

NO: R013

COUNCIL DATE: **January 16, 2017**

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **January 9, 2017**  
FROM: **General Manager, Planning & Development** FILE: **5080-01**  
SUBJECT: **True Colours of Surrey – We Are Surrey Anti-Racism  
Public Awareness Campaign**

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department recommends that Council receive this report as information.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to inform Mayor and Council about the True Colours of Surrey project, and specifically about the *We Are Surrey* anti-racism public awareness campaign.

## BACKGROUND

The True Colours of Surrey project followed-up on a finding in the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership's (LIP) *Surrey is Home: Immigrant Integration Research Project* (March 2015). In response to a telephone survey, discrimination was identified to be at least 'somewhat' of a problem by more than half of Surrey residents.

In February 2016, Planning & Development Department received a \$20,000.00 grant from the Province of British Columbia to conduct a project focussed on issues of racism and discrimination. The project timeline was from February 2016 to December 2016. It included three components:

- Research
  - A scan of promising community programs and models in and outside of Surrey was conducted.
  - 500 residents were surveyed to better understand the causes and impacts of racism and discrimination in Surrey.
  - A full report and summary quick study of research results were prepared. The quick study is attached as Appendix "I".
- "We Are Surrey" Public Awareness Campaign
  - Materials (posters and stories profiling Surrey residents) were developed for use in a public awareness campaign to address racism and discrimination.

- Community Forum
  - A one-day community forum was held on November 18, 2016 in City Hall with about 75 participants. Its purpose was to share and discuss the research findings and public awareness campaign materials, and to identify actions and next steps.

## DISCUSSION

The *We Are Surrey* public awareness campaign aims to celebrate Surrey's diverse population and to challenge peoples' perceptions and/or stereotypes.

For the campaign, nine posters were created. They feature 18 local residents representing a diversity of ethno-cultural backgrounds and ages. In addition, stories were collected from the 18 residents. The posters are attached as Appendix "II" and the booklet of stories is attached as Appendix "III."

The response to the posters at the True Colours Community Forum was very positive. Many participants indicated an interest in displaying the posters in their organizations. The Surrey Board of Trade has already borrowed the poster boards for a couple of their events, and the Surrey Centre Mall has requested to use the posters for a mall display. Vancity Credit Union has agreed to contribute \$2,000.00 to assist with additional printing costs associated with the campaign.

In January 2017, the City will formally launch the *We Are Surrey* campaign. Planning & Development staff is working with the Web-team and Marketing team to plan a campaign that will feature the posters on the City's social media as well as in civic facilities. The possibility of displaying the posters at bus shelters is also being explored.

## SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The *We Are Surrey* campaign aligns with the following Desired Outcomes (DO) and Strategic Directions (SD) in our Sustainability Charter 2.0:

### Inclusion

- DO 1: Surrey welcomes, includes, embraces and values the diversity of people who live here.
  - DO 2: Surrey is a caring and compassionate city that supports its residents of all backgrounds, demographics and life experiences.
  - DO 3: Residents have opportunities to build social connections with people from different backgrounds.
  - DO 5: New immigrants and refugees are supported to settle, integrate and become thriving members of the community.
  - DO 20: Surrey residents are proud of their community.
  - DO 21: All residents have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged in civic issues and to contribute to community life.
- 
- SD 1: Support the social and economic integration of newcomers through the Local Immigration Partnership, and development and implementation of immigrant and refugee strategic plans.
  - SD 4: Work with the LGBTQ community to ensure a safe and inclusive community that invites gender and sexual diversity.
  - SD 18: Celebrate and build upon what makes us proud of our community.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council receive this report as information.

*Original signed by*  
Jean Lamontagne  
General Manager,  
Planning & Development

AM/ss

### Attachments:

Appendix "I" - Quick Study: Understanding Racism & Discrimination

Appendix "II" - *We Are Surrey* Posters

Appendix "III" - *We Are Surrey* Stories Booklet

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# TRUE COLOURS OF SURREY

## UNDERSTANDING RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

### Scan of Promising Community Models & Programs

#### The Aim of the Scan is Two-Fold

1. Identify existing initiatives in Surrey that help combat and address racism, and racial discrimination.
2. Identify programs and models outside of Surrey that can serve as examples and catalysts for expanding local community capacity.

