**Jane:** No problem. The oldest member of my family (paternal side) is my sister in the US. She came to the US after fleeing Idi Amin in 1970. She had been jailed for a while, before our dad got someone he knew in government to get my sister out. She went to Germany first, then to Canada where she had a maternal sister who was a Canadian diplomat, who allowed her to stay with her. From Canada she moved to the US where she has lived since.

**Ninfa:** What made you come here?

**Jane:** When we were done our studies in Germany, we were not allowed to remain permanently in Germany. And also due to the racism we did not want the girls growing up marginalized. We then looked at potential countries where we could apply for permanent residence. Australia, UK, USA, and Canada were on the list. Australia seemed too far. US too many guns, and they didn't have health

care like Germany. So we were left with Canada. We did not know much about Canada. So I asked more questions and went and did Internet research and I decided to come and compare Germany with Canada. I have a sister in the US so I visited her in Michigan. When I crossed over to visit a cousin in Ontario and went to the stores, I was impressed by the fact that I was “normal”. No one really looked at me as someone from away and no one asked me when was I going back to my country. That is when I decided we would move to Canada.

**Nimfa:** What do you feel you have gained by coming here? You have lost?

**Jane:** I'll start with what I've lost. Time with my mother and father, uncles, siblings, relatives and friends, people that I grew up with who mean a lot to me. What have I gained? Freedom, which has enabled me to break the chain of future generations of girls after me, being defined by their gender.

# Luketa M’Pindou

by Rita Shiluba

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*For 16 years, Mrs. Rita Shiluba has been an advisor and mentor to many African francophone girls and women. Member of the Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l’Alberta Society (AJFAS), Rita initiated a group of francophone immigrant women to work on a family violence prevention project, helping them to access information about their rights as women in Canada.*

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Mr. Luketa M’Pindou is originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire. He came to Canada in 1987 to study at Laval University in Québec City in Business Administration. After 2 years, he moved to Montréal where he continued his study in the same area of Business Administration. He moved to Alberta in 1997.

Luketa M’Pindou holds a Bachelor degree in Management from HEC Business School (École des Hautes Études Commerciales) of the University of Montreal. His professional and community involvement helped him to gain skills and abilities in business areas that match the priorities of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

His involvement with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO started in

2003. Out of his interest he has attended all the Annual General Meetings.

At the 47th Annual Meeting of the CCUNESCO, he was appointed a member of the Partnerships and Memberships Committee, where he served for two terms. He currently serves as a member in the Sectorial Commission on the Human, Social and Natural Sciences, where he has attended all meetings.

Mr. M’Pindou has been the Executive Director of “Alliance Jeunesse - Famille de l’Alberta Society” AJFAS since 1999. AJFAS is an organization working in the areas of education and prevention of crime among young Francophone immigrants of Alberta.

Regarding his community involvement,

he has set up several community projects including the project "Our True Colors" and the project "Youth and Education to citizenship" (YECIT). He has developed a project called "Caravan against racism and discrimination" which, with a broad outreach, aims to promote understanding of the issue of marginalization, prejudices, and discrimination, while strengthening the collaboration between Schools, Youth,

Basketball Tournament of Diversity, Youth from Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and St. Albert, ages 12 to 17 years, have taken part in the tournament. This tournament is held during the Franco-Albertan Festival. The Tournament of Diversity, as its name suggests, promotes diversity and multiculturalism. It includes boys and girls on one team, and includes young people from different countries in order to break

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***"The Tournament of Diversity, as its name suggests, promotes diversity and multiculturalism."***

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Police, Media, and the Community. This project has been a model in Francophone schools in Alberta, and Mr. M'Pindou has helped to develop an educational guide that teachers use in the framework of Social Sciences.

With his leadership, Mr. M'Pindou has collaborated with the Edmonton Police Service to develop a document for improving the relationship between the immigrant communities of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Service. This document has been translated into Arabic, Dari, French, Hindi, Oromo, Pashto, Persian/Farsi, and other languages.

To bring together young Francophone Albertans from different areas of the province, Mr. M'Pindou has set up the

prejudices, that are frequently the root of discrimination.

Due to his deep familiarity with the Francophone and Acadian communities, Mr. M'Pindou served as Director of the Northwest side of the "Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes" (FCFA of Canada), Co-Chairman of the Guiding Subcommittee of Alberta's francophone immigration, Community Representative from Alberta in the National Committee Citizenship & Immigration Canada - Francophone minority communities, and Senior Vice President of the French Canadian Association of Alberta (provincial ACFA).

For his community involvement, Mr. M'Pindou has received many awards such as The Sovereign Medal for



Volunteers and the Diamond Jubilee Medal of Queen Elizabeth II, from the Governor General of the Canada; and The Alberta Centennial Medal from Premier Ralph Klein and Lieutenant Governor Norman L. Kwong.

Mr. M'Pindou has a final word of advice for youth, with whom he has been involved for years: "This Country belongs to all of us, including you the youth. I would like to encourage all of you as citizens of this country to take advantage of positive opportunities such as education and employment. You should also engage yourselves as citizens to make Canada a better society, by combating racism and discrimination, through community engagement, fighting domestic violence against women and campaigning against bullying at school. It's time we helped to build a model of the Black Community as part of Canada and creating, in the process, a better society for ourselves and for future generations."

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***“This Country belongs to all of us, including the youth.”***

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# Flag Pin Omen

by Dhruba Shrestha

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Born in Nepal, Dhruba Shrestha has an M.A. in Social Sciences and Humanities. He taught English in Nepal for over a decade, and now works as a child development supervisor in Edmonton. A Black Belt holder, Dhruba volunteers as an instructor in Karate, and in other capacities in the community. Dhruba and his wife Minu have two boys.*



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On warm, bright May 26th, 2011, my wife Minu, our four-year old son Swopnil, and I, arrived in Edmonton, our new home!

It seemed like a dream. I had never thought of immigrating to Canada. I knew little about it, besides the fact it is big. And cold. Here is an event that had probably led me to connect with Canada. I was working as a salesperson at a department store in Nepal when some Canadian High School students came in. Because I spoke better English than other sales persons, our manager asked me to attend to the students. I quickly learned they were in Nepal from Ontario on an exchange program. As they were leaving, a girl in the group gave me a Canada flag pin. That small but kind flag pin gift, I would think later, must have been a good omen paving my way to this beautiful land of Canada.

To this day, I wear that flag pin on every July 1st.

Our first impression of Canada at the Edmonton International Airport immigration lounge was a land of nice people. The police officers directing people at the immigration area, were kind and polite. They even helped to push wheel chairs of arriving passengers! Minu and I were stunned. In Nepal, government officials and police officers are unduly stern and rude.

We were picked up by our hosts, the family of Dharma and Nisha Shrestha. The next day, enjoying Nepalese Canadian hospitality, we took part in a family potluck event, a Summer tradition in Canada, we came to learn. It had been organised by Nepalese Canadian families at William Hawrelak

Park, a vast, green, clean expanse. At the potluck, we got a chance to chat with fellow Nepalese who had been in Edmonton long.

Our first residence in Edmonton was a Whyte Avenue rental apartment with no bed, furniture, cooking utensils, a phone, T. V., Internet, or anything. The first night the three of us – we who used to live in comfort and luxury in Nepal – slept on a bed spread sheet on the carpeted floor! Swopnil kept asking where his bed was and where his grandparents were. A heartbreaking experience. But then the next day in response to one phone request, adacadabra, like magic everything we needed arrived, from Saint Vincent, a charity organization: bed, mattresses, sofas, coffee table, book case, cooking utensils, dinner plates, cups and saucers, toasters, microwave, radio, telephone set, clothes hanger, toys, and more. The kind volunteers also helped us set things up, guiding us on how to use the appliances and electronics.

Our next step was to find a job. I

as a security guard, for which I needed a police clearance. At the police station, I was a bit nervous, thinking of the scary police back in Nepal. But how different I found the super polite and cooperative officers at the police station to be!

Going to Child Care Services office, I applied for child care certification level 3. I hold a Bachelor of Education degree from Nepal, sufficient qualification, I learned, to make me eligible to work at that level in the child care industry. I was profoundly pleased with the helpful attitude of the staff at the office and amazed there was no fee to apply for the certificate!

With language, English was no problem for me – I had taught English back in Nepal – but for Minu it was. Our host family and friends suggested Catholic Social Services for a language level test and English class referral. I booked the test, which Minu took. When her English level was determined, we were given a list of ESL schools to choose from. We chose Sacred Heart School, which had a child care facility. While Minu attended

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***“The kind volunteers also helped us set things up, guiding us on how to use the appliances and electronics.”***

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dropped off my resume at various places. I applied for SIN and health cards. I also applied for a license to work

her class, Swopnil too learned English at the child care facility! In six months Minu and Swopnil had greatly improved

their English. They also learned about Canada and Edmonton!

Within two weeks of our arrival, I got a job at a liquor store as a cashier and sales person. It paid our bills! With this first job, we decided to apply for subsidized housing for new comers and low-income families. We qualified for a house and got on a waiting list. Six months later, we got a two-bedroom house with a basement and free water and gas, which we moved in on a snowy November day. We felt great, like we owned our own house in Canada! Swopnil was excited to have his own bedroom for the first time.

Soon after, Minu qualified for ESL classes with funding. She was working hard as a volunteer at nearby day care, so she could get her Child Care Level 1 Certification. Besides ESL, she also took child care certification classes, after which she got a part-time child care job. Saving, we bought a home. The day we took possession of the house in October 2012 was the most ecstatic moment of our life! In October of 2014, we got our second child, a baby boy, another joyful moment of our life in Canada.

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***“The day we took possession of the house in October 2012  
was the most ecstatic moment of our life!”***

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# Shumka & Roots

*An excerpt from the book UKRAINIAN SHUMKA DANCERS: TRADITION IN MOTION  
by Ukrainian Shumka Dancers Alumni Association, as written by Alice Major*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Shumka, since its founding in 1959, has aimed to preserve a rich and vital heritage and to communicate it in new ways. This has resulted in a style of dance theatre drawing from Ukrainian dance as well as other dance and theatre disciplines. Shumka's storylines are based on legends and folk customs of Ukraine. This excerpt is adapted here with permission from the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers Association.*

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Almost ever since its founding in 1959 through the vision of Chester Kuc and on the basis of the amalgamation of talents from several active Ukrainian dance groups in the mid-1950s, Shumka has had a decades-old dream of taking its artistry back to its Ukrainian homeland. Over the years, prohibitive costs and political barriers prevented the realization of the dream. But the reality started to crystallize after Shumka's performance at the 1988 Olympics in Calgary when the company was invited to share the stage with the Soviet Ukrainian Bandura Chorus.

Much soul searching took place over this opportunity. The old nationalist anti-communist emotions still ran deep in Edmonton's Ukrainian community. But eventually, the company decided

that it would make a better statement by appearing with the Bandura Chorus in the non-political framework of an Olympic celebration than by refusing the invitation. The decision to perform alongside Bandura at the Calgary Olympics proved to be the stepping stone to an eventual Ukraine tour by Shumka.

