



Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick *Annual Activity Report*

2023



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About Us

Created to support Canada's declaration of May as Asian Heritage Month (2002), New Brunswick's Asian Heritage Committee—now the Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick—encourages, with its partners, celebration of the social, political, and economic contributions of Asian Canadians to the nation.

We aim to fulfill the federal mandate by creative engagement with others on matters of common interest such as education, employment, citizenship, history, and identity. We promote the unique foods, music, dance, visual arts, crafts, and costumes of Asia—expressions of both traditional and contemporary culture.

At present, AHSNB—one of the country's 16 Asian Heritage organizations—is the only one in Atlantic Canada. We've active chapters in Saint John (2007), Moncton (2006), and Fredericton (2018). In Miramichi, Asian Heritage Month is celebrated in partnership with the Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association.

Our affiliated groups include over a dozen ethno-cultural groups and associations—the Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF), New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC); Bangladeshi, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Iranian, Lebanese, Nepalese, Indonesian, and Vietnamese among them. We welcome new members and volunteers from all backgrounds, as well as partnerships with schools and community organizations. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch.

ExplorAsians

On May 12, 2023, AHSNB held the ExplorAsians event to start off Asian Heritage Month in the Fredericton Public Library. Speakers to this event included Professor Emeritus Larry Shyu, Professor Constantine Passaris, Minister Arlene Dunn, NBMC Executive Director Maura McKinnon, and the Founding Chair of AHSNB Madhu Verma. In this event, many people came together to discuss the two exhibits: one about the Chinese Exclusion Act and another about the different big faiths in Asia.

Chinese Exclusion Act

July 23, 2023, marks the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, also known as the Chinese Immigration Act, and as such, it was a topic of great importance in this year's ExplorAsians event. Professor Emeritus Larry Shyu, an East Asian Studies prof, had prepared an excellent talk to introduce and educate the audience about the Act.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was a significant piece of legislation enacted by the Canadian government in 1923. The Act was designed to restrict the entry of Chinese immigrants to Canada. In the 19th century Chinese laborers were brought to Canada to work on projects like the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. As Chinese workers completed these projects, anti-Chinese sentiments grew, fueled by racial prejudice and economic competition. This eventually led to the creation of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Chinese Exclusion Act effectively halted almost all immigration from China to Canada, and only about 50 Chinese people entered Canada from 1923 to when the act was finally repealed in 1947. The day the Act was passed, 1 July 1923 or Dominion Day (now called Canada Day), was called Humiliation Day by Chinese Canadians for many years. After its repeal, Chinese immigration to Canada gradually resumed, leading to a more diverse and inclusive society.

ExplorAsians

Different Faiths of Asia

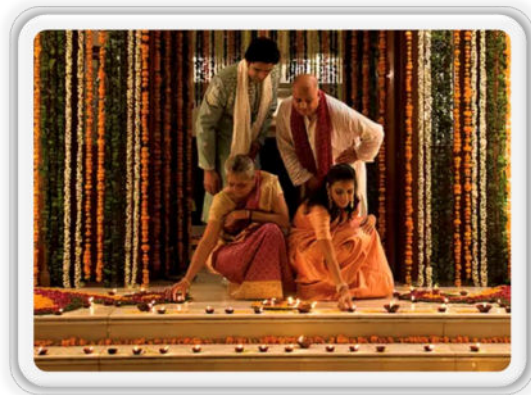
The second topic for the ExplorAsians 2023 event was the different faiths of Asia. Asia is the birthplace to many religions and with exposure to others from around the world. Religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Christianity, Jainism, etc. are practiced there. The exhibit in ExplorAsians 2023, however, touched on four religions that can be considered some of the biggest in Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Islam.

The exhibit consisted of four posters listing key knowledge about each religion and a few photographs to help illustrate the points made in the posters. Madhu Verma, Founding Chair of AHSNB, stepped up to talk to about awareness and respect to customs and religions of people, talking briefly about the four religions presented on the posters.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions and has a vast diversity of beliefs and practices. It emphasizes the concept of Dharma (righteous duty), Karma (action and its consequences), and Moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). Hinduism celebrates numerous festivals, but one of the most well-known is Diwali, also known as the "Festival of Lights." Diwali symbolizes the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. During this five-day celebration, people light lamps and candles, decorate their homes, exchange gifts, and offer prayers to various deities, most notably to Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.



A family celebrating Diwali



Decorating a house with lamps.

