



# The Citizen

Durham Region's Diversity Focused Newsletter

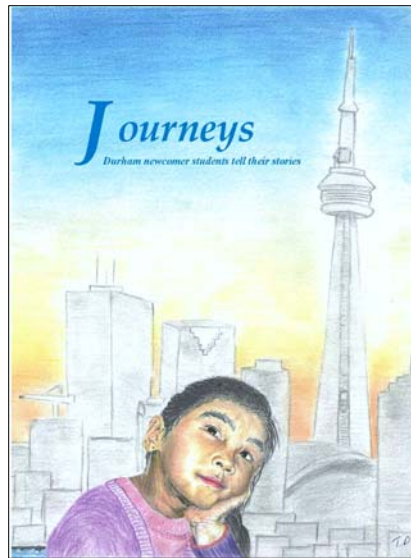
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## "Journeys" Durham newcomer students tell their stories

*Journeys* is the result of a project, unique to Durham District School Board (DDSB), that received funding from the Ministry of Education to enhance the learning of English language learners. Elementary and secondary students from across the region participated in two writing workshops with author Rukhsana Khan, and an art workshop with Cristina Matei, in preparation for writing and illustrating their own stories. The book launch was the culmination of work on this project which began last October. It provided the opportunity for our student authors, their families, our community partners and school board staff to view all of

the *Journeys* stories and original artwork, and to hear readings by some of the student authors themselves.



Tenzin Doedon, a student from Ajax H.S. created the cover art for *Journeys* and shared his story, *Lost and Found*. He writes of growing up in India although his real country is Tibet. He tells us that he has never seen his father in his whole life and he doesn't know where he is. Tenzin describes the hardships of his family as refugees in India, the difficult decisions made by his family in order to support themselves and the unwavering love and support they provide for each other. Of his life in Canada, Tenzin says:

"My life in Canada is going well. It has been 1 1/2 years and I love Canada. In Canada, if you think you can do it, then you can do whatever you want. There are so

Con't ....page 4

## "The Citizen" A Diversity Focused Newsletter

Durham Region is a community on the move. Recent changes to the local economy, combined with a growing and increasingly diverse and dynamic population, have resulted in shifts in the local social, economic, and political landscapes. These changes have created new opportunities for growth and development, but have also created new challenges for planning, service delivery and community cohesion. Taking advantage of these new opportunities and meeting the demands of these challenges will require a cooperative and comprehensive approach that includes all stakeholders in our community.

Con't ....page 4

### Inside this issue:

Community library	2
PFLAG awards event	2
Accessibility in Durham	3
Journeys (cont')	4
Introducing "The Citizen"	4
The Local Diversity & Immigration Partnership Council	5
In the words of newcomers	6

**Translation links:** [www.translate.google.com/](http://www.translate.google.com/)

## It takes a library to raise a community

If you were asked to draw a picture of your community's main gathering place for celebrations and holiday events, what would you include in your drawing? Would you draw the main street, the city hall, a park, a town square, an arena, a mall? Very likely the drawings of most Durham residents would include many of these things but some



Left to right: Wendy Kong, Oshawa Public Library; Sally Grande, Multicultural Librarian, Oshawa Public Library

might also feature another hub of civic activity: the local public library.

"Library?" you say, looking up from the warm latte you've just purchased from a large bookstore café. "What can I get at a library that's not on the Internet or in this lovely bookstore?" Well, first of all, libraries are multilingual, so books, films and often newspapers in many languages are all available for free. While Durham's libraries are municipally funded and managed differently, they all share a commitment to meet the information needs of their diverse communities. At Oshawa Public Libraries' McLaughlin Branch, you can find books and films in 33 languages, and magazines and newspapers in 15 languages. Not only are there

children's books in several languages, but books for teens and a vast selection of world music. Working together with the neighbouring English as a Second Language (ESL) Centre, the library offers in-house tours, citizenship study materials, and supports "conversation circles", film showings and book clubs in languages other than English. With 50% of the student population of our new university in Oshawa (UOIT) speaking a mother tongue that is not English, the library provides a taste of home in recreational reading, films and listening materials. Open and available for free 7 days a week, your local public library is a welcoming space for all.