#### Scan At-A-Grance

**Over 50 initiatives** were found with many serving more than one function (for example, the Fresh Voices refugee youth project with the Vancouver Foundation).

**29 found in B.C. and 8** specific to Surrey.

**Only 20 are confirmed to be** still active and ongoing.

#### Types of Programs Identified



#### Status & Institutions

<b>36</b> ACTIVE	<b>14</b> GOVERNMENT	<b>4</b> SCHOOL BOARD	<b>2</b> POLICE
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#### Key Findings

1. There are a number of anti-racism initiatives in Surrey and the broader Metro Vancouver region, but not as many as initially expected.
2. For some initiatives, addressing racial discrimination and racism is but one goal among many others. Sometimes, it is only peripheral to the main mission of the project in question.
3. Anti-racism initiatives take many forms, ranging from annual events such as the Community March Against Racism, to longstanding initiatives such as AMSAA's Safe Harbour project.
4. The majority of initiatives, in Surrey and Metro Vancouver, focus on 'advocacy', 'education' and 'empowerment' with a strong emphasis on youth-related projects.
5. Only a small number of initiatives focus explicitly on providing support to victims of racism and/or racial discrimination.
6. Racism and racial discrimination tend to be framed as immigrant issues. Indigenous people tend to be overlooked in conversations about racism and/or racial discrimination.

#### About the Project

The True Colours of Surrey project aimed to better understand the issues of racism and discrimination in Surrey, highlight some of the promising community models in addressing these issues and engage local stakeholders in working together and exploring innovative approaches to address racism and discrimination in Surrey.

The one-year project was funded by the Province of British Columbia and led by the City of Surrey in partnership with the Surrey LIP Committee and True Colours of Surrey Working Group.

This fact sheet summarizes the findings from the online survey of local residents and from the scan of programs and models aimed to address racism and discrimination in Surrey and other jurisdictions.

## Survey of Local Residents

The main goal of the survey was to expand our understanding of what kind of racism and discrimination incidents local residents are experiencing, where and why.

### Who Are Survey Respondents?

#### Over 500 residents

have participated in the online survey that took place in June-July 2016

#### 70% of respondents

were born in Canada, **30%** are immigrants

#### A majority of immigrants

surveyed have been in Canada for more than 10 years

#### 23% are visible

minority (predominantly South Asians)

#### 2% have

identified themselves as "Aboriginal Person"

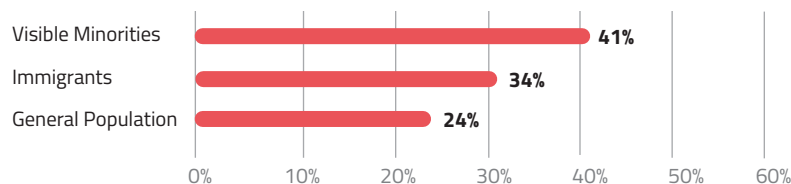
#### Only 4%

16-24 year old

### Key Findings

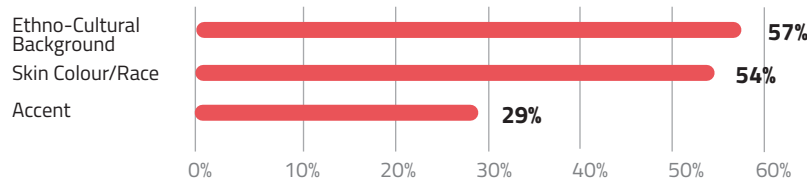
A significant percentage of people report witnessing (**80%**) or experiencing (**55%**) racism/discrimination in Surrey.

#### Percentage of respondents who experienced racism/discrimination often & sometimes:



### Why?

#### The most common basis by which racism and/or racial discrimination is experienced/witnessed:

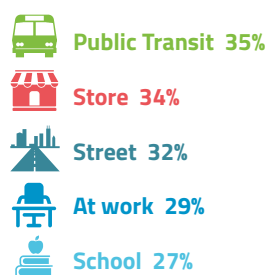


### Where?

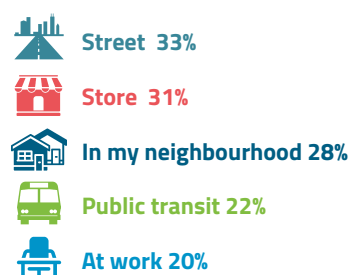
A significant segment of people surveyed (**27%**) experience racism/discrimination on public transit (more so than in other places).