The negotiations to bring about the tour were long and frustrating for producer Michael Sulyma and others involved. Early promises of "anything you want" ran head to head with the fact that the Soviet organizers had no idea why Shumka needed the kind of facilities it wanted. The Soviets could not understand why, for instance, the company could not perform in a theatre with no orchestra pit or in a soccer stadium. The tour



was postponed several times, creating artistic problems as dancers came and went and people had to learn new roles. Funding also presented the usual challenge for Shumka. While the Soviet sponsors, Rosconcert, would cover expenses in Ukraine, the company was still responsible for paying costs for pre-

1990 as planned, overcoming technical challenges and differences in culture between the visiting dancers and their hosts, pulled the troupe together and created a bond among its members. But what bonded the troupe even more and resulted in their coming back changed by the tour, was the intense emotional



production, travel, shipment of props and insurance. The bills would be nearly \$250,000.

Members of the alumni association threw their energy into helping with a fund-raising campaign. Dancing in Ukraine was a dream they had shared during their own time with Shumka, and they were anxious to help make it come true for the company in 1990.

When eventually the tour happened, in

experience of giving back Shumka's Ukrainian dance to the people who had originated it, to the cultural and folkloric roots which had inspired the artistry of the Canadian company. Ukrainian audiences included not only artistic people but also thousands of "regular folks," said Laurel Chomyc, one of the dancers. "They know exactly what we're doing and why we're doing it. There's nothing like dancing here because it is their dance." Dorianne Martyniuk, who has performed with Shumka in



many special performances, including those before Ronald Reagan and at the Olympic games, says, "The Ukrainian tour had an emotional impact that was different from other tours, deeper, more intense." She adds, "I had never felt more proud to be Canadian than I did on stage in Ukraine."

The emotion swept up everyone, from Viktor Stepovy (one of the dancers) who had grown up in Kyiv and learned to dance there, to people who had no personal experience of Ukraine at all. For many dancers, the Ukraine tour brought about rapturous reunions with families who had been strangers for years or even generations.

"It was a remarkable experience," says Darka Cherkawsky who arrived in Lviv to be greeted at the railway station by six aunts and uncles and nine cousins whom she had never met.

"It was really wonderful to come that way—not as a visitor or tourist," she adds. "We were showing them what we'd done with the roots that many of them thought we had lost."

For every member of the troupe, there is some picture, whether onstage or off, that sums up the emotional intensity of the Ukraine tour and the bond it created with an ancient heritage. For one, it was a sense of tranquility felt on a visit to the Carpathian Mountains—a sense

that her Baba, long-dead, was with her for a moment and proud. For another, it was the sight of the opera house in Kyiv; for many it was the warm applause sweeping up and over the stage.

Accolades from dancers in Ukraine and invitations to have Shumka members visit Ukrainian dance companies to provide a creative spark have also given the troupe a sense that their innovations do fit within the framework of their heritage. The tour was not only an occasion for pride in the group's Ukrainian heritage. In equally strong degree, it defined for them their Canadian identity.

"I was proud to be Ukrainian—but I had never been so emotionally attached to Canada as I was at that moment," Kathleen Todoruk says, echoing the emotion felt by the whole company.

# Circle of Friends

by Sameer Singh

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Sameer Singh is a community organizer with End Poverty Edmonton. He was the international coordinator of the 2nd World Indigenous Nations Games in 2017. He has done journalism, documentary film-making, design, and business incubation. He has worked with cultural communities in Canada and abroad. He is interested in creating new ways to build community, particularly for newcomers to Canada.*

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The first week of July 2017 was a thrilling one for Albertans as the First Nations of Treaty Six Confederacy hosted the 2nd World Indigenous Nations (WIN) Games for 9 days in the Edmonton area.

At the Opening Ceremonies in Bear Park in Mascwacis, located approximately 45 minutes south of the provincial capital, Treaty 6 Grand Chief and WIN Games Ambassador J. Wilton Littlechild (a.k.a Grand Chief Willie) spoke to hundreds of delegates from two dozen countries about the purpose of the Games saying, "This is a celebration about life. For youth to be proud of their culture—to choose life over other options." It was also a pronouncement 40 years in the making for him. A decorated athlete in his youth, he used hockey, football, swimming, and other sports to cope with Residential School trauma. He later

envisioned an Olympics for the world's Indigenous people and their traditional sports such as spear-throwing, log carrying, archery and sand races.

It fell to his Brazilian counterpart, Marcos Terena, to host the first World Indigenous Games in Palmas, Brazil, in 2015. Marcos, along with the Mayor of Palmas, Carlos Amastha, brought soil from his home territory to share with Treaty 6. Mayor Amastha handed Grand Chief Littlechild a baton carved out of natural Brazilian wood. Enoch Cree Nation Chief Billy Morin added eagle feathers to represent Canada, and the baton will continue to grow as it journeys to future WIN Games.

Afterwards, federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett spoke about Reconciliation as more than words

and promises while her provincial counterpart, Richard Feehan, spoke about Alberta's ground-breaking new Indigenous-focused educational curriculum reform. That these Games were taking place just days after Canada's 150th birthday had a special, if not ironic, import.

Following the speeches, a number of musicians performed, including the Logan Alexis drummers, a trio of local women with incredible voices known as Asani, a young girl who sang the national anthem entirely in Cree, and Saniya from Yakutia who regaled the audience with her throat-singing.

Yet the crowd's attention was only partially on the main stage. The carefully-marshalled choreography of the opening parade quickly dissolved into a joyous, fungible mess of handshakes, hugs and selfies as the athletes and delegates greeted each other in an amazing moment of mutual celebration. Kuna joined with Apache, Maori welcomed Sanoya, Tarahumara met Saami and Blackfoot rejoiced with Oromo (from Ethiopia).

Joining the field as tentative participants

was a group of young Syrian men, 11 in all. They had arrived in Canada as refugees over the last several years. Most were university students trying to resume their studies or looking for work in a still rocky Alberta economy. Julie Kamal, an intrepid Edmontonian who worked tirelessly on refugee settlement and cultural acclimatization activities, organized the group, and brought them to the opening ceremonies.

It was here, on the field, that they met Mason Buffalo dressed in regalia and with his face painted white to indicate his status as a traditional dancer with the Samson Cree First Nation. When he learned the boys were from Syria, he offered his thoughts on what was one of the country's thorniest political issues. Ironically, Mase spoke about the realities of rejection and acceptance during the singing of the U.S. national anthem. He said, "One thing we've heard is a lot of people complaining about you guys comin' here. Well, they've got to remember that this is our land...Some (Canadians) came over as refugees too and they forget that. So they've got to remember we are the Keepers of this land. We are the first ones of this land. So for us we welcome people. We have

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***“We are the Keepers of this land...so for us we welcome people.”***

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hearts. And a lot of times, we get treated the same way. We get pushed aside, to a reserve. And why is that? This is our land. The first ones that should be complaining are us—but we are not. We are the ones with the biggest hearts out of a lot of people.”



The boys grinned and nodded as he spoke, learning firsthand an uncomfortable yet indelible truth of Canada's reality. Medical student Bashar Dyab said simply, “We are so excited! We have never seen anything like this before.”

The boys would go on to play a demonstration soccer game against the top-notch Paraguayan national team later in the week. Shortly after, they walked into the closing ceremonies of the games at Enoch with one of the biggest cheers of all. They may not have been indigenous to Canada, but they were welcomed home nonetheless.

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***“They may not have been indigenous to Canada, but they were welcomed home nonetheless.”***

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## Through a Bi-racial Lens

by Rebecca Smilie

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I am a business owner, a proud Edmontonian and Canadian, a sister, daughter, partner, and a community investment expert. I am also Ethiopian. My mother is a first-generation immigrant who embodies ambition, hard work, empathy, and kindness. My father is a third generation Canadian, an educated social worker and advocate for the fair treatment of all people. Growing up in a bi-ethnic family was not difficult, but still a different experience from that of my friends.

When I look back at the circle with which I identified throughout my upbringing, I realize that my friends, teachers, classmates, and mentors were all mostly Caucasian. When I think back, I don't remember ever feeling the pain of discrimination, except on rare instances. One of those rare instances involved my 5th grade crush. I remember bravely telling him that I "liked" him. His response is my first true memory of feeling less-than I should have.

He told me, "Rebecca, you're nice, but



you know what? Black people don't date white people."

I remember replying, "What about my parents? There are an interracial couple, you know!"

It didn't make a difference. We were in the 5th grade. The 5th grade. That boy was 9 years old.

One time I asked my mother, "What has it been like to raise bi-racial children in a white society?"

She told me, "I have this memory of us driving home spending an afternoon with your grandparents, a wonderful afternoon. You and your sister, I remember, insisted that you were not black. You said you were half. Half black. And that YES, there was a difference."

I remember that conversation vaguely. It's painful to think that I was so ashamed of my diversity, that I chose to only identify with one side of it.

But times have changed. And the conversation has shifted. Our peers, whether white, black, Asian, Pakistani,

Quebequois, or Hispanic, all have a place in the conversation. My biggest fear in these changing times is that there is more focus on the pain of the past, then the progress for the future. While that pain needs to continue to be honored, it needs to be honored by all, and not only by people of color. But to do that, we must welcome the participation of all people in the conversation, regardless of skin color, ethnic background, or economic status. That is what modern-day progress NEEDS to look like. Now, more than ever, black men and women have a stage to advocate for equality. But as these conversations become more common, so unfortunately do white people get chased from the conversation as a result of perceived white privilege. Because even if that privilege DOES exist, exclusion will only re-ignite the problems of the past. It will create new instances of racism.

It wasn't until my late teens that I fully accepted my identity. You see, I believe that shift was a result of a more diverse circle of influence. I have friends who are proud Africans, and proud Canadians. They have taught me that pride in both should and can co-exist. Today and

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***"I have friends who are proud Africans, and proud Canadians. They have taught me that pride in both should and can co-exist."***

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every day, my hair is curly. Today I am in an interracial relationship with a partner who demonstrates interest in my cultural background. I am also playing catch-up on the identity I turned away from as a child. Progress is happening every day. I'll leave you the reader with this request. Have open conversations with people about equality. When someone expresses an opinion you perceive as racist, don't put them down. Ask questions. Have an educational conversation with them. Share your powerful thoughts in a respectful way. Because the more conversations among diverse people happen, the better.

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***“Because the more conversations among diverse people happen, the better.”***

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# Creative Force

by Funke Smith

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Funke Smith is a Life and Career Coach. She is an inspirational and passionate mentor in talents and skills development. Funke reaches people of diverse cultures, giving them a sense of purpose and bringing out their full potential. She founded the Potter's Wheel Foundation, a non-profit organization empowering young talents and professionals in Creative Industries.*

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What you need for greatness is inside you. Find and make it happen! It doesn't matter what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for – and if you dare to dream, to fulfill your life's calling! It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool to pursue your dreams – to begin again, but do it right this time, and leave a legacy that echoes for generations to come.

