

Multicultural Advisory Council

Established in 1988, the Provincial Multicultural Advisory Council (MAC) turned 25 in 2013. The MAC has a mandate to advise the Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism on issues respecting to multiculturalism and to perform any other duties or functions specified by the Minister as set out in the Provincial Multiculturalism Act.

The MAC members, who have expertise in multiculturalism and anti-racism issues, are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from communities across B.C. In December 2013 the appointment of Chairman Tenzin Khangsar and seven new members to council has strengthened the MAC's role to assist the Ministry with its work to: promote the value of diversity and inclusiveness in B.C. communities. Helping to promote economic prosperity in communities across the province while simultaneously positioning the province for long-term growth and creating jobs for British Columbians.

'PROSPERITY AND INCLUSION' SERIES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

The MAC organized 'Diversity and Inclusion' series of Community Engagement Meetings with the key stakeholders from government, non-profit agencies, businesses, community organizations, service providers, law enforcement, and educational institutions. Five Community Engagement Meetings were held in Coquitlam, Surrey, Vancouver, and Victoria over the period from November 2013 to March 2014 in which more than 250 stakeholders participated.

The objectives of these Community Engagement Meetings were to invite participation from a cross-section of community, business, non-government, health, law enforcement, and education partners to identify the gaps in and barriers to participation in provincial programs and services and to explore opportunities and strategies for stronger collaboration and partnerships.

Each of the five meetings was organized in partnership with the community or business stakeholders who proactively set the agenda for these meetings in partnership with the Multicultural Advisory Council as well as providing supported for the meetings.

All of the Community Engagement Meetings received an overwhelming response. A wide number of participants represented organizations that provide direct services to immigrants, such as job search and labour market information, health care, education and training, language and translation services. Many of these organizations work in the social development arena advocating for a fair and representative voice for the First Nations and immigrant communities. The business-focused group represented organizations that provide services and assistance to immigrant-based businesses that seek to extend and enrich economic opportunities.

The final meeting of the series in partnership with the Business Council of British Columbia was concluded with the keynote presentation by the Honourable Teresa Wat. The meeting was very timely, as it also marked the International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination (March 21).

DIVERSITY EXPRESS TO CELEBRATE MULTICULTURALISM WEEK

On Nov. 19 2013, a multicultural tour from Vancouver's Robson Street to Richmond was organized by the MAC to celebrate annual Multiculturalism Week. Multiculturalism Week is an annual event that has been proclaimed by the provincial government since 1993 as recommended by the Multicultural Advisory Council. Multiculturalism Week complements the spirit of the Multiculturalism Act (1993) which recognizes diversity, encourages respect for multicultural heritage, racial harmony and the full and free participation of British Columbians in every aspect of political life.





The Diversity Express, a 38-passenger chartered bus, travelled to No. 5 Road in Richmond. Known as the 'Highway to Heaven', No. 5 Road is the most diverse, multi-faith and multicultural street in British Columbia, where more than 26 religious edifices of all denominations are located. The three-kilometre road has religious institutions and schools from the Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim traditions, blending English with a myriad of global languages.

More than 25 employees participated in the multicultural tour to visit various faith organizations and schools on No. 5 Road. The MAC invited participation from all B.C. ministries, Crown Corporations and government agencies. The objective of this initiative was to promote cultural awareness and religious understanding by exploring the vast array of faiths, religions and spiritual practices that co-exist peacefully in British Columbia.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL PROVINCIAL NESIKA AWARDS

The fifth annual Provincial Nesika Awards proved that multiculturalism is flourishing in British Columbia. More than 400 people attended this flagship event at the Science World OMNIMAX Theatre with Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism Teresa Wat there to present the awards.

The annual event honours individuals and organizations that promote multiculturalism in B.C. Awards were given in five categories - Individual, Business, Organization, Youth and, new this year, Multicultural Excellence in Government. The new category recognizes the commitment government organizations are making to promote multiculturalism, both internally and externally.

All recipients received a trophy. Recipients in the first four categories also received a \$5,000 cheque to be given to a recognized organization of their choice to further advance multiculturalism in British Columbia.

The provincial Nesika Awards started in 2008 to recognize the people, organizations and businesses whose exceptional work helps bring our diverse cultures together. The Province's Multicultural Advisory Council organizes and sponsors the awards to honour and celebrate British Columbia's cultural diversity and Aboriginal heritage. www.flickr.com/photos/bcgovphotos/13768146604/in/photostream



Photos (top to bottom): The fifth annual Provincial Nesika Awards proved that multiculturalism is flourishing in B.C. More than 400 people attended this flagship event at the Science World OMNIMAX Theatre with Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism Teresa Wat there to present the awards.



KOREAN BUSINESS-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING

The Multicultural Advisory Council organized a Korean Business-Community Engagement Meeting on June 26, 2014 at Canada Place in partnership with the Canada-Korea Business Association. More than 15 participants discussed enhanced business opportunities driven by the recent Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement. The discussion focused on challenges, opportunities and the strategies to strengthen Korea-British Columbia economic, social and cultural relations.

HONOUR AND RECOGNITION

ANAR POPATIA

Anar Popatia, member of the Multicultural Advisory Council, received the 2013 RBC Top 25 Canadian Immigrants Award. This is a peoples' choice award that recognizes people who have come to Canada and have made a positive difference living here.

Anar came to Canada 28 years ago as an international student seeking what so many other newcomers desire: a better education and a better life. Reflecting back on her early years in Canada, Anar describes her settlement journey as "an extremely amazing experience." Rather than dwell on the inevitable challenges that come with adapting to life in a foreign country, she chose to maintain a positive attitude throughout. "I focused on the many gifts I received as a newcomer - so much kindness and generosity from my peers and professors, and a host family that took me in as their own," she said. "These things were precious to me; they made me feel like I belonged."

Respectfully submitted,

Tenzin Khangsar
Chair

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE MULTICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (JANUARY 2015):

Tenzin Khangsar (Chair)
 Ruby Rose F. Asuncion
 Dennis Chan
 Manpreet Dhillon
 Eun Kyeong (Kelly) Hwang
 Steve H. Kim
 Charles Mak
 Anar Popatia
 Tanveer M. Siddiqui
 Myrt E. Turner
 Angela Hollinger
 Garrison Duke