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Thousands expected for Halton cultural festival this weekend

By **WILMA BLOKHUIS**
Special to The Champion

The entertainment at Sunday's second annual Hands Across the World celebration at the St. Volodymyr Cultural Centre will reflect Halton Region's cultural diversity.

Last year's event was attended by 3,000 people.

The day-long celebration with 25 dance and musical groups, speakers' corner and international foods, is the grand finale of a three-part celebration honouring the 25th anniversary of Halton Region.

A Citizenship Court was held on Aug. 5 during which 27 new Canadians, 25 of them from Halton, became citizens. The new Canadian citizens come from more than 20 countries including Afghanistan, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Russia, Ghana, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, England, Scotland, the United

States, Bosnia, Ethiopia and Wales.

The second part, the Halton Awards of Excellence, were presented Wednesday, (Aug. 11), to 12 people — one of them posthumously. The awards recognize their contributions towards eradicating racism and prejudice based on cultural and religious origins.

Based on Statistics Canada 1996 data updated by the Halton Social Planning Council, 5.5 percent of the region's population do not hold Canadian citizenship. Halton has a 23 per cent immigrant population. Many who arrive here decide to stay and become citizens. About 40 per cent of immigrants are under 20 years of age.

Halton has 6.72 per cent visible minorities including South Asian, 31 per cent; Chinese, 20 per cent; Black, 19 per cent; Filipino, 6 per cent; and Arab-West Asian, 7 per cent.

Countries of origin include United Kingdom, 12.70
• see **CULTURAL** on page 18

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