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INTERLACED

Living our Faith Through Stories

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INTERLACED:

Living Our Faith Through Stories

On behalf of the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA), the Kolot Mayim Reform Synagogue, the Ismaili Jamatkhana of Victoria, and the Victoria Hindu Temple in Saanich, we are excited to present our Interfaith Storytelling Book.

ICA wishes to acknowledge that we are on Coast Salish Nation and Esquimalt Nation territory and we thank them for their generous hospitality.

“INTERLACED: Living Our Faith Through Stories” has been a truly collaborative community project, funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia through EmbraceBC.

The objective of the project was to bring together participants from three faith groups to learn and develop skills in the art of storytelling, promote understanding and build relationships across faith groups, share stories in a public performance and create a book of stories.

The project got off the ground in September 2012, and over ten months the Hindu, Muslim and Jewish faith communities shared personal stories that answered the question “How do you live your faith?”. We wanted to know how religion impacted daily and community life. During fifteen workshops under the experienced guidance of storytelling facilitators Lina de Guevara and Jennifer Ferris, stories were drawn from a variety of themes including birth, death, migration, work, marriage, children, sacred objects, repair of the world, belonging, fate, personal and community identity, kindness, courage, hospitality and the stories of our names, to name a few. Only eight stories were selected for this story book, but we heard over one hundred stories that not only made us laugh, but inspired us and made us nod our heads in shared understanding.

It was gratifying to watch community members, who in the beginning were hesitant to speak before a crowd, quickly grow in skill as storytellers and performers. Participants learned about each other's faiths and new friendships were made across cultures and religions, as you will see in the photographs throughout this story book. As Lina de Guevara, the workshop facilitator, aptly put it:

"We feel enormously rewarded by being allowed to share a glimpse of these religious communities of whom we knew little or nothing about. Any preconceptions we might have had were disproved, and our spirits opened to other understandings of the universe. Its complexity and beauty was once more revealed, thanks to the generosity of these three communities who shared their beliefs openly and trustingly, and thanks to the wonderful instrument of storytelling, which allows expression to all human beings."

And here are some of the stories shared...

Paulina Grainger, Arts & Outreach Coordinator,
Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
www.icavictoria.org

Faith Group Information

Victoria Hindu Temple in Saanich

The Hindu Temple of Victoria is located in Saanich on Cultra Avenue. It was founded around 2000 and currently has more than 200 members. The Hindu temple, where the members gather to worship, was originally an older Anglican Church that the Hindu temple community purchased and renovated around 2000. Services for Hindu worship are generally held on Saturday evenings and include shared meals prepared by the members. Religious events and celebrations are held throughout the year to which members of the public are welcome. To learn more about the Victoria Hindu Temple, visit www.victoriahindutemple.com.

Ismaili Jamatkhana of Victoria

The Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, generally known as the Ismailis, belong to the Shia branch of Islam. Ismailis call their house of prayer a “Jamatkhana”. There are 65 Ismaili Jamatkhana in Canada and 17 in BC. The Victoria Jamatkhana is located in the heart of Esquimalt at 1250 Esquimalt Road and is designed with the surrounding community in mind. There are about 200 members of the Ismaili Muslims who join together to worship, celebrate, and support the wider community. To learn more about the Ismaili Muslim community, please visit www.theismaili.org.

Kolot Mayim Reform Synagogue

Kolot Mayim Reform Temple is a congregation of about 80 members in Greater Victoria. The congregation meets at the Jewish Community Centre located on Shelbourne Street. Founded in 1997 by a few families meeting monthly in each other’s homes, the Victoria Reform Jewish Congregation has grown to include weekly



Kabbalat Shabbat services, religious instruction for children, and celebrations for festivals, holidays, and life-cycle events. The congregation's Rabbi leads services at least once per month, with lay leaders conducting services the rest of the month at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays during the year. To learn more about the Kolot Mayim Reform Temple Synagogue visit www.kolotmayimreformtemple.com.

















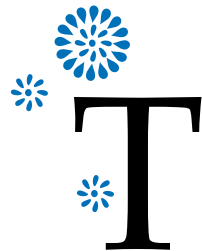






Journey from Poland

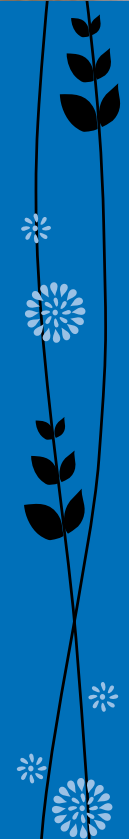
Joe Gougeont-Ryant




his story came to me from reading handwritten scraps of paper shoved into a drawer and from listening at my mother's knee. It is her story of leaving Poland as a six-year-old child. Her memories were very graphic and detailed.

The year was 1910. My mother and her mostly younger siblings lived on the outskirts of Radom, then a small city in north central Poland. My grandfather, along with his sister, had gone to Toronto two years earlier to earn the money needed to bring his wife and children to Canada. Life in Poland was harsh and dangerous for Jews and the increasing frequency of pogroms made migration increasingly imperative.

My mother recalled the family being loaded onto a rough-hewn farm wagon, pulled by one horse, for the trip to the train that would take the family to the embarkation seaport. My mother remembered her own grandmother, who was not making the journey and who would never see her family again, running behind the wagon wracked by grief and wailing in a loud voice as the wagon pulled away. In a final gesture of despair, she threw the large white apron she was wearing back over her face in a futile attempt to hide her sorrow.