My name is Funke Smith. I am a Life and Career Coach. As a little girl growing up

with three siblings, my mum – God bless her magnanimous heart – would often bring home children who lacked parental care and guidance to live with us. As she gave them warmth and became their only source of hope for the future, her golden rule was that anyone she brought home automatically becomes a bona fide member of the family, and was to be treated as such. She nurtured and educated the children and they have grown to become successful and accomplished professionals in their fields of endeavor, and they now touch

many lives in their own spheres of influence. I believe that it is my mother's legacy of goodness, and its far-reaching impact on several lives, that inspires me to reach out and inspire others to achieve and do good in the world.

Prior to moving to Canada, I was an accomplished translator travelling to different countries to work with global organizations like the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union in international conferences. I also had

and I actually contemplated the idea of going back to my home country - and risk being tagged a failure; and risk the money I had spent from a large portion of my life savings to move to Canada. It was indeed a relief when a human service organization offered me a job after a long screening process and my employment package was sent to me. But my joy was short-lived. On what was supposed to be my first day at work I was told, sorry, they could not proceed with the offer. I went back home feeling

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***“I believe that it is my mother’s legacy of goodness, and its far-reaching impact on several lives, that inspires me to reach out and inspire others to achieve and do good in the world.”***

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a private firm, offering training and consultation to clients seeking life and career development. Coming to Canada with a Master's degree in Applied Translation from the United Kingdom, extensive international experience, rich multicultural exposure and ability to speak English, Spanish, French and Portuguese – I thought the world was my oasis. Well, it was a rude awakening when I tried fruitlessly to get a job, as most employers required some Canadian experience. How do you acquire Canadian experience if you're not given the chance to build it? At that point, I was at my wit's end,

disenfranchised and dejected. I was told later by a former employee, that the organization didn't intend to employ me in the first place; they only did that to show proof that they had fulfilled the diversity requirement in their recruitment process.

Today, I am passionate about my work as Skills Link Program Coordinator at the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Edmonton. The road to settlement in Canada was bumpy, froth with difficulties and struggles that tested my tenacity. But I am a black woman and don't give up! I came from a

place where only the strong, brave and courageous can thrive. We are wired with a survival instinct that pulls us through against all odds. Where there seems to be no way, we stretch our creative capacity, and make a way. Having lived through the realities and struggles of post-immigration trauma faced by many immigrants, I see the need for individuals to find their voice and space for creative expression in their diverse fields of endeavor. As Robert Collier rightly states "Every man or woman has within them a particle of creative force, endowed with infinite intelligence and infinite resources that they can call upon at ease." I am all about leading the way to a brighter future, whether it's by leading a business startup to prosperity, or inspiring my church drama group to maximize their capacity for creative expression to put on an outstanding performance.

I am the can-do voice that seeks out that particle of force in you: the creative force that pushes you out of your comfort zone to translate your passion into creations. This is the inspiration behind my new project *Force* – a network that empowers young creative talents and

professionals in the creative industries. Stephen Covey puts it perfectly when he says, "When you engage in work that taps your talent and fuels your passion - therein lies your voice, your calling, your soul's code."

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***"I am the can-do voice that seeks out that particle of force in you."***

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# My Life in Canada

by Clementine Savadogo Sombie

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Clémentine Sombie, from Burkina Faso, says she is a lady who came to Canada with zero English. Now, she speaks better English. Strangely, for someone coming from a very warm country, winter she says is her favorite season in Edmonton*

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My children and I are happier since we moved to Canada as permanent residents, from Burkina Faso in 2011. In the absence of political instability, which we used to face in my country, my kids now can safely go to school. Separated from my husband, I'm the first person from my family to move to Canada. The rest of my extended family are back in Africa. My relationship with them has changed. We don't see each other often anymore, but we are happy that we are able to keep in touch over the phone and the internet.

Here in Canada, people from my home country, including me, meet from time to time. That way our kids can get to know our culture, such as clothing, food, and language.

Many opportunities exist in Canada and I'll succeed if I work hard. That I have come to realize happily within the short

6 years I have lived in Canada. Because I come from a Francophone African country, to settle in Edmonton I needed to go to school to learn English. I could have gone to Quebec, but I wanted to overcome the English language barrier while in Canada. After learning English, I went to nursing school, obtaining a health care aide certificate. I now work as a health care aide. I am also in my 4th year of a Social Work Bachelor degree. Canada helped me to discover my hidden social work skill that I didn't know I had before in my country when I worked as an accountant.

Canada has helped me realize my dreams. It wasn't easy. I am a single mom with two kids, but I had to be strong and hope for the best. To translate certain documents into English and to help me settle in Edmonton, I got some support from various institutions, such as Centre d'accueil francophone and Edmonton

Immigrants Services Association. Observing the system, I realized right away that I had to strive to merge myself into it, to become part of the lovely Canadian society. I suffered culture shock and didn't always understand how to interact with people. The English language confused me.

One day, for example, somebody asked me, "How is your day so far?"

I didn't know what the question meant and answered, "I do not live far from here." I was embarrassed when I came to learn what the question had meant.

Students calling the teachers by their first names shocked me. So did the sight of bosses keeping their offices wide open at work, giving access to everyone. This would never happen in my country of birth. I was also amazed to see how polite Canadians are. Three common magical words I have learned here are sorry, please and thank you.

I don't have any role model. I just want to be myself, have a career and participate in building Canada of which I feel I am part. Yet I do admire those who work hard, specially the immigrants who, coming from far away, need to start a new life and try and succeed despite cultural differences.

The most memorable experience of my journey and life here is when I landed in

Canada. Immigration personnel greeted my kids and me smiling broadly and right away they gave me information for the settlement guide agencies. I felt valued.

My dream for myself and my family is a better future here. I would like to see them grow up and succeed in Canada. I wish my community in Edmonton to grow in number and to have more activities. I wish to become a social worker and help people.

Canada feels pretty much like home to me. I have learned to accept other cultures, people's choices, and sexual orientation. (Accepting gay people, for example, is something that I have learned here.) I am happy about the diversity of people we have in Canada. At school and at church, I interact with people from other cultures, a beneficial experience. I plan to stay in Canada, and I hope my kids will raise their families here too.

Finally, I would like to give some advice to newcomers: work hard, many opportunities exist in Canada for anyone willing to take advantage of them.



# Culture Shock

by Yaa Serwaa Somuah

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Yaa Serwaa Somuah, a teacher by profession, works as a family support worker for Kids Kottage and program manager at Sinkunia Community Development Organization. She worked in different childcare facilities and ran her own day care. A speaker and writer, she has self-published books in English and her Ghanaian mother tongue. She and her husband have four children aged 1 to 19.*

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*What a cultural shock it must have been, eh?* is what people here commonly express when they learn I'm a newcomer.

They may be right.

I immigrated from the tropical country of Ghana where everyday had a summer temperature that averages between 22 to 34 degrees Celsius. The exception is the mountainous Eastern region of Ghana where I attended my teacher training. Temperatures there are relatively cold, sometimes falling to 19 degrees Celsius; unbearably cold according to weather standards in Ghana. So I was completely shocked at the temperatures here. I arrived in May when everybody was singing praises of the good warm weather that followed the harsh winter and heralded the coming of spring. For me, the weather

wasn't warm enough. I wore mittens and a hat indoors. In my first year here, the weather made my life hard to bear. I could not stand the cold and I didn't know how best to dress in what they call layers. Sweaters and jackets were too heavy for me to wear. Whenever I went shopping, I bought the wrong clothing. It was impossible to understand when people talked about the wind chill. Most times I ventured out poorly dressed and came back home on the point of dying. Since that time, my three children have joined me; I see them rejecting the jackets I give to them, complaining they are too heavy, and then they come back home frozen. They don't understand the weather.

To move on to another source of cultural shock, in Ghana, most jobs are distributed according to gender,

with some only for women and others exclusively for men. So, I was shocked when, once here, I saw my employer, Heather, laying tiles on the floor, what would be considered a man's job in Ghana, and when her husband Perry cooked, a woman's work in Ghana, and taught me to make spaghetti sauce. He did most of the cooking for us, mmmm, he is the best cook I know, apart from my mother. I had arrived to work for Heather and Perry as a live-in nanny for their daughter, Lauryn, and their two cats Jazz and Bella.

One day, Heather was painting the house, and her husband, Perry, was

himself trying to fix dinner.

My husband could not take it and asked, "Is it normal for men to cook here while women sit and talk?" Heather and I simultaneously burst into laughter.

Another mind-blowing cultural shock that I experienced was the sight of the kind of people who smoke here. In Ghana, people had a great respect for the white man, sometimes to the point of almost worshiping them as gods. We ranked everything that came from the white man's country to be superior. We believed, in part, that white people did not fall into sins that most of the black

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## ***“What a culture shock for you, eh?”***

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giving their daughter Lauryn a bath. I asked her why she was doing a man's work and her husband, a woman's work. "What kind of system is this?" I said.

She laughed and said what many people had remarked to me. "What a cultural shock for you, eh?"

In 2014 when my husband visited, we decided to go visit my former employer. I was no longer working as a live-in nanny for the couple, but had maintained links with them. My husband had a cultural shock when Heather sat with us in the living room, chatting while Perry busied

people struggled with. Now in Ghana, people who smoke are of low status, who have fallen through the cracks, not headed anywhere. No way would one see a teacher, a nurse or anyone with a respectful job, smoking. So, imagine my shock when I came to Canada and saw who smokes, a shock that I have not gotten over even after more than seven years in Canada. People with enviable jobs, and wearing suits my monthly salary can't buy are among those who smoke!

Culture shock notwithstanding, my family and I have found a haven in

Canada. Every day, we are learning new things, tasting new food, every day, meeting people who have come to live here from all over the world, and who are also experiencing their own cultural shocks but loving it here, despite that. Living within the complexity and diversity of cultures in Canada has been one of the best experiences we have had. It's an experience one can't find in a classroom but only in migrating to a land like this, so vast, so rich in diversity, so peaceful and one full of endless opportunities.

Happy birthday Canada!

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***“Living within the complexity and diversity of cultures in Canada has been one of the best experiences we have had.”***

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# My New Life in Canada

*by Florentin Stoian*

I was born in Romania. My wife and daughter and I came to Canada from Romania 15 June 2006, through a family class immigrant status. After one year my wife and I got divorced.

My father wasn't happy at my coming to Canada. He was all alone, my mother having died a long time. He didn't like the idea of living all by himself, and his family leaving Romania to go to Canada. Not a good option at his age.

We were lucky enough that when we came, the ex-wife of my brother and his family had already been in Canada for 10 years. We received great help from him. From the first day of our arrival, we had our own rental apartment. He had also arranged for us to get our new identification papers, like Social Insurance Number, permanent resident card, and Class 5 Graduated Driver License. I found a job quickly in the plumbing industry. In my home country I had worked as a civil engineer, and my ex-wife had been a mechanical engineer.

