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Tackling productivity and job equity with ISSofBC's Career Paths Program

by LILLIAN LIAO

“The productivity problem not only affects newcomers but also has broader implications for the local population and the future of Canadian society,” says Soudabeh Rafiei, a senior manager of the Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants (Career Paths) program, referring to the Bank of Canada’s concerns over the Canadian economy’s failure to grow.

For Rafiei, this problem is connected to the struggles of skilled newcomers in finding employment suitable to their qualifications, a problem that Career Paths addresses through its services. She sees the program as not only helping new immigrants and refugees, but also building a stronger Canadian society – one that has the potential for economic and social growth.

Rippling effects

“Certain groups, such as those with advanced degrees from non-Canadian institutions or those with specialized skills in less common fields, often face more significant hurdles in finding employment,” says Rafiei, identifying licensing costs and regulatory barriers as common challenges.

Operated by the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)

since 2017, Career Paths helps newcomers navigate these difficulties through services such as resume writing, interview preparation and network building. Rafiei adds that the two biggest barriers are newcomers’ lack of Canadian work experience and unfamiliarity with the local workplace culture.

“This lack of awareness can make the job search process more daunting and time-consuming,” she adds, noting that many new immigrants are unprepared and even unaware of these challenges.

Rafiei points out that while employers preferred local experience even before the pandemic, the post-Covid job market saw these issues exacerbated. As the market adapted to the new normal and different immigration trends, the core barriers to employment remained.

“The ongoing economic fluctuations and changes in immigration policies continue to have an influence, often making it a moving target for skilled immigrants trying to align their qualifications with job market demands,” she adds.

According to Rafiei, employment difficulties do not just affect one’s professional life. She notes how newcomers may struggle with their mental health as an unsuccessful job



▲ Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program staff at ISSofBC greet newcomers at a recent job fair in Metro Vancouver.

search places further stress on their confidence and financial security, leading to implications in their home life. While Career Paths keeps clients engaged with their job search and offers referrals to professional mental health support, Rafiei notes that the problem requires support from lawmakers and employers.

“Employers can help alleviate this issue by offering job shadowing, mentorship programs and internships that allow newcomers to gain experience and bridge skill gaps,” she says. “Legislative reforms are also needed to streamline and expedite the credential recognition process, making it easier for immigrants to enter their professions.”

Rafiei also mentions financial resources for re-credentialing and encouraging competency-based assessments as ways to break down licensing barriers. For her, newcomers’ employment struggles can have far-reaching implications in Canadian society in terms of community fragmentation.

“This strain can lead to significant family issues, impacting the well-being and future prospects of their children, who represent the next generation of Canadians...[creating] a ripple effect, influencing community cohesion and potentially limiting

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Seeking the root of health outcomes of Black African immigrants in Vancouver

by STAFF WRITER

The International Day for People of African Descent serves as an opportunity to highlight the experiences of the African diaspora around the world. Celebrated annually on Aug. 1, the UN-recognized date offers a chance to showcase and reflect on those experiences, including those with Vancouver and British Columbia as a whole.

Like most things in life, immigration is not a one-size-fits-all experience. And yet, all too often, newcomers to Canada are expected to navigate our new communities in similar ways, no matter where we're from. Dr. Lawrence Chidzambwa, executive director of the Great Zimbabwe Cultural Society of British Columbia (ZICUSO BC), sees this as a harmful mistake.

"The Black African immigrant experiences are unique," says Dr. Chidzambwa. With the help of a recent Vancouver Foundation grant, ZICUSO BC will be able to further highlight the distinct needs of his community and find solutions that address African immigrants' unique cultural contexts.

When ZICUSO BC opened its doors in 2007, it functioned as both a social hub and tool to help new immigrants from Zimbabwe and its neighbouring countries. But when COVID-19 struck, the charity realised it would need to level up its services to truly help its community.

"We were shocked to see the number of our members who were out of jobs," recalls Chid-

zambwa. "People weren't going there, they were reluctant."

With funding, ZICUSO BC pulled together food hampers that featured culturally appropriate food items, delivered in a culturally respectful way. It started out helping 60 families; that number tripled in just a few months.

Obviously, the need was even greater than ZICUSO BC had thought. The team knew that to truly help the community, they would need to go beyond treating the symptom to tackling the problem underneath.

"We needed to address this food insecurity issue from a

to find out which ones have the highest impact and come up with some recommendations."

Immigrating is stressful enough for so many of us. Yet Black African immigrants are also subject to additional stress, due to discrimination and systematic inequalities. Depression, anxiety, sleep and eating disorders are common among this community. One more important, distinct commonality: African immigrants are often not used to advocating for themselves.

