

Changing Times

A magazine made by newcomers to Southwest Saskatchewan

WINTER 2012

Winter Play: Stay Warm, Stay Happy

Immigration News: the Latest
in Family Class Category

New Section: *Becoming Canadian*



Our Holiday Stories:
The Journey of Traditions

SOUTHWEST NEWCOMER
WELCOME
CENTRE



from the editor

This issue marks my one year anniversary as the editor of Changing Times magazine. Wow! I can't believe it has been already a whole year of gathering stories, pictures and putting it all together for you to enjoy. I have learned a lot about our diverse cultures, traditions and also challenges that most newcomers have to face upon arrival. Hearing your stories is what makes my work so awesome. Please know that I am always glad to hear your feedback and looking for new writers to join our crew! In this winter issue we are glad to introduce two new segments: **Becoming Canadian** on page 11 and **Ask the Expert** on page 7 that you may find useful.

Here at the Welcome Centre we hardly can believe the year has come to an end and the holiday season is upon us. May your holidays be lovely and the New Year bring you new adventures and blessings!

~ Agnese

Oh, the wonderful New Year's resolutions that we never keep... do you have one?

2012 has been a challenging year so I would like to make 2013 a less stressful one, have more quality time with family & leading a healthy life style. Most of all, continue to stand up for what is right and just.

~ Icasiana de Gala



My New Year's resolution is to be better prepared, to be a good example and learn something new.

~ Claudia Muñoz



Rae Kroshus

My New Year's resolution is to spend more time at the Welcome Centre and read more!



Mable Derksen

So what do I resolve for 2013? Renovate my kitchen, DIY (do-it-yourself) style with a little help from some professionals. Yes, this is the year, so I tell myself (and my husband)!

My New Year's resolution – I will grow more garlic in the garden. We always run out too soon!



Wendy Swann

My New Year's resolution: i would like to start reading for fun again :)



Anika Henderson

Agnese Vilde

I am one of those people that never keep their well meant New Year's resolutions. But I make them anyhow. This year my one New Year's resolution is wake up earlier in a day to have a sit-down breakfast with my family even on workdays.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

On October 26th we WENT ONLINE!!!

We are happy to share this website with everyone and hope that you will find it useful and informative.

Check it out if you haven't done so already!

- **Learn about our history, mission and values;**
- **Find out more about our programs and services;**
- **Use our resource links to government and community organizations, immigration and essential settlement services.**
- **And the best of all: you can find all our previous issues of the *Changing Times* online!**

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Our New Year's Resolutions | 2 |
| Website Launch | 3 |
| What's New! | 4 |
| SCBEX Award Celebration | 5 |
| Immigration News: New Legislation, | 6 |
| New Conditional PR for Sponsored | 7 |
| Spouses & Partners, Ask the Expert | |
| Internship Program with the City | 8 |
| Celebration of Culture & Sport | 9 |
| Winter Play: Stay Warm, Stay Happy | 10 |
| Becoming Canadian. Curling | 11 |
| Our Holiday Stories: Traditions | 12 |
| Happy Holidays | 14 |
| The Tale of Three Traditions | 15 |
| Easy Holiday Snack | 15 |
| FASCA Christmas Party | 16 |
| Reminders | 18 |
| New Arrivals | 20 |
| New Babies & Families | 21 |



Make sure to keep checking in to keep up with the latest news about immigration as well as the upcoming events at the Welcome Centre, the city and Southwest Saskatchewan. If you have an event coming up in your community, please let us know and we will gladly include it in our calendar!



Congratulations on taking the next step to serve the newcomers of Southwest Saskatchewan. In an era where information is available instantaneously, a website is another great tool to access. Your ongoing work welcoming new Canadians makes it easier for them to feel at home in Southwest Saskatchewan.

*David L. Anderson, M.P.
Cypress Hills—Grasslands*



New Website for Newcomers

City of Swift Current has launched its newcomer website aimed at attracting newcomers to Swift Current. This website will provide newcomers with easy access to important information about all aspects of life here in Swift Current, and about the benefits of making this community their home.



www.citysc.ca

Meet Wendy

"Hello! My name is Wendy Swann. I am a retired high school History and English teacher. After a career of 30 years, it is hard to quit teaching and so I thought I would offer my skills to the clients of the Newcomers Welcome Centre.



I love to garden and my yoga practice helps to keep me gardening. My husband and I like to travel. We have visited every Canadian province and two of the three territories. We have also spent time in Europe. The Welcome Centre offers me a marvelous opportunity to meet many people from all over the world while offering them my support."

Are you an artist living in Saskatchewan -

a vocational or professional? Are you 18 years and older? We invite you to sign in to the **Artist Registry** at Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA).

The Saskatchewan Arts Alliance wants to understand better how all the arts including community arts, arts education, fine arts, and the creative industries are interconnected, if they are part of a continuum. We believe this will lead to a better understanding of the contribution the arts make to the sustainability of our current economic growth and the sustainability of various art forms in our province as well as the cultural fabric of our communities.



The registry will be kept confidential, for SAA arts research purposes only. You might be contacted to participate in one of our research projects.

Please register at:

<http://www.artsalliance.sk.ca/?p=artistregistry>



Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre will be closed from **December 24th** till **January 2nd**.

If there are any immediate concerns, please contact us at: nwc@newcomerwelcomecentre.com



... and the winner is...



We have been honored with the SCBEX Spirit of Swift Current Award

that recognizes innovation and entrepreneurship. We are proud to be the inaugural recipient of the Spirit of Swift Current Award in the Not-for-Profit-Award Class. Here are some pictures of the fun night!

We would like to thank all volunteers, staff and partner organizations that continue to help us in the work that we do. And of course, the board members and the community have been very supportive.



A HUGE thank you goes to everyone who voted for us!



“As a community we are grateful for the work that you do to welcome and assist the many new people who arrive in Swift Current looking for home. Again, congratulations on your award and best wishes for continued success as you continue to work with our new residents.”

*Brad Wall,
MLA for Swift Current
Premier of Saskatchewan*



Saskatchewan
Ministry of the
Economy

“The Contribution made by the South-west Newcomer Welcome Centre to the City of Swift Current are truly remarkable, and on behalf of the Ministry of Economy allow me to offer my personal thanks. Your commitment to ensuring our newest friends and neighbors have access to the services and support they need to make Swift Current home is to be commended.”

*Bill Boyd
Minister of the Economy*



Saskatchewan introduces legislation to protect foreign workers and immigrants.

This month, Saskatchewan introduced the *Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act* which aims to protect foreign workers and immigrants against abuse and exploitation. This legislation also aims to improve transparency and accountability when being recruited to work in Saskatchewan or in the process of immigrating to the province.

So what does all of this mean? Here are a few highlights of the legislation:

- Every employer recruiting foreign workers must register with SK authority;
- Every foreign recruiter must obtain SK license;
- No employer, immigration consultant or recruiter may charge fees related to obtaining employment;
- No one may charge a fee or expense for recruitment services, except to an employer;
- No employer shall require a foreign worker to use the immigration services of a specific immigration consultant
- No recruiter, employer or immigration consultant shall misrepresent employment opportunities, including misrepresentations respecting position, duties, length of employment, wages and benefits or other terms of employment
- No person shall act as or present themselves as an immigration consultant or provide immigration services or recruitment services unless they hold a license to do so
- Any immigration consultant who is also a licensed recruiter must disclose if they are working for the employer and the foreign worker being hired by the employer and must obtain the written consent of both the foreign worker and the employer.
- No recruiter, employer or immigration consultant shall threaten deportation
- No recruiter, employer or immigration consultant shall take action or threaten to take action against a person for making a complaint to any government or law enforcement agency or participating in a government agency investigation.
- No employer shall reduce or vary the wages or benefits of a foreign worker in order to recover the cost of recruiting the foreign worker. Any agreement signed by the foreign worker agreeing to any such variation or reduction is void.

The *Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act* is available online at: <http://docs.legassembly.sk.ca/legdocs/Bills/27L2S/Bill27-83.pdf>

SINP Family Referral Category

Are you wondering how the new changes to the SINP Family Referral Category will affect your chances of bringing your family members to join you here in Canada?