At NAIT, I enrolled in an apprenticeship

program which I found very hard because it was based on technical words that made it necessary for me to use an online dictionary. After four and half years in Canada, I took Citizenship in December 2010. In my 4th year of the NAIT apprenticeship program, just before qualifying for the Alberta's Plumber and Gasfitter B, I quit my job in the hope of working for one company as a Union member and make more money. My hope was dashed when after only 3 months the company finished the job it was doing at the Edmonton International Airport. I applied for Employment Insurance in 2011. This was one of the hardest years. It wasn't until December that I got a job.

I worked 3 months with a company that was building camp homes for workers and engineers and other personal for oil field. Then for two months I got a job at a food court in Northlands, and as service plumber with a company from Calgary.

In my personal life, I remarried. The woman was from Venezuela, and I sponsored her to come to Canada. Things didn't work out. A short while

later, we got separated. After that, I felt the need to look after myself. I joined a group of divorced people. I interacted with group members in events like movies, coffee, hiking, site seeing, and many others. In the last month of the year 2011, finding it impossible to get a plumbing job, I made a career change and got a job in the Oil industry with a company in Nisku. I worked there doing inspections in pipes and power sections used for vertical drilling. But the job didn't last long. To this, day I struggle to find a job. Finding nothing, I volunteered at Edmonton Public Library (EPL).

direct from them. When I gave them my original papers, they told me they were not good. They also wanted references from companies I had worked for in Romania, which I had no way of getting.

I completed, on my own, an online course with EPL, which by the way I think is a great Institution in Edmonton. I received very useful professional information there.

Canada, in my opinion, is a good country to live in because of the varieties of possibilities and opportunities existing here. The people coming here from

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***“Canada, in my opinion, is a good country to live in because of the varieties of possibilities and opportunities existing here.”***

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Soon two years will have gone by since I had a full time regular job, with my Employment Insurance running out. Anyway, if God is up in the sky, I will be fine. I have 2 more years before I turn 60 and can apply for CPP.

I was surprised to get a a paper from IQAS (International Qualifications Assessment Services) that recognized my Bachelor Degree in Civil engineering, but when I went to APEGA (Association of Professional Engineers and Geo-Physicists) they wanted to see all my papers from the Romanian University

different countries bring with them much knowledge and competence to add to what is already here.

Now I couldn't pass the Alberta and Industry Training exam to get employment. Without good results from the exams, no employer would take me.

I thought of trying a career change. Perhaps I would become real estate agent. I completed a pre-assessment and I came through Ok except for English, which I didn't do so well in.

So the school for English I went in is good but not the best for me. With English now, I like to read and read in that language. When I find words I don't understand, I write them down on a paper from an online dictionary but the process to improve and broaden my language is hard, and it seems will last forever.

Canada is a great place to live except for its winters. If only they were shorter! In my country of origin winter lasts only 3 months, not 6 like in Edmonton. But we can't fight nature

I would like to conclude by saying thanks to you, Editor, for listening to my story of happy times and so happy times. We will see what the future brings.

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***“Canada is a great place to live except for its winters. If only they were shorter!”***

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# Where the Heart Is

by Hansa Thaleshtar

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Arriving in Canada in 1968, Hansa Thaleshtar has lived for 47 years in Alberta. She is wife, mother, and a grandmother. She is a retired public librarian, and former Cold Lake mayor. Her 35 years of community involvement includes board memberships and chairing, and serving organizations like Food Bank, Hindu Society of Alberta, Affordable Housing Society, and others.*



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On a sunny September day in 1968, I arrived as a new bride at the Montreal airport with my husband Ishvar. As we exited the airport I remember thinking in surprise and relief, "Wow, they even have flowers, green grass, and trees!" I had heard about the Canadian cold climate and was expecting the worst.

But as we opened the door to enter the building, a duty-free wine bottle Ishvar had purchased that I was carrying slipped to the ground and broke.

This, I thought, was the beginning of misfortune!!

But as I settled into Montreal, I made friends with Dorothy, a lady from Scotland with a two-year old. We spent many afternoons together. She told me

about the neighbourhood, Montreal, and Canada, and she asked me about my home country of India. Dorothy and her family became our extended family, and Montreal our city and home.

We had our first baby at a hospital where no one spoke English, only French. With no family support and a language problem, Dorothy stepped in to help.

Our son was six months old when Ishvar came home distraught one evening. "I've lost my job!" he said. "Massive layoff." His company had run into financial trouble.

Looking for a new job, my husband found one in Cold Lake, Alberta. It was dark and cold when we arrived there early December. We checked into a Motel called Norwind, the only one in

Grand Centre, a town near Cold Lake with dirt and gravel roads, and a hitching post for horses!

From Norwind Motel, we moved in to a rental duplex. Close to Christmas, many people working with Ishvar invited us to their homes. We were getting to know them well. In six months, we bought a small home for \$15,000. We had paid too much, some friends said!!!

In October 1973, our daughter was born in a Cold Lake hospital that is no longer there. This time the doctors spoke English, and the surgeon was from India. We could not have been happier.

Our son started kindergarten a year after our daughter was born. I became involved in his activities and in our daughter's playtime. During this time, I was invited to a parents' meeting to

came to our meetings. Not long after that, the Department of Education did a study on the state of the public education in our region. They recommended a reorganization of the school districts to address the concerns of Catholic and Public-school districts. Two new school districts with coterminous boundaries were created; Lakeland Roman Catholic School District and Lakeland Public School District.

Elections for the two new districts were set for early November 1980. Parents, staff, and the public asked Ruth and I to put our names forward. To seek elected office, a candidate had to be a Canadian Citizen. I had applied for Canadian citizenship but I didn't know when I'd get it. Public speaking terrified me and I told Ruth, John, a trustee from the former board, and other individuals of my fear. "This is a small town," John

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## ***"Before the nomination day, I got my Canadian citizenship."***

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discuss the lack of supplies, teachers, and programs for our school. At one of the meetings, I met a parent named Ruth who had children in junior and senior high school. We became close friends and organized a strategy. We invited trustees to our school and to our meetings. One of the school trustees sympathized with our concerns and

told me. "You'll never have to speak to a big crowd." Before the nomination day, I got my Canadian citizenship.

As the nomination day came closer, John urged me to put my name forward. I asked Ishvar for advice. He replied, "You can run, but don't be disappointed if people don't vote for you because

they can't even pronounce your name." Taking his advice, I went with Ruth and John to file my nomination. Eight candidates were running for four positions. I got elected school trustee.

I served nine years as a school trustee, I was elected as one of six councillors to the Town of the Cold Lake municipal council. I was the only woman councillor. I served for one term, then was elected Cold Lake Mayor. I served for four years. During that time, I led the amalgamation of the Grand Centre, Cold Lake, and Medley (residential quarters of the CFB Cold Lake). It was a pleasure to serve as a Mayor of the new Town of Cold Lake, as it became the newest City of the Millennium in 2000. Ishvar and I believe that to shape your community you need to participate actively in its life, whether it is in an urban or rural area. Cold lake became our home, we made many good friends, and learned a lot from everyone who came into our lives.

Our children, growing older, moved to Edmonton for higher education. In a few years our son got married. We grew anxious to move to that City.

When Ishvar retired, we settled in the Edmonton Region, where we have three beautiful grandchildren. As the saying goes: *home is where the heart is*. Our new community has become our home.

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***“As the saying goes: home is where the heart is. Our new community has become our home.”***

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# Paying It Forward

by Linh Kim Truong

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Linh Kim Truong came to Canada as a refugee from Vietnam. A holder of a Science degree and a mother of three, she co-founded the Children of Vietnam Benevolent Foundation which helps underprivileged children in Vietnam escape poverty. She has co-authored the cookbook Quintessential Authentic Vietnamese Cuisine and teaches at Truong Lac Hong School.*



Like many Vietnamese Canadians, I often look back on my journey from my country of birth to my adopted country. I am privileged that my family and I have acquired a secure life and a promising future in Canada. To remind myself that this blessing shouldn't just be for myself but for others as well, I joined Children of Vietnam Benevolent Foundation (CVBF) to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in Vietnam.

This past summer my husband and I self-financed my 21-day trip to Vietnam. I wanted to see with my own eyes the work that CVBF has done there. I arrived

in Hanoi after a 20-hour flight. I had planned to visit all of Vietnam's three regions: North, Central, and South.

I did.

I spent most of my time in Vietnam's poorest regions in northern Vietnam (Cao Bang, Ha Giang, Lao Cai and Lai Chau). Then I traveled to central Vietnam (Hue, Da Nang, Da Lat, Lam Dong, Ninh Thuan). After that, I went to southern Vietnam (Saigon, Tien Giang, Can Tho and Hau Giang). On this whole trip, I took "the road less traveled." I went from village to village on the local



bus, on motorbike, and with local taxis. To visit children in the Dao, Mong, Giay and Tay ethnic communities, I walked. I visited Meo Vac Sunday market, popular with many ethnic minority people. I had no time for hotels. For sleep, I snatched some mostly traveling on buses at night. I witnessed many things most people who visit Vietnam never get to see. We sometimes stopped when traveling on motorcycles to talk to children walking along the road to get to school or to work. To children we saw walking, we gave them shoes and snacks. A highlight of my trip was a visit to a new school that the foundation helped build in Pó Ngan C, Meo Vac district, Ha Giang province. The winding and twisting path with high mountains and deep abysses are not for the faint of heart. We had to cross several rivers and a few mud slides. Lucky for us, an amazing team helped us through. The beaming faces



of the children, when we finally arrived, more than rewarded us for the nerve

wracking trip. My happiness I felt at that time equals that which I feel right now



when I look back at my whole journey to Vietnam.

Though I learned about the poverty that these people face daily, I also saw the care and commitment that they have for each other. I made good friends who showed me that there are others who care as much as I do. This has given me the strength to continue working towards creating a society where all Vietnamese children have hope and opportunities to realize their potential and dreams, a chance to go to school. It has given me the determination to contribute in helping the children help

themselves and their families, in order to escape poverty. We returned to Canada with images of the impoverished conditions under which many of our little brothers and sisters still live, but we did so more committed to giving hope to these underprivileged children.

For those who have joined us to bring that hope, I am happy to say that 100% of their donations have gone directly toward that purpose. Through their generous support, I succeeded on this trip to distribute sports equipment, library books, textbooks, notebooks, educational supplies, computers, warm



jackets, shoes, clothing, milk, diapers, food, rice, first aid kits, and nail clippers

and much more, to some of Vietnam's most needy. I visited over 11 schools and



3 orphanages. I personally delivered 46 scholarships, 18 bicycles, and over 1,000 gifts to children.

Why, one may ask, am I doing all this? My simple answer? It is my way of "paying it forward." Others will hopefully work on this cause with us. Let me close with words of wisdom from a 5th grade student Nguyet Anh in Ninh Thuan Province during my trip. They were part of her thank you speech on behalf of the recipients, herself included, of gifts of bicycles we had brought.

"The gifts are more than a prize," she read. "They are a symbol of generosity and compassion. They teach us how to accept gifts, while thinking how we too can be compassionate to others."