Explor Asians

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion founded in the 15th century in the Indian subcontinent. Sikhs believe in one God and follow the teachings of Guru Nanak and nine successive Gurus. Baisakhi, also known as Vaisakhi, is a significant festival for Sikhs. It falls on April 13th or 14th and marks the Sikh New Year and the founding of the Khalsa (the Sikh community of initiated warriors). Sikhs gather at Gurdwaras (Sikh temples) for prayers, processions, and community meals called Langar.



Baisakhi Celebrations



Community meals during Baisakhi (Langar)

Islam is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion founded in the 7th century CE. Its followers, known as Muslims, believe in one God, Allah, and follow the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Quran. One of the most important festivals in Islam is Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. Muslims engage in prayers, give charity (Zakat al-Fitr), and come together for festive meals with family and friends. It is a time of joy, gratitude, and reconciliation.



Eid Celebrations



Festive Meals on the day of Eid

Explor Asians

Buddhism is a spiritual tradition founded in the 6th century BCE by Siddhartha Gautama, who became known as the Buddha. Buddhists seek enlightenment and liberation from suffering through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Vesak, also known as Buddha Purnima or Buddha Day, is a major Buddhist festival celebrated on the full moon day in May. It commemorates the birth, enlightenment (nirvana), and death (parinirvana) of the Buddha. Buddhists visit temples, participate in meditation, listen to teachings, and engage in acts of kindness and charity.-



Vesak Celebrations



Professor Emeritus Larry Shyu on the Chinese Exclusion Act



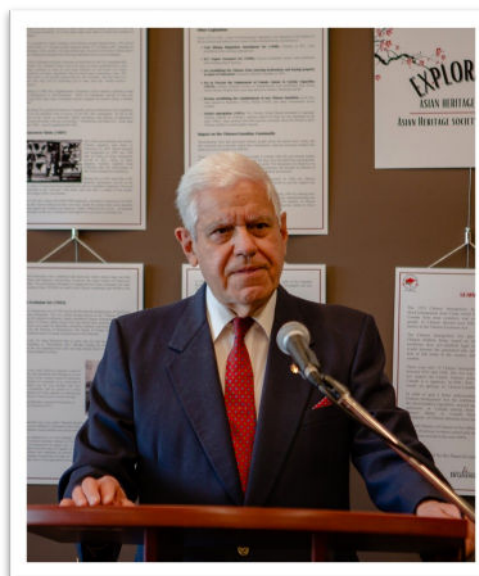
Founding Chair of AHSNB Madhu Verma on the various Faiths of Asia



Hon. Arlene Dunn, Minister of Immigration and Aboriginal Affairs



NBMC Executive Director Maura McKinnon



Professor Constantine Passaris, Professor of Economics, UNB



From left to right: Intesar Saeed; Prof. Constantine Passaris; Prof. Emeritus Larry Shyu; AHSNB Founding Chair Madhu Verma; Hon. Arlene Dunn; _____; NBMC Exec Director Maura McKinnon; Felisa Chan

Mirror Embroidery

On May 14, 2023, the Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick hosted a workshop on Mirror Embroidery at the Fredericton Public Library. Embroidery is the craft of decorating fabric or other materials by threading threads through it to make patterns and designs. This workshop focussed on using small mirrors within the embroidery.

The person teaching at the event was Mrs. Sarita Guger. She has been embroidering for many years and had setup a vast array of her works on display in the room. There were dozens of unique and interesting pieces with different types of embroidery employed for each. Samples includes dresses, framed pieces, blankets, bed sheets, and lots more.

Around a dozen people took part in the event. Mrs. Guger first introduced them to the basic stiches they would need to do mirror work, namely Chainstitch and Blanket stitch. After practicing both stiches individually, Mrs. Guger taught everyone how to combine the two to hold a small mirror in place on a piece of fabric. After practicing with a few failed attempts, everyone was successful in securing a small mirror onto the fabric.

After taking some pictures, Mrs. Madhu Verma, founding chair of the Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick (AHSNB), invited everyone present there to the Asian Cultural Gala to happen soon. The event ended with celebratory cake, for everyone who participated and learnt something new.

This event was also covered by CBC, whose reporter interviewed Madhu Verma and Sarita Guger.



Acrylic Painting

On May 27, 2023, the Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick hosted an acrylic painting workshop in the Fredericton Public Library. It was led by Ms. Olha [last name here], who has been practicing visual art for many years and is an art teacher by profession. Several her acrylic pieces were hung around the room for people to look at as they walked into the room for the workshop.

More than twenty people showed up, including Olha and a couple of other helping. Olha first introduced herself, then presented the painting that the attendees were to try and replicate a painting of a starfish lying on the border between sand and sea, with a line of white frothy foam cutting the board diagonally in half behind it.

Starting with the background, which was a series of simple gradients, Olha walked the attendees through how to approach the painting, what brushes to use, etc. Step by step, the attendees finished with the background. Acrylic paint layers on older paint easily, so next was blocking out and painting the starfish in the centre of the background. Olha had prepared a printout of a few visual references that were passed around for everyone to use. The workshop ended with the addition of specific details (dots, lines, shading etc.) to the starfish.

Everyone was provided brownies as celebratory snacks, and pictures of them with their paintings were taken.



Rice Cooking Demonstration

On June 3, 2023, the Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick hosted an event informing attendees about Rice, its importance in this world, and how to prepare and cook rice in different Asian styles. Over fifty people attended this event held at the Grant-Harvey Centre. Dishes presented came from China, India, and Philippines.

To start the event off, an informative documentary on “Rice and its history around the world” was played. It talked about the earliest cultivation of rice, uses of rice in food and other avenues, etc. One such unusual use of rice was the use of rice husks in concrete to strengthen it, in southern China.

Following the documentary, cooks brought out a few dishes from a kitchen adjacent to the room. They first introduced the dish and explained what ingredients it had, how it was prepared, etc., finally passing around some of the food for everyone to taste and experience for themselves.

The first dish was Sticky Rice Cake wrapped in bamboo leaves from China. The specific rice used was soaked overnight which made it extremely sticky and was easily formed into small rice cakes. Attendees were invited to prepare rice cakes from the rice and wrap them in bamboo leaves for the fragrance and taste it provides to the



Chinese Sticky Rice wrapped in bamboo leaves



Khichidi

dish.

Next up was Khichidi from India. The term Khichdi comes from the Sanskrit word 'Khiccha', meaning a dish of rice and legumes. This batch of Khichidi was made using Basmati Rice, mixed with spices and vegetables; all of which were then cooked together. Due to the requirement of cooking the

dish on a stovetop, it was pre-made and handed out to the attendees for them to taste it.

Next was another dish from China – Rice rolls. Made by laying rice powder in thin sheets and cooking them. A filling is then placed on top of the thin sheets of rice and rolled to form the Rice Rolls. The presenters brought rice sheets and filling out and prepared it in front of the attendees to show them the process. Then, the food was distributed around the room to everyone.

Next up was Arroz Caldo, a dish from the Philippines. It is a form of rice porridge with chicken. The name has Spanish origins, “Arroz” meaning rice and “Caldo” meaning broth. After introducing the dish and explaining the process to make it, it was served to the attendees.

The event concluded with the presenting of Biko, a sweet dish made of sticky rice and caramel from the Philippines. The caramel is made with milk and brown sugar. The dish is made by cooking the rice and then layering the caramel atop it and letting it slowly soak into the rice. The dish was then passed to everyone to taste.

After thanking everyone for coming and engaging with the chefs and presenters from the AHSNB, the event ended.

Cultural Gala

On May 20, 2023, many cultures from around Asia present in Fredericton came together to put on a spectacular Cultural Gala for onlookers. Hosted by emcee Manju Gill, it was an enormous event attended by over seven hundred people in the audience. Special guests included Madhu Verma, Founding chair of AHSNB; MLA David Coon; Councillor Eric Megarity; and NBMC representatives Carmen Budilean, José Poirier, and Shadwa Ramadan. Though unable to appear in person, the audience was addressed via video message by Honorable Arlene Dunn, Minister of Immigration and Aboriginal affairs about the event.



Emcee Manju Gill



Founding Chair of AHSNB, Madhu Verma



MLA David Coon



Councillor Eric Megarity



NBMC representatives Carmen Budilean, José Poirier, and Shadwa Ramadan



Honorable Minister Arlene Dunn

Gala Events

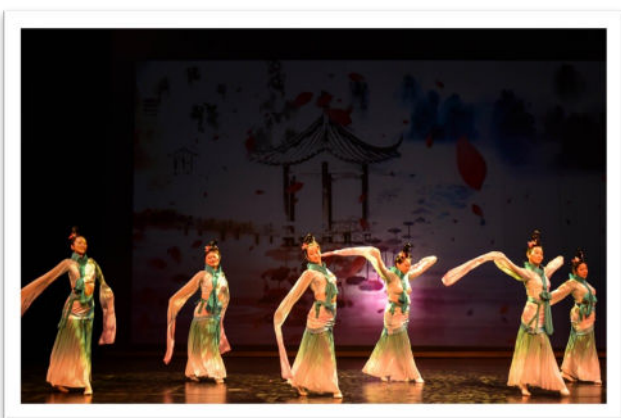
The event consisted of nine performances, from the Chinese Cultural Association of New Brunswick (CCANB), Indo-Canadian Association of New Brunswick (ICANB), Bangladeshi-Canadian Association of New Brunswick (BCANB), Filipino-Canadian Community of New Brunswick (FCCNB), and Nepali Cultural Association of New Brunswick (NCANB). The event list looked as follows:

1. *Bharatanatyam* (solo dance) by Michelle Renni (ICANB).
2. *Spring Outing* (group dance) by CCANB.
3. *Ang sarap, ang saya maging Pilipino* (group dance) by FCCNB.
4. *Lebanese Medley* (group singing) by Kreidi Siblings.
5. *Nepal Unveiled: A Mosaic of Cultural Dance* (group dance) by NCANB.
6. *Festivals of four cultural and faith groups* (presentation) by Manju Gill.
7. *Sitar Performance* (instrumental) by Sushmita Badrinathan (ICANB).
8. *Lawiswis* (group dance) by FCCNB.
9. *Bangladeshi songs mashup* (group instrumental and singing) by BCANB.
10. *Cultural Fusion* (group dance) by ICANB.

Gala Events

Bharatanatyam – Michelle Renni

Bharatanatyam, a pre-eminent Indian classical dance. Conventionally a solo dance performed only by women, it initiated in the Hindu temples of Tamil Nadu. According to Hindu tradition, the name is derived from two Sanskrit words – Bharat and Natyam. The “bha” is from “bhauna”, meaning emotion; “ra” from “raga”, meaning “melody”; and “ta” from “tala” meaning rhythm. “Natyam” in Sanskrit means dance.



Spring Outing – CCANB

This beautiful dance depicts a group of young girls frolicking in the spring, singing and dancing together. It showcases their innocence and beauty as they enjoy nature. It is an excellent dance that shows the marvelous magnificence of the Han and Wei dance style.

Ang sarap, ang saya maging Pilipino. – FCCNB

An inspirational song to remind everyone that it is a good thing to be Filipino and that there are many reasons to be proud to be pinoy. The Filipino language lyrics of the song and the original video produced by Jollibee depicts the beauty of the Philippines, world class achievements, the tenacity of the Filipino, and the joyful local culture.



Gala Events



Lebanese Medly – Kreidi Siblings

This exciting song mashup has its origin in Lebanese culture and showcase its art by expressing, as a song, a dialogue among people bringing variety of memories & songs.

Nepal Unveiled: A Mosaic of Cultural Dance – NCANB

Maruni dance is a renowned traditional folk dance of Nepal, steeped in ancient heritage and widely celebrated during festive occasions. Adorned in vibrant attire and rich ornaments, the dancers gracefully move to commemorate the "victory of good over evil" and rejoice in the gift of life.



Raag Bihag on Sitar – Sushmita Badrinathan

Indian Classical Music has two main traditions. Hindustani played in Northern India & Carnatic played in Southern India. Sitar is a dominant instrument in Hindustani music. It is a plucked stringed instrument which is believed to be derived from the ancient Indian Instrument called "The Veena". It is a solo instrument accompanied with tabla for rhythm.

Gala Events

Bharatanatyam – Michelle Renni

The performance is a dance on the Philippine folk dance Lawiswis Kawayan. It is a famous Visayan folk song, where the title of the song refers to the sounds from the bamboo leaves when wind blow upon it. In the dance, the dancers sway just like a bamboo that is tossed back & forth by the wind.



Bangladeshi songs mash-up – BCANB

This enthusiastic mashup of great songs consists of melodious Bengali pieces. The songs were brought to life by the live playing of music for the singing.



Indian Cultural Fusion – ICANB

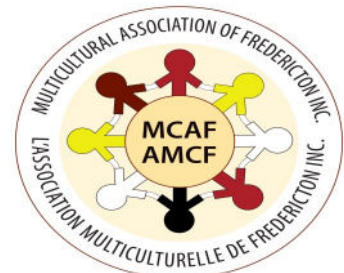
A fusion of different dance forms, music, and styles from across India, this was a multi stage dance with different cultural ideals from across the country brought together in a single flashy presentation.





Thanks to our Funders!

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