*Sally Grande  
Multicultural Librarian,  
Oshawa Public Library*

## Durham celebrates its first PFLAG awards event

On May 9, PFLAG (formerly known as Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Canada, Durham's Chapter presented "Champions Against Homophobia & Transphobia Awards" during a celebration event co-ordinated by PFLAG Canada Durham, Club 717 and The AIDS Committee of Durham. This was the first event in Durham Region honouring individuals and organizations working to create inclusive communities

on behalf of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) (Rainbow) community. The event was emceed by Mark Childs, President of PFLAG Canada. Also honoured were Lin Bambrick, Jane Currie, Anji Dimitriou, Councilor Brian Nicholson, David Martin, Garrett Metcalfe, Udana Muldoon, Cst. Keith Richards, Kelly Roy, Mike Shields, Stefanie Swinson, Community Development of Durham and The AIDS Committee of Durham.



Left to right: Cst. Keith Richards, Diversity Coordinator, Durham Regional Police Service, Tracey Vaughan, Executive Director, Community Development Council Durham.

## Accessibility in the Region of Durham

In 2005 a law was passed in Ontario ensuring inclusive communities and full participation for persons with disabilities. The goal of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* (AODA) is to assist both the public and private sectors in the identification, prevention

**"IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE 70,000 RESIDENTS LIVING IN DURHAM REGION WITH SOME FORM OF A DISABILITY."**

and removal of barriers. A barrier for someone with a disability is anything that prevents participation in social or economic

opportunities within our communities. There are 1.85 million people living in Ontario who have a disability.

Municipalities had already

begun implementing accessibility strategies because of an earlier law, *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* (ODA). This legislation is still in effect, and the AODA builds on its provisions by introducing Standards that outline requirements for both the public and private sectors. These Standards address customer service; employment; information and communication; transportation; and the built environment.

Under the legislation, each municipality is required to have an Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC). This committee is comprised of people with disabilities (more than 50%), service providers, and municipal staff. The AAC is an important contributor to municipal accessibility planning. Additionally, the

eight municipal AAC Chairs and the regional AAC Chair meet regularly to share best practices, partner on learning opportunities and accessibility information.

It is estimated that there are 70,000 residents living in Durham Region with some form of a disability. With continued collaborative efforts and this new law, our communities can plan and become more inclusive. Everyone benefits when all residents can fully participate and contribute to their economy and community. Whether it is an automated door at a grocery store, easy to read signage or safe pedestrian walks, inclusive communities create engaged communities.

*Tracey Tyner-Cavanagh  
Accessibility Coordinator  
The Regional Municipality of Durham*

### Joint Regional AAC Chairs Group Committee



**Far Back Row:** Michele Cotton (Accessibility Coordinator-Whitby); Ken Corner-far back row (Chair of Whitby AAC)

**Back Row:** Paul Feldman, (Chair of Ajax AAC); Prem Noronha-Waldriff (Accessibility Coordinator, Pickering); Barb Condie (Committee Coordinator- Scugog Township); Mary Scarlett (Lakeridge Health); Thom Gettinby (Municipal Clerk- Brock Township); Lynda Lawson (Accessibility Coordinator- Oshawa); Zoia Horne (Chair of AAC, Pickering)

**Front Row:** Mike Roche (Chair of Region of Durham AAC); Tracey Tyner Cavanagh (Accessibility Coordinator, Region of Durham); Cyndie Sproul (Chair of Oshawa AAC)

**Absent from Photo:** Olive Struthers (Accessibility Coordinator, Ajax) Edie Forsyth (Chair of AAC, Scugog Township) Diana Stephen (Deputy Clerk, town of Uxbridge)

## "Journeys"

(cont' from front cover)

many opportunities in Canada that we don't have in my country."

In all, the stories of 81 newcomer students from grades one to twelve are included in *Journeys*. These students have come to us from all over the world, under many different circumstances, and they bring with them languages, cultural traditions and experiences that enrich our schools and communities. Their stories tell of the struggle, loss, determination and hope involved in coming to a new country and beginning a new life in Canada.