The new requirements make it tougher to qualify for this category. In order to qualify, your **family member MUST have a SKILLED offer of permanent employment** (NOC 0, A or B). And there is NO option to remove the requirement of a skilled job offer by demonstrating that you have settlement funds available to support your family members. It is simply not possible to make use of this category without that skilled offer of full-time, permanent employment.



for your SINP application

One of the new(ish) requirements for SINP applications is that you include a copy of the SINP Job Approval Letter from a Saskatchewan Employer. Many applicants are only learning about this requirement **when they are almost ready to submit. It is important to plan ahead for this requirement as it can take a couple of months to obtain this letter**, therefore delaying you in submitting your application package.

Your employer is required to register online with the SINP - a two-stage process that can take up to a month. Once your employers registration is approved, they can submit your job offer online. The SINP then processes this online job offer and once it is approved, they will send your employer the Job Approval Letter via email. This is the letter that is required in your application package. The processing times seem to vary with these job offers (from a couple of weeks to a couple of months) so the sooner your employer is able to submit the online job offer, the better.

Please note that **your employer does not need to wait to submit the online job offer until you are eligible to apply to the SINP. They can submit this job offer at any time.** Please also note, that once your employer is approved, they are not required to go through the employer approval process again but only have to submit the job offer online for positions being offered to foreign workers.

News summarized & "Hot Tip" provided by Anika Henderson

New Conditional Permanent Residence for Sponsored Spouses & Partners



As of October 25, 2012, CIC introduced new regulations that require a sponsored spouse or partner to live together in a legitimate relationship with their sponsor for two years from the day they receive permanent residence status in Canada. If they do not, they risk losing their permanent resident status. CIC states that the idea is to deter people from using marriage as a way to obtain immigration status. This new legislation does not, however, apply to all sponsored spouses & partners. It applies to you only if you meet all of the following conditions:

- You are being sponsored by a permanent resident or Canadian citizen;
- You have been in a relationship for two years or less with your sponsor;
- You have no children in common;
- Your application was received on or after October 25, 2012.

It is important to know that this change is not retroactive, meaning that it will not affect sponsorship applications which were received by CIC prior to October 25, 2012. In addition, at the end of the two-year period, a Conditional Permanent Resident will not have to submit an application to CIC to have the Condition removed. Instead, CIC will automatically remove the Condition after two years if there is no ongoing investigation into whether the Conditional Permanent Resident complied with the Condition. Having said that, CIC may still start an investigation against a person after the two-year period has elapsed if they believe that person breached a Condition.

Some critics argue that these regulations will endanger the lives of women in abusive relationships, many of whom may be too afraid to speak out for fear of losing their immigration status. The minister did put into place an "exemption" from the two-year condition for those sponsored spouses or partners who could prove that they are subject to abuse or neglect. Critics argue that domestic violence incidents are seriously under-reported (CBSA reports that they receive approximately 120 reports per year) and that fleeing from abuse is not as simple as just picking up the phone and calling the police. There are significant barriers faced by women experiencing violence including fear, shame, lack of income, lack of a place to go and now risk of deportation.

*Do you have an immigration question?
Let us know and we will try to answer it in
future issues.
Please send your question(s) to
agnese@newcomerwelcomecentre.com*



*Immigration questions answered and advice provided
by Anika Henderson, Imagine Immigration & Consulting
Registered Canadian Immigration Consultant*

ask

the expert

Q: *When are they going to re-open or allow family class sponsorships of parents and grandparents?*

A: Since November 5, 2011, CIC has not been accepting any new applications to sponsor parents or grandparents. CIC has stated that this stay of applications is likely to remain in effect for up to 24 months. In the meantime, however, CIC has come up with a new option for parents and grandparents of Canadian citizens and permanent residents to visit family members in Canada – **the Parent and Grandparent Super Visa**.

While this may not be the solution that everyone is looking for, the Super Visa does provide another option that may work for you and your family in the meantime.

Basically the difference between a regular Visitor Visa and a Super Visa is that the Super Visa can be issued for a period of up to 10 years and if granted, parents and grandparents are able to remain in Canada for up to two years at a time, without having to renew.

The other difference is that in order for your parents or grandparents to qualify, you must meet a minimum income threshold. You are also required to provide evidence of having \$100,000 worth of health coverage for your parents or grandparents for a minimum period of one year. This of course, can be expensive, but some local insurance providers are now willing to work out a payment plan with you to make it a bit more affordable. Your parents or grandparents will also have to undergo a medical examination as part of the application process.

So far, CIC is reporting that more than 83% of Super Visa applications are being approved.

Internship Program

By Icasiana de Gala

One of the many challenges newcomers face when looking for a job is lack of Canadian Work experience. Employers always look for that Canadian work experience when hiring newcomers. Getting a job in a field related to their work experience or prior learning from their home country is even harder and with stricter requirements. There are of course ways to earn that Canadian work experience. By volunteering, newcomers are exposed to Canadian workplace practices, and are able to improve their communication skills and develop new skills as well. It also broadens

their networks and gives them Canadian references. There are other work opportunities, although part-time or temporary, that also help newcomers gain Canadian work experience in their related field. Another great opportunity to gain Canadian work experience is through internship programs. Early this year, the NWC and the City of Swift Current developed the Newcomer Internship Program. The purpose of the program is of course to give newcomers the opportunity to work in their related field. Several resumes were submitted to HR and 2 newcomers were eventually chosen for

the 2 available training posts: one at Human Resources and another at the Museum. We are of course hopeful that after this Internship Program and the training and skills that they have acquired, they would find employment in the related fields.

The NWC would like to thank Susan Motkaluk, City Chief Administrative Officer, HR Department and the Swift Current Museum for their support to the program. We hope more newcomers will get the opportunity to have this experience.



The Newcomer Welcome Centre initiative encouraged me to apply for the Internship Program conducted by the city of Swift Current. I was very new to Swift Current when I started my internship at the Museum. Although, I don't like kitchen and housekeeping work, I had no other options at the time.

Once, I began my job as visitor's attendant – I got the great opportunity to meet different people during the "Lunch & Learn" program conducted by our museum. People from many different parts of Canada and the world visit the Museum. They come from different cultures and backgrounds. I was also able to work on the different collections of books and archives housed in the museum. All my coworkers at the museum are very friendly and cooperative. Even though I feel like I know nothing, they help me with every step of the way, so that I am able to handle my duties properly. There is a tourism section running in parallel to our museum complex. The Tourism director, Jackie helps me when I am in difficulty. My boss, Mr. Lloyd Begley, the museum director, is very helpful in all respects. His support is invaluable. So I am very grateful to all of those people who have given me the opportunities to build my career. I especially cannot forget Icasiana and Susan Motkaluk who created the initiatives that led to the creation of this position with the City. May God bless all of them. Happy Christmas to everyone in our small city!

~ Prokash Chandra Das



QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM:

- The internship program was initiated by the Chief Administrative Officer, Susan Motkaluk.
- It benefits the newcomers in getting a Canadian work experience. The internship is a temporary position; length of service is dependent on the need of the City.
- Currently, there are 2 interns: Prokash Das in Visitors Services Attendant at the Swift Current Museum and Deena Baje as Human Resources Assistant - Training.

It is great working for the City and I hope to continue my services here as a permanent full time.

~ Deena Baje



culture days

CELEBRATION of CULTURE and SPORT

took place on September 29, during *Culture Days* at the Riverside Park. It was attended by many people who were entertained by different dance performances, multicultural displays to and had a chance to enjoy some tasty snacks that are featured in our cookbook *Cooking Culture*. It was truly a celebration of culture, sport and dance. We were also blessed with a windy but altogether lovely fall day.

Together with city's Rec & Parks department we would like to thank all our dancers, presenters and performers as well as our volunteers. Huge THANKS also goes to Manju, Jeuly and Agnese for spending their morning cooking and baking their culinary specialties to be enjoyed by everyone.



There is an old Scandinavian saying:
**"There is no bad weather,
only bad clothing."**

To truly enjoy winter recreation activities, proper winter clothing is a must! Remember that quality clothing will pass on to the next sibling, or you can sell or trade it for the next season. Online classifieds, thrift shops and end of season sales are great ways to find affordable winter clothing for your family.



Winter Play

With the City of Swift Current's Recreation and Parks Department

On the Saskatchewan Prairies, we have more than 120 days of winter weather EVERY YEAR! The best way to 'survive' the winter is to embrace it, welcome it and enjoy the season. Skating on an outdoor rink, sledding, and building snowmen are classic winter activities. Walking and winter bird watching along the Chinook Parkway can be exhilarating. Snow makes a great canvas for snow art or for animal tracking. Beach toys can easily become snow toys and snow castles are every bit as grand as sand castles! If you prefer to stay indoors, the City of Swift Current Recreation and Parks Department has indoor rinks with public skating times available. Walking for Wellness is also offered in a warm, ice free environment. And of course the aquatic centre is always an enjoyable winter activity. For more information on how you can stay active and enjoy winter to its fullest, please contact the Recreation and Parks Department at 778-2787. Or check out our website at

www.swiftcurrent.ca



Stay Warm, Stay Happy

1. Monitor your local weather. Winter temperatures can vary widely, so you want to be prepared for the day. Tune into the morning news or check online for the latest weather updates.
2. Dress in layers. Stick a T-shirt under your long sleeve shirt or sweater.
3. Choose fabrics like fleece, wool, flannel, corduroy and heavy knits. More so than plain cotton, these help keep body warmth in. Thermal underwear is also a valuable winter purchase.
4. Insist on a hat. According to some experts, hats do indeed keep warmth from escaping your body. Covering your head will keep your body temperature regulated. Opt for a knit or fleece hat with ear flaps to stay extra toasty.
5. Add mittens or gloves. Mittens work best for younger children whose fingers may not fit into gloves. Fleece-lined gloves or mittens with a waterproof shell are effective options to keep hands warm and dry.
6. Choose a neck warmer. For kids neck warmers are safer than scarves because there is no additional fabric to pose a strangulation risk. If there is risk of frost bite, consider using a ski mask.
7. A good quality winter jacket. Choose a water resistant jacket with a hood. Down or synthetic filled coats with a waterproof shell are great. Consider a long down coat in extreme temperatures. Children definitely need ski pants or a ski suit.
8. Choose fleece-lined, waterproof boots. Fleece keeps feet warm and dry, and rubber soled boots provide good traction in slippery conditions. Look for boots with deep treads in the sole so that they can grab the ground and provide stability.

Adapted from e-how.com



becoming Canadian

As many of you have moved to Canada hoping to build better futures for yourselves and your families, you are worried not only how to settle and adjust to your new home, but also trying to make new friends. You may be wondering if you will ever become like them - Canadians, that is.

Canada is so multicultural and diverse. It is not always clear to us newcomers what "becoming Canadian" actually means. Does obtaining a Canadian citizenship make you a "Canadian"? In this section we will try to explore or explain some of the Canadian Ways, slang and provide some fun facts and bits about this beautiful country.



A True Canadian Sport

By Karen Biese - SC Curling Club

How much fun can you have on a sheet of ice? Come out to the Swift Current Curling Club and find out! We have drop-in times scheduled in the afternoon and evening, so why not come out and give curling a try?

Curling has been embraced by Canadians from coast to coast. It is a winter sport and we are a winter country. Curling (at least initially) required very little in the way of equipment – some ice, some jamcans filled with water and a broom to clear the way for the rocks. Winter lasts a long time in many parts of Canada and people needed to have fun. If the pond was frozen, people with skates would play hockey. Those without skates would curl! Later, when every community no matter how small had a community rink, ice was available for curling too. It is a great social and family recreation activity.

CAN-DICTIONARY

The meaning of **eh!**

eh = what did you say?

eh = what do you think?

eh = something to say just to end a sentence

ehhhhhhhhhhhhh! = wow!

eh! = sure!

Canada, eh!



HOW IS IT PLAYED? The game consists of two teams of 4 players each. Each player throws 2 rocks from one end of the sheet of ice to the other. At each end of the ice is a circle with different colored rings. When all the rocks have been thrown, that is called an end. When an end is complete, the team with the rock closest to the centre of the rings counts the score. They would count 1 point for each rock they have closer to the centre than the other team. For example, if a team has 3 rocks closer to the middle of the rings than the other team, they would count 3 points in that particular end. The game usually lasts 8 ends and the winner is the team with the most points.

