

STRUGGLES, HARDSHIPS ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO OPPORTUNITIES, IMMIGRANTS SAY

New Canadians eager to join community

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Sure, there are struggles. Of course, there are hardships. But more lasting than the difficulties and upsets along the way are the hopes and rewards of settling in a new homeland where opportunities abound.

"They say this is the land of milk and honey. This is where they want to be," Phylis Camposano said.

Ms Camposano and the families she hosts from around the world are the faces behind the statistics that show York Region is emerging as one of the world's most culturally diverse communities.

As the first-ever volunteer host with Catholic Community Services, one of York's largest agencies serving immigrants of all religions and backgrounds, Ms Camposano has been matched with nine families struggling to find their footing in a new community and a new country.

The Filipino native, who moved to Canada in 1979 as a teenager, was also a volunteer host with Toronto's Culturelink agency for about three years before she joined the York organization.

Over the years, she has played host to families from Yugoslavia, Iran, Korea, Russia and China.

All of them were professionals eager to find employment in their chosen fields.

Ms Camposano, a prosecutor with the Ministry of the Attorney General at Newmarket's Tannery Mall, meets at least once a week for two hours with her assigned family to help them master English and learn Canadian culture.

Matches generally run for six months to a year, depending on the level of support the family requires.

For Ms Camposano, the people she helps become far more than just "matches"; they are close friends. To her sister's faux-consternation, Ms Camposano invites as many of her new friends as she can every Christmas night to her sibling's home to enjoy singing carols and other festive cheer.

She has been invited to attend some of their functions and has felt like a proud mother when they excel.

If there's a common theme among new immigrants, it is a desire to learn English and become productive members of their communities.

"They have this hunger to be fluent already," said Ms Camposano, a Thornhill resident.

"Not one of them wanted to stay in the background. They want to integrate, they very much want to fit in to what our way of life is."

Once they've found their foot-

ing here, they are keen to volunteer in their communities, especially eager to help other newcomers settle in.

"They tell me they've moved here for a better life, for themselves and their children," Ms Camposano added.

"Other than missing their families, I don't remember anyone wanting to go back to where they came from."

"They say this is the land of milk and honey. This is where they want to be."

"There are struggles in the beginning, but when I look at them now, I take such pride in seeing how far they've come and how well they fit in."

People of every ethnic background are making York Region

their home.

According to York Region statistics, more than 39 per cent of the region's residents are immigrants.

A regional report monitoring the status and health of York residents found recent immigrants have arrived here from 127 countries, with the most common nations of last residence being China at 15 per cent, India at 13 per cent, Iran at 7 per cent and Pakistan at 6 per cent.

Most newcomers are settling in the south part of the region.

Markham and Richmond Hill had the largest growth in immigrant population from 1991 to 1996.

In fact, in this year's census results, Statistics Canada reported almost six in 10 Markham residents are people of colour.

That makes Markham second only to Richmond, B.C. as the municipality with the highest proportion of visible minorities in Canada.

Meanwhile, Italians lead the list of York's five main ethnic origins, comprising 14.1 per cent of the population.

Chinese at 11.7 per cent are second, followed by Canadian at 8.1 per cent, English at 6.7 per cent and East Indian at 3.5 per cent.

Interestingly, the report stated about 83 per cent of York's residents spoke English most often at home in 2001, up from 80 per cent in 1996.

Wyn Chivers, chief executive officer of York's United Way, said the region's fabric has been enriched by the contributions of newcomers.

"When we at the United Way of York Region think about cultural diversity, we think about building stunning, kaleidoscopic communities," she said. "I think we're all the richer for it."

Ms Chivers said the agency is making every effort to reach out to the region's increasingly diverse population, especially to the South Asian and African Caribbean communities, through its Leading the Ethnoracial Access Dialogue (LEAD) project.

'Passionate Canadian' teaches youth about roots

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Cecil Roach describes himself as a passionate Canadian.

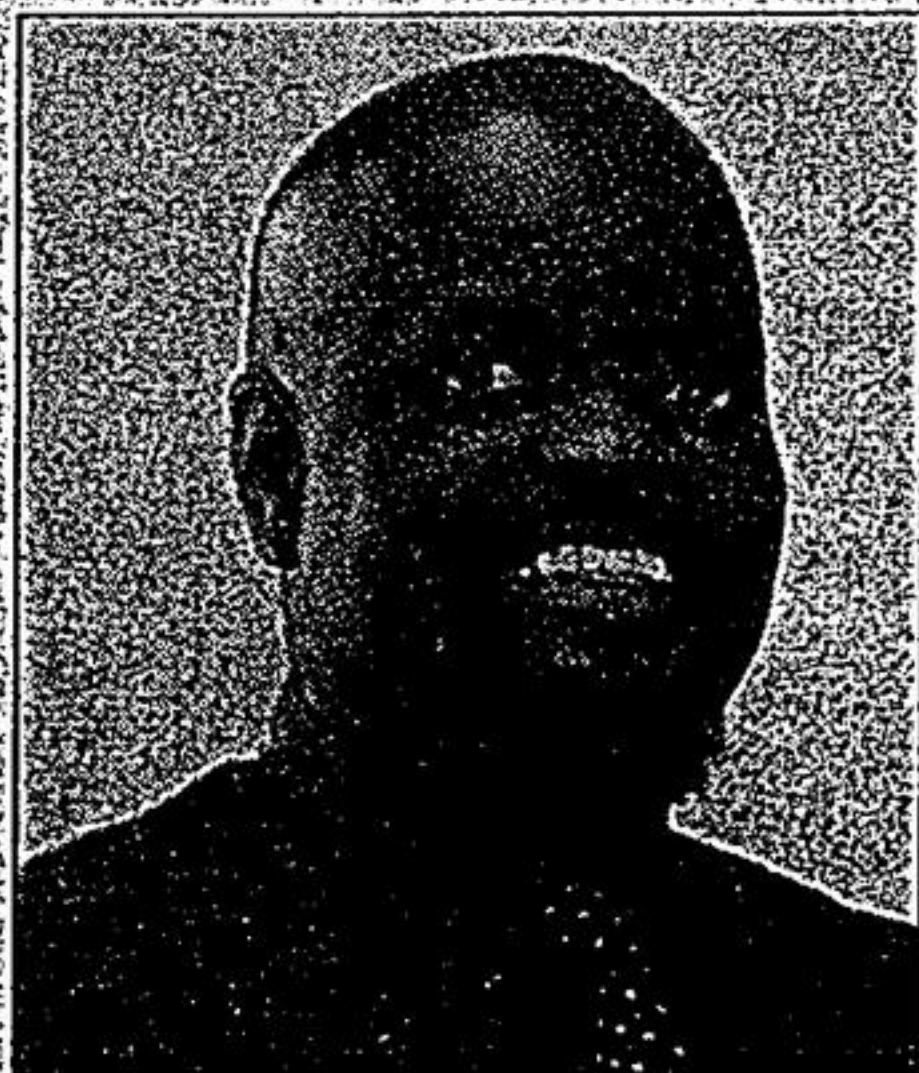
"It's the greatest country in the world," said the Markham resident and Middlefield Collegiate Institute principal.

"But I have also come to a fundamental understanding of myself as a person of African heritage. We have a wonderful past, a rich heritage that should be celebrated."

Mr. Roach is determined to teach Markham youth about their own cultural roots, something he says they only see in bits and pieces.

"A lot of kids are adrift culturally, they only get snippets of what it means. They grab parts of their culture from videos or their parents, they define it by food or by events like Caribana. They haven't got the understanding of how they fit in Canadian culture," he said.

Part of the issue around black youth is there is no palatable transition from childhood to adulthood. Many are not religious and they are drifting into manhood without that cultural foundation.



CECIL ROACH: "A lot of kids haven't got the understanding of how they fit into Canadian culture."

There are no rights of passage for these kids."

His office is decorated with African art — masks, drums and good-luck charms. He has posters of Bob Marley, Charlie Parker and Martin Luther King. He's determined to make a difference in the lives of "his kids" at Middlefield and believes the school system and the community have to work together to provide support for teens.

"Serving the community has always been part of what I do. Good communities are the result of people getting involved."

He does his share.

Mr. Roach is a member of York Region's Alliance of Educators for Black Students, which tries to ensure students get the benefit of all the educational opportunities the board offers. He is also a member of the Markham African Caribbean Association and is involved in the organization's Saturday school program, which provides students of African Caribbean descent academic enrichment and tutorial support, motivational coaching and cultural awareness.

"It's all about giving kids a grounding in who they are," he explained. "It's important to have a history, so they can say people just like me have made important contributions to Canadian society."

Born on the tiny Caribbean island of Monserrat, Mr. Roach arrived in Canada at 13, three years after his parents.

"That's typical of a lot of kids with Caribbean parents, they

come to prepare the way. It was a bit tough, but I spent the time with my grandmother," he recalled.

Arriving in Montreal in April, he was startled to see his breath in the cold temperatures and struggled with the sheer size of his new city.

His immigrant experience, however, has given him a solid link to his students and other youth in the community.

Working his way up from teacher to vice principal over the years, Mr. Roach was named principal of Markham's Middlefield Collegiate in 1994. He strives to ensure every student knows how important education is to their future.

Mr. Roach also serves on the police/community liaison committee, work he calls "very important." He advises police about their diversity training and uses his school experience to suggest programs.

"My message is everyone is capable of success. Whatever community you come from or language deficiency you may be dealing with, there is still no question success is possible."

BEST BUY

CORRECTION NOTICE

On page 2 of our June 27 - July 3 flyer, Splinter Cell, Sku 10026936 was incorrectly advertised with the special offer of Gameshark, valued at \$29.99. The special offer is actually Splinter Cell Sharkbyte, valued at \$14.99 and it's only applicable to Splinter Cell for PlayStation(r)2.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.

BEST BUY

CORRECTION NOTICE

On page 1 of our June 20 - June 26 flyer, an error occurred.

The Rogers Motorola cell phone, Sku 10021987 requires in-store activation on a 24-month plan.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers.

FUTURE SHOP

CORRECTION NOTICE

On page 2 of our June 24 - June 26 flyer, an error occurred.

The RCA MP3 Player, Sku 10016132 will be unavailable until July 8. We will be happy to offer you a rain check redeemable when stock is available. Please see a sales associate for further assistance.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers. Thank you.

FUTURE SHOP

CORRECTION NOTICE

We apologize for the inconvenience due to an error on page 17 of the June 13th - June 19th flyer. Windows XP Pro Upgrade was advertised as Windows XP Professional.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our valued customers. Thank you.

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