"Black African communities are likely to consider some of these ailments as minor, private or may

“Empowerment involves Black African communities understanding their situation better and coming up with their own solutions to their problems.”

Dr. Lawrence Chidzambwa, executive director, Great Zimbabwe Cultural Society of British Columbia

systematic point of view," says Chidzambwa.

Digging into the root of the issues

To go deeper than meal kits, ZICUSO BC approached Vancouver Foundation with a proposal for a first-of-its-kind research project to better understand how the social determinants of health are affecting Black African immigrants in Canada. Vancouver Foundation awarded the group a Participatory Action Research Grant to support its vision.

want to avoid stigma associated with such diseases," wrote Chidzambwa in ZICUSO BC's grant application. "As a result, they only go to the hospital or doctor when the situation is dire."

To help his community help themselves would require a big-picture understanding of cultural attitudes and the forces that shape them, both before and after immigration.

Empowerment comes from understanding

ZICUSO BC's study aims to dig into social determinants of health, to discover how they impact the deterioration of health in Black immigrant communities in Vancouver. This study is designed with what's called a participatory action research approach in mind, meaning it's co-led with members from the community that it studies and researchers. In this case, ZICUSO BC has teamed up with researchers from the Adler University, Vancouver Campus, Department of Public Policy and Administration for the study.

Together, they also will investigate which cultural behaviours prevent Black African immigrants from accessing medical and counselling services.

It's an ambitious quest, but an admirable one. The ultimate goal? To uncover what systemic change needs to happen to build healthy and vibrant Black immigrant communities in Metro Vancouver.

"Empowerment involves Black African communities understanding their situation better and coming up with their own solutions to their problems," writes Chidzambwa. ✍️

Source: The Vancouver Foundation

Le plaisir of the words by Le Stylo à mots

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
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Horizontally

- 1- tonic soft drink
- 2- in the direction of – publicity light
- 3- clean – dream
- 4- centiliter – part of a building – germanium
- 5- birds – small piece of land in the sea
- 6- island – whole quantity – body part
- 7- cereal – horseshoe shaped island – that is
- 8- parent – levels
- 9- hard – market basket measure
- 10- embrocate – big blood vessels
- 11- nobody – choice – actual being
- 12- governors – similar

verticalement

- A) punissant
- B) saut en patins – singe – aime les animaux
- C) vallée fluviale – faussent
- D) maudit – aller en arrière
- E) aluminium – constance – vieux poète
- F) fronçat – metal
- G) prénom – prix – arme
- H) immédiatement
- I) plantes – maladies
- J) monnaie roumaine – article – zip
- K) suivais une rivière – unité de sensibilité
- L) mesure de grains – note – utilises

For answers, see page 8



▲ ZICUSO BC is looking to better uncover and understand the distinct issues and outcomes of Black African immigrants.

zambwa. "We knew we'd need to help them in some way and food security emerged as the quickest way to help."

This was a unique problem for ZICUSO BC, due to African cultural attitudes around asking for help and accepting point-blank charity. Chidzambwa and his team knew that the community was not comfortable using local food banks.

"We had to approach food from a cultural point of view as there is a stigma attached to

Social determinants refer to any non-medical aspects of peoples' lives that affect their health. This usually includes social, political and economic factors like housing, employment and cultural attitudes and backgrounds.

"There have been many studies about the impacts of social determinants of health to immigrants... but none that address the unique features for people immigrating from Africa," explains Chidzambwa. "We want



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Ukrainian Independence Day

A chance to reflect and to celebrate

by CURTIS SEUFERT

As war rages on in Ukraine, an annual day to celebrate the country's independence approaches. Ukrainian Independence Day has been celebrated annually on August 24 since 1991, the first anniversary of the Ukrainian parliament's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union. Since that time, both residents of Ukraine and its diaspora have marked the day as a chance to highlight their heritage and affirm their continued independence.

One such group is the Vancouver Branch for the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), a collection of organizations aiming to advocate for Ukrainian people and culture.

Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Elvira Mruchkovska, president of the Vancouver UCC branch, says the group took a somewhat more lighthearted, albeit still dedicated, approach to celebrating the country's culture and heritage. But after a major shift in priorities in 2022 to bring attention to supporting Ukrainians following Russia's invasion, the UCC is now returning to a mix of events and fundraising, balancing a cultural heritage celebration with a continued focus on advocacy to continue to support Ukraine's independence.

"[We] would like to show and remind people... we do have inde-



▲ The Ukrainian Canadian Congress's Vancouver branch hopes to celebrate Ukrainian culture and independence year-round.

pendence," says Mruchkovska. "It is important to us just to show we are here, we're still fighting."

An outpouring of support

When Mruchkovska first joined the UCC as a general member and volunteer, she was pursuing her studies in hospitality and tourism management in Vancouver, having just moved to B.C. a few years prior. But before her move to Canada, she had a deep background in promoting, advocating, and fighting for Ukrainian human rights and migration, playing an important, public role prior to moving to Canada.

"I spent more than 25 years in Ukraine engaged in human rights activities in the field of

migration security: helping refugees, reducing the risks of labor migrant exploitation, combating human trafficking, including child trafficking, rescuing, protecting, and rehabilitating victims," she notes. "Even while in Canada, for some time I continued my public activism in Ukraine as a national expert."

Achieving her degree in early February of 2022, Mruchkovska was ready to enter a new career and primary focus in life, while still continuing to advocate and remain involved in supporting and celebrating Ukrainian culture. But as she notes, there was a drastic change in priorities once the Russian invasion took place, and she was compelled to do what she could to help those affected.

"We gathered as a Ukrainian community immediately and decided how to organize aid for Ukraine," she says. "My life, as a coordinator of the [Help Us Help Ukraine] program, became a 24/7 commitment to thousands of newcomers from Ukraine, for whom we found housing, food, clothing, hygiene products, and everything else needed for survival."

At that time, Mruchkovska recalls how Ukrainian community members were some of the first on the ground to begin assistance with refugee settlement as the Canadian government developed frameworks and policy measures to assist their transition. Mruchkovska once again leveraged her experience in advocacy to assist in that continued support.

"I managed to convey the right messages to the local government because I had good experience in Ukraine. So, our work progressed successfully," she says. "I think Canada, overall, did the most in the world in this direction for Ukraine."

In April 2023, Mruchkovska was elected president of the Vancouver UCC branch, and since that time has looked to keep Ukraine's challenges on the radar, even as news coverage declines on the war.

"Canada did a great job and is still doing that. But we are also asking for support [and] we are always doing charity events every month," she says.

In addition to those continued efforts, Mruchkovska also highlights one of their upcoming initiatives to sponsor the incoming Ukrainian team for the 2025 Invictus Games that will be hosted in Canada.

But this month, with Ukrainian independence day approaching, she hopes the Vancouver branch's picnic event – open to all members of the public – can offer an opportunity to celebrate the UCC's and Ukrainian community's continued efforts and spotlight Ukrainian culture more broadly.

"We welcome everyone who would like to learn and to be here to be with us," she says.

To learn more about the org, visit www.ucc.ca/ucc-member/vancouver-bc

Canada Energy Regulator Notice of public hearing GH-001-2024 Westcoast Energy Inc. Application for the Sunrise Expansion Program

The Canada Energy Regulator (CER) has received an application from Westcoast Energy Inc. (Westcoast) for approval to construct and operate the Sunrise Expansion Program (Project) pursuant to sections 182, 214, 97, and 226 of the Canadian Energy Regulator Act (CER Act). This Project involves building approximately 137 kilometres (km) of 42-inch diameter natural gas pipeline in 11 pipeline looping segments in British Columbia, extending southwest from Chetwynd to the Canada-United States border near Sumas. The Project also involves work at existing compressor stations and a meter station, as well as the construction of approximately 34 km of power lines.

Westcoast also seeks various exemptions under the CER Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Onshore Pipeline Regulations, and further seeks an order affirming that the Project's costs will be included in the T-South cost of service and tolled on a rolled-in basis. Westcoast intends to start construction as early as the second quarter of 2026, subject to receiving regulatory approval. Its target in-service date is 1 November 2028.

Hearing participation

The Commission of the CER is currently assessing whether Westcoast's application is complete, having regard to comments received on this issue. It will hold a hearing for the Project if the application is found to be complete, such that it can proceed to assessment. Those participating in any hearing can do so in one of two ways:

- A **commenter** may share their views with the Commission in a letter of comment. They cannot be asked questions about their letter of comment, nor can they ask questions about Westcoast's or intervenors' written evidence or provide argument. Commenters are not eligible for participant funding.
- An **intervenor** may, among other things, file written evidence, ask questions about Westcoast's and other intervenors' evidence, and provide argument in accordance with a hearing timeline. An intervenor that files written evidence must answer any questions asked about their evidence. Intervenors may be eligible for participant funding (learn more at <http://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/pfp>).

Those wanting to be intervenors must register and be confirmed as intervenors by the Commission. Commenters may sign up to be notified by email when the commenting period opens. Registrations and sign ups must be done through the CER's online Participation Portal found at <http://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/participate>.

Registration and sign-up opportunities will be available from **1 August 2024 until 29 August 2024**.

Need help?

<https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/applications-hearings/view-applications-projects/westcoast-energy-sunrise-expansion-program/index.html>

sunrise.help@cer-rec.gc.ca

1-800-899-1265



Map is for illustrative purposes only and not to scale. Project design is under development and configuration of pipeline loops, compressor units, additional compressor station modifications, and powerlines are subject to change.

For detailed Project mapping, please refer to: enbridge.com/sunrise

Errata

Vol. 25, Issue 04 - I am my mother's daughter – The resonance of relationships in art

The article listed that the exhibition, I am my mother's daughter, features two new artworks by Farheen Haq, including a series of prayer mats, Janamaaz, and a sculptural video installation, Pani ki Awaz. However, the new artworks featured are Janamaz and Ghoonghat ke pat khol, consisting of a series of dupattas or veils.

The photo in the article erroneously identifies a performance at the exhibition. The performance shown in the photo is called Hamara Badan, not Silsila.

The article inaccurately states that Haq grew up in a tight-knit community of Muslim elders and Indigenous people. Haq grew up amidst a community of Muslim elders, but developed relationships with more Indigenous people later on.

We apologize for these errors.



CRRF welcomes new federal anti-racism strategy

by STAFF WRITER

Founded in 1996 by the Canadian Government, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) was created as part of the Japanese Canadian Redress agreement, and meant to reaffirm the principles of justice and equity for all throughout the country.

In that time, the organization has sought to affirm those principles through a variety of



▲ Mohammed Hashim, CEO of Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

workshops, action plans, campaigns, funding opportunities and other diverse initiatives uniting Canada against racism, and promoting multiculturalism and diversity.

Earlier this year, the CRRF carried the first two of 12 Building Bridges workshops, in Victoria and Vancouver, aiming to combat hate in Canada. But, more recently, the CRRF is welcoming the announcement of “Changing Systems, Transforming Lives: Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2024–2028.”

This action-oriented framework for change builds on an earlier iteration and is informed by substantial community input. With an investment of \$110.4 million aimed at driving action in employment, justice and law enforcement, housing, healthcare and immigration systems, it takes a whole-of government approach, including over 70 federal initiatives to eliminate systemic racism and create diverse and inclusive communities.

“Our work regularly reveals the extent to which racism

is still deeply entrenched in Canada. The communities we support and with whom we collaborate across the country experience it firsthand in all its forms, from violent acts of hate to more insidious, daily systemic inequities,” says Mo-

ammed Hashim, CEO of the CRRF. “A community-informed federal strategy to transform this reality, with concrete actions and accountability mechanisms, is a strong and long-awaited push in the right direction.”

“Our work regularly reveals the extent to which racism is still deeply entrenched in Canada.

Mohammed Hashim, CEO, Canadian Race Relations Foundation

ammed Hashim, CEO of the CRRF. “A community-informed federal strategy to transform this reality, with concrete actions and accountability mechanisms, is a strong and long-awaited push in the right direction.”

The strategy’s priority areas include promoting economic, social, and cultural empowerment; advancing racial equity in immigration, health, and housing systems; driving justice, law enforcement, intelligence, and public safety

systems reform; and using international engagement to inform advancement on racial equity and inclusion at home. The CRRF affirms the need for all four of these priorities to be tackled across the government. The CRRF also recognizes the need for impacted communities to lead change, which is why our National Antiracism Fund (NARF) supports the first two priorities through by supporting, enabling and convening community groups and organizations to carry out their own work to combat racism and create opportunities for meaningful dialogue, learning and sharing with the broader public.

Additionally, the core of the CRRF’s commitment through the Strategy is to drive public

policy change in the fields of justice, law enforcement, intelligence and public safety systems reform, an area in which the CRRF says they have made significant strides, and will continue to be an accelerator of transformative change.

The CRRF congratulate their colleagues at the federal Anti-Racism Secretariat and the Department of Canadian Heritage for this important milestone, and they look forward to working with the federal government and other partners to make this vision a reality and create a future in Canada where everyone is treated equitably with dignity, respect, and opportunity. ✉

Source: The Canadian Race Relations Foundation

► “ISSofBC” from page 1

ing the overall economic and social progress of the country,” she adds.

Addressing regional needs

Drawn to ISSofBC’s positive impact on the immigration sector, Rafiei joined the organization in May 2022 to manage one of its entrepreneurship programs. Her current role with Career Paths highlights how the job market’s occupation needs change from region to region, even though the Canadian economy as a whole is reliant on immigrants.