This is just a very basic outline of how the game is played. Come out to the Curling Club and give it a try. Drop in times are Wednesday at 1PM and Sunday at 7PM. The cost is \$5.00 /person. All you need is a clean pair of shoes that have some grip on the ice. There are brooms and sliders available to use at the rink.

If you would like to come out, please call the rink and we can make arrangements to have a volunteer come out to help you get started. We also have a few \$4.00 Fridays where the curling is \$4.00 / person and we have \$4.00 drink specials up in our lounge. Check the website www.sccurlingclub.ca for dates, or call 773-4001 for more information.

Our Holiday Stories: The Journey of Traditions

by Mabel R. Derksen

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is reaching a much anticipated crescendo. Our community is dazzling with all things that shimmer and glitter. The airwaves are scintillating with the sounds of "Jingle Bells" and "Silent Night". And the feasting – it's everywhere! All those extra mouth-watering calories keep us warm on chilly winter nights until our exercise routines begin with resolve after New Year's.

Winter holidays are not limited to the traditions of Canada. All around the world, people are jubilantly celebrating different events such as the African *Kwanzaa* (harvest festival), *New Year's* in South-East Asia, Jewish *Hanukkah* (celebrating an ancient victory), *Winter Solstice* (shortest day of the year) and *Christmas* (Birth of Jesus). The same is true with many of our Newcomers to Swift Current. For our Winter edition of *Our Stories*, we asked two families about the journey of their traditions. Specifically, we were curious as to their holiday customs and if any of these customs have changed since moving to Canada. We also wanted to know if any of these families have started new traditions or adopted any Canadian customs. Here are their stories.

From Tunisia to Here.



In Tunisia the main religion is Islam and most people do not celebrate Christmas. But we looked forward to receiving Christmas gifts from our English half of the family. On Christmas day we often invited friends for a multi-course meal including a delicious stuffed turkey. There

belonging to the culture I am immersed in. Although some regions have unique traditional holiday foods and customs, most people I meet value family gatherings, generosity and compassion in exactly the same way that I grew up with. Despite being far from home, these shared values have allowed me to feel "at home" during my travels and with my newly acquired families.

Thank you Swift Current for providing me with a new home and family.

My name is Ymène Fouli and I grew up in Tunisia. Having arrived in Saskatchewan in March 2010, I am now in my third Swift Current winter. I visited Canada for holidays in the past, and my first ever Canadian winter was in Québec City in December 2000. I found out the real meaning of *freezing cold*.

Growing up we usually spent holidays as a family away from the city of Tunis. We would either visit relatives in the south or drive to the higher grounds of the humid north-west (on the edge of the Atlas Mountains) and enjoy beautiful walks in the cork/oak forests. We would often sing during our walks to ward off any wandering wild boars (and because we all loved singing). Unfortunately there was always lots of homework to do for school and that took up a good chunk of the holidays.

was always a Christmas cake and pudding that we looked forward to tasting. We explored various ways of decorating the living room using the hundreds of cards we had received over the years. There was usually a small pine tree that we enjoyed decorating as well.

Family is very important in the Tunisian culture and in everyday life. Holidays often meant family gatherings. Since leaving Tunisia over a decade ago to pursue my education and to travel, I have managed to make it home for many holidays. I have met many wonderful people during my travels that are now part of my "extended" family. In general I do not keep any specific annual traditions; rather I enjoy diversifying and joining in traditions



Have a happy holiday season and best wishes for a healthy and prosperous year 2013!



From Belarus to Here:

My name is Marina Dyck and I was born in the country of Belarus that used to be a part of the Soviet Union. I met my lovely husband Thomas, originally Canadian, while he was doing some missions work in Belarus. We got married overseas and spent four years in Belarus before moving to Canada in 2004.

Growing up in Belarus, I honestly never heard about Christmas. After the 1917 Revolution, Christmas was banned throughout the Soviet Union, along with other religious celebrations. It was not until 75 years later, in 1992, after the fall of Communism, that the holiday was openly observed. The New Year's celebration was the most exciting event of the year. The holiday tradition included a decorated tree and a character called *Ded Moroz* or "Grandfather Frost", who looked very much like the western Santa Claus. He wore a red suit and brought gifts on New Year's Eve. He was accompanied by his granddaughter *Snyegurochka*, the "Snowmaiden", who helped distribute the gifts.