## Language is a Key

by Ingrid Urberg

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When people learn that I am a naturalized citizen of Canada, it is understandable that some of them assume I am originally from Norway since I have a Norwegian name—Ingrid Kristine Urberg—am fluent in Norwegian, and teach Scandinavian Studies on the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta. However, I was born in North Dakota, and my immediate family roots are in Norwegian-American farming communities in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Unlike many older

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Ingrid Urberg teaches Scandinavian Studies on the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta. Her interest in polar regions and literature has brought her to Northern Canada, Greenland, Svalbard and Antarctica. In addition to travel, she enjoys hiking, cross-country skiing and running. She and her spouse Mark Fulton live in Camrose with their two dogs, Hutch and Coda.*

Albertans of Norwegian descent who have parents or grandparents who

came to the Canadian prairies many decades ago, the earliest arriving around the turn of the 20th century, my journey to Canada was more circuitous and took place much later. Though my immigrant experience is, in many ways, far removed from these self-identified “Minnesota Norwegians” and other Norwegians who emigrated directly to Canada, my contact with these groups has made my life richer both personally and professionally. Before I tell you about that, however, I would like to share how language has made all of this possible for me.

of Wisconsin-Madison. I taught for three years at Luther College in Iowa, before taking a three-year job at the University of Oregon in Eugene. While I was there, I found out about a permanent position in my area being advertised at what was then Augustana University College in Camrose, a small city near Edmonton. I enjoyed my teaching job and the hiking and running community in Eugene, but I wanted more job security, and in addition I missed the snow I had grown up with in the Midwest, as well as the cross-country skiing I had learned to love while living in Norway. The thought

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***“My contact with these groups has made my life richer both personally and professionally.”***

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In all likelihood, I wouldn't be a Canadian today if I hadn't enrolled in a beginners' Norwegian language class as an eighteen-year-old at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa to fulfill a language requirement. It was natural for me to take Norwegian since this was the native language of my grandparents, but I didn't intend on taking it for more than a couple of years. However, one thing led to another, and I ended up spending my last year of my undergraduate degree studying in Norway, where I reconnected with distant relatives and became fluent in Norwegian. Because of this experience, I took my MA and PhD in Scandinavian Studies at the University

of living permanently in a northern country appealed to me, and I applied for the job and was hired. I moved to Alberta in 1994 as a landed immigrant, and I felt fortunate to have the chance to pursue my professional passion of teaching.

I had no family or friends in Canada before I moved here, but I wasn't concerned about that, having been warmly hosted during my job interview. It didn't take me long to feel at home at Augustana, which offered me an instant community of friends and colleagues. In addition, I quickly connected with a variety of Scandinavian heritage

groups in Camrose, Red Deer, and Edmonton and beyond, groups which like the countries they represent cooperate and support each other, and I discovered that there were many first-generation Norwegians in Alberta who had fascinating stories to tell. These connections and stories inspired me to start an oral history project—*The Norwegian Immigrant Experience*

and their stories will be available shortly for a broad audience.

One of the phrases that I teach my Norwegian language students is “språk er en nøkkel”—language is a key. Learning another language will open doors, though you may not be aware of which doors it will open until they present themselves. Learning

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## ***“Learning another language will open doors.”***

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*in Alberta*—which has given me the opportunity to interview first-generation Norwegian immigrants to Alberta. I have recorded the voices and stories of about twenty-five Albertans who moved to Canada before 1970, and many of them live in Edmonton and the surrounding area. Some came as students and intended to return to Norway, but they stayed and worked in fields such as energy, education, and engineering, while others came to farms or to work in cities with the intention of staying permanently. Some came as young children with their parents and grew up bilingually, while others came in middle age and struggled to learn English. They came from the extreme north to the far south of Norway and many regions in between. All of them have lived lives that are part of the fabric of the city of Edmonton and the areas surrounding it,

Norwegian has opened many doors for me since I started learning it in 1980. This language has allowed me to study, live and do research in Norway, to cultivate personal and professional relationships in North America, Europe and beyond, and it has opened the door to my becoming a resident and citizen of Canada. Here, in my adopted home, I have reconnected with my northern identity in both my professional and personal life.

# My Journey to Canada

by Pauline Wagereka

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Pauline has a Banking Diploma from Kenya and a Business Administration Diploma from NAIT. She works for Edmonton-based Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL) company, which has honored her for community building. She is also the Project Coordinator of the Association of Kenyans in Alberta (AKA). Fourth-born out of six children, Pauline considers her beloved parents to be her role models.*

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I had what I would call “my last supper” with my family. Tomorrow I would embark on what until now had been only a dream, a journey to my second home of milk and honey, home of pristine nature but one of the coldest countries in the world: Canada! The mood was bittersweet. My dream had finally been realized. From this point on, nothing was impossible. But a question lingered in my mind. How would I elevate myself and my family through this opportunity? The next day I bid my family farewell with the deepest and warmest hugs and wishes before I boarded a flight taking me to the Promised Land. After a long and exhausting trip, I landed in Toronto, before making my way to Edmonton.

My experience and observations here in Canada have been amazing. Canada is the second largest country in the world

and very diverse. The green vegetation, deciduous trees, clean environment, the Rocky Mountains, lots of rivers and lakes and the prairie land were spectacular, just like I remember reading about them in my grade five geography class. Then winter came. For the first time I saw and felt and touched snow. Phenomenal! But the experience of snow was only good until the temperatures dropped to frigid cold. Dressing up became cumbersome. Plugging in vehicles became a task done religiously. Driving around or walking was done with extra caution. Simply put, you had to accept the winter season because it was here to stay.

No one prepared me for the culture shock! The people were kind and friendly but even after speaking the Queen's English from a very young age,



I found communication to be a problem with the Canadian English terminologies and choice of words. I had to adjust to fit in very quickly otherwise all I would hear would be "Say what?" from Canadians who were trying to understand what I was saying. I'll admit I found it rather strange they couldn't understand my English because, they claimed, of my thick accent, yet I understood them very clearly. I pronounced words and completed sentences without breaking them. I knew I spoke not only good grammatical English but also articulated my words very well. I realized many Canadians and North Americans in general spoke with a nasal "twang", while others were just plain ignorant who chose not to understand you. Over the years I tried to imitate the twang, but it sounded so forced and incorrect. Since I did not wish to change my way of speaking, I stuck to my thick accent to which they have now come to adapt and like.

Canada prepared me to be very independent. I could no longer rely on my parents other than for moral support.

secretary, and Event Coordinator in our Association of Kenyans in Alberta (AKA). The purpose of the association is to enable networking among members of the Kenyan community in general, and to facilitate information about Kenya and Kenyans within the province of Alberta and beyond. This organization has brought Kenyans together in a common bond of peace, love and unity, giving us a sense of identity.

This past July 2017, my employer, Federated Co-operative Ltd (FCL) honored me with a certificate and community funding for my volunteer services and as an active community builder. This has given the community and myself a lot of gratification and pride. I have also had the opportunity to meet dignitaries like the Minister of Infrastructure and communities in Canada Hon. Amarjeet Sohi and the Kenya High Commissioner to Canada H.E. John Lanyasunya.

I have participated in the board planning and committee meetings of CAAC (The Council for the Advancement of African

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## ***"Canada prepared me to be very independent."***

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I had to own my life. I became the sole decision maker. I grew up fast! It wasn't easy. But here I am now, currently a board member, in the capacity of former

Canadians) where we organize and host "Africa Gala", an annual event that welcomes upwards of 700 people. The event promotes and celebrates the

richness and diversity of African culture through performance and displays of talent amongst us. We have had the pleasure of attendance by prominent guests at the event. Among the list was Education Minister Hon. David Eggen, Economic Development and Trade Minister Hon. Deron Bilous, and MLA David Sheppard. I have come to admire and aspire to be amongst those who always strive to better themselves. Community engagement is the key to establishing oneself in a new environment. The feeling of belonging to the community is fulfilling and rewarding. These events open many opportunities to network and interact, leading to the success we have had among immigrants, some of whom have even started their own businesses, becoming their own bosses. An outstanding achievement!

I have been fortunate enough to put myself through an academic institution. I have completed a Diploma in Business Administration with a Major in Finance and now I am contemplating taking some Supply chain management courses. I have worked for an established and well reputable company for over five years. We pride ourselves in integrity, excellence and responsibility and operate in a culture that supports ethical decisions, and promotes diversity and inclusion. I'm at home here and wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Canada definitely lives up to its name. It values the contribution of immigrants and embraces all cultures and religions. It has demonstrated multiculturalism which embodies a sense of belonging and acceptance. Canada is the leading multicultural country in the world. A In 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), Statistics Canada reported that the country had more than 200 ethnic origins with 13 different ethnic origins surpassing the 1-million mark. Canada at a glance is now the home of 36 million people making up 0.49% of the world's population. Canada offers better opportunities for career development and for personal growth. There is a wide range of programs for immigrants that allows for social interaction where people benefit from government services, such as the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Catholic social services, and Africa center (CAAC) which serves as the hub for the African communities.

Living in Canada has definitely changed my life. I have grown to be a better person, I have gained a wealth of knowledge, and now I am on the verge of preparing my path for a better tomorrow while co-existing with my fellow Canadians. All in all, Canada is my home, my country and I'm proud to be Canadian.



# The Accidental Immigrant

by Debby Waldman

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Debby Waldman is the author of two books for adults and six books for children. Her latest children's book, "Miriam's Secret" (Orca 2017) is inspired in part by her four immigrant grandparents. She works part-time at The Student Success Centre at the University of Alberta, helping international graduate students with their writing.*

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I never set out to become an immigrant, although immigration is in my blood. I'm Jewish: we wander.

My grandparents maintained the tradition that began with Abraham the Patriarch. Rather than God, however, they took their orders from the Czar's soldiers, who chased them out of eastern Europe at the end of the 19th century.

They settled in the northeastern United States, which is where I was born and raised and would have lived happily ever after, except I fell in love with a Canadian I met when he immigrated, briefly, to my neck of the woods to earn his PhD.

By the time we married in 1992, David had returned to his hometown for a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of

Alberta. My career was portable, so I made what I figured was a short-term move.

David's Canadian roots are deep: his father's ancestors arrived from Scotland in the late eighteenth century to work in the fur trade. They married Indigenous women, whose ancestors had been here even longer. A town in Saskatchewan bears the family name, as does a street in Red Deer, Alberta. David's great-great grandparents settled and named the town of Rosebud, Alberta. Their photo is displayed on a billboard on the highway into town.

When David's post-doc ended, he was offered jobs at four universities in the US and one in Canada. We had no family in any of the US university towns, but we had plenty in Edmonton. Staying put was a no-brainer. Still, when I was feeling

piqued, I convinced myself that my husband and his parents had conspired to trap me in Alberta.

My transition from proud American to proud Canadian did not happen quickly, nor was it easy, but the usual bureaucratic reasons had nothing to do with it. My problem was that I didn't believe I needed to become an immigrant.

to vote, there was a Democrat in the White House. It seemed patently unfair that I was on this side of the border.

I made the best of my fate. I found work writing for publications in Canada and the US and as a researcher at CBC radio. I was even allowed to go on air, but only after the local producer assured the Toronto producer that I didn't sound like I was from New York.