#### Top 5 places where respondents experienced or witnessed racism/discrimination:

##### Visible minority



##### Non-visible minority



### How?

- The most common institutional forms of racism/discrimination include:
  - receiving "poor customer service"
  - "unfair treatment in the workplace"
- The most common, non-institutional ways in which people experience or witness racism/discrimination are:
  - "stereotyping"
  - "unwelcome staring"
  - "name calling"

### What is the impact?

- Impacts of racism/discrimination tend to be informal. Most notably, lacking a "sense of belonging in the community" (**33%** response rate), and interfering with "participation in community life" (**15%**).
- The overwhelming majority or respondents (**90%**) have no knowledge of services and programs that can help victims of racism/discrimination.

### What are the solutions?

- The two top services to support victims that survey respondents were aware of were:
  - the BC Human Rights Tribunal
  - the RCMP

About **200** people provided feedback as to what would help address the racism and discrimination experienced or witnessed in Surrey. By far the most common suggestion is to:

- Educate more people about issues of racism/discrimination;
- Promote cultural awareness;
- Educate people about how to prevent racism/discrimination.

### ABOUT THE SURREY LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

Established in 2014, Surrey LIP is led by the City of Surrey and governed by a committee drawn from 30 community organizations. The Surrey LIP works on making Surrey more welcoming and inclusive.

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE MARRIED

## JENYA

BORN IN RUSSIA

AUTO TECHNICIAN

A BIT OF A PERFECTIONIST

LOVES MAKING AND EATING BREAD

MET WIFE ON MEDITATION RETREAT IN INDIA

## MADHURIMA

MOM OF 2 TEEN BOYS

LAWYER IN INDIA

CAN SPEAK RUSSIAN

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

TEACHES SAHAJA YOGA MEDITATION

# WE ARE SURREY

CURIOUS? LEARN MORE ABOUT WHO WE ARE AT [WWW.SURREYLIP.CA](http://WWW.SURREYLIP.CA)



THECITYOFSURREY



CITYOFSURREY

#WEARESURREY



SURREY LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP



Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE GIVING

## MAINU

HAILS FROM  
SOUTH AFRICA

HEADHUNTED TO  
CANADA 8 YEARS AGO

FINANCIAL MANAGER

SPEAKS ENGLISH  
AND AFRIKAANS  
(DUTCH)

DIRECTOR OF  
MUSLIM FOOD BANK  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICES



## JEFF

CHARTERED  
PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTANT

GREAT-GREAT  
GRANDFATHER WAS  
FROM SCOTLAND

WORLD TRAVELLER

FAVOURITE CITY  
IS BARCELONA

CHAIR OF SURREY  
CARES COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



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WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE INSPIRED

## ZHAN-ZHAN

BORN IN CHINA

AWESOME 13-YEAR-OLD

DOES COMPUTER  
PROGRAMMING FOR FUN

RECEIVED A  
COMMUNITY GRANT

ORGANIZED SUMMER  
BASKETBALL FOR  
COMMUNITY KIDS

## EBRAHEEM

PALESTINIAN-  
SYRIAN REFUGEE

LEFT SYRIA ON HIS  
OWN AT 18

WANTS TO GIVE BACK  
TO CANADA

RECEIVED A  
COMMUNITY GRANT

FORMED A PEER GROUP  
FOR ARABIC YOUTH  
IN SURREY

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SURREY  
LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE CARING

**AMRIK**

DOTING DAD

OF SIKH FAITH

WORKS HARD AT  
TWO JOBS

PIZZA LOVER

RECEIVED 2014  
CARING CANADIAN  
VOLUNTEER AWARD



**DAVID**

PHYSIOTHERAPIST  
HELPS CHILDREN  
AND SENIORS  
PLAYS GUITAR  
DEDICATED TO  
COMMUNITY SERVICE  
CO-FOUNDED  
SURREY INTERFAITH  
COUNCIL

