

## PHILIPPINE BAYANIHAN COMMUNITY CENTRE

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Summer 2019 Edition

# ILAW

ILAW is the newsletter of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association

Editors: Lani Domaloy and Meyen Quigley

## EDITORIAL

When future editors of ILAW write about **2019**, they will look back to the early part of this year as a time of momentous celebrations and events for Filipinos in Victoria.

In **April** of this year, the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Association (VFCA) marked **50 years since its founding in 1969**. The VFCA celebrated the courage, the vision, and the determination of those pioneers with a dinner-dance at the Hotel Grand Pacific, and a cultural show at the Dave Dunnet Theatre in Oakbay.

In April 1969, fifteen Filipino immigrants – fourteen women and one man, under the leadership of **Marcelina Bolanos Baldauf**, saw the founding and formal incorporation of the VFCA, an organization meant to cement the togetherness and sense of community of Filipino immigrants in Victoria and support their efforts to be good citizens in their new country.

Those pioneers, many of them in the health care field, met in each other's homes, at restaurants, in church halls, in parks, when they could – keeping the fires of love for the home country alive, and working to make a strong and positive contribution to their adopted country, Canada.

They were not motivated by money, or fame, or self-interest. They simply longed for home, and did not want to forget. But they also wanted to show loudly and clearly that Filipinos deserve not only to be part of the Canadian immigrant fabric, but have much to contribute to the strength and beauty of Canada's multicultural identity.

And so they danced, they cooked, they sang, they showed off their Filipino costumes – taken out of storage in *bauls* and closets, and invited Victoria and indeed, all of Vancouver Island, to see what they had brought to enrich the life of the community. And the community took notice. Sponsorships for VFCA events grew, organizations took various steps to show their support. Victorians turned out to see Filipinos share the wealth of their cultural traditions.

Because it was such a brave act – the coming together to create a unique space and place for Filipinos in Victoria, we celebrated the VFCA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in style. It was also a celebration of how

much and how well the vision and mission of the VFCA has been preserved and indeed, expanded in ways the pioneers could not have imagined, including a building of our own on Blanshard Street.

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In **May**, following tradition, Victoria's Filipino-Canadians participated in the community celebration of **Victoria Day**. On **May 20, 2019**, members of four organizations – the VFCA, the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Seniors' Association (VFCSA), the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Caregivers' Association (VFCCA) and the Vancouver Island Cordillera Association (VICA) marched along with several thousand participants in the 121<sup>st</sup> Island Farms **Victoria Day Parade**.

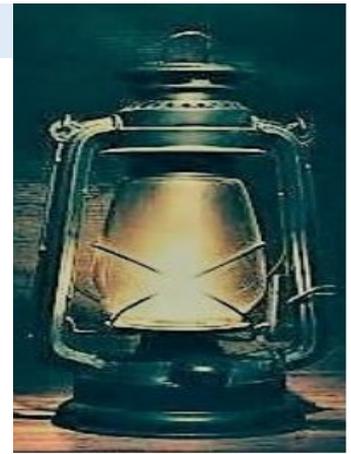
Filipino organizations have been regulars in the Victoria Day Parade. Their participation has included marching with giant size *papier-mache* figures in Filipino costume, a nipa hut, and dancing Philippine folk dance favorites on the street. This year, they marched dressed in various cultural and regional costumes, a **nipa hut / bahay kubo** in tow. They were a colorful addition to the floats, marching bands, and revelers that took over Douglas St. in **Victoria**, marching from Mayfair Mall to the intersection of Douglas and Humboldt Street.

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Also in **May**, the VFCA **Sampaguita Dancers** bagged the **Quail Rock Foundation Award** and the **Adjudicators Choice Award** for Ethnic Dance at the **Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival**.

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And then came **June** and **MABUHAY**. The VFCA, the VFCSA, the VFCCA and VICA again joined hands for a community-wide celebration of **Philippine Independence Day** at Victoria's Centennial Square, for the benefit of the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS).



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- \* November 3  
Volunteer  
Appreciation and  
2019 AGM
- \* December 1  
Children's Christmas  
Party
- \* Christmas Dance  
Auction—TBA

This year, 2019, marked **121 years** since the Declaration of Philippine Independence on **June 12, 1898** by Filipino revolutionary leaders in Kawit, Cavite. The first **MABUHAY** celebration in Victoria was launched in 2018.