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***“My transition from proud American to proud Canadian did not happen quickly, nor was it easy.”***

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In my experience, you became an immigrant because the job opportunities were better elsewhere, as with my husband's fur trading ancestors, or because the conditions in your homeland were intolerable, as with my persecuted grandparents.

“We are now homeless,” my paternal great-grandfather wrote in 1921 to the three of his children who had fled to America and were assembling documents so that the rest of the family could join them. “We have suffered in the last four months about as much as one suffers in Hell for fifty years.”

I was not suffering, at least not that way. I was suffering because I really, really wanted to move back to the US. In 1993, for the first time since I was old enough

As the years went by and David and I became parents, it became increasingly clear that Canada was home. Yet I could not bring myself to make it official. I was still a citizen of what I considered to be a good country, at least compared to Iran and China, which is where most of the Canadian immigrants I knew had originated.

I was a little bothered that I could not vote and therefore had no say in the policies affecting my life and that of my children, but it wasn't until 2002, when the Government required permanent residents to obtain identification cards, that I finally took the plunge. If I had to do paperwork, I figured, I might as well go all the way. Also, two years into George W. Bush's presidency, the US was looking slightly less good.

Nearly 13 years to the day that I crossed the border for my “short-term” stay, I pledged my oath to the Queen. As conditions in the US continue devolving, especially since the 2016 Presidential election, I feel more grateful for the gift of citizenship and more guilty that I’m not in my native land, suffering with everyone else and trying to make things better.

I console myself by reminding myself that I didn’t run away, even if I’m no longer quite so eager to return. And if my family and friends need to flee, I’m here, door open, ready to welcome them.

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***“Nearly 13 years to the day that I crossed the border for my ‘short-term’ stay, I pledged my oath to the Queen.”***

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# Kiswahili Learning Centre: Beginnings

by Francis Wambugu

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Francis steers Kiswahili Learning Centre business development, marketing and student admission operations and doubles as an instructor. Passionate about the advantages of competency in foreign languages, he is fluent in Kiswahili and two other languages. Francis is a registered and practicing engineer in the Province of Alberta and a University of Alberta MBA graduate.*

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The Kiswahili Learning Centre story has been one of determination; and its success could not have been made possible without the support from the community and staff whom we cannot thank enough. Among those who have played a significant role in delivering the programs that our learning centre offers are Dr. Leonce Rushubirwa, Mr. Tololwa Mollel, Ms. Hannah Goodwill, Dr. Andrew Kerandi, Mrs. Irene Mwangi and Dr. Abdulwahid Mazrui.

Kiswahili is a language that is spoken by over 150 million people in 12 African countries including Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Comoros and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The strength and

value of Kiswahili as a language goes beyond these facts and statistics; and since the 1960s Swahili has been seen as a language that has the potential to unite peoples of all parts of Africa.

The Kiswahili Learning Centre is a centre of excellence dedicated to offering holistic intercultural training and Kiswahili language instruction. The centre was founded in Edmonton, Alberta, by a Kenyan born Canadian, Francis Wambugu. He believes that language is a window into a society's culture and that showcasing our rich African cultural heritage will bring better interaction and long-lasting relationship with the rest of the world.

Since its founding the centre has provided services to a diverse cross section of Canadian society including Africans in the diaspora who call Canada home, spouses that are married to Swahili speakers, missionaries that work in East and Central Africa, and tourists.

During its founding, the Kiswahili Learning Centre was the only school teaching African languages in Edmonton amongst over 20 heritage language schools that are registered under International Heritage



Languages and Association. Back in 2014, the management of the centre acknowledged the difficult task that was involved in convincing children of the African diaspora and some of their parents to learn Swahili. The intimidating reality of championing a language that was not used in daily interactions between the children, teenagers and adults dawned on us early on. This challenge coupled with the need for school rental space, recruiting of teaching staff, financial responsibilities, apathy from the

Swahili speaking parents concerning the impact of learning the language on the performance of their regular school going children, and scheduling constraints almost derailed the entire project. It took the extreme courage of the management and the goodwill of a number of parents to launch the first class in the summer of 2015.

The summer 2015 class progressed successfully with the classes extending well into October 2015. Subsequent to this class, adult students registered for classes in November 2015 for two semester studies. These students were in the Swahili intermediate level having spent extended periods in Africa during earlier postings. These adult students were a lifeline, given the school going students had left in October.

The centre identified the strategic importance of Ottawa in terms of the concentration of diaspora communities and launched the Ottawa centre in April 2016. The centre has been providing language and intercultural training to a variety of clients including university students, volunteers, researchers and missionaries.

The centre has continued to thrive in a highly competitive environment considering the dominant languages that we have to contend with such as English, French, Mandarin, and Arabic etc. The students have also contributed

to growth and development of the centre by providing tuition which funds the operations of the learning centre including staff wages, renting space and purchasing equipment. IHLA has been very supportive to the Kiswahili Learning Centre in areas of professional development, student grants, marketing and mentoring.

In October 2015, the centre partnered with University of Alberta where a Swahili FM program that airs every Sunday between 2pm and 3pm on 88.5 FM was launched.

The idea of launching an African language and culture school was bold but necessary. The benefits to the Edmonton, Ottawa and other communities in Canada have been immense. We have trained over 400 students both in languages and culture since the centre's launch. Through this learning centre mixed race marriage couples have broken communication barriers with the families they marry into, children have an incentive to improve their skills when they travel to see their cousins and grandparents in Africa and the Canadian population has found

a place where they can learn about African culture and above all the centre supports in retention of the African diaspora Swahili heritage.

Kiswahili Learning Centre is always a click away at [www.kilece.com](http://www.kilece.com)

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***“We have trained over 400 students both in languages and culture since the centre’s launch.”***

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# Beyond the Familiar to Infinite Possibilities

by William Wei

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*As told to Michelle Woodard, writer with the MacEwan University Office of Communications and Marketing. This article originally appeared on MacEwan.ca in January 2015. We have adapted it here with permission. William Wei is Associate Dean and full professor at MacEwan University School of Business.*



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I grew up in Beijing, first in a traditional courtyard residence, and then in a high-rise condo. The settings couldn't have differed more, but in both homes a tightly woven social fabric held people together. Tradition ruled. Working hard made up the heart of that tradition.

Education in China has been changing, but when I was a student school was fiercely competitive. Teachers posted student rankings on the blackboard. You worked hard to stay on top. To occupy the bottom of the list, guaranteed public humiliation. I remember doing a lot of work on my own; good teamwork was rare.

While I realize now how far from ideal

was the blackboard motivation forced on me as a student, I also know that growing up in that environment primed me for hard work.

And it has paid off.

I left China for Germany in 1999 with a bachelor of arts and scholarship in hand. There, applying my work ethic from my years growing up in China, I finished two master's degrees in three years, before I moved to Ireland to complete my PhD. Academic success aside, the lessons I learned during my time as an international student went beyond the classroom, as I steered myself in foreign environments, between learning within four walls and doing so in life.

Though I cherish the experiences I had as an international student, I can also remember the culture shock when I stepped off the plane in Germany, fresh from China. I remember, too, times of distress. An example of such times was when someone stole my bags. One of them contained my passport. But I did learn something from the incident. In the process of coping with the incident, I learned that I could deal with challenges like that without freaking out, if I kept a calm mind. From many other incidents, I learned one important lesson that has pushed me to achieve all that that I have. Sometimes, I learned, people hesitate to do things because they feel it is very

in several international associations and Edmonton-based communities.

Today, I have each of my feet firmly planted on each side of the globe. I spend the bulk of my time in Edmonton, but I travel regularly to Asia for my research, as a visiting professor and to supervise graduate students at Chinese and German universities.

About my cultural identity in all this back and forth travel? I would say it's somewhere in between.

I was raised in China and in terms of foods and habits, I like Chinese. As a Chinese

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***“You can...stimulate a lot of potential in yourself  
and do things you didn’t think you could  
if you just convinced yourself to try.”***

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difficult; you can, however, stimulate a lot of potential in yourself and do things you didn't think you could if you just convinced yourself to try.

And no one can accuse me of not trying. I have written close to 120 articles, business cases and conference papers on topics related to international business—from culture and politics to energy-related issues, and outward investments from Asia to Canada. I have given numerous keynote speeches at international events, and volunteered

Canadian though, I want to interact with people from different backgrounds. I also want to learn more about Canadian culture, in all its variety, and to contribute to the local community.

Doing so can be more difficult than it sounds. Most cities in Asia are very high density and, in a way, it makes it easier for people to communicate with each other. You can't help but see your neighbors when you leave your condo. In Canada, I see looser connections within communities, and more of a

division between work, and life outside of work.

Bridging two cultures isn't a unique challenge, but it's a challenge nonetheless. I'm looking for different ways to find a balance, personally and professionally, between staying connected to my roots, and finding a place in my adopted Canadian community. I'm reaching out to immigrant family businesses in Edmonton —both large and small—to hear their stories of entrepreneurship. That's because I empathize with the experience they have gone through to adjust to their adopted new home, as I am doing.

As new Canadians, we need to think about how we're using our social and cultural ties. Are we contributing to our local community? Are we finding ways to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds? How can we bring value to Edmonton, Alberta, and Western Canada as first-generation immigrants? As I continue to search passionately for answers to my own personal, professional and research questions, I strive like most people, to find balance in life between my immigrant self and the larger Canadian society of which I'm now part.





# La Bonte Divine Association (BDA) – A Community Story

by Rosalie Welo-Bolisomi

This is the story of why and how BDA was founded, which I'm writing on behalf of the association. First, my story. In November 2000 I arrived in Montreal from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (RDC), to join my husband. After I gave birth to our first daughter, I went back to school, then worked as a nurse while my husband was a student. Three years later, I had my second daughter. Life was good. We were an active part of

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rosalie Welo-Bolisomi is President of BDA and comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She and her family have lived in Edmonton for around 4 years.

an integrated community.

For family reasons, we moved after a couple of years to London, Ontario. Two months after we moved I gave

birth, prematurely, to my third child, a boy. He stayed in the hospital for three months. Without my husband, who had been absent for an extended period, I struggled as a single mother with the three children. Fortunately, I got help from Carrefour des Femmes, one of the best women organizations in London. They attended promptly to all my womanly needs and challenges. In collaboration with Government of Ontario, Carrefour des Femmes established a program called The Woman Entrepreneurial at College Boréal, in which I participated for six months to obtain tools and expertise to build my own business. Soon after that, I volunteered for ACCCL (Association Culturelle Canado-Congolaise de London) as a social worker. I cite those two organizations because the strength and knowledge that I have today came from them.

Joining the Canadian Forces, my husband moved to Alberta in December 2013. We were proud of him and excited, as he was, about this adventure, which we knew however involved a lifestyle that would require time to adjust to.

I had a hard time upon arriving here, due to a lack of resources, services, language barriers, difficulty finding employment, and financial and other issues. To start, I discovered that because I'm a Canadian citizen (not a non-Citizen), that to register for ESL I

had to pay for the course myself. I said no, and wasted a whole year at home.