Copies of *Journeys* have been provided to all DDSB schools and Durham Region Public Libraries. For further information please contact Anne Sidnell at 905-666-6944, Durham District School Board, 400 Taunton Road East, Whitby.

"THERE ARE SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES IN CANADA THAT WE DON'T HAVE IN MY COUNTRY".



Fibi Assad,  
Grade 12 Student

"It was a really good day for us. We told all our friends that we were flying to happiness. We thought that all our problems would be solved. We were dreaming about everything in Canada, how it would be, and when we would go."

Fibi Assad was one of seven student presenters at the recent book launch celebrating the release of *Journeys: Durham newcomer students tell their stories*.

The event was held on May 5, at the Education Centre, Durham District School Board. "Facing Troubles" is the touching and inspiring story of Fibi's journey from Egypt to her new life in Canada.

## Introducing...."The Citizen" a diversity focused newsletter

(cont' from front cover)

With this in mind, the Durham Region *Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council*, was formed with a mandate to develop strategic partnerships and comprehensive plans for the development of an inclusive community in the Region of Durham (See page 5 for more information). In order to achieve this mandate, the Council must have a process to continually communicate and engage stakeholders from all local sectors, including business, civil society, government, and the general public. This newsletter will be the cornerstone of these efforts.

The purpose of "**The Citizen**" will be to communicate with the community on the activities of the Council, share information about the work going on in the community, showcase providers, residents and governments that are working toward the development of a more inclusive and welcoming community in the region. Published on a quarterly basis, the newsletter will include contributions from members of the Diversity Council, the community, and service providers in an effort to promote information sharing and engagement.

We hope that this newsletter

becomes a focal point for local discourse on diversity and immigration issues and can become a valuable tool in helping creating the community we all envision Durham can be.

*For more information, or inquiries regarding contributing material, please contact: [diversitynewsletter@durham.ca](mailto:diversitynewsletter@durham.ca)*

\*All submitted material will be subject to established protocols that will be available to anyone interested upon written request, and must contribute to the mandate of the Council and this newsletter.

*Benjamin Earle  
Manager of Social Research & Planning  
Community Development Council of Durham*



## The Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council (LDIPC)

The Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council (LDIPC) was formed at the request of Durham Regional Council. Elected officials from all eight local area municipalities recognized the potential benefits of a planned strategic approach to Diversity and Immigration. The primary purpose of the Council is to act as a co-ordinating body ensuring that the many agencies, municipalities, community groups and organizations doing work in the area of diversity and immigration know about each other, share resources, avoid duplication and leverage each others expertise and resources.

The Council will work towards creating a culture of inclusion, attracting and retaining skilled newcomers, increasing settlement capacity and promoting Durham Region as a destination of choice for both newcomers and new industry.

Throughout 2008 community consultations took place asking the community of service providers, newcomers, municipalities and residents what priorities and initiatives would make sense for Durham Region. The results of these consultations give direction to the LDIPC and ensure the community was the voice setting priorities.

In early 2009 an interim Council was formed comprised of 16 community stakeholders representing different sectors. As the work of the Council evolves Council membership will be reviewed.

This group of community leaders are committed to executing the objectives of the LDIPC and are excited about contributing to the growing momentum in Durham Region. A momentum that ensures all residents have an opportunity to contribute, be engaged and utilize the skills they bring to our communities.

*Audrey Andrews  
Social Services Department  
The Regional Municipality of Durham,*



Left to right: Regional Councillor April Cullen, (Co-chair) and Dr. Hugh Drouin, Commissioner, Social Services Department (Co-chair)

### Members of the interim LDIPC

<b>City of Oshawa</b>	Regional Councillor April Cullen
<b>Community Development Council Durham</b>	Ben Earle, Manager of Social Research and Planning Tracey Vaughan, Executive Director
<b>Durham College</b>	Mary Blanchard, Dean
<b>Durham District School Board</b>	Martyn Beckett, Director of Education
<b>Durham Region Local Training</b>	Rick Lea, Executive Director
<b>Lakeridge Health Corporation</b>	Wanda Leach, Director, Human Resources
<b>The Regional Municipality of Durham</b>	Dr. Hugh Drouin, Commissioner, Social Services Department Audrey Andrews, Policy & Research Advisor, Social Services Department Doug Lindeblom, Director, Economic Development & Tourism Department John Koopmans, Planning Department Kelly O'Brien, Income & Employment Support Division Cst. Keith Richards, Diversity Co-ordinator, Durham Region Police Service Tracey Tyner-Cavanagh, Accessibility Co-ordinator, Regional Chair & CAO's Office
<b>Town of Ajax</b>	Regional Councillor Colleen Jordan
<b>UOIT</b>	Dr. Shahid Alvi, Professor & Associate Dean of Faculty of Criminology, Justice, Policy Studies

### Celebrate diversity month

Ajax Town Council has proclaimed September as Celebrate Diversity Month. Visit the town website [www.townofajax.com](http://www.townofajax.com) to learn more.

## In the words of newcomers.....



For Nardeen Abu Hassan, the decision of immigrating to Canada in 2007 was not an easy one. Both she and her husband are pharmacists who owned their pharmacy in Palestine, yet they were looking for a more peaceful place to raise their family, so they chose Canada. As Nardeen recalls, that decision did not hit her until she was ready to board the plane, "I was having mixed feelings, fear, happiness, sadness, excitement. So many pictures came to my mind about that far away snowy country".

Beyond the fear of immigrating to a new country, Nardeen was faced with a new challenge; as a pharmacist, her credentials were not recognized in Canada. So she had to choose to go back to school, or forget about her chosen profession that she worked so hard to achieve. "Every body has their own personality, goals, strength and dreams to follow the way of success" she says, "It all depends on how you accept your new life or refuse to accept it".

With the help and guidance that she received at the Community Development Council Durham (CDCD); an agency that works with newcomers to assist them in settling in their new country, Nardeen made the decision to go back to school and start again with her profession. "It was not an easy decision" said the mother of two.

Today Nardeen, who has finished the first phase of her exams, looks back at that experience and shares her reflections. "In my opinion there are some steps that you need to follow to achieve success in Canada

- *You must love this country and try to feel yourself as part of it. Learn more about Canada and its amazing nature.*
- *Build a new friendship from the Canadian mosaic in addition to your own culture's friends.*
- *Try to select friends who are positive and able to encourage you and give you sound advice, hope, and motivation. Avoid those who are negative and make you give up and feel disappointed or ineffective.*
- *Keep asking and searching for whatever you want to achieve, there is nothing impossible, you can make it possible if you really want to,*
- *Every lock has it's own key, so if you get that key the door will*

*open,*

- *You should be determined to get your goal and never lose your dream, it will take a long time and many trials to achieve it, but at the end you will have it.*
- *Put your needs in order from the most important to the least important, and focus on the most important one first, after you achieve it move on to the next one, this will give you confidence in yourself and in your achievements.*
- *In Canada everything follows a rule, everything has a procedure. You must follow the steps in order and be sure that you go through that procedure. Never stop because if you do so many people will move ahead and reach before you, so your chances will be less."*

When we asked Nardeen if she still has any challenges in her life, she paused and said: "I can't find a job, any kind of a job. I have tried everything, from survival jobs to a pharmacist assistant with no luck. I go for interviews but nothing happens after that".

*Tracey Vaughan  
Community Development Council Durham*

Service Planners: the Community Social Profile is available at [www.cdcd.org](http://www.cdcd.org) to inform your planning decisions.

### Local Diversity and Immigration Partnership Council

We look forward to hearing your stories and feedback. If you would like to subscribe or **contribute** to the "The Citizen" Newsletter, please contact :

Email: [diversitynewsletter@durham.ca](mailto:diversitynewsletter@durham.ca)

Website: (portal pending)

Blog: (coming soon)

Facebook: (coming soon)