**June** was a landmark in another way. In October 2018, federal **MP Salma Zahid** of Scarborough Southwest, Ontario, authored the *Filipino Heritage Month Act №23*, declaring June as **Filipino Heritage Month** across Canada. The motion was passed by a unanimous vote in the House of Commons on October 20, 2018. In a privilege speech, MP Zahid stated that “*the government (of Canada) should recognize the contributions that Filipino-Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Filipino language and culture, and the importance of reflecting upon Filipino heritage for future generations by declaring June, every year, Filipino Heritage Month.*”

Victoria is home to more than 5,000 of the approximately 850,000 Filipino Canadians in the country today. It was but one of several cities all across Canada to celebrate **the first ever Filipino Heritage Month** in Canada.

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Also in June, was a **Workshop on the Trafficking of Vulnerable Newcomer Women and Youth**. The workshop held at the Bayanihan Community Centre on June 5 was a follow up to an earlier workshop on May 1 held at the Cedar Hill Golf Club.

This series of workshops was coordinated by the Intercultural Association of Victoria ICA and Community Partnership Network in collaboration with the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Caregivers Association under President Annette Beech and was funded by the Province of BC, and the BC Ministry of Justice - Office of Civil Forfeiture.

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In **July**, the **Vancouver Island Cordillera Association (VICA)** had the honor of hosting a **Grand Cañao** that welcomed dancers, singers, community leaders and visitors from Vancouver Island, Washington State, Oregon, Vancouver and other cities in Canada. This was the second **Grand Cañao** the VICA has hosted in Victoria, the first one in 2015. Held at the Canadian Legion Building at 761 Station Avenue in Langford, the **Cañao** was a moving and memorable celebration of the culture and traditions of the peoples of the northern Cordillera region in the Philippines. The presence of several generations of Cordillerans was noteworthy, the preservation of a unique culture taking place before visitors’ very eyes.

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From **August 12 – 14**, Filipino-Canadian youth in Victoria were treated to a youth camp sponsored by the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Association. The camp was held at the Bayanihan Centre. There were 23 participants ages 8—17 in total.

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In the pages that follow are pictorial essays covering these various events. Other events and activities are covered by comments and articles.

We hope you join us in applauding what has been a truly memorable **2019** so far, and congratulating everyone in the community who has had a role in making these events happen, keeping alive the flame of love for the homeland and good citizenship in Canada that our VFCA pioneers lit 50 years ago this year.

**Maraming Salamat at  
Mabuhay tayong lahat**



**ERRATUM:** We regret the omission of the following individuals in the 50th Anniversary Souvenir Program. Our deepest apologies.

**Leonor Santos**  
**Concepcion Banguis**

**Manny Acebedo**  
**Cheryll Ann Pacis**

**Theresa Acebedo**  
**Ginalyn Aquino**

**Cheryl Mason Groulx**  
**Annabelle Sunio Sorinio**

## VFCA CELEBRATES ITS 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The VFCA kicked off its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration with a dinner-dance held at the Hotel Grand Pacific on March 30, 2019. The event was a happy, festive, and star-studded affair.

In attendance were dignitaries including *Philippine Ambassador to Canada Petronila Garcia, Consul-General for Vancouver Ma. Andrelita Austria, Mable Elmore – the first Member of the British Columbia Legislature of Filipino origin, and Member of the Canadian House of Commons representing Esquimalt, Randall Garrison. Victoria City Mayor Lisa Helps* was represented by *Councillor Laurel Collins*.



*L-R BCCHS President Dominga Passmore, VFCCA President Annette Beech, MP Mable Elmore, Consul Greg Marie Concha-Mariño, Consul General Ma. Andrelita Austria, her husband Engr. Carlito Eduardo Austria, Philippine Ambassador to Canada Petronila Garcia, VFCA Board member Lorina Miklenic, VFCA President Agnes Myhre, VFCSA President Connie Custodio, MP Randall Garrison and Victoria Councillor Lauren Collins*

Also present were **VFCA pioneers** – part of the group of men and women who had been present when the VFCA was first organized, and who had guided it to incorporation and lift-off. Present of course were the officers and volunteers of the VFCA, the BCCHS, the VFCSA, the VFCCA, and VICA. Emcee for the evening was *Laila Pires*, VFCA past president and Board Member.