Since 1992 Christmas has again been celebrated in Belarus, as in Russia, on January 7th, according to the Orthodox calendar. But, to date, New Year's still remains the bigger event and is associated with decorating the tree, gifts, Santa, fireworks, big family dinners and all-night celebrations. While New Year's Day, January 1st, precedes the Russian Christmas, some Russians and Belarusians observe two Christmases and even two New Year's – the first Christmas being observed on December 25th, and the second New Year's observed on January 14th. Because of this, people have good reason to have long holidays.

As mentioned before, Christmas was never celebrated in my family growing up, and even when it was publicly acknowledged, it became a tradition for us to celebrate it within the church circle only. In Canada, our emphasis has shifted from New Year's to Christmas. The Christmas season has become one of our favorite holidays of spending time together as family. Today, Thomas and I are

blessed with three children: Nicole (6), Milana (4) and Kaelan (1). Year by year we have been developing some family traditions that help make good Christmas memories. Our Christmas season always starts with the children and me decorating the Christmas tree. My husband always attaches Christmas lights on the outside of the house. We have created a tradition of adding new ornaments to our tree each year and have also added ornaments with a picture of each child to help them feel even more interested in the tree decorating.

The next thing we do is create and send family picture cards to our friends and family. Most years we get involved in baking cookies or cookie exchange parties. We bake several dozens of cookies and then exchange them with friends. At the end of the party, each family goes home with a variety of different cookies to enjoy over the Christmas season.

Christmas is known as a season of love and sharing, so one year we decided to sponsor a child in Rwanda and share our love this way. If you ask our children how many there are in our family they would always include their "other brother". This brings us joy and reminds us how blessed we are here in Canada. Our Christmas does not feel complete without the Church Christmas concert and banquet. The kids usually get to perform on the stage and it makes them feel so special. We also made it a tradition every Christmas morning to gather around the tree, read the Christmas story from the Bible, talk about the real meaning of Christmas and then open our presents. Children love this the most and talk about it all year-round, anticipating their dreams coming true. That is so awesome!

It was such a pleasure to share with you. We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas!



☺ HAPPY HOLIDAYS ☺
By Wendy Swann

English speaking Canadians are very confusing sometimes. A very good example of this occurs during the Christmas season. Here it is, Christmas time and many people wish others "Merry Christmas". But this is not always so. People often wish others "Happy Holidays" at this time of the year. Still others will write or say "Season's Greetings".

Why all the options?

Canada is of course a multicultural country. Canadians can trace their origins all over the world. For many Canadians, Christmas is a religious celebration. Yet others are more focused on the holiday rather than its religious aspects. After all, the children are out of school and many people have December 25 and December 26 off work. So truly, "Happy Holidays" is a more inclusive greeting in keeping with the diversity of our population. "Season's greetings" recognizes that this whole time of the year is special to many people for different reasons.

Simbang Gabi or Misa de Gallo

has already started all over the Philippines. December 16 marks the start of a nine-day dawn mass or Christmas Novena that ends on December 24. Church bells ring as early as 3:00 in the morning during those 9 days to signal the start of the mass. Christmas has officially begun in this part of the world. The Christmas Eve mass and the *Noche Buena* that follows, are the height of the Christmas celebration. Families gather together for a special meal with traditional Filipino dishes and delicacies. The whole evening is spent sharing stories and adventures, and of course gift-giving. The young ones are usually the happiest because they always get the most gifts, be it in kind or in cash. The Christmas season does not end on Christmas Eve but goes on until the feast of the Three Kings on the 6th of January or the first Sunday of January.

The Philippines is not the only country that officially starts Christmas on the 16th of December. **In Mexico**, they also have nine-day

Christmas Novena that starts on the 16th and ends on the 24th of December. They call it a celebration of Nativity or *Posadas* that is a re-enactment of the journey of Joseph and Mary while looking for lodging the night Jesus was born. Each family in the neighborhood schedules a night of *Posada* to be held at their home. Practically every home has a Nativity scene.