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SURREY LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP



CITY OF SURREY  
The Labour of Love



Partnership  
Immigration and  
Employment Services

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE AMBITIOUS

## RANIA

BUSY DENTIST

SYRIAN FROM ABU DHABI

MARRIED WITH 2 KIDS

LOVES HIKING

BRYAN ADAMS' FAN

## Wafa

BUSINESS OWNER

HOCKEY MOM  
OF 3 DAUGHTERS

CAME FROM IRAQ  
4 YEARS AGO

OUTDOORS  
ENTHUSIAST

MEMBER OF THE  
CITY'S SOCIAL  
POLICY ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

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SURREY  
LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



Partnership  
Immigration and  
Employment Services

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE STRONG

## TROY

GITXSAN FIRST  
NATION / GERMAN  
SKATEBOARDER  
FAMILY MAN  
GOURMET CHEF  
CONSTABLE,  
SURREY RCMP

## MONIQUE

OJIBWE DESCENT  
WIFE AND MOM  
FORMER TEACHER  
LOVES '80S MUSIC  
RCMP OFFICER  
IN COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT

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SURREY LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



Partnership  
Immigration and  
Employment  
Partnership  
Employment  
Partnership

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE RESILIENT

## AHMED

SOMALIAN REFUGEE

FUN DAD

MASTER SMOOTHIE  
MAKER

PLAYS SOCCER

VOLUNTEERS WITH  
SOMALI YOUTH  
ASSOCIATION OF B.C.

## CANDACE

REFUGEE FROM  
MYANMAR

SCHOOL SETTLEMENT  
WORKER

LOVES TIM HORTONS'  
ICED CAPPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BUFF

CHAIR OF KAREN CULTURAL  
SOCIETY OF B.C.

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SURREY  
LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE PROUD

**GARY**

**FILIPINO**

46-YEAR-OLD  
COLLEGE STUDENT

ADORES HIS SHIH TZU  
POODLE, GUCCI

PINOY PRIDE  
VANCOUVER CO-CHAIR

MR. GAY SURREY 2015



**ALEX**

BORN IN ENGLAND

HAS 2 MASTER'S  
DEGREES

SOCIAL WORKER

LOVES THE MOVIE  
*GLADIATOR*

FOUNDER OF LGBTQ  
SUPPORT GROUP,  
SHER VANCOUVER

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SURREY LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE NURTURING

## SILVIA

BORN IN ARGENTINA  
PROUD OF HER 2 SONS  
CAREER AND LIFE COACH  
GROWS OWN VEGGIES  
SUSTAINABLE  
FOOD ADVOCATE

## MUNA

SOMALIAN-BORN,  
OTTAWA-RAISED  
SINGLE MOTHER TO 4 KIDS  
READS SHAKESPEARE  
LOVES TO COOK  
HELPS NEWCOMERS  
FIND HOMES

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SURREY  
LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



# WE ARE SURREY







## **WE ARE SURREY**

### **A campaign to celebrate Surrey's diversity and challenge perceptions**

It is said that Surrey is one of the fastest growing cities in B.C., but the city is not just growing, it is evolving. It's a community of increasingly diverse people, cultures and religions. Some people are Canadian-born, others are immigrants, but all have chosen Surrey as their home. Surrey is an example of Canadian multiculturalism in action, where people from all walks of life, from all corners of the world, are becoming neighbours.

With this new reality can come certain challenges, however. Differences can lead to insecurity, misunderstandings and stereotypes.

Enter the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), a collaboration made up of 30 community organizations, working together to make the community welcoming and inclusive. It is this mandate that led to the development of the "We are Surrey" diversity campaign, featuring a selection of Surreyites from varying perspectives and backgrounds.

Their stories reveal that there is much more than meets the eye. And, despite first impressions, we all have a lot more in common than you'd think, in terms of personality traits, career ambitions, hobbies, lifestyle and love of family.

Combining print posters, social media and online articles, the Surrey LIP hopes to inspire dialogue and connection among all Surreyites by asking the question: "Who do you think we are?"

The answer?