On **Sunday, March 31, 2019**, the celebration continued with a cultural presentation at the Dave Dunnet Community Theater of Oak Bay High School on Cadboro Bay Road in Victoria, showcasing Filipino songs and dances, put in the context of the Filipino-Canadian story in Victoria. Members of all the Filipino-Canadian organizations in Victoria participated, under the guidance of **Jean Graciela Penola**, an instructor at Pearson College and VFCA volunteer who did the script and choreography. **Ryan Velasquez** narrated.



Jean herself starred as the stately queen in *Singkil*. Pioneers' children **Jason Pires**, **Emily Gonzales**, and siblings **Dino** and **Jhoana Castillo**, showed they could still do the moves of the *Tinkling* that they had danced as children. They were joined by **Tita Quigley**, **Delfin Pojol**, and **Connie Custodio** – all pioneer movers and shakers of VFCA in the early days. VICA men and women danced Cordillera dances to the beat of the *gangsa*, followed by Line Dancers and our very own Sampaguita dancers with songs by the VFCA Carollers.

Young **Rayver Agapito** stole the show with his heartbreaking rendition of *SA UGOY NG DUYAN*, which spoke not only to the love of a child for his mother but also captured the immigrant's longing for the motherland.

The event was well-attended, with everyone present treated to cake and other sweets after the show.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL EVENT ORGANIZERS AND PARTICIPANTS!**

**SA UGOY NG DUYAN**

*Sana'y di nagmaliw ang dati kong araw  
Nang munti pang bata sa piling ni nanay  
Nais kong maulit ang awit ni inang mahal  
Awit ng pag-ibig habang ako'y nasa duyan*

*Sana'y di nagmaliw ang dati kong araw  
Nang munti pang bata sa piling ni nanay  
Nais kong maulit ang awit ni inang mahal  
Awit ng pag-ibig habang ako'y nasa duyan*

*Refrain:*

*Sa aking pagtulog na labis ang himbing  
Ang bantay ko'y tala, ang tanod ko'y bituin  
Sa piling ni nanay, langit ay buhay  
Pusa kong may dusa sabik sa ugoy ng duyan*

*Sana'y di nagmaliw ang dati kong araw  
Nang munti pang bata sa piling ni nanay  
Nais kong maulit ang awit ni inang mahal  
Awit ng pag-ibig habang ako'y nasa Duyan...*



# GREATER VICTORIA PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

May 7, 2019



The *VFCA Sampagueta Dancers* bagged the **Quail Rock Foundation Award** and the **Adjudicators Choice Award** for Ethnic Dance at the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival. The Sampagueta Dancers performed the *Singkil*, a folkdance of the Maranao people of Lake Lanao in the Philippines and based on the epic legend *Darangen*. The performance was at the festival's Highlights Concert on May 7 at the University of Victoria.

Texts and photographs by: Ben Pires

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## VICTORIA DAY PARADE

May 20, 2019

It was drizzling and the skies were grey as paraders gathered with their group. But come rain or shine, the Filipino-Canadian community of Victoria in their colourful costumes carrying banners, flags, and a nipa hut depicting Philippine culture gracefully marched down Douglas St. during 121st Annual Island Farms Victoria Day Parade. Over the years, the group has won awards in the



walking category. Meanwhile at the Bayanihan centre, meals were prepared to welcome and provide nourishment to the weary paraders...



Photographs by: Annette Beech and Lorina Miklenic

## MABUHAY 2019

Centennial Square in Victoria turned into a Philippine island on June 15, 2019, with **MABUHAY 2019**, a festival celebrating the **121<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Philippine Independence from Spain** and also marking the **first ever Philippine Heritage Month in Canada**. The square was transformed overnight into a large circle of booths representing various programs, businesses, and organizations, Many of them Philippine-staffed or owned. People flowed into the square and went from booth to booth checking out the delights and displays on offer.