“One key aspect often left out of the conversation about the productivity problem is the need for better planning and coordination in the integration of new immigrants, rather than placing blame on them for economic challenges,” she says.

Built around these regional needs, Career Paths currently has three streams. The first focuses on the provincial government’s designation of high-priority occupations. Within this first stream, ISSofBC services clients looking for work in engineering, construction and technology. The second stream targets regulated professions that are of lower priority, while the third focuses on lower priority and non-regulated professions. While ISSofBC is responsible for the Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster and the Cariboo and North regions, other locations are serviced by different organizations for the second and third streams.

“If we consider the Career Paths program as a whole across the province, it has served over 750 clients between April and August 2024, which is a substantial number,” adds Rafiei. “Historically, Career Paths serves hundreds of clients each year.”

She adds that over 70 per cent of Career Path’s clients have found jobs that are either in their chosen fields or correspond closely to their career ambitions. While the program has received many requests

from those on work and study permits, it is only available to individuals with permanent residency status who entered Canada within the last decade and refugees with a positive decision notice. Rafiei notes that applicants’ eligibility also depends on language proficiency and other requirements specific to their desired occupations.

“Valuing the education and experience of immigrants and implementing faster, more efficient evaluation processes for their expertise are important steps that can help align the talents of newcomers with the specific demands of local economies,” she adds.

To better plan for immigrant settlement, Rafiei also advocates for more research targeted at understanding the varying needs of different regions. She



▲ ISSofBC looks to offer new pathways to immigrants so they can find and build careers that are appropriate to their skill level.

would like to expand the Career Paths program by establishing stronger connections with professional associations as well as regulators.

“As policy evolves in response to client needs and changing immigration trends, it’s important to ensure that these adjustments are thoughtfully designed to tackle emerging challenges,” says Rafiei. ✉

For more information, see www.issbc.org.

THE ROGUE FOLK CLUB PRESENTS

THE FAUX PAWS

Is it bluegrass? Not usually. Old-time? Occasionally. Is it Celtic? Can't quite say that. Is it Folk? Americana? Jazz? Singer-songwriter? None of the above, but members of the Paws have deep ties to all of these traditions and blend their elements effortlessly to serve whatever musical idea is being presented.

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Issues and Ideas

Let's help grow more intergenerational connections

There are few things more satisfying than seeing young people and older adults interacting with each other and building an effortless sense of community and belonging. Robust communities include all ages. But such spaces need help to develop and thrive.

Global Intergenerational Week, a celebration of the power of bringing together younger and older people for the benefit of all, is in its third year. Started in Scotland, this positive initiative has spread worldwide and we are part of it here in Canada.

Intergenerational connections lead to the creation of empathy and in doing so reduce loneliness for both young and old, and address ageism that is so harmful to health and well-being.

We need to foster more intergenerational connections across the country.

We already have spaces where older and younger generations live together. They are called Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs). NORCs are geographic areas – generally apartment buildings or condominiums – where at least 30 per cent of residents are older adults, mostly women.

In Ontario there are approximately 2000 such buildings, and in Toronto alone there are 489 NORCs.

More older adults live in NORCs than in retirement and long-term care homes combined, making NORCs an important yet largely ignored opportunity to create age inclusive communities that support healthy aging at home.

These spaces have large proportions of older adults, but they also have young residents too.

While much of the attention given to NORCs (when they are recognized at all) has focussed on the value of reorganizing services around these high-density clusters where older adults already live and want to stay, an under-recognized advantage is that they are where older and younger people live together. NORCs provide the ability to build intergenerational connections that are so beneficial to health and well-being.

You might think of loneliness as primarily impacting older adults, but it is common among younger people too; new data show young people aged 15 to 24 are the loneliest group in Canada. Chronic loneliness is known to have a detrimental effect on health, contributing to the development of chronic conditions like diabetes and dementia, and robs us of the joy of shared experiences.

Social connections are key to reducing loneliness.

NORCs provide opportunities for teenagers to meet with older adults and get career advice and mentorship; opportunities for older adults to help young families with childcare; opportunities for younger adults to share their technology expertise with those who want to improve their phone and computer skills – and so much more.

Unfortunately, despite the proximity of intergenerational neighbours, there is often little opportunity or space set aside to facilitate the forging of much-desired social connections, and with it, a sense of belonging.

That's why Women's Age Lab at Women's College Hospital, along with University Health Network's NORC Innovation Centre and Barrie Housing, are developing and evaluating a NORC program model that promotes community building, intergenerational connection and access to care, and offers a vision for creating vibrant and healthy communities that are inclusive and accessible to all.