Then suddenly, in my 2nd year in Alberta, I thought of all that I had accomplished in London. That gave me strength to go into battle! Finding a way, I obtained free ESL registration! In addition, I succeeded to get small financial support while I studied.

It was after those challenges that, to prevent others from getting trapped in a situation like what I had gone through, I decided to create BDA. In February 2016, I incorporated it as a non-profit association with its mission to offer social, community-based services to newcomers. BDA's specific goals are to:

- Help newcomers in their settlement, integration, and daily activities.
- Promote health and social welfare, raising immigrants' awareness on the importance of physical activities in their health, and to help them break down isolation and prevent stress and depression.
- Participate in the advancement of education, raising young students' awareness of the importance of studies, to reduce school drop-out rate.
- Help vulnerable individuals.

- Fight poverty.

The BDA operates in Canada and other countries. We may have something in common with other organizations that provide social services, but we are different as far as where, when, how to deliver the services, who is eligible, and how long the services last. We welcome everybody, and are mobile. Like Doctors Without Borders, we serve everyone anywhere as needed. We focus on client comfort 24/7, at home, in hospital, schools, churches, or over the phone.

We are proud of our accomplishments in a short time in Canada and overseas. Three experiences have made us feel essential to the community:

members was healed of a rare sort of cancer, even though we are not a religious association or church.

BDA would like to thank Mr. Luketa M'pindou, Executive Director of AJFAS (Alliance Jeunesse Famille de l'Alberta), who supported us in in different ways, the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers who helped to raise our visibility and enabled us to participate in various events, and Pastor Mamie of Exodus Church for her spiritual support.

I would, in conclusion, like to share some advice: your worst enemy in life is yourself, if you choose to give up. So don't give up. Try new things. Interact with different people and in different ways. To be active, to connect and

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***“Your worst enemy in life is yourself, if you choose to give up. So don't give up. Try new things.”***

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- We advocated and won a case for one University minority student in Edmonton who was about to be kicked out, a victim of racism, injustice, and intimidation.

- We have let many women, who didn't have proper work references, volunteer for us.

- Through our prayers and emotional support, one of our

interact with others, elevates your mood, opens doors to opportunities, and helps to prevent depression and isolation.

It's wonderful to be in a peaceful and lovely country like Canada, which welcomes and gives people a chance to live a better life.



# Ghanaian Community in Edmonton

by Ato Yeboah

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Ato Yeboah is a Science graduate from Brandon University (Manitoba) and holds a University of Alberta B. Commerce. He has worked as an auditor for Alberta Treasury Department and Alberta Municipal Affairs, and Business analyst and Account manager with Alberta Agriculture, and is currently a financial advisor. He thanks Leo Sam and Michael Adam for assistance with this story.*

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Canada and Ghana have a unique relationship that goes back to 1919. At that time Sir Gordon Guggisberg, a Canadian in the British Colonial Administration, became governor of the Gold Coast, as Ghana was called then. Governor Guggisberg introduced industrialization in Ghana with the opening of a deep-sea harbour at Takoradi in the Western Region, and a railroad network connecting the port to the resource rich interior of the country.

Despite these major achievements led by Governor Guggisberg, Canada was a relatively minor player in Ghana until after political independence on March 6, 1957. After that year to well into the end of the 60s, the Government of Canada facilitated academic programs under the auspices of the Commonwealth Scholarship and

Fellowship Plan (CSFP), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Canadian Universities Services Overseas (CUSO). These programs enabled successive batches of Ghanaian students throughout the '60s to study in Canadian universities. Many of these students went into the fields of medicine and dentistry. After Prime Ministers John Diefenbaker, Lester Pearson, and Pierre Elliot Trudeau successively relaxed the restrictive Canadian immigration policies, some of these students chose to stay in Canada after completing their studies. The next wave of Ghanaian students/immigrants arrived in the '70s, '80s and '90s. These were mostly graduate students, tradesmen, and women. Consequently, the Ghanaian community in Edmonton (and across Canada) is highly educated and skilled.

In those early days, members of the community faced harsh conditions upon arrival in Edmonton. I personally remember those unbearable winters. In addition to struggling to adapt to extremely cold, bone-chilling winter temperatures, many of us encountered considerable difficulties, particularly in obtaining employment. And, after one had prayed and competed hard to get a job, it was even more difficult to hold on to it. The fact is, we Africans were often among the last to be hired and first to be let go when it became necessary for our employers to downsize their businesses and operations.

There were also some other curious, interesting, and sometimes unsavoury experiences for black people. Examples of such experiences abounded. Rarely

she was caught jay-walking on Jasper Avenue. A black man seen walking with a white woman would have a white motorist try to run him down. Or, as a black person at university, you had to fight with professors because they had given you low grades, and all because of your skin colour.

It was against this backdrop that the Ghanaian community in the summer of 1975 formed the Ghana Friendship Association of Edmonton (GFAE). In solidarity with other black organizations, GFAE worked to improve relations between Edmonton's general population and the ethnic communities. It became a founding partner of several inter-ethnic organizations and initiatives; among them The Communicant (a black newspaper), CCACH – Council

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***“In those early days, members of the community faced harsh conditions upon arrival in Edmonton.”***

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did a white person in those days take a seat next to a black person in an Edmonton Transit System bus, even if there was no other place to sit. I remember us responding to rental vacancies advertising only to be told the places had just been rented. When a white person called it became magically available! I remember a young black woman strip-searched at the Edmonton Police Station because

of Canadian of African and Caribbean Heritage (formerly Council of Black Organizations), Edmonton Multicultural Society, African Students Association of the University of Alberta, and JANA (Jamaica Association of Northern Alberta), Congress of Black Women of Canada, and Black Women's Association of Alberta.

As we celebrate Canada's 150th Birthday

I note (happily!) how far Edmonton has come, and how tolerant, inclusive, and cosmopolitan our dear city has become. Today, the unsavoury experiences of early Ghanaian and black immigrants are increasingly becoming distant memories, thanks to the courageous, inclusive, and far-sighted policies of our Federal, Provincial and City governments, who are listening to all the great organizations advocating change. Besides Edmonton, which has been home to me for forty-three years, I have lived in other provinces and cities in Canada. And I can say for a fact that Edmonton is one of the best cities in which to live in the country.

It is our fervent prayer that God will keep this land glorious and free, for the next 150 years.

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***“As we celebrate Canada’s 150th Birthday I note (happily!) how far Edmonton has come, and how tolerant, inclusive, and cosmopolitan our dear city has become.”***

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# “Umoja na Undugu”: Mwalimu’s Legacy in Edmonton’s Tanzanian Community

by Dr. Sophie Yohani

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tanzanian-born Dr. Sophie Yohani is an associate professor of counselling psychology at the University of Alberta, a refugee/migrant mental health psychologist, and a founding member of the Tanzanian Association of Northern Alberta (TANA). In 2016, The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers awarded her a RISE Lifetime Achievement Award for her contributions to the community in education, health and community development. She is a mother of a son and a daughter, Joshua and Maya.



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In October 2009, I participated in a unique event that took place in a mid-sized seminar room at the University of Alberta's north campus in Edmonton. Our diverse group, of academics, students, community leaders, and members, had gathered to reflect on the legacy of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and to commemorate the 10th anniversary of his death. Known worldwide as “Mwalimu” or teacher, Nyerere was Tanzania's first president, and an internationally respected statesman. His legacy includes “*Umoja na Undugu*”, which mean “unity and kinship.” Many Tanzanians, like myself,

often encounter non-Tanzanians, who recognize our heritage by relating to Mwalimu's contributions. For instance, when I met our current prime minister, Justin Trudeau, he immediately shared a fond childhood memory of visiting Tanzania with his father (then Canada's Prime Minister) in the early 1980s, and meeting Mwalimu. Mwalimu's legacy of leadership lies in maintaining a unique spirit of tolerance and unity in a multiethnic, multiracial, multilingual and multi-religious nation, not unlike Canada today.

While history, geography and

demography account for Tanzania's cultural diversity, Mwalimu drew on African values of kinship, togetherness, and respect for humanity to unite a country of more than 130 diverse indigenous ethnic groups and 300 languages. It is also a population made up almost equally of Christians and Muslims, plus other religions such as Hinduism and Sikhism. Umoja na undugu are now well-known concepts that embody these values and have been used as slogans to promote social harmony and tolerance. Swahili, Tanzania's lingua franca besides English, was also used by Mwalimu as a unifying tool that communicated and solidified the values inherent in umoja na undugu. As a result, for over half a century, Tanzania has managed to maintain social concord and relative political stability, despite economic hardship and whilst situated geographically in a region assailed by violence and civil wars. Given this history, Tanzania has often served as a site for and moderator of peace talks aimed at settling various crises within the continent. As an example, Tanzania was the host country for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwandan genocide crimes, and even recently brokered peace talks for South Sudan and Burundi. Not coincidentally then, this same spirit of umoja na undugu exists in the Tanzanian diaspora community in Edmonton. I also believe that these umoja na undugu values are especially relevant and needed in

our current national and international circumstances.

For over 20 years, I have been an Edmontonian and proud member of the Tanzanian diaspora community. Indigenous Tanzanians have moved to Edmonton since the early 1970s; initially as sojourner students, and more recently settling with their families as immigrants. With more than 300 community members, Tanzanians in Edmonton are an emerging and vibrant community who contribute to the economic, social and cultural fabric of our city. Umoja na undugu are aspects of our community that are recognized both within and external to the community. They embody a spirit of warmth, welcome, and generosity that is uniquely Tanzanian. I can attest one can tangibly experience this when attending one of our community events, or better yet, when befriending a Tanzanian.



Not surprisingly then, our community-specific events, such as Independence Day celebrations and fundraisers, are often multicultural events, graced by many non-Tanzanian family and friends alike.

Beyond our own community, I believe we also recognize the principles embedded in the Tanzanian proverbs, “Kidole kimoja hakivunji chawa” and “umoja ni nguvu, utenganifu ni udhaifu” both of which teach the strength, creativity and productivity that comes from working together and avoiding division. Organized around the Tanzanian Association of Northern Alberta (TANA), which was founded in 2005, our members have taken these proverbs to heart to participate in various city events such as the *Heritage Festival*, *African Poetry and Arts Day*, and *World Storytelling Day*. We have contributed to the larger African community in Edmonton through the Edmonton-based Africa Center and City of Edmonton initiatives such as ‘Africa Connect’, a city celebration in 2011. Members also contribute to civic initiatives in a range of areas including arts and culture, immigration, health and wellbeing. As an example, members of the Tanzanian community developed and taught University of Alberta’s Swahili language course, the first of its kind in Western Canada. A memorable initiative for me was serving on the city advisory and working committee that led to the

formation of *Women’s Advisory Voice of Edmonton (WAVE)*, a group to advise city council on women’s gender related issues. Members of our community have also established relationships with members of the Indigenous community, and work to increase awareness and understanding between Indigenous and immigrants in our city. We have participated in events such as the Truth and Reconciliation event in Edmonton in 2014.

