CELEBRATING CITIZENSHIP

“Canada is the best country in the world. There is no racism, it is multicultural. Everyone is equal, there is no class” New Citizen and roundtable participant.

“It’s for a bright future for the next generation. I won’t be able to live a life of luxury, but my daughter can.” New Citizen and roundtable participant.

Q: What is the most valuable thing that you will give Canada, now that you are becoming a citizen?

“Being a good citizen”, “working very hard” “volunteering” “Participating in public life”. “Helping people in need, for example: lost their job, taking them in and helping them until they get back on their feet.” “Voting in elections, helping my community, especially in the winter with shoveling and helping people who are stuck in the snow.”
On May 15th, 2014, the Winnipeg ICC Building Citizenship Committee, primarily based at Immigrant Centre Manitoba and led by the Committee President, and Immigrant Centre Executive Director Linda Lalande hosted a day of Citizenship Celebration.

After the incredible ceremonies and roundtable sessions that took place at the Qualico Centre in 2012 and the Manitoba Museum in 2013, the 2014 ceremony had a lot to live up to and it did so in style. Thanks to the ongoing support of RBC, both financially and through volunteers, the space and staff donated by the Millennium Library and other partnerships with Leadership Winnipeg and Price Waterhouse Cooper, the day was a huge success.

The Volunteer Committee coordinated the day and provided volunteer round table hosts, greeters and story gatherers. Mandy Joseph from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) led the round table discussions about the importance of citizenship and provided every new Citizen with a Cultural Access Pass. After a catered lunch CIC held the Citizenship Ceremony was movingly led by Judge James McCrae. It included speeches by a Filipino-born representative of the Canadian Military, British born Administrative Coordinator, Gail Doherty, from Millennium Library, and three songs by Mimoza Doct and her brother Moses, also of Filipino heritage.
In the ICC Building Citizenship roundtables the fantastic RBC Volunteers, many of whom were returning for the second or third year, were invited to guide a conversation with new citizens that encourages the sharing of stories and a collective reflection on what it means to be a Canadian citizen.
ICC Committee Member Rob Vineberg (left) was MC for the event and each roundtable elected a representative to share the highlights of their discussion.
President of the Winnipeg ICC Committee, and Immigrant Centre Executive Director, Linda Lalande, enjoys the happy day with RBC’s Holly Toupin, a guest speaker at the event.

Holly Toupin chatting with an enthusiastic young Canadian attending the ceremony to watch her parents (see below) becoming Canadian Citizens.
Mandy Joseph, National Program Manager, Building Citizenship, ICC, introduces the Canadian Access Pass (CAP) to the roundtable participants. The New Citizens were able to apply for their card straight after the ceremony as the Millennium Library is a distribution point for the program. Representatives from Parks Manitoba, one of the newest members of the CAP program, spoke at the roundtable event to let newcomers know about the amazing outdoor opportunities available to Manitobans year round in the Province’s stunning parks.
From Left to Right: Canadian born David (age 3) and his sisters Rachel (11) and Chelsea (7) enjoyed crafts provided by the Millennium Library. Rachel and Chelsea moved to Winnipeg from Nigeria when they were young children and became Canadian Citizens in the afternoon ceremony. They said they loved their life in Winnipeg and their school in Valley Gardens but wanted Canadian passports so they could visit California and New York!

A light lunch was provided for all the new citizens, roundtable participants and volunteers. Gift-wrapped Canadian flag cookies were handed out to every new citizen to take home at the end of the day.
Many of the new Citizens taking the oath were young adults excited about what the future held for them in their new home.
Local media covered the event and spoke with many of the new Citizens about what this special day meant to them.
Tradition and technology in perfect harmony - a guest at the ceremony uses his tablet to photograph new citizen Rachel posing with guest singer Mimoza Duot. One of Mimoza’s songs was Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah, which the citizenship judge says was the best version he’d ever heard.

The Immigrant Centre on behalf of the ICC Building Citizenship Volunteer Committee can not thank all its partners and volunteers enough for their many years of support for these ceremonies. They have been inspirational occasions and treasured memories for so many new Citizens and the Volunteers who heard their stories and shared their joy on their big day.

Due to the huge success of the 2012 and 2013 Citizenship Ceremonies, many local organizations asked to partner with the ICC Winnipeg Volunteer Committee for the 2014 event and the Millennium Library donated the use of its space and outreach staff. The ICC National Office also nominated the Winnipeg Committee to be part of the national PWC sponsorship agreement and their local office provided 3 enthusiastic volunteer roundtable hosts.