We are all, in our own way: *caring, giving, strong, nurturing, ambitious, inspired, proud, resilient ...*

And, beyond that, we are *all* Surrey.

#WEARESURREY  
[www.SurreyLip.ca](http://www.SurreyLip.ca)

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE AMBITIOUS

**RANIA**

BUSY DENTIST  
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COMMITTEE

# WE ARE SURREY

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**RANIA ATAIA****Dynamic Dentist**

The first thing non-Muslims might notice about Rania Ataia is her hijab — the head scarf traditionally worn by women of Muslim faith. Hijabs, often made of lovely colours and prints, aim to cover a woman's hair for modesty for religious and cultural reasons. In Arabic, hijab means "cover."

Rania says the hijab is "a part of my identity."

She's of Muslim faith, obviously, and of Syrian ethnicity, but born and raised in the cosmopolitan city of Abu Dhabi (UAE). In 2010, Rania, a dentist by profession, moved to Canada, sponsored by her new husband, Tammam Kbeili, who came to Canada as an international student and is now a leader on Vancouver's tech scene as founder of CodeCore. They met while he was visiting Abu Dhabi. "His roommate [at Dalhousie University] in Halifax was the fiancé of one of my friends," she says.

After they got married, Rania was excited to come to Canada, and re-establish herself as a dentist here. But she was aware that it was a challenge for internationally trained professionals like herself to start practising in licensed professions in Canada.

"I knew that it would be hard," she says. "After arriving in Canada, it took me 3 years to relicense as a dentist." Although she had studied dentistry in English, and passed the Canadian dental equivalency exam without having to go back to university, the Canadian system limits the number of internationally trained dentists accepted per year. "There might be hundreds of foreign dentists, but only a few get [their Canadian credentials]," she says.

Today, Rania is pleased with what she's achieved working for two dental clinics, one in the Guildford area of Surrey, one in Vancouver. "I work two-and-a-half days in Surrey and two-and-a-half days in Vancouver."

She also feels fortunate that the dental practice she works for in Surrey lets her support the recent community of Syrian refugees with access to dentistry services.



**"People are very nice here. Surrey is very multicultural and my experiences have been good so far."**

"People are very nice here," she says. "Surrey is very multicultural and my experiences have been good so far."

One day, Rania hopes to perhaps open her own practice, but with two young daughters at home, aged two and four, she is going to hold onto that ambition until they are in school full time.

"My husband already has his own business and is working long hours. So I'm going to wait a little bit for the kids to grow up more; I need him to help me more with the kids," she says with a laugh.

Rania is happy with her life as a busy Canadian working mother today. As she drives between her clinics, you might find her singing along to the gravelly vocals of her favourite singer, Vancouver native Bryan Adams, and when finished with a long day of work, she will come home and play with her beautiful daughters.

Rania's life as an ambitious and caring professional, wife and mom reads like the ultimate Canadian success story.

**BUSY DENTIST  
SYRIAN FROM ABU DHABI  
MARRIED WITH 2 KIDS  
LOVES HIKING  
BRYAN ADAMS' FAN**

**Wafa Al-Jabiri**

**Entrepreneurial Mom**

You could call Wafa Al-Jabiri your typical Canadian hockey mom. She’s used to getting up in the early hours of the morning to take her daughters to hockey practice. She cheers from the sidelines at games as her kids skate up and down the ice at the Surrey Sport and Leisure Complex, and enjoys chatting with the other parents on her team. It’s so Canadian!

And a very long way from Iraq. That’s where Wafa emigrated from under the skilled worker category with her husband and three daughters just three years ago in 2013.

The transition from an Arabic Muslim country like Iraq to Canada was not always as simple for Wafa and her family, however. For most newcomers to Canada, there is a lot of uncertainty about settlement, culture, language and the job hunting process after first landing. Both she and her husband had technology backgrounds, but neither had jobs lined up in Canada.

“My husband fortunately found a job in his field in IT after a few months,” says Wafa. But, between focusing on helping her three daughters adjust to their new life and school in Guildford, and taking classes herself to polish her English skills, Wafa’s path took a different turn.

It began with volunteering. “I started volunteering with community provider services helping newcomers and refugees in English conversