

2015 BRITISH COLUMBIA MULTICULTURAL AWARDS

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Note: The descriptions below reflect the activities of the award recipients at the time they received their award.

Individual Award

Henry Yu, Vancouver: Henry Yu has devoted thousands of hours to ensuring that the legacies of early Chinese Canadians and their relationship to First Nations are better known by all British Columbians. As a history professor, he teaches students about the cultural and historical ties between First Nations and Asia Pacific migrants in B.C. Through his work, he challenges assumptions derived from B.C.'s colonial past and the subsequent ethnic discrimination. His approach to this work is notably through collaborative projects such as Chinese Canadian Stories: Uncommon Histories from a Common Past and the Vancouver Dialogues Project, both of which engaged young and old from diverse communities. He is also a co-chair of the B.C. government's Legacy Initiatives Advisory Council formed in 2014 to oversee implementation of the Chinese Legacy Projects.

Organization Award

Vancouver Co-operative Radio, Vancouver: Founded in 1975, Vancouver Co-operative Radio (CFRO, 100.5 FM) is a multi-lingual, non-profit community radio station that provides the Greater Vancouver area with independent public affairs, music and arts programming. Located in Vancouver's Eastside, Co-op Radio's mission is to produce creative and engaging programming for communities whose voices are underrepresented in the mainstream media. Co-op Radio has 80 locally-produced programs that air on the station each week.

Co-op Radio's on-air programming is produced by more than 300 volunteers who speak the languages and know the stories, experiences, and music of their own diverse communities. The volunteers are first trained in production skills, and are then able to provide access to news and events for non-English speaking people in their communities. This in turn encourages more community members to engage within their cultural community and build ties with the broader community.

Business Award:

Nana's Kitchen & Hot Sauces Ltd.: Nana's Kitchen was founded in 2001 by Shelina Mawani and Nasim Dhanji, immigrant women from East Africa who started selling food to small cafeterias. Now, the company's products are found in grocery chains across North America. Nana's Kitchen employs 35 production workers made up of mostly immigrant women who lacked work experience and English-language skills when they were first hired. Employees are given the opportunity to learn English and develop computer skills, with some also learning how to operate a forklift. Five of the company's workers are supervisors who have been with Nana's Kitchen for more than 11 years, and according to the owners, they have excelled far beyond expectations. Mawani notes that it is a proud moment to see that "all our women supervisors are fully trained forklift operators and can load up to 10 skids in large trucks from our loading docks and fill out all the required documents in English using a computer." All workers complete first aid and FoodSafe certificates, and today, Nana's Kitchen is the only federally-approved Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plant in British Columbia.

Youth Award

Crecien Bencio, Vancouver: Crecien Bencio is a community development worker in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood of Vancouver, which brings him face-to-face with issues of isolation and inclusion among recent immigrants. As a cultural connections liaison at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Bencio focuses on community capacity-building through projects that celebrate diversity through literacy, visual, and performing arts. In this context, neighbours explore and challenge their own identity, and learn more about their own and other people's history. Currently, he is also collaborating with the Renfrew-Collingwood Food Security Institute to publish a book that showcases the resilience and cultural resources among youth in the neighbourhood through sharing histories in the context of food.

Multicultural Excellence in Government Award

Royal BC Museum, Victoria: The Royal BC Museum (RBCM) is a world-class venue for showcasing B.C.'s history through its exhibitions, programming and public outreach that promote multiculturalism, diversity and cultural sensitivity. For example, in May 2014, on the 100th anniversary of the Komagata Maru incident, RBCM, in partnership with the University of Victoria, hosted a series of events to discuss and reflect upon lessons learned. And in August 2014, RBCM joined 13 other Canadian institutions in the Landscapes of Injustice project to conduct research and develop a travelling exhibition about the forced dispossession of homes and properties owned by Japanese Canadian citizens during the Second World War. Through these exhibitions and its online tools, RBCM enables visitors to discover cultures, past and present, which have been integral to the makeup of British Columbian communities.