I believe we participate and contribute to our city because we came to Canada instilled with an appreciation of and recognition for the values of diversity and peace. Now we work to teach

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***“We came to Canada instilled with an appreciation of and recognition for the values of diversity and peace.”***

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these values to our children, in Canada. Indeed, this aspect of our heritage resonates with what is espoused and aspired in Canada’s multicultural society. In this regard, Tanzanians have much to offer in Canada. Looking towards the future, I am confident that Canadians of Tanzanian heritage will continue to contribute to our city’s economic, social, and cultural growth.



# Room

by Nermeen Youssef

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Nermeen Youssef writes right to left and left to right. She moved from Egypt to Canada in 2009 to obtain a pharmacology PhD at University of Alberta. As a medical researcher and poet, science eases into her writing as does simile into her research. Nermeen is grateful to her strikingly contrasting home cities, Cairo and Edmonton, for giving her the eyes and ears of an expatriate.*

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in the grounds of coffee  
my grandmother saw  
a journey from river  
to lake

she told me  
“you will leave ancients of sun  
to ancients of snow  
you will recognize the pride

vastness will strike your heart hollow  
at first  
longing will paralyze your tongue  
at first

but fear not  
warmth will find you

one day when you almost  
declare winter  
heartless  
bannock is broken

when it is too still  
remember to look up  
your ears are guiding you  
to marvel at the dancing lights

when it is too empty  
remember to look back  
watch the wings of ravens  
extend on guard

hollowness you will decorate  
with smiling faces of  
new      chosen  
family  
you will stomp to  
majestic drumming  
and slowly realize  
the heartbeats are mine

sail from Nile  
to North Saskatchewan  
do not be scared  
bear our greetings"

today by the river  
i remember you  
and sprinkle

grounds of coffee

*salam*

*hay hay*

Hay Hay, Canada

Hay Hay

# Struggle to Grow

by Christina Chu

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Christina Chu is President of the Edmonton Taiwanese Association.*

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In 2010, my 14-year-old daughter Irene, as a Canadian citizen, moved to Canada to live with her cousin and attend the local school. We worried about her living in Canada alone, so a year later, my husband and I decided to take our 9-year-old son, Tommy, and move the entire family to Canada. Originally, we thought that by leaving the high-pressure school system of Taiwan, our children's path to education would be smoother. What we did not foresee was that the language and cultural differences, as well as the monotonous living situation, would have an unexpectedly large impact on our children.

After entering the 9th grade, my daughter had two years to take ESL courses in order to strengthen her English language skills. The teachers were particularly concerned about the students of new immigrants, and the school tried to help by extending the

time the students had to answer test questions and by taking a step-by-step approach to teaching the children. My son was in 5th grade and was taking 2-3 hours a week of ESL classes. In his second year, he also started to take French classes. The fact that he had to learn two foreign languages at the same time only added to our worry.

By the time Irene was in 10th grade, her school situation had started to bring her to tears. Several times I would find her crying because she felt she had no friends, she was lonely, and she missed her school friends back in Taiwan. She couldn't break into the social circles of her Canadian classmates. After all, they had come from the same primary and secondary schools, or had been neighbors for years. They had entered and graduated schools together, and had things to talk and laugh about. Then there was Irene, a young girl newly immigrated from East Asia. How could

she enter this scene? Later on, Irene found a group of Chinese students from China and began spending time with them. But there were still significant differences between Taiwanese and

education system.

In the face of our children's interpersonal and learning difficulties, we felt we could not stand idly by. So, we actively sought

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***“In the face of our children’s interpersonal and learning difficulties, we felt we could not stand idly by.”***

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Chinese cultures, and Irene found it was difficult to communicate with these students. What's more, when these students were together, they only wanted to speak Chinese and refused to speak English. This only made Irene's integration into Canadian society more difficult, and it wasn't long before she stopped spending time with them.

Perhaps one of the most surprising things that we discovered about the Canadian school system was that students “had no textbooks”! In fact, there were almost no workbooks at all (the kind that facilitate a student's learning progress with practice exercises and review lessons). Although later on we were able to find a workbook at Chapters Bookstore, there were very few subjects covered. Needless to say, the children's learning progress was extremely slow. It didn't help that there were many school holidays, PD Day, Family Day, teacher strikes, and the strange phenomenon of students not attending class, all of which led us to start doubting Canada's

out counselors, teachers, and even the school principal to discuss what we could do to help our children. We went online to buy practice workbooks in all the school subjects for our kids to study. We encouraged Irene and Tommy to make Asian friends who spoke English, and to join extra-curricular activities after school or look for volunteer opportunities. Irene became friends with a Korean classmate and a Mexican classmate. They participated in a “30 Hour Fast” to help fundraise for African refugees, which made them happy, and more importantly, gave them a feeling of self-worth and accomplishment.

Tommy, thanks to his violin skills, became the school's little celebrity. He was given numerous opportunities to get on stage and perform. And in high school, during summer vacations, he served as a volunteer teacher, teaching a group of at-risk youth to play violin. Just like Irene, his grades was above the eightieth percentile, and he was invited to have breakfast with the principal

twice. It was these glorious moments that gave them the self-confidence to expect more from themselves in the future.

Next year my daughter is graduating from college, and will go on to be a social worker. My son will be entering his first year in university. After these seven long years, they are finally a part of the Canadian lifestyle and education system, and have even begun to care about Canada's social policies and issues! After all, now, Canada is their home.

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***“After all, now, Canada is their home.”***

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## Editor's Note

When I was in the thick of editing this E-book, I dreamt of nothing but the stories. One night, one of the E-book story writers crept up behind me as I sat writing this editor's note in a dream, and whispered in my ear, "Now remember, keep it short."

I woke up laughing, because it's the very thing I have been asking writers to do for the E-book. To keep their pieces short. We usually find it hard to write short. It's easier to write long than short. As human beings, we are full of words, spoken ones mostly. By nature, we are more of oralists than writers, a trait that spills into our writing arena. But writing demands brevity and conciseness in a way oral expression often doesn't.

As I edited the E-book stories, I tried to use the cover note with which I accompanied an edited draft story back to writers, as a tool to encourage brevity. I also used the note to 'sell' the cuts to writers, some of which were huge, that I made to submissions that were too long, and there were many. This is a bit of a long-ish note I sent to one writer: "In my editing I aimed to make your story

straightforward, focused and clear (that is, uncluttered and not winding around), with the number of words only those needed. I also pared away anything that had little or nothing to do with a point you are making. When writing, we all fall (myself included) into the same pitfalls in our first drafts, out of which I worked to rescue your story. To cut your story, and do it wisely, I first determined what the focus of it was. Then anything that didn't have something to do with the focus, I cut. I also cut details that slowed down the story, or those that would not be missed or the absence of which would not harm the substance of your story. A short story, like the kind this E-book is asking for, is like having only so much money – words being the money. When you are only allowed so many words, you only buy with them what is essential for your focus. It is also akin to going somewhere and you only have so much time to get there. You don't, on the way, stop to smell flowers or the coffee, however enticing. Your sense of purpose won't allow you. So, looking at a story, I always ask myself: how can such and such be expressed in one word, sentence, or paragraph,

instead of four or three or two?"

Now, this is why I encouraged short writing. We wanted and expected the E-book to contain stories that represented the broad range of

eclecticism. It contains all kinds of voices: young and old, men's and women's, those from people of all walks of life, as well as writers from a variety of cultural and racial backgrounds, professions, outlooks, religions, etc.

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### ***"In the end, this E-book is rich in its eclecticism."***

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Edmonton's immigrant communities, old and new, of all races and cultures, and from all continents. With the wide-ranging outreach into communities we planned to do, and ended up carrying out, we knew we had the potential of receiving numerous stories. (This anthology contains 124 stories.) We wanted there to be room for all, and the stories therefore had to be short. The shorter the better.

We also wanted the E-book, and its trajectory, to be shaped by the sum-total of the pieces in their diversity, and we encouraged all kinds of submissions. The first thing I did with a piece that came in, besides sneaking a look at the word count, was to determine its form and style – the more unique it looked the better. I then worked to help the writers succeed with the styles and forms they had begun to toy with (sometimes intuitively), to get them to contribute to the variety we desired for the E-book.

In the end, this E-book is rich in its

No censorship was attempted with any of the submissions we accepted. In fact, I encouraged writers to be bold, and not to shy away from what they wanted to express, however harsh. My only consideration as I edited was what would make a piece stronger, more compelling, readable, and therefore more effective. In the book, we have poems, creative non-fiction with a liberal dose of fictional elements, essays, conversations, articles, reports, commentaries, diary entries, photos and images, dramatic skits, surreal writing, humor, and serious discussions (with justified outrage and passion) on racism, belonging, multiculturalism, past injustices, and humanity in general. We have pieces by first time writers, and aspiring and professional ones, and the one-off writers writing because they happened to have something specific to say.

I would like to thank "Connecting Us All Working Group" for allowing the E-book to become whatever it wanted

to be; to become a sum of a free range of subjects, styles, forms, voices, and threads making up kaleidoscopic fabric; and for always being attentive to the emerging and evolving needs of this anthology. I would like to thank Scott Sabo, who volunteered countless hours to help in the painstaking task of editing, saving me from becoming overwhelmed by the enthusiastic inflow of submissions. He was particularly helpful with poetry, which is tricky to edit. He has a better ear and eye for it than I do, being a writer and wide-ranging and avid reader of poetry himself. But he did more than edit poetry.

My thanks also go to Suraj Khatiwada, our project manager for his calm stewardship, and to Mery Gniazdowsky, Ankita Baid, and the Working Group that includes conscientious Steffanie Beekman and Kemoh Mansaray, for facilitating submissions from numerous community writers. I also thank Debbie Hagman and Shahriyar Khan (who are also members of the Working Group), Mark Fredrick, my son Emeka Mollel, and Phyllis Bright from The Flag Shop, who helped with proofreading.

On behalf of everyone in this E-book project, I also thank Armando Munguia, for his great help with graphics and the logo, besides connecting us with writers; Joelle Kacou, Zeinab Abdelaziz and Nilton Romero, for their help translating into English the stories and

poems that needed to be; and Michelle Luyimbazi for promoting the project on the AHC website and for her help in uploading the e-Book online. I give special thanks to Steffanie Beekman for aptly organizing the author group photo shoot for the e-Book wonderful cover by our Designer and Photographer.

I reserve my greatest thanks, as editor, to all the writers who contributed to the E-book, for their enthusiasm and willingness to allow my (and Scott Sabo's) input into their work, and to stay on task, to deliver something workable. I thank the first-time writers who took my encouraging hand and let it guide them, as they conquered their feelings of inadequacy. I thank those writers who decided to persevere to write in their so-so English, and thereby saving us the time needed to have their work translated into English from Arabic, Nepalese, French, or other languages. I thank the professional writers who, laboring under deadlines in their own paying writing projects, showed the grace and generosity to submit stories free of charge, as did all writers who contributed to the E-book. May all the writers be honored in the best way writers can be, by having lots of readers enjoy their wonderful writings in this E-book.

***Tololwa M. Mollel***  
***Edmonton, Alberta***  
***November 2017***