"Storytelling is a return to the power of the human voice and human engagement. We must give people a chance to tell their stories enough that they begin to select and choose the stories that they want to represent their community."

Lina de Guevara

The family crossed the Atlantic in steerage, that is, the least expensive class. It was arranged as one large dormitory for men, women and children. People were to sleep on cots. Sanitary facilities were both limited and primitive. Kosher food was not available so that observant Jews, my mother and family included, ate only bread, porridge, hard boiled eggs, and whatever scanty raw fruit and vegetables that were offered.

My grandmother immediately became violently seasick to the point that she could barely lift her head from the pillow. My mother's older brother, and she herself, as the oldest daughter, effectively parented their younger sister and two brothers, the youngest of whom was still in diapers.

As bad luck would have it, there was a storm at sea and the ship began to take on water. My mother remembers the water rising up the legs of the cot on which they were all huddled. The order came to abandon ship but even at the risk of her life, my grandmother was unable to get up from her bed. She implored other passengers to save her children, but the children refused to leave her side.

When all seemed lost, the ship's pumps suddenly became effective and the water level began to go down. The lifeboats that had already been dispatched, were called back and the voyage resumed its normal route heading for Halifax.

When the ship docked at the now famous Pier 21, my grandfather was not there to greet his family. He could not afford the fare that would have enabled him to meet them. Instead, he sent enough money, through the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (H.I.A.S.), to purchase rail passage for his wife and children to Toronto, where he awaited them. The family, being only Yiddish-speaking, and in a forlorn and bedraggled state, could not have continued the journey without the assistance of H.I.A.S.

A brief word of digression about H.I.A.S. Earlier Jewish immigrants to "America", Canada and the United States, had founded a variety of community institutions to ease the process of adaptation to their new land. There were synagogues, Jewish day schools

and after-school schools, free loan societies, burial societies, societies to supervise *kashruth* (dietary laws), and so on. One of these community groups was H.I.A.S. and my mother didn't know how they could have completed their journey without its intervention.

After 30 hours on the train, sustained by what little food H.I.A.S. was able to provide, the family arrived at Toronto's Union Station, there to be met by my grandfather and his sister. In a grand gesture, he loaded the family and the belongings into a horse-drawn carriage and took them to their new home, a cold-water flat on the third floor of a tenement building.


And there they were - bewildered, exhausted and traumatized - in a new land where they had been led to believe "the streets were paved with gold". It didn't feel that way to them.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. It was their immediate next-door neighbour, an Italian woman who sold fruit and vegetables from a pushcart in what is now Kensington market. She bore a gift of welcome; a platter of fresh fruit with oranges, apples, plums, grapes, and bananas.

My grandmother dutifully cut the two bananas into six equal pieces so that each of them could taste the new and strange fruit. Never having before seen a banana, they didn't know to peel the fruit before eating it - they tried it peel and all.

Faces contorted with disgust, they cried out in unison, "*Mir hassn bananas!*" We hate bananas!


That is how my family came to Canada.



*"I enjoy basking
in this courage
exerted by all those
closet-storytellers
in coming out and
sharing their stories
with all of us, all
realizing their value
together."*


Audience member






"People need to learn the value of what they have inside them. Stories must be told."

Audience member at the final storytelling performance



Best of Both Worlds

Arpita Sahasrabudhe



All our lives we read stories, we tell stories, and we learn from stories, but these are all stories that are already written. If someone asks me what is my story, I really have to think, as most of the time I really don't think of my life as a story. But after much thought and pondering, I will say my story is "best of both worlds".

I came to Canada seventeen years ago as a newly wedded bride with my husband of four months. What a change it was for a girl like me, from a small rural town in India to a big modern city in Canada, from a big loving family to a lonely place where I didn't know anyone. From hot temperatures to cold in Canada, from my mother tongue, Marathi, to this new language which I have learned but hardly spoke in daily life, from a carefree young life in India to this new world of responsibility.

I used to cry a lot, feel sorry about myself... and complain. But then I realized, yes, many things had changed for me but what had not changed was me and my deep faith in our God, my strong values and teachings from the rich culture and religion which I belonged to. Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life in India. It has taught me three important things that I strongly believe and try to follow in my life; God is with you all

the time, watching you, guiding you, taking care of us so I don't need to feel that I am all alone – actions speak louder than words. You are responsible for your actions, but not the outcome of it. So don't worry about success or failure, just be open minded, respectful to all others, be fair to all and always work hard without expecting anything in return; It's a circle of life – what you sow is what you reap! So be good and do good to others, and good will come back to you. Have gratitude for all you get, and do not regret for what you do not have!

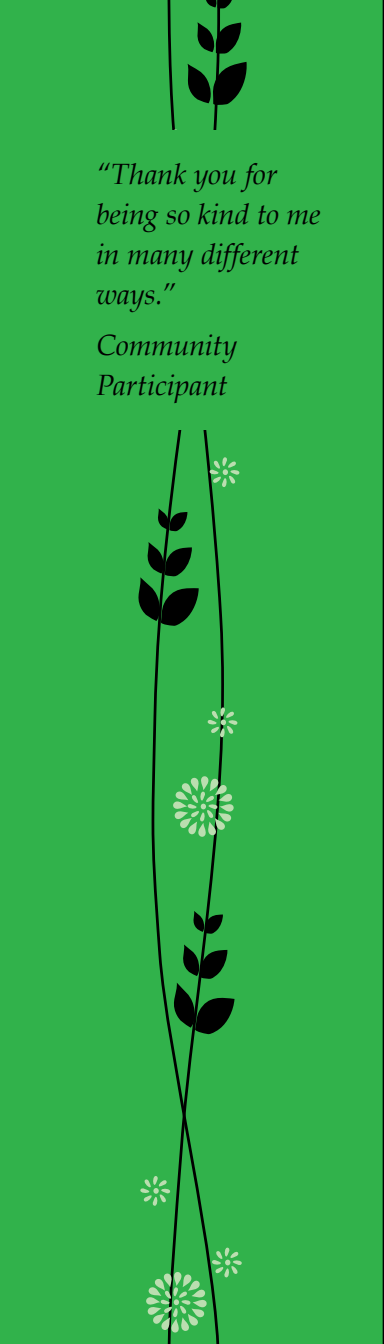
I decided in my mind – yes, I am educated, I can work hard, and as long as I follow what my faith taught me, I can make this the “best of both worlds” for me, my family and my community.

Now, it has been 17 years here in Canada, happily married with my husband. I did have many ups and downs in my life, but my faith kept me strong. Now I am well settled, have a job, I am used to the cold in Canada and not alone any more. I have two beautiful daughters and I try my best to give them the best of both worlds. I have my faith and values and, at the same time I give myself the freedom to experience good things from other cultures and traditions. Now my daughters speak English, but also are very fluent in my mother tongue, Marathi. They learn Indian classical dance and they learn ballet. We pray at home, celebrate our festivals and we go to church and celebrate other festivals too. Now we are part of a big Hindu community here in Victoria and our kids enjoy the cultural activities and they feel that they belong to our community. They are connected to a big loving family in India and they have a huge family of friends here in Canada.

When I look back my years in Canada, I feel very blessed to have best of both worlds. I know there is a long way to go, but I know my god is with me taking care of me all the time – while experiencing the ups and downs of the best of both worlds!



यथा देशः तथा भेषः
*Yathaa deshah,
thathaa bhashah –
the countenance
should suit the
circumstances.*




"Thank you for
being so kind to me
in many different
ways."

Community
Participant

Blueberry Buns

Neal Wasser



Have any of you had the good fortune of tasting a blueberry bun? I grew up in Toronto and by some fluke of history, it is the only city in North America where the blueberry bun can be found at some of the Jewish bakeries. Its origin is Eastern Europe – probably Poland. These most amazing blueberry buns are made with a sweet yeast dough, jam packed with blueberries. When you bite into them there is an explosion of taste like nothing else.

I was about nine years old when my Booby, my father's mother, passed away. Booby is Yiddish for grandmother. When a member of the immediate family passes away, it is the Jewish tradition that we go to synagogue and say *kuddish* for that person for a period of one year. Among the more religious of our community, the tradition is to go daily.

Now, I am the eldest of a family of four children, all of whom were born within about a five and a half year period. With that number of young children to attend to, there was no opportunity for what we now call "quality time". My mother was busy taking care of this large brood of kids, while my father was working hard to build up his business and support his family.

When my father would go to synagogue to say *kuddish* for my Booby, sometimes I would go with him. I guess it was me who would go since I was the eldest. I remember that time we spent together going to synagogue with great affection. It was during that time I had the rare opportunity to be with my father; just the two of us. We would drive to the synagogue where he would join in prayer with the others who were also saying the mourner's *kuddish* for their loved ones who had passed away. After religious services there is what is called a *kiddish*, where cakes, sandwiches, sweet Mogan David wine are served, and usually a bottle of rye for those wanting a shot of something stronger.

When we headed home, often we stopped at one of the Jewish bakeries on the way to buy bread and blueberry buns. Blueberry buns were a luxury since they were expensive. It was too expensive to buy blueberry buns for the whole family, so often we returned home with only two blueberry buns; one bun for my father and one for me. Now I'm not sure, but I think it was my father and I who had the greatest appreciation for these sweet buns, and perhaps that's why I don't recall any of my siblings complaining about this injustice.

Now that I live in Victoria, there is nowhere I can buy blueberry buns. So, whenever I am in Toronto, I make sure to go to the bakery. I was there recently to help celebrate my father's 85th birthday and when I returned home to Victoria, as usual, I brought with me a half dozen blueberry buns to help tide me over until my next Toronto visit. Whenever I'm fortunate enough to find myself eating a blueberry bun, it brings back fond memories of the times I accompanied my father when he went to say *kuddish* for his mother.



תיקון העולם
Tikkun HaOlam –
Repair of the World



"The telling of stories brought more stories back into memory; there is a release of memory, of voice."

Community Participant

How I Got My Name

Sanskruti Padmarwar (age 10)




"S

anskruti" means culture. It was when my parents just got married, my father was on a three month business trip to Japan, and my mother was visiting her parents in Pune which is located in the west of India. My mother was crazy about babies and little cute kids. When she saw a little girl from a distance who was around 5 or 6 years old, my mother called her to come and she asked the little girl, "What is your name?", the little girl answered, "*Sanskruti*". My mother was amazed with her response. She contacted my father and wrote a handwritten letter (those days emails were just evolving) saying she adored the name *Sanskruti*, which is a very unique name that is unheard of by most people. After I was born three years later, my father set his mind on *Sanskruti* as well. They both loved the name and soon, I learned to love it too. :)



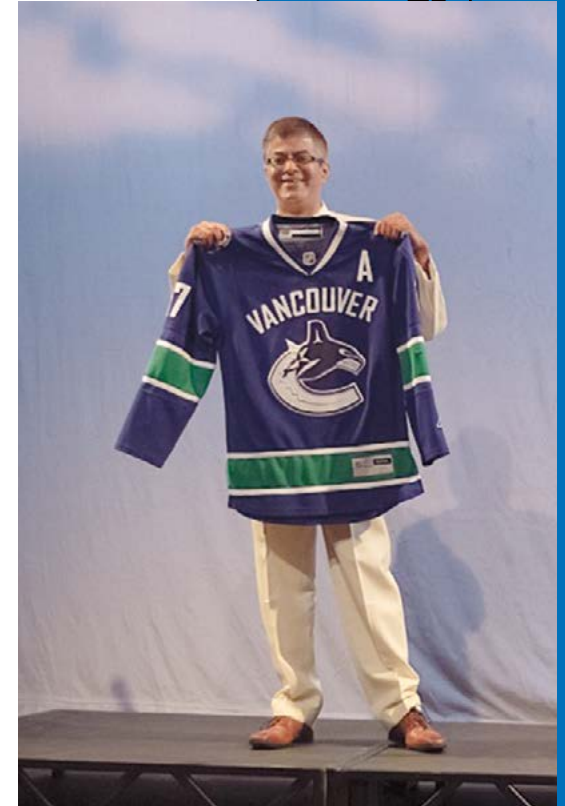
Hope and Magical Generosity and the Vancouver Canucks


Ali Hemani

 My story is about the human spirit, and how my family experienced an incredible level of generosity and kindness when we moved Canada from Uganda. I have thought about this over the years and have come to the conclusion that it is not a common occurrence, and that is why I call it magical.

The year was 1972, and our family of seven had just been told along with other members of the East Indian community in Uganda that we had 90 days to abandon everything we owned and leave the country.

Dad held a family meeting, and we debated whether we should we try to go to England or Canada and we voted as a family to go to Canada. What followed was a weekly routine of travelling from our small town in Jinja to Kampala to wait in a queue outside the Canadian Embassy. It wasn't any old queue, but a gigantic human snake that wove back and forth down the





"Everyone was so natural and sincere. It was very special getting to know you through your faith and ethnicity – a completely new experience for me. I hope to be able to see you again – maybe sharing some latkes during Hannukah."

Community
Participant



street as far as the eye could see. Entire families would wait for hours on end in the hot African sun, just to be turned away at the end of the day. The Embassy was trying hard, but could only process so many applications and interviews in a day.

One of the vivid memories of those days was of my mother in the line-up. She held her prayer beads or *tasbeih* in her hand while she prayed silently. The look of unwavering faith in her eyes comforted me; I knew that we were going to be ok!

Then finally it happened, we got in the front door! We went through the interviews and were granted our visas. I heard my Mom and Dad exclaim "*Shukr – Alhamdu-lilah*" or "Thanks and praise be to Allah." I remember everyone being so excited and my parents being especially relieved. The headline in the paper that morning read, "20 days to go."

Dad and Mom planned it out that very night after evening prayers; they would go to Canada first, and the five children would go to live with our relatives in Kenya until my parents got settled.

I remember seeing them off as they got onto an airplane at Entebbe airport. It had not really sunk in until that moment that we may not see our parents for a very long time. I can only imagine how my parents felt; they were not only leaving their family behind, but also their community, and everything they had worked so hard for.

From my perspective as a seven-year-old everything to this point had just been one big adventure. School was out, and with the curfews, we got to spend a lot more time together as a family. I even remember how my brother and I used to walk up to the soldiers on the street and ask in Swahili if we could hold their rifles - they just smiled at us. Just imagine the little boy in the movie, 'It's a Beautiful Life', that was how I felt – not truly aware of the danger of our situation.

Dad and Mom landed in Toronto. The first question posed was to choose which city they wanted to settle in – Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. They chose Vancouver and were immediately routed there. They landed in Vancouver and were given temporary accommodations.

Now, Dad was a very successful entrepreneur and he had a natural charm and charisma about him. He was also a member of the international Rotary Club. He located the club in Vancouver and was asked if he could speak to the club about what the family just went through in Uganda with Idi Amin. So Dad told his story. Then a very interesting thing happened. He was approached by a couple from Victoria who had come over to hear the talk. Finn and Greta Hemmingsen said to my Dad, "We would like to take you and your wife to Victoria with us and help you get settled in this new country."

"Really?"

"Yes. We are here for a couple more days, why don't you get your stuff together and we can take you back with us." And so started the magical journey....

Dad and Mom stayed with Finn and Greta at their house and one of the first things they did was to ask my parents what type of business they would like to run? Dad said that Mom was a really good cook – how about a restaurant? So Finn took Dad to see his banker and they talked him into providing a business loan to buy a restaurant called Bob's Burgers on the Island Highway. But...there was a condition – the loan had to be guaranteed because Dad was um...kind of penniless. So guess what Finn and Greta did? They guaranteed the loan. The magic continues...

Next, Finn and Greta helped Mom and Dad search for a house for the family. They found a house in Gordon Head close to the schools. But...there was a condition, the mortgage needed to be guaranteed. So guess what Finn and Greta did? They guaranteed the mortgage!

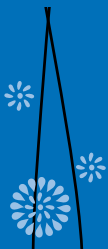
A month later we received a call in Nairobi from Mom and Dad. They had settled in and wanted us to fly to our new home in Canada. We landed in Vancouver, were bundled into a station wagon and driven to this really big parking lot at night. Suddenly the whole parking lot started moving and that was how I remember my first ferry trip.

الحمد لله رب العالمين
Thanks and praise be
to Allah



"Through this process, not only do I learn so much about the lives of others and their 'journeys' but I also gain valuable insight into my own relationship with my new home. I am very grateful for this rewarding opportunity and would like to thank my fellow collaborators for welcoming me into this sacred sharing space."

Enrique Rivas
(Project Musician)



We pulled up to our new house in Victoria and, as kids, we never realized the incredible generosity that had made that possible for our family.

A few days later, my brother and I had a sleepover with Finn and Greta's son, Ray. He brought his hockey cards and said to my brother and me, "If you're going to live in Canada, you must pick a hockey team." He then whispered something in my older brother's ear and Murad picked the Montreal Canadiens. Then it was my turn; I picked the Vancouver Canucks because it was the closest city. So began years of rivalry with my brother, and years of hanging my head during playoffs.

My family never forgot the kindness and compassion shown to us by the Hemmingsens and Canada. Although we left a community behind in Uganda, we were embraced by a new community here in Victoria. We never felt isolated or alone. This experience deepened our faith and made us feel that God was watching over us.

Raisins and Nuts on Yom Kippur

Reva Hutkin



I grew up in Montreal in what was mostly a Jewish ghetto with a sprinkling of French Canadian families and one Irish Catholic family on the corner. I was a scrapper and mischief-maker and the Irish girl and I used to get into physical altercations.

Directly across from our house was the Orthodox synagogue, a really small building. True to the Orthodox tradition, the men prayed downstairs and the women were located in the balcony. My Dad attended services there every day and we also celebrated the High Holidays in this little “shul.”

True to my mischievous nature, I couldn’t help fomenting trouble. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year when we ask God to inscribe us in The Book Of Life for another year. It is also a day of prayer and fasting. Children under the age of thirteen are not required to fast and Yom Kippur seems to be an endless day as the adults spend all day in synagogue.

I decided to organize my cousin who is my age, and my younger sister to partake in a prank I dreamed up to pass the time. We filled our pockets with almonds and raisins





"More! This was an accessible joyful event that fully engaged the audience and built respect and connection across the group."

Audience member



and went to "shul." There we were; three adorable pre-teens, looking so innocent. That is, until we began pelting the men below with almonds and raisins! We caused quite an uproar and were chased out of the building unceremoniously. We survived another year and with time off for good behaviour. I was sure there would be more pranks in my future.



"When I stepped into the Muslim temple on the morning of my presentation, I felt I was entering another world. My time there was sweet and precious. I learned a lot about the participants and about my own storytelling from the discussions that followed my demo. The group was warm, smart, respectful, insightful, and articulate. The facilitators guided us all through a session that stays with me to this day."

Anne Glover (Experienced Storyteller Model)

Fate

Ashok Agarwal



M

y story is about how fate has played an important role in my life.

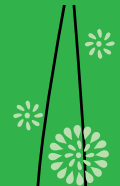
On graduating from university, I applied for two job postings at the Bhabha Atomic Research Center in Mumbai. One posting was for a Scientific Officer, and the other was for a Hospital Physicist, and I got interviews for both. One of my cousins had the spiritual power to predict the future very accurately. He told me that for sure I would be selected for the post of Hospital Physicist, but not for my preferred position of Scientific Officer. Though happy that I would be selected for at least one, being ambitious, I wanted to change his prediction and requested him to do something to help me get the job I really wanted. He simply told me that this is what destiny wanted and he could not do anything about it.

The first interview, which was for the Scientific Officer position, went well and I answered all the questions except for one simple question that was asked by the



"This project has given voice to people who are not usually storytellers."

Community Participant



Chairman. He was adamant, insisting that I must know the answer to his question in order to be selected for the position. While waiting in the lounge for the Hospital Physicist interview, I asked my friend, who was just returning from his interview for that position, "How was the interview?" He said, "It didn't go well; I failed in answering a simple question about a full wave rectifier."

When I was called in, the Chairman said that since they were running out of time, they would just ask one simple question. To my surprise, it was the same question my friend had told me about and I immediately responded with the correct answer. Chairman told me delightedly that I am truly bright and that I was selected for the job of Hospital Physicist. My cousin was right; I could not escape my fate.





"I enjoyed being a model storyteller for the Hindu community. The audience was warm, enthusiastic and participated well, especially in the musical parts of the story. Their comments, elicited afterwards by the workshop leaders, showed that they understood the meaning behind the story through their own experiences as immigrants to a new land who, like the lone, introduced apple tree in the story, learns that it has so much to offer the world. I felt a sense of celebration with the telling of this tale that I have never felt before, even though I have told this story many times."

Shoshana Litman (Experienced Storyteller Model)

A Legacy of “Service”

Alnoor Ramji

  **T**he rising sun was glistening off the giant tusks of elephants crossing Kilindini Road in Mombasa. This was the view from the top floor of the Jubilee Insurance Building where I lived with my grandparents and uncle. I was seven at the time.

It was time to get ready for school but I felt like reminiscing. Last night had been amazing. We had visitors at the house, and my grandfather was regaling them with stories of his time spent in the service of His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, and his grandfather, His Highness Sir Sultan Mohammed Shah Aga Khan III, spiritual leaders (or Imam) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims.

My grandfather spoke of the time when the present Aga Khan took office on July 11, 1957. His retelling of the coronation ceremony that took place amongst a crowd of thousands of followers, made me feel like I was right there. The way my grandfather spoke had everyone’s undivided attention. I often wondered why he was so respected





*"What an
interesting,
inspiring journey!"*

*Community
Participant*



and revered by anyone who came in contact with him. I came to the realization that night, that it was his passion to serve the Imam and our community with undying loyalty and dedication that others wanted to emulate him. He went on to tell us of the time when in the service of the former Aga Khan, as the President of our Council, how he accompanied the Aga Khan in his travels and the many countries he visited; how on the 75th anniversary of the former Aga Khan, a ceremony took place at the Diamond Jubilee Hall in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Sitting on a raised platform, the then spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims paid homage to the community in hosting him on his 75th anniversary. It was a particularly special moment for my grandfather when he recited a "*ginan*", or devotional hymn in the presence of His Highness and hundreds of thousands of followers. It was that moment that glorified my grandfather in the eyes of all who saw and heard him sing.

My grandfather related his experience of the late 1930's and 40's when he immigrated with his family to Mombasa, Kenya and in the true ethic of service to others, helped settle hundreds of families that had moved from the Indian subcontinent to East Africa. In his retelling of the story he mentioned the numerous occasions when there were 20 to 30 individuals staying with him in their five bedroom home until he was able to find suitable accommodations and work for the families.

He related accounts of the several businesses he was involved in with his two siblings. One such business was a stone quarry. It was this business that enabled him to build the Tudor Jamatkhana, a place of worship for one of our communities, and Makupa Flats, a housing project for another Ismaili community. It was this dedication to serve others that has inspired me to follow in his footsteps and serve my community to the best of my ability in my present capacity as leader of the Ismaili community in Victoria. The examples of the types of service provided by my grandfather have been a constant source of motivation for my family and me.

Since moving to Victoria from Vancouver, my family and I have been involved in our community in providing leadership and guidance to our congregation over the last 17 years in one form or another. The immense satisfaction derived from this service has filled our lives with an abundance of joy and fulfillment. My community of approximately 175 individuals has become my extended family. Their best interest is what drives me to achieve more and more every day. However, without the support of my family and those I serve closely with, this journey would not have been possible. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity I have been blessed with.

“With a drum and a blanket, I entered the storyteller’s circle to demonstrate a lively story about my practice of spirituality. Surrounding me were a wonderful group of Ismaili, Jewish, and Hindu storytellers-to-be, all interested to present some of their stories in a play. Themes that resonate with me from the occasion are respect, friendship, and discovery. I brought the spirit through my drum, formed my blanket into a primordial prop of a thousand uses, and shared story. This delighted the circle that had assembled, already chock-full with humanity, a basic, ultimate condition of any desired spiritual connection or practice.”

Rob Hunter (Experienced Storyteller Model)





Storytelling Facilitator Bios

Lina de Guevara

Chilean-born **Lina de Guevara** is a director, actor, storyteller and specialist in Transformational Theatre and Commedia dell'Arte. In 1988 Lina founded PUENTE Theatre in Victoria, B.C. and was its artistic director for 23 years. She retired in June 2011. With its mandate to create and produce plays about diversity, the immigrant experience and intercultural communication, PUENTE has been a significant presence in the Victoria theatre scene.

Lina's director's credits include "Sisters/Strangers", "Storytelling Our Lives", "I Wasn't Born Here", "Crossing Borders",

“Letters for Tomas”, “Act Now Against Racism”, “The House of Bernarda Alba”, “Mother Courage”, “Uthe/Athe”, “Chile con carne”, “Emergence”, “The Woman who Fell from the Sky”, “Canadian Tango”, “Scene and Heard”, and “Pilgrimage of the Nuns of Concepción”.

Currently, Lina freelances as director, actor, workshop facilitator and storyteller. She is a strong believer in the power of the arts to enrich life, to heal wounds and to add meaning and joy to our days. Website: www.linadeguevara.ca

Jennifer Ferris

Victoria storyteller, **Jennifer Ferris**, has entertained listeners for more than 25 years. In addition to her own tales, she tells stories of wisdom, magic, mystery and transformation from around the world. She also engaged audiences with improv stories where caution is thrown to the wind. Jennifer has encouraged and mentored many new tellers through her workshops for all ages and levels.

Jennifer has produced and performed in many storytelling events including UNO Festival, World Storytelling Day, B.C. Summer Games and Storytellers of Canada-Conteurs du Canada national conference. In addition to her own storytelling career she has worked for the benefit of other tellers and story listeners as president of Storytellers of Canada-Conteurs du Canada.

“I feel honoured to have worked with Lina de Guevara during this wonderful project.”

A Selection of the Stories Told During the Project

Hindu Stories

<i>The Story of Fate</i>	Ashok Agarwal
<i>Freedom of My Religion</i>	Robina Virk
<i>My Kids and Culture</i>	Sayukta Agarwal
<i>The Statue of the Dog</i>	Yashwant Katireddy
<i>The Sacrifice of the Eye</i>	Sanskriti Padmawar
<i>The Honesty of the Poor Flute Player</i>	Ashok Agarwal
<i>Pavaarti and the Goat</i>	Yashwant Katireddy
<i>Indra's Curse</i>	Yashwant Katireddy
<i>Bring my Kids to Temple</i>	Sayukta Agarwal
<i>Responsibility for Self</i>	Robina Virk
<i>Everything Has a Soul</i>	Vinod Bhardwaj
<i>Making Your Morals Your Own</i>	Vinod Bhardwaj

<i>Acceptance</i>	Vinod Bhardwaj
<i>The River</i>	Vinod Bhardwaj
<i>The Bonding of the Family</i>	Arpita Sahasrabudhe
<i>The Girl Who Finds Her Friend</i>	Niyati Agarwal
<i>On the Train to Goa</i>	Sejal Agarwal
<i>Ride on an Elephant</i>	Charuta Sahasrabudhe
<i>Living Faith Through Children's Drama called «The birth of Lord Krishna»</i>	Sayukta Agarwal, Sri Ganti, Arpita Sahasrabudhe and Kids
<i>Keeping Faith with God</i>	Raj Prasad
<i>The Sinner Who Became a Saint</i>	Shashi Prasad

Jewish Stories

<i>The Turning Point</i>	Shoshana Litman
<i>The Jerusalem Walk</i>	Shoshana Litman
<i>Swimming with Sabras</i>	Joe Gougeont-Ryant
<i>Latkes for the World</i>	Shirley Langer
<i>Raisins and Nuts on Yom Kippur</i>	Reva Hutkin
<i>B'al Teshuva: Master of Return</i>	Shoshana Litman
<i>Rebellion</i>	Dotter (Dorothy) Field
<i>It's Enough to Make a Grown Person Cry</i>	Joe Gougeont-Ryant
<i>Becoming Me</i>	Jenny Laing
<i>The Potato</i>	John Sitwell
<i>My Father - Vaseline Doll</i>	Dotter (Dorothy) Field
<i>It's a Shame to be Ashamed</i>	Louis Sutker
<i>Jewish Cuisine</i>	Joe Gougeont-Ryant
<i>Pepperoni Pizza</i>	Sean Littenberg

<i>Hebrew School</i>	Shoshana Litman
<i>Lemons</i>	Neal Wasser
<i>Seder Story</i>	Reva Hutkin
<i>Drunk at the Synagogue</i>	Neal Wasser
<i>Wine for Special Occasions</i>	Reva Hutkin
<i>Passover and the Stranger</i>	Dotter (Dorothy) Field
<i>Three Cantors</i>	Joe Gougeont-Ryant
<i>A Journey Into Faith</i>	Gavin Wyer

Muslim Stories

<i>We Belong</i>	Shabana Inayatoli
<i>Memories of Eid</i>	Shabana Inayatoli
<i>Faith</i>	Monica Constantino
<i>Jewish Camp in Upstate New York</i>	Nazmudin Rayani
<i>When My First Fish Died</i>	Qaeza Ramji
<i>Didar in Vancouver 2007</i>	Qaseem and Qaeza Ramji
<i>The Beginning of my journey into</i>	Monica Constantino
<i>Ismaeli Muslim Religion</i>	
<i>Bungoma Childhood</i>	Karima Ramji
<i>My Wedding in a Special Place</i>	Nazmudin Rayani
<i>My Special Ring</i>	Fayaz Kaba
<i>Dance Performances</i>	Qaeza Ramji
<i>The Times Colonist and the World Partnership Walk</i>	Nazmudin Rayani

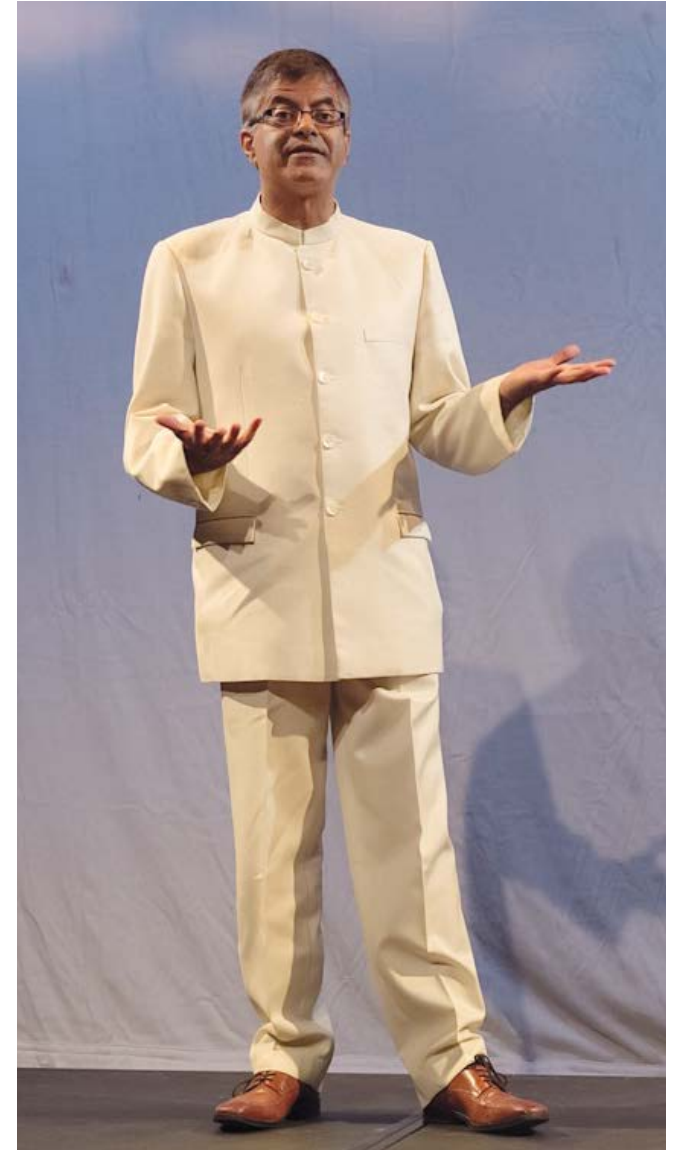
<i>Eidnamaz</i>	Qaseem Ramji
<i>The Singing Taxi Driver</i>	Karima Ramji
<i>A Family Story</i>	Parim Kanji
<i>Earning Your Goodies</i>	Alnoor Ramji
<i>The Canadian Experience</i>	Shamshu Kanji
<i>Nice and Warm</i>	Nazmudin Rayani
<i>Ritual</i>	Nafisa Kassam
<i>Earning the Play Station</i>	Qaseem Ramji
<i>My Grandfather serving the community</i>	Alnoor Ramji
<i>Jamatkana in Ontario</i>	Nadia Rajan-Charani
<i>Memory of Afghanistan</i>	Zohra Mohammadzadeh
<i>World Partnership Walk</i>	Karima Ramji