In Colombia, Christmas or *Navidad* starts on December 7th by celebrating the day of the Immaculate Conception. At dusk, there is lighting of candles on long pieces of wood board in front of homes. The Novena is also a must, beginning on the 16th and ending on the 24th of December. The Nativity is a constant scene in many houses. Christmas provides the opportunity to indulge in traditional

The Tale of Three Traditions

By Icasiana de Gala



foods. The feast on Christmas Eve is called *La Nochebuena*. Often, the celebrations continue until Christmas morning.

It is always good to know about different cultural traditions and discover similarities in how people celebrate Christmas. The fact that these countries were at some point in their history under Spanish rule probably explains the cultural similarities. As we can see however, people in the Philippines, Mexico and Colombia have definitely made these celebrations their own.



Easy Holiday Snack

by Erin Kinney

you will need:

- * full size marshmallows
- * white Belgian chocolate wafers
- * red and green sprinkles
- * peppermint sticks

how to make it:

Step 1: melt chocolate in a double boiler;

Step 2: dip the peppermint stick in the chocolate then in the marshmallow;

Step 3: dip the marshmallow in the chocolate and sprinkle!



We had another wonderful party celebrating Christmas Filipino style with great food, lots of laughter and dancing till the middle of night. As David Anderson put it, " The Filipino party is the best Christmas party in town!" Perhaps that is why he keeps joining us every year! We were also happy to have Brad Wall and Susan Motkaluk and George Bowdich in attendance! Thank you to all our friends and guests, and everyone who made this party so much fun!



reminders

who is new?

Don't forget to tell us who is new in our community. We would love to meet them!

International Women of Swift Current meet on Wednesdays @ 7:45 at the Welcome Centre 237 Central Ave N

For more info contact Myra (306) 773 - 5068, mleyshon@sasktel.net



TRUE SPORT

We have a bag full of sports equipment & board games. Want to try hockey? We have helmets and gloves. So come by and borrow some equipment and try a new activity!



HOMEWORK CLUB is back!!

We are looking for more students and more teachers! If you want to volunteer or participate in this program, please contact Icasiana at (306) 778-6252

Don't miss out on important announcements and opportunities.



Add us and keep in touch with all that is going on!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/41822533487/>

Immigrant Access Fund **IAF**

→ The Immigrant Access Fund

The Immigrant Access Fund provides micro loans to immigrants who need help to pay for the costs associated with obtaining the Canadian accreditation or training that will allow them to work in their profession or trade.

More info at the Welcome Centre!



Learn English From Home *for free*

visit us for more information! Or check out their website at www.linchnational.ca

To enroll contact Bula Ghosh from Great Plains College (306) 778 5477 bulag@greatplainscollege.ca

new arrivals



Chetan Sood
from India



Wey Quan, Serena & Cui Ming
from China



Mylyn, Libibeth & Sammy
from Philippines



Jhoanna & Edna
from Philippines



Sachin Kumar
from India



Jihye Lee
from South Korea



Jyobeen Kacha
from India

new babies

Congratulations to all parents with the new wonderful additions to their families!



Alyzon Georgia
~ Oct. 7, 2012
born to Aldrin & Gemma Lianko



Alizea Morales
~ Oct. 5, 2012
born to Jobert & Milet Morales



Jaevy Angela
~ Dec. 16, 2012
born to Joevy & Angelo Perrera

families reunited &

new families



Cajajal family reunited



Elma Gonzales & Clint Bennet

The Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating and maintaining a welcoming atmosphere for newcomers who have decided to reside in Southwest Saskatchewan. We hope to enable independence and respectful community participation for newcomers by providing settlement and integration services and by promoting cross cultural awareness to all in the communities we serve.

SOUTHWEST NEWCOMER
WELCOME
CENTRE

502 Central Ave. W. Swift Current, SK S9H 0L1 | www.southwestnewcomercentre.com

SOUTHWEST NEWCOMER
WELCOME
CENTRE

Centre Hours
MONDAY - FRIDAY
8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

306 778 6262 PHONE
306 778 6226 FAX

info@newcomerwelcomecentre.com