

In this issue: Reflections of a First Time Voter, Immigration Partnership Event Highlights and more...

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## WINTER 2016

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### *Inside this issue:*

Page 2

**Reflections of a First Time Voter**

**Emmanuel Dizwani**

Page 3

**Interview with Kashif Riaz,**

**Director Sales and Technical Support  
Computer Liquidators**

Page 4

**Profile Partnership Council**

**Fulford Academy**

## Welcome to our first newsletter of 2016!

Looking back, 2015 was an exciting year for the Immigration Partnership. Highlights include the First Annual Immigrant Entrepreneur Award, a newcomer World Café event, training sessions for employers, and refugee awareness training for local service providers. The Immigration Partnership has also joined the Refugee Assistance Brockville & Area Committee and will remain engaged with refugee support efforts throughout the region.

We look forward to increasing the number of partners we are collaborating with and supporting, to ensure Leeds Grenville continues to be a welcoming place for newcomers to live, work, study and raise their families.

*Best wishes for a wonderful 2016!*

## Reflections of a New Canadian on Voting in the October 2015 Federal Election

Written by: Emmanuel Dizwani



Emmanuel Dizwani at the Polling station Oct 19, 2015

Democracy is defined as a system of government in which power is vested in the people, who rule either directly or through freely elected representatives. It is a word that we hear thrown around a lot, in many a different context. For me – I recently came face to face with what I believe to be its true meaning.

I am born in a country called Zimbabwe in Southern Africa. It is characterized by wonderful, hard-working and friendly people, beautiful and fertile land, magnificent wildlife and an ideal climate. Unfortunately, as is the case in many African nations, it is also experiencing a political and economic crisis.

There's an African proverb: "When the elephants fight it is the grass that suffers." So often in the game of politics, as parties battle each other for power, it is the innocent masses that suffer. Often Democracy is subverted, voter's rolls are manipulated, intimidation of voters is rife and the ballot count is rigged. I remain hopeful that my beloved birth country finds peace in the near future and with it the prosperity and freedom that will doubtlessly follow. The patterns of history weave in its favor.

I moved to Canada to be with my Canadian wife in 2010. Last year, in the spring of 2015, I became a Canadian citizen and was eligible to vote for the first time. My experience of voting until then had been shrouded in doubts and knowing that my selection would probably not even count. But in the fall of

2015, I saw for the first time an example of what can happen when the rule of law exists and where the elected officials are there to primarily serve the public and are held to account by the Citizenry.

Certainly my experience in Brockville will not necessarily reflect the experience of every voter throughout Canada, especially perhaps in cities much larger than Brockville, where the voting experience may differ. But there will certainly be parallels – foremost of which will be that people will cast their vote without fear and with the knowledge that it will count. That is the greatest victory of

democracy. That is the truest expression of freedom.

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A voter card was mailed to me informing me where I could go to cast my vote (impressive!). I arrived at the polling station on Vote Day, where there were just two people ahead of me waiting to vote, which in itself was surreal and a far cry from the queue of hundreds of voters that I was accustomed to. In my previous voting experiences I would expect to spend most of the day in a voting queue. When it came to my turn, an elderly lady with a beautiful and welcoming smile gestured for me to come to the table. I handed over my ID and voter card and my name was located on the voter’s roll, I was given a ballot and went into the voter’s booth and made my selection. I remember a feeling of apprehension that I didn’t quite understand but that I know to be linked to the enormity and magnitude of the moment. Perhaps partly due to an awareness of the fact that for the first time in my life, I was confident that this vote would count.

Then a moment of slight confusion - partly due to the fact that I wasn’t certain of the exact procedure and what should happen next, and partly because I was also undergoing a weird sort of out-of-body experience where I felt like I was not the one participating, but was just an outside observer of the entire experience: I walked back out with my ballot and went to walk past the registration table, (with ballot still in hand!) and was urgently called back because the ballot box where I needed to drop my ballot was on that table! So anyway, with my ballot safely in the box, I then walked out with a rueful smile, thinking that if she hadn’t stopped me, I would have probably walked out and driven home with my ballot! Now that would have been a waste of the voting experience, eh?!!

I reflected that on that one day, every four years, the Citizenry wielded tremendous power, and with the stroke of a pen could instigate profound change and determine for themselves the government and future of their choosing. What a powerful and wonderful gift! I wondered if most of my fellow voters were as aware of the profoundness and awe of this moment, where power changed hands without the firing of a single bullet - without doubt or fear or intimidation. Or perhaps you first have to be denied that gift, like so many people in fractured nations around the Globe, in order to see its true value? A free and fair election is an event that is too rare even in our modern world.