The World Health Organization has created a Global Campaign to Combat Ageism and identified intergenerational connections as one of their three key recommendations to combat discrimination based on age. NORC programs can be an important part of the solution.



Photo courtesy of Quoi Media

▲ Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities could play a key role in building greater and more sustained intergenerational connections.

Creating opportunities for people to get together, from yoga classes, community gardening activities to simply sitting and having coffee with other people, can have invaluable benefits for residents of all ages.

NORC programs play a pivotal role in working with local communities to prioritize their interests and needs. They act as a catalyst for residents who desire change – from challenging the way care is traditionally organized and delivered, dispelling outdated notions of aging, to fostering vibrant, age-inclusive communities within our urban fabric.

By enhancing NORCs, already home to so many older and younger people, with activities that lead to social interaction, we have the ability to improve the social connections that reduce loneliness while addressing the all too pervasive impact of ageism. ✍️

PAULA ROCHON is a geriatrician and Founding Director of Women's Age Lab at Women's College Hospital and RTOERO Chair in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Toronto.

RACHEL SAVAGE is a scientist at Women's Age Lab, Women's College Hospital and Assistant Professor at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, University of Toronto.

JEN RECKNAGEL is the Director of Innovation and Design at University Health Network's NORC Innovation Centre.

Source: Quoi Media



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August 29th: Madam Mayhem

City of Powell River

Exploring Ethiopian traditions at Burnaby's annual summer festival

by VAISHNAVI DANDEKAR

The Ethiopian Community Association of BC (ECABC) has long served as a central hub for many Ethiopians living in the region, offering various forms of support and fostering community. Through its range of services - including mentorship programs, language classes and health navigation - the association has looked to serve as a point of community for newcomers, helping them navigate the challenges of settling into a new country while maintaining ties to their heritage.

On Aug 31, the ECABC will host its annual Ethiopian Community Summer Festival, a day that brings people of all cultures together. But the event aims to be more than just a gathering, also serving as a moment for connection, reflection and mutual appreciation of the cultural mosaic that makes up the province.

tions formed and the stories shared. It's an opportunity for British Columbians of all backgrounds to come together, learn from one another and celebrate what makes each person unique.

Among the highlights of the festival is the marketplace, where local artisans and small businesses will showcase their work. From handcrafted goods to culinary delights, the marketplace offers a window into the culture and creativity within the Ethiopian community. It's a space where visitors can explore Ethiopian crafts, sample delicious food and support local talent.

The festival will also feature local and national artists including DJ Yared Meslin from Toronto to offer up summer beats to soundtrack the festivities.

As the Ethiopian Community Summer Festival approaches, it offers a window into the everyday traditions and rich heritage of Ethiopia. The festival looks to go beyond being a celebration,



Photo courtesy of the Ethiopian Community Association of B.C.

▲ Last year's Ethiopian Community Summer Festival offered people from all backgrounds a chance to experience and learn about Ethiopian culture.

The Summer Festival serves as an extension of the association's mission to serve as a space where culture and community intersect. The annually celebrated festival looks to fill Burnaby's Edmonds Park with music, dance and food, where the sounds, tastes and traditions of Ethiopia are shared and celebrated.



But beyond the cultural showcases, the festival is also about people, including the connec-

also serving as a chance to engage with the cultural practices that continue to shape the lives of Ethiopian families in British Columbia. It's a moment to honor the roots of a community that has made this province its home - and to share in the simple, meaningful connections that culture and tradition foster. ✂

For more information about the festival and the ECABC, visit www.vancouverethiopia.wildapricot.org

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Aug 31 - Sept 2
2024
DIALOGUE WITH SPAIN
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Aug 31 - Sept 2
Downtown Vancouver
FREE ADMISSION
www.vancouvertaiwanfest.ca

You may also like the following events from TaiwanFest:

- This month, 31st August, 02:00 pm, How Minnanese Survived Abroad during the Age of Exploration? 大航海時代閩南人的異國求生術 in Vancouver
- This month, 31st August, 04:00 pm, Road Trip - Reimagining International Artistic Exchange in Vancouver
- This month, 31st August, 07:00 pm, TECTONIC I with Barangay Project Society | 2024 TAIWANfest Vancouver in Vancouver



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Photo courtesy of TAIWANfest Vancouver

The passion of flamenco with a touch of Taiwan

by CURTIS SEUFERT

Bringing together a mix of Spanish culture with Taiwanese dance, *Flamenco de Formosa* showcases an intergenerational story of cultural exchange detailing a mirrored love of flamenco dance between mother and daughter. The performance is choreographed and led by Ballet Nacional de España member Hsueh Yu-Shien, and features an array of dancers including Yu-Shien's mother and Taiwanese flamenco pioneer Lian Ho.