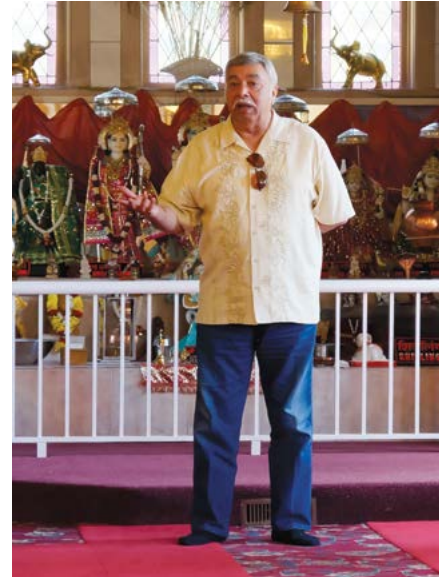


























Comments from Audience Members and Participants who Attended the Storytelling Performance at the Belfry Theatre in June 2013

"I really enjoyed the personal stories that people told and the connections to their cultural origins." Audience member

"What an evening it was - enchanting journey through our past, through our fate, through many cultures and traditions of the world and through melodious music!!" Participant

"Events that bring people of different backgrounds together enhance our lives and broaden our understanding of other cultures." Audience member

"This was an accessible joyful event that fully engaged the audience and built respect and connection across the group." Audience member

"Very Important!! – a need for more interfaith & multicultural events like these in my community." Audience member

"All the storytellers were amazing and the crowd was so warm and friendly." Participant

"Excellent performance. Well done. Beautiful integration. I would attend another event like this - and often!!" Audience member

"On behalf of our three faith communities, what a wonderful performance! You all did such an exceptional job and the performance was amazing." Participant

"Enjoyed the celebratory aspect. It renewed contacts from other events. Presented in this way, it brings enjoyment and info in a delightful way." Audience member

"We all enjoyed ourselves, and are now aware of a new art form, which we should embrace and enjoy. I will be happy to contribute my time and talent towards any future effort. It was a pleasure working with everybody, and I love the fact that I made so many new friends." Participant

"This was a brilliant and moving evening. Thank you." Audience member

"Thank you for an amazingly moving performance!" Audience member

"More. More. More. Events like this!" Audience member

"I wanted to thank ICA for putting this event together and a special thanks to you – Lina, Jennifer, and Paulina for your coaching, mentoring, and constant encouragement. You made us believe in ourselves!" Participant

"Congratulations again on such a splendid event on Sunday. I have been thinking about all of the stories since then, singing the little Apple Tree's song, imagining the smell of jasmine blossoms, wishing someone would bring Latkes for the World to Victoria." Audience member

"Words cannot describe the feeling in the room last night." Participant

"I had lots of fun listening to you all, and learning from you all." Participant

"Fantastic. Fantastic." Audience member



ICA helps individuals and organizations to connect across cultures. We provide information, support and tools to help immigrants reach their goals. By engaging people through networks, education and arts programming we create a welcoming community.

ICA offers services for newcomers, including settlement and integration counselling, translation and interpretation, English classes, mentoring, volunteer matching and peer support. We also provide outreach and education in the community through community arts programming, as well as community development workshops on anti-racism, multiculturalism, diversity awareness, immigration and human rights.

ICA illuminates cultural connections through community arts. Founded in 1971 as an organization to produce the long-running multicultural arts festival, FolkFest, ICA has evolved over the years to encompass many different strategies for the creation and support of a welcoming community for newcomers to Canada. ICA Inter-Cultural arts events are local celebrations that encourage community-focused artistic innovation and collaboration among diverse cultures.

www.icavictoria.org

Special thanks to our three project partners:

Victoria Hindu Temple, Ismaili Jamatkhana of Victoria and the Kolot Mayim Reform Synagogue.



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