I am a Citizen of two countries. Both of which I love and am fiercely proud. The Zimbabwean part of me yearns for a day that all people, not just in my country of birth, but wherever they are in the world, can vote freely and choose a collective destiny of their own making. I cannot wait for that day. Through this experience of voting for the first time in Canada, I have seen what is possible. As I watched the results come in late into the night, I sat in awe at the people's will being expressed in dramatic fashion. This whole experience reached its peak a few days later as I sat in front of the television and saw one Prime Minister resign his position gracefully and another get sworn in, all without a single riot or a single bullet being fired.

Bravo Canada. This was awesome and inspiring. We truly do live up to our creed of being the "True North – strong and free." A fine example of Democracy at work - And I was privileged to see it first-hand.

*-Emmanuel Dizwani*

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Page 3

## **Kashif Riaz, Director Sales & Technical Support Computer Liquidators**



Kashif Riaz immigrated to Windsor Ontario from Pakistan in 1999. Shortly after, Kashif who is an experienced computer programmer was offered a position in Kingston Ontario. In 2001, his wife also from Pakistan joined him. She has a Master degree in Chemistry and secured a position at Abbot Labs in Brockville. The family grew with the arrival of a son who is now ten and twin girls who are eight. His parents also immigrated to Canada to be reunited with the family.

For the first few years Kashif made the daily commute to Kingston but in 2004, decided to open his own business in Brockville. He saw a unique business opportunity to refurbish and sell lower cost computers. The successful business has been located at the same address on Ormond Street since it opened. It has since expanded to include IT support and computer services to local businesses.

Kashif is very involved in the community. He provides co-op training opportunities for local high school students as well as job training through the Employment and Education Centre. He is or has been an active member of the Greater Brockville Ad & Sales Club, Business Network International, the Brockville Chamber of Commerce, and other local business organizations.

Kashif's many volunteer commitments include the Brockville and area YMCA working with both youth (5-15 years) and adults providing Squash training, and acting as a religious guide and visitor for inmates of the Brockville Jail and the secure Treatment Centre. He is a member of the Indian Canadian Multicultural Society and has assisted the Indian community with their booth at the multicultural festival since arriving in Brockville.

He is the contact person for Muslim immigrants and new residents moving into Leeds Grenville and is actively involved with the Syrian refugee committee. Kashif is a Founding Member of the Brockville Islamic Society and a part of a group that works towards interfaith understanding.

Kashif also finds the time to volunteer at his children's school, as a member of the Parents Council especially helping in their fundraising programs, including their annual community BBQ, kids hot lunch program, and track and field activities.

Since coming to Brockville, Kasif Raiz and his family has made a significant contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of our community. Leeds and Grenville is made stronger by newcomers such as the Raiz family.



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*Page 4*

## **Profile of Local Immigration Partnership Council Member: Fulford Academy**



Fulford Academy was founded 2002 by Suzan Kendall and Nelson Williams, two independent school professionals with a shared vision to help international students succeed. The founders were seeing many international students fail in school, not because they were lacking academic capacity, but because they were poorly prepared for the reality of English language instruction in Canada. Suzan Kendall has a background in admissions at the secondary and post-secondary level and is the lead recruiter; still travelling several months per year.

Suzan's vision was to have a boarding school that would teach English, Canadian teaching/learning styles, Canadian culture and boarding school expectations to international students. In addition to preparing students socially, academically and linguistically, Fulford provides academic counselling and placement services that provide a viable academic plan for each student's future; a path to university and beyond. The ethos of the Fulford community is on individual attention in a small family-like setting in which each person has the opportunity to feel comfortable and valued.

Fulford Academy started with a handful of students in March 2002, and remained a relatively small business, growing to a school of 40 in 2010. Since 2010, with the opening of the Chinese market and other regions fully recognizing the potential benefits of a Fulford education, the school's enrolment has more than doubled. In the spring of 2015 Fulford had their largest enrolment with 94 students.

Due to the increased numbers, the school recently moved the student residence off campus to what is called Fulford Dorm on the 1000 Islands Village Campus which is just a few minutes east of the "School House" in Brockville. This new location allows Fulford to dedicate the School House at 280 King St. East to classrooms, and place all the students into the same residence facility. This ensures students have an equivalent and well controlled residence experience.

The school employs a diverse staff. Many of the international faces arrived in Canada prior to employment at the Academy, but Fulford has also recruited several international employees in the past few years. This year the staff has connections in Germany, Mexico, Venezuela, Barbados, Russia, China, Taiwan, South Korea and Scotland.