The performance will take place on Sept. 1 at the Vancouver Playhouse as part of Vancouver TAIWANfest 2024.

A shared love and affinity for flamenco

For Lian Ho, it was love at first

sight for flamenco. After getting the chance, at a young age, to see the flamenco-focussed Ballet Nacional de España perform live, she says it was an experience she has never since been able to forget. The long-time dancer recalls the first moments she witnessed the movement and flow of the dance form, and how she found them to be profoundly and deeply moving.

"When I saw flamenco for the first time, I was so touched, and I cried," she says. "I didn't know why. I didn't know what was the meaning from the melody, but it was something touching."

Soonafter, she decided to pursue dance professionally, but opted to study contemporary dance. However the thought and feeling of flamenco never truly left her. So after pursuing her studies in New York, Lian Ho traveled to live

and study flamenco in Madrid, recalling it as one of the most important times in her life. After returning to Taiwan and to teach the challenging dance form in her home country, she eventually settled down to raise children.

For Yu-Shien the same cycle of coming to love and appreci-

"When I was six or seven years old, that was kind of my first concrete memory of falling in love with flamenco," she says. "At that age, maybe it's too young to know what passion or falling in love is, what it really means to love something. But I felt like a very proud peacock,

historically-rooted one, presenting different eras of Taiwanese society and reflecting on inter-cultural mixing from there.

"My mother took that original passion for flamenco and transformed it into something very great. It's not just a blend of style or culture. [*Flamenco*

“When I saw flamenco for the first time, I was so touched, and I cried. I didn't know why.

Lian Ho, Taiwanese flamenco dancer

ate flamenco would repeat, as she recalls her own first experience learning from her mother to dance flamenco, and experiencing a movement and flow so enrapturing it was hard to even understand or put into words.

dancing. A kind of that pride and shining on the stage."

It would be that same spark of interest that would drive Yu-Shien's desire to reach the highest levels of flamenco performance. After becoming the first non-Spanish dancer to become a member of the Ballet Nacional de España, and winning first place in a major Spanish international dance competition, Yu-Shien has now set her eyes on the choreography and incorporation of her cultural roots into this most recent work.

Flamenco de Formosa

Named after the Portuguese name for Taiwan, *Ilha Formosa*, or "beautiful island", *Flamenco de Formosa* reflects an inter-cultural blend with Spanish flamenco and Taiwanese culture, speaking to intergenerational stories of the lives of Lian Ho and Yu-Shien.

For Yu-Shien, it's an opportunity to express not only a cultural blend, but a personal and

de Formosa] is that, but it's also a representation of some of the different eras and changes through Taiwanese society," says Yu-Shien. "You can see that in the dance. It is also a representation of my generation, the next generation of dancers and their relationship with the land with Taiwan."

Overall, she hopes that the show can allow the audience to reflect on their own culture, experiences of immigration and their respective cultural contexts as they witness this personal and moving story.

"I hope the performance will be like a mirror," says Yu-Shien. "There are a lot of immigrants in Canada, just like there's lots of immigrants in Taiwan. So through this performance, I hope people can find the warmth and passion in their own lives." ✍

For more information on the performance, visit www.vancouvertaiwanfest.ca

August 20–September 10, 2024

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I hope everyone soaked up the sun and created unforgettable memories this summer! While fall is fast approaching, there's still some sunshine to bask in before the seasons change. The city is alive with a vibrant array of cultural events that promise to keep the summer spirit going a little longer. From lively festivals and inspiring art exhibits to engaging theatre and interesting conventions, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Here's a roundup of some must-see cultural happenings around town that you won't want to miss. Mark your calendars and I'll see you this autumn!

Bard on the Beach

Now until Sept. 22
www.bardonthebeach.org

If you haven't yet gotten your fix of The Immortal Bard this summer, the Bard on the Beach is currently running in Vancouver's Vanier Park until mid-September, featuring four of William Shakespeare's classics: *Measure for Measure*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night* and, of course, *Hamlet*. Catch a showing before the summer is up! Visit their website for tickets and more information.

Anti-Icon: Apokalypsis

Now until Sept. 29
www.thepolygon.ca/exhibition/anti-icon-apokalypsis

What does it mean to be an icon and who, or what, becomes iconic? Icons carry authority, in their highly symbolic and instant rec-



Photo courtesy of Serbian Days at Saint Sava Church

▲ Serbian Days returns to Vancouver at the end of this month, showcasing Serbian food, culture and heritage from Aug. 31 to Sept. 1.

ognisability. The new, landmark series *Anti-Icon: Apokalypsis*, by acclaimed photographer Martine Gutierrez and on exhibit at The Polygon, refuses ready understandings of identity, gender and culture. Across seventeen self-portraits, Gutierrez embodies a pantheon of legendary figures – all female or feminized – from across the world's legends, histories and myths. Her re-imaginings of such endlessly reproduced figures reference the long visual lineages in which these images circulate – from traditional iconography and Renaissance painting to contemporary fashion editorials and pop media – while offering an interpretation that challenges all these depictions. Through the “anti-icon”, Gutierrez stretches the malleability of the self, and of the social imagination that shapes it.

Fourth Annual Light Up Chinatown!

Aug. 24–25
www.lightupchinatown2024.com

The Fourth Annual Light Up Chinatown! is back with a free, two-day outdoor festival featuring live performances, limited-edition food collaborations, hawker street food, lights and colourful lanterns! Come enjoy specialty offerings from Chinatown's merchants and restaurants while exploring the beloved neighbourhood. Check out the festival's website for pictures and more information.

2024 Richmond Maritime Festival

Aug. 24–25, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.
www.richmondmaritimefestival.ca

Celebrate Richmond's diverse nautical history at the 21st Annual Richmond Maritime Festival! Enjoy a vibrant program of free live music, maritime-themed kids activities, a display of beautifully restored wooden boats and ships and much more.

Fifth Annual Westcoast Comic Con

Aug. 25, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.
www.westcoastcomiccon.ca

The Fifth Annual Westcoast Comic Con is happening at the Maritime Labour Centre on Aug. 25. This mega event will showcase some of the most amazing comics and collectibles rarely seen at local comic cons. You will have an opportunity to see and buy some of the most sought after key comics, toys, anime and other collectibles. Check out the con to meet artists and exhibitors who have the same passion for creating or collecting awesome comics.

Serbian Days

Aug. 31–Sept. 1
www.svetisava.net/serbiandays

Bring the kids to this family friendly event to partake in the celebration of all things Serbian at the 34th Annual Serbian Days at Saint Sava Church. Learn about the heritage and folklore of Serbian culture, compete in a soccer tournament, enjoy grilled barbequed meats and listen to traditional trumpet and popular music. For a complete list of events and activities, please visit their website.

Nikkei Matsuri

Aug. 31–Sept. 1, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.
nikkeimatsuri.nikkeiplace.org

This annual celebration of Japanese culture hosted by the Nikkei Cultural Centre since 2013 returns to Burnaby once more, featuring food, performances, games and entertainment. Bring the kids to chow down on a Japadog, play ring toss and mini-golf, dress up in a yukata traditional dress and listen to talented musical and dancing contenders vying for singing glory at the Talent Search.



Photo courtesy of Nikkei Matsuri

▲ The Nikkei Cultural Centre will once again be hosting Nikkei Matsuri, an annual celebration of Japanese culture in Burnaby.

Vancouver Fringe Festival

Sept. 5–15
www.vancouverfringe.com

One of Vancouver's most beloved festivals returns to Granville Island for the 40th time to delight, entertain and inspire independent theatre goers of all ages. From the humorous to the intellectual, the tear-jerking to the naughty, there's something for everyone. On Sept. 4, the festival will have a two hour preview called *Fringe4All*, featuring many artists presenting their reason why you should see their show. For more information, please visit their website.

Place des Arts September Exhibition

Sept. 6–Oct. 23
www.placedesarts.ca

The Place des Arts Gallery will be currently showcasing three new exhibits in September. Check out *Avifauna*, printmaking and watercolours by Molly Gray; *Eroded Origins: Liminal Illusions Amidst Climatic Transformations*, digital photography and videos by Garrett Andrew Chong; and *Tetochromatic Visions*, acrylic paintings by Nan-

cy Whiteside. There will be an opening reception for these exhibits at 7 p.m. on Sept. 6. For more information, check out the Place des Arts' website.

Tenth Annual Polish Festival

Sept. 7, 1–8 p.m.
www.belweder.org

Come on down to the Tenth Annual Polish Festival at the Shipbuilders Square in North Vancouver for a day of family fun. Activities include puppet shows, arts and crafts, singing and dancing. Traditional cuisine will be available, as well as vendors selling Polish accessories and merchandise. Check out their website for more information.



Photo courtesy of The Polygon Gallery

▲ Martine Gutierrez, *Ardhanarishvara* from ANTI-ICON APOCALYPSIS, 2021. Tia Collection, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.

Answers:

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| 6- isle – all – ear | 12- tetrarchs – as | F) plissat – or | L) anée – ré – uses |



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