**Mayor Lisa Helps** came (below, top right) and she was greeted by officers of the BCHS, VFCA, VFCSA, VFCAA, VICA, and program committee leads. Other dignitaries present were **MP Randall Garrison**, **Kevin Lee - President of the BC Ferry and Marine Workers' Union** (a MABUHAY sponsor), and representatives of community organizations including **Tim Horton's**, **Campus Nissan**, **Sprott Shaw College** and **Dodd's Furniture**. Quite a few Filipino-Canadians sported the Philippine flag on their clothes. And at 10:00 a.m., the event came alive with the start of the program.



After a sizzling Zumba number by **Lizy Gipson**, an invocation by First Nations Elder **Joseph Thomas**, and the Canadian and Filipino national anthems, **BCHS President Dominga Passmore**, **VFCA President Agnes Myhre**, **VFCSA President Connie Custodio** and **VFCCA President Annette Beech** welcomed everyone and thanked all who participated in and sponsored the event. Mayor Helps, MP Garrison and Mr. Lee of BCFMWU congratulated the community on the observance of Philippine Independence Day – and Philippine Heritage Month. And then it was time to eat, and what an array of choices everyone had! There were long lines at the VFCA's nipa hut kiosk, the VFCSA and the VFCCA's tents – all serving Filipino food. **ANCOP Victoria** went full multicultural, serving *sisig* and hot dogs. The **Glad Tidings** group also had a booth, and **IGNITE**, and a family that served that most beloved of all Filipino foods, *lechon*.



People ate and talked and walked and stopped at various informational booths and exhibits. Another Zumba number led by **Rufo Borja** sizzled the crowd while dancers changed costumes. The afternoon flew by quickly for those who stayed and watched the various song and dance numbers on the stage. These included VFCA's very own **Sampaguíta Dancers** led by **Daisy Breuer**, the **Vancouver Island Cordillera Association (VICA)** dancers, the **Unity Dancers** led by **Tina Rezvani**, the **VFCA Line Dancers**, and the **Lahing Kayumanggi Dancers** led by **Meriam dela Cruz**. Singers included **Sam Penola**, **Rayver Agapito**, **Angela Caraca**, **Thia**, the **Glad Tidings Group**, **Kurt Agno**, **Rayver Agapito**, and **Meriam de la Cruz**. Emcees **Anna Junge** and **Sam Claver** kept the program clipping along at a quick pace. A very special treat was the repeat performance of **Singkil**, a dance number that won the Adjudicator Award at the Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival, with **Jean Penola** as the lead dancer. The emcees and program participants included cultural footnotes to each performance.



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**CONGRATULATIONS** to the BCHS, VFCA, VFCCA, VFCSA and VICA for another successful **MABUHAY** celebration. **THANK YOU** to all who participated and volunteered to make **MABUHAY** possible. **THANK YOU** for all your hard work!

**PHOTOGRAPHS** by: **JB Lim** and **Sid Emmanuel**

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## WORKSHOP ON THE TRAFFICKING OF VULNERABLE NEWCOMER WOMEN AND YOUTH

Human trafficking is a problem worldwide. It is a problem that has also come to our community in Victoria. On June 5, 2019, a workshop was held at the Bayanihan Community Centre to address this matter. It was a follow up to an earlier workshop held on May 1 at the Cedar Hill Golf Club. This initiative was coordinated by the Intercultural Association of Victoria and the Community Partnership Network led by **Steven Baileys** in collaboration with the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Caregivers Association headed by **Annette Beech**, with funding from the Province of BC and BC Ministry of Justice - Office of Civil Forfeiture.



There were 33 attendees with varied backgrounds such as: police officers, international students, university students, temporary foreign workers, and members of the Punjabi and Filipino Communities. A lecture on the "[Cycle of Exploitation](#)" was facilitated by Debi O'Boyle. Debi is the Manager for Quality Assurance at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Victoria. The workshop served as an open door to the public, providing information that seeks to support vulnerable women and youth, and letting them know that help is available, and empowering them to hopefully regain their life back.

As ICA notes on their website: "The west coast of Canada is both a major transit and a destination point for human trafficking. Canada is also a source of trafficked persons and has experienced cases of domestic trafficking within its borders. Due to the hidden nature of this crime, most human trafficking activities are often undetected or unreported. Often the most vulnerable populations in our community become victims of human trafficking. These vulnerable groups include: Aboriginal women, temporary foreign workers, youth and newcomer immigrants and refugees."

Filipino domestic workers and caregivers are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation. They may face a host of problems including not being paid their wages, having their passports taken away, their free time being limited, and many other restrictions and human rights abuses. Many hesitate to report the abuse because on insufficient knowledge of the police system in Canada and the supports and resources available to victims.

To learn more about human trafficking and what you can do to combat it, visit the website of the [BC Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons](#).

## GRAND CANAO 2019

In the early evening of Saturday, July 27, 2019, people in their lovely Igorot themed costumes began to flock to Royal Canadian Legion Hall at 761 Station Avenue in Langford, Victoria. Some came from Vancouver, a few from Seattle, Washington, and some from as far away as Calgary, Alberta. Members of BIBAK (Benguet Ifugao Bontoc Apayao Kalinga) BC and BIBAK Pacific Northwest and their guests all came to Victoria to grace a *Grand Cañao* hosted by the Vancouver Island Cordillera Association (VICA).



This was the second *Grand Cañao* that VICA has hosted. In 2015, VICA also hosted a highly successful *Grand Cañao* with guests from the United States and other cities in Canada.

Cañao has a lot of meanings. For the people of the Cordilleras it has come down in history as a ceremonial ritual wherein the community offered food and prayers to the gods for safety and the protection of warriors who bravely defended their lands from the conquest of the Spaniards. In modern times, Cañao refers to a feast that may include ritual offerings and sacred liturgy among the indigenous peoples of Northern Luzon in the Philippines.

Former VICA President Marco Ogen welcomed everyone, and Mrs. Rufina Pinangat started the evening with a short prayer. After a dinner that included Canadian roast beef as well as Filipino *lechon*, ice cream and fruits in season, Mrs. Dominga Passmore, VICA founding Board Member, opened the program. Mr. Amando Pitag, current VICA President, welcomed everyone anew and introduced special guests Mr. Pablo Wigwigan, President of BIBAK BC, and guests from Washington State who represented BIBAK Seattle. Sam Claver, VICA youth, emceed.



Top L-R: Sam Claver, Marco Ogen, Dominga Passmore.

Bottom L-R: VICA President Amando Pitag, Petra Durrance, Meredith Tayaban

The guest speaker for the evening was Ms. Petra Durrance, a member of VICA's first Board of Directors. She spoke about the commonalities between Canada's First Nations and the Cordillerans – especially in their need to fight for their rights as indigenous peoples against governments' attempts to eradicate their identity.

Meredith Tayaban then gave an inspirational speech highlighting the achievements of VICA and how far the community of Cordillerans in Victoria had come. Geovahne Fillag ("Banny"), a visitor from Calgary, sang the plaintive *Nan Layad Nan Likatan*, a song about remaining true to what one loves despite much hardship and suffering.

*"We should remain proud of our uniqueness and heritage, our color and culture and how far we have come. Let us be generous with our gifts to help out and lift each other up."*  
– Petra Durrance

Throughout the evening, there were Igorot tribal dances. Customary to a Cañao are the sounds of *gangsa* or the gongs whose rhythm and vibes those dances moved. The display of costumes worn with cuts or designs both original and modernized, all contributed to reminding everyone of the rich culture that Cordillerans represent. The evening celebrated a community of loving people bound by their ethnicity, autonomy and love for life.



Photographs by: Lani Domaloy and Johnedel Matias

## VFCA YOUTH CAMP 2019

Filipino-Canadian youth in Victoria were treated this summer to a youth camp sponsored by the VFCA. The camp was held at Bayanihan Community Centre from August 12—14. 23 youth attended ages 8-17.

Over 3 days, they learned Tagalog from **Aghie Myhre**, cooking Filipino food from **Dominga Passmore** and **Leonor Santos** and did theatre and dance with **Jean Penola**.

Congratulations to the young campers and thank you to camp mentors!!!

The youth are so important to the work of preserving our Filipino heritage in our adopted country. We hope more and more young people become involved in the activities of the BCHS and the VFCA!



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## YOUTH AWARDEE: SOPHIE SIANEN

On May 74, 6453, the Saanich Municipal Government Youth Services department hosted a Youth Awards night at the Cedar Hill Golf Course's Banquet Room. The event focused on increasing supports and opportunities for youth to be engaged in their community. In all, 12 individual and group awards were handed out to local youth and youth workers. Awards were presented to young people in Saanich who had demonstrated exceptional resiliency, dedication, volunteerism, friendship, and/or commitment to making their community a better place.

Filipino-Canadian **Sophie Sianen** was recognized with the **Eco-Citizen Award**. In nominating Sophie, Reynolds Secondary school faculty member **Heather Corey** wrote:

*"Sophie is an amazing young lady, an exceptional student, and a best friend of the earth. Sophie has engaged in many projects to help reclaim Garry Oak Ecosystems, count pollinators at Lochside Meadow, and grow produce in the school garden for our local salad bar program. Her enthusiasm for the earth is real, and growing healthy food has become a passion so great, she has been a spokesperson at conferences, speaking to inspire others on this cause."*



*This year, Sophie and her peers tackled the issue of building a culture of reusing and sharing in our school community. They came up with the concept of a pop-up café, where students have been sharing used clothing and books. She uses produce from the community garden to create lip balms and preserves, and passes those products along to the school community. Furthermore, the pop up café is being used to disseminate home recipe cards for eco-friendly cleaners and meatless recipes, which the students back with creative art work. Sophie has been creative and deliberate in her efforts to influence those around her to take note of the ways that we can move forward in efforts to be eco-friendly in all aspects of our lives."*

Congratulations Sophie - you make your Filipino— Canadian community in Victoria proud!

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## THANK YOU AND ADIOS TO MINDA ROGERSON

You would have seen her at many a Filipino community function in Victoria - slim, well-coiffed, and smiling, wearing a business suit or her trademark yellow mestiza dress with blue trim. She has emceed, cooked, danced, served food, greeted guests, made phone calls - name a volunteer activity and she has done it. She, of course, is **Minda Rogerson**, who has been one of the indefatigable members of the VFCA and who, with her husband **Bob**, is getting ready to leave Victoria later this September for the sunny landscapes of Southern Spain.

Minda has been here, there and everywhere at VFCA and BCHS events since she and Bob moved to Victoria permanently in 2009. It took Minda no time at all to plunge deep into VFCA and BCHS volunteer activities, as she had spent her years in Alberta and other places before that leading and organizing fundraising and other activities for non-profit organizations, including a symphony orchestra, even while working full-time on her real estate business.

She will be the first to tell you that her enthusiasm and energy have sometimes been met with raised eyebrows. "But that's OK," she says. "In any organization there will always be differences of opinion, different backgrounds. The important thing is to discuss things up front and not behind people's backs. Disagreement is healthy but it must be done in the open."

Minda's confidence, directness, and her winning ways (she will melt your heart with a sweet "Inday...") served her well in business and in her volunteer work. She has come a long way, she says, from being the shy medical technologist from Bohol who arrived in Montreal in 1966, where she "froze" even in July. She was helping in the kitchen at a Filipino party in Montreal when Bob, a student pursuing a Master's degree at McGill University, took one look at her and promptly fell in love.

Fifty-one years later they are still like newly-weds, enjoying the comforts of their warm and welcoming home on Moss Street even as they prepare to join daughter Luiza and her family in Spain. Another daughter, Neriza, lives in Alberta.

*"We really have to take care of the volunteers, and let them know that we care. They are the backbone of the organization. Some of them work, some have two jobs, but they come and they help. They are important."* – Minda Rogerson

Talking about her grandchildren Dylan and Lucy brings a sparkle to Minda's eyes. "I love it here but I want to be there for the little ones; I want to enjoy them," Minda says.

Asked what she has liked the most about being a BCHS and VFCA volunteer, she says: "The people, and the fiestas." Reflecting on her work with BCHS and VFCA, Minda says: "We really have to take care of the volunteers, and let them know that we care. They are the backbone of the organization. Some of them work, some of them have two jobs, but they come and they help. They are important."

Thank you Minda, for your hard work, generosity and the dedication you brought to your volunteerism. Godspeed as you start your full-time career as Lola, and come visit when you can!



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### CONGRATULATIONS TO BEN AND LAILA!

There is an English word, "serendipity," which means happy, chance and unexpected events. In April this year, VFCA celebrated 50 years since its founding. In an example of serendipity, April 2019 also marked 50 years of marriage for two of VFCA's pillars, **Ben and Laila Pires**. On April 28, VFCA feted Ben and Laila with a congratulatory lunch at the Bayanihan Community Centre.

Ben and Laila met at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, where Ben's father was serving as UNESCO regional teacher education centre. Ben himself was president of the International Club of U.P., a club of which Laila (de Lara) was a member. Laila and Ben married on April 26, 1969, with various Philippine dignitaries in attendance including then Secretary of Foreign Affairs Carlos P. Romulo. Ben and Laila immigrated to Canada in October 1969. They moved to Victoria in 1971, and became quickly involved in the newly-formed VFCA. They have played many many roles at VFCA and BCHS.

They were founding members of the BCHS in 1991 and worked hard to make the dream of a community centre a reality. Laila is currently a VFCA board member and has been BCHS treasurer since 2000. Ben was editor of ILAW for many years. They have played leadership roles but they have also carried boxes, cooked, served food, sorted donated goods, greeted guests and done a lot of the not very visible but important work of building relationships between the Filipino community and other groups in Victoria, including the Intercultural Association of Victoria.



The Filipino Canadian Cultural Heritage Society of British Columbia recognized Laila's work on behalf of the Filipino community of Victoria with the Maharlika Award in 2011. Ben was named Honorary Citizen of the City of Victoria in November 2000 and received the University of Victoria Community Leadership Award in December '03. Ben also received the Award of Excellence for community service from his fraternity, the Beta Sigma Fraternity, University of the Philippines, in July 2006.

Ben and Laila have three children: Karl, a lawyer based in Japan; Jason, an anchor for CTV News; and Serena, a medical doctor, and three grandchildren Misha, Kaiya and Reyan. All the Pires children were members of the Sampaguita Dance Group, as was Laila. Asked to comment on his family's life in Canada, Ben said: "It was blessing upon blessing after we came here."

The Pires family themselves have been a gift to the Filipino community in Victoria. Congratulations and thank you!

**SPREAD THE WORD** about your wedding, birthday, anniversary, or other celebrations and important events through ILAW. For a small donation, we will post your announcements and photographs. Send your email to bayanihanc@shaw.ca with the subject line: llaw Ad

# TRANSITIONS

On April 5, 2019, the Filipino-Canadian community in Victoria lost one of its most beloved members, Eufrocina "Mama Sen" Narciso.

It was under Mama Sen's leadership that the VFCA Choral Group was organized in 1976. For the past 40 plus years, during the Christmas season, the group has gone caroling at the homes of Canadians of Filipino ancestry in Victoria - raising thousands of dollars for VFCA and the Bayanihan Community Centre from donations. The choral group has also recorded a CD to fundraise for the centre.



In 1991 and 1994, with Mama Sen conducting, the VFCA Choral Group starred in a Musical Extravaganza that showcased Philippine music and dance to the Victoria community. Mama Sen was an important part of local TV productions of Christmas in the Philippines, Philippine Festivals: Lent and May-time Rites, and a cultural fundraising show for earthquake victims in the Philippines. Formerly a school teacher, Mama Sen generously shared her knowledge of and love for Philippine music, dance, fashion and cuisine with the community. She herself was a dancer and participated in fashion shows.

Mama Sen was the beloved wife of Jesus ("Jess") and loving mother to Jessica, Marlon, and Babette, and grandmother to seven. We will miss you Mama Sen. Thank you for your love and service.

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This year we also said goodbye to:

**Juanito Bartolome Castillo**  
**Susan Cabico**  
**Bruce MacGregor**



Condolences to the families and loved ones of our departed members. We are grateful for their lives and what they shared and did for the Victoria Filipino-Canadian community.

## June is declared Filipino Heritage Month in Canada

### Statement by Minister Rodriguez on Filipino Heritage Month

OTTAWA, June 2, 2019

This June, Canadians mark the inaugural Filipino Heritage Month.

On October 30, 2018, the House of Commons unanimously adopted June as Filipino Heritage Month in recognition of Canadians of Filipino descent and the contributions they have made to our country.

With a community of over 850,000, Filipino Canadians are the fastest-growing community in the country. Proud of its rich heritage and history, the community has made and continues to make outstanding social, economic, political, and cultural contributions to our society. Filipino Heritage Month is an opportunity for us to recognize and learn more about the Filipino community in Canada and the valuable role they play in creating an open and diverse society.

As Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, I invite all Canadians to learn more about the rich culture and traditions of our fellow citizens of Filipino descent and to take part in the many activities taking place across the country in June. Happy Filipino Heritage Month!



**The Honourable Pablo Rodriguez**  
 Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism

## Some Achievements of Filipinos in Canada

From "The Filipino Diaspora in Canada," Embassy of the Philippines, Ottawa  
<https://ottnwps.dfa.gov.ph/index.php/2016/04/12/98-34-55/filipino-diaspora>

### Developments after the 2016 Census

Filipinos in Canada numbered around 901,218 in April, 2018, comprising a mix of naturalized Canadians, permanent residents and temporary foreign workers (TFWs). This number comprises almost 2.6% of Canada's national population.

In 2017, remittances from Filipinos in Canada totalled USD 644,754,000, up 12.6% from 2016 (USD 572,820,000). The figures are small compared to statistical data from earlier years (e.g. data for 2010 showed remittances from Filipinos in Canada at USD 2,022,611,000). The apparent decline in remittances is due to a correction in the statistical methods and in double-counting remittances coursed by remittance centers through banks.

### Some Achievements of Filipinos in Canada

Canadians of Filipino descent have had forays into provincial and federal politics with mixed outcomes. Among the more notable ones would be that of Dr. Rey D. Pagtakhan, who served as cabinet minister in the Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, and served as a Member of the Federal Parliament from 1988 until his defeat in the elections of 2004.

In Manitoba, Fiorina Marcelino of the New Democratic Party, was the first woman of color to be elected to the Manitoba Legislature in 2007 and served as Provincial Minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism. She continues to serve at the Manitoba Legislative Assembly representing the electoral district of Logan. Her brother-in-law and caucus colleague, Ted Marcelino, was also elected to the Legislative Assembly in 2011 and represents the district of Tynndal Park. Mable Elmore (NDP) was elected to the British Columbia Legislative Assembly in 2009, representing the riding of Vancouver-Kensington.

Filipinos who come to Canada span many generations across the past decades, each with unique sets of motivations and pursuits. A study by the Asia-Pacific Foundation puts the socio-economic and cultural contributions of Filipino-Canadians, and thereby of the Philippines, to Canada at about \$255.5 million in human capital - covering the economic value of the personal, technical and professional contributions of Filipinos to Canada, and taking into consideration the investment within the Philippines of about \$1,825 per year in feeding, housing, clothing, educating, and training each Filipino until migration to Canada at age 35 (approximately \$63,875 per person of working age).

The increased flows of Filipinos contributed significantly to the dispersal of new migrants in Canada, partly because their pre-existing communities were more dispersed across Canada. Filipinos do not tend to cluster in urban areas but instead go to places of economic opportunity.

## Philippine Independence 1898

### The Declaration of Philippine Independence

With a government in operation, Aguinaldo thought that it was necessary to declare the independence of the Philippines. He believed that such a move would inspire the people to fight more eagerly against the Spaniards and at the same time, lead the foreign countries to recognize the independence of the country....

On June 12, between four and five in the afternoon, Aguinaldo, in the presence of a huge crowd, proclaimed the independence of the Philippines at Cavite el Viejo (Kawit). For the first time, the Philippine National Flag, made in Hongkong by Mrs. Marcela Agoncillo, assisted by Lorenza Agoncillo and Delfina Herboza/ was officially hoisted and the Philippine National March played in public. The Act of the Declaration of Independence was prepared by Ambrosio Rianzares Bautista, who also read it. ... The Philippine Declaration was signed by ninety-eight persons, among them an American army officer who witnessed the proclamation.

from Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*



Photograph reproduced from The Manila Times. The 1898 Declaration of Philippine Independence in Kawit, Cavite.



The Making of the Filipino Flag - painting by Fernando Amorsolo.