## **Economic and Social Impact**

The Fulford Academy has both an economic and social impact on the local community. The school employs more than 60 people, many of them teachers and residence staff and other professionals, but also an excellent chef, cooks, cleaners, a maintenance crew and many others. The payroll comprises more than half of the budget. As a business, Fulford chooses to spend locally as much as possible and the students also inject a large number of dollar into the City via restaurant meals (Kochi Sushi is favourite on Fridays nights), new gadgets and entertainment. They also support local charities by fundraising and volunteering at Loaves and Fishes, Harvest Sharing Food Bank, the Maternity Ward renovations at the Brockville General Hospital, Movember & Women's Health, Kids and Cops Fishing and others.

Headmaster Dr. Tom Steel states that, "In an age when differences are often seen as a source of fear in our society, the local community's exposure to our international kids generates a positive attitude and understanding. We are justifiably proud of the exceptional behaviour of our students in most public and social occasions; they always seem to be on their best behaviour when they are outside of the school and this has built goodwill in town towards international visitors."

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## **Immigration Partnership Event Highlights**



### **Sandhu Dental Group awarded First Annual Leeds Grenville Immigrant Entrepreneur Award!**

The award was presented to Dr. Raja Sandhu and Dr. Gurfateh Sandhu at the Leeds Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre Bridges to Better Business Conference in October.

From left to right:

**Dave Paul**, City of Brockville Economic Development and Chair of Immigration Partnership Council, **Meghan MacDonald**, CSE Consulting and Immigration Partnership Council member, **Dr. Raja Sandhu and Dr. Gurfateh Sandhu** of the Sandhu Dental Group with their parents and brother, **Melissa Francis**, Leeds & Grenville Immigration Partnership Manager

Photo used with permission of Brockville Recorder and Times (Ronald Zajac).



## Newcomers from 7 different countries attend First World Café!

In November 2015, immigrants from Leeds Grenville met to discuss their settlement experiences. There were plenty of lively and heart warming stories, in addition to suggestions on how Leeds Grenville can become even more welcoming for newcomers. Newcomers will be meeting again in January to continue the conversation, and share their favourite foods from their homelands!

### Refugee Assistance Committee Brockville & Area and Transition Brockville

**Present:**  
**Understanding Islam and  
Muslims, in the Context of our  
Changing Community**

Barbara Helms, Executive Director of  
Dar-ul-Ihsan Centre for Islamic  
Education, Chair of Cornwall  
Interfaith Partnership

### Free Employer Training: Effectively hiring immigrant employees from within Canada, and abroad

Wednesday February 17th,  
6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

380 Colonnade Dr., Kemptville  
(Grenville Mutual Insurance  
Company)

Presenters from Hire Immigrants

*Barbara has been active in the Cornwall area for the past two decades, participating in interfaith dialogue, pastoral care, community education, cultural consultancy, and professional training on issues affecting of relating to Muslim populations. She has a BA in Comparative Religion and a Master's in Islamic Studies (both from McGill) and a Master's in Counselling Psychology from Athabasca University.*

Date: February 8, 2016

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: Memorial Hall  
(Memorial Centre)

1 Magedoma Blvd., Brockville

RSVP: [loretta@eecentre.com](mailto:loretta@eecentre.com)

Ottawa and Immigration,  
Refugees and Citizenship  
Canada

Hosted by CSE Consulting, North  
Grenville Business Retention &  
Expansion Alliance, and the Leeds  
& Grenville Immigration  
Partnership

## **Celebrate International Women's Day!**

Tuesday March 8, 2016

*Free screening of the  
documentary*

### **HE NAMED ME MALALA**

Employment and Education  
Centre

105 Strowger Blvd. Brockville

Call 613-498-2111 ext. 261 for  
details

## **LEEDS & GRENVILLE IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

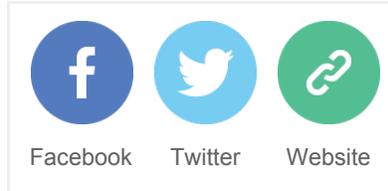
**Brockville & District Multicultural Council  
Chinese & Canadian Heritage Cultural Association  
City of Brockville Economic Development  
CSE Consulting  
Employment & Education Centre  
Francophone Immigration Support Network of East Ontario  
Fulford Academy  
KEYS Job Centre  
Leeds Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre  
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs  
Parks Canada  
St. Lawrence College  
1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board  
The Works ( International Event Management & Exhibition Services )  
TR Leger Immigrant Services / TR Leger Services aux Immigrants  
United Counties of Leeds Grenville, Economic Development  
Upper Canada Leger Centre  
Volunteer Centre of St. Lawrence-Rideau**

*Look for the Sign in our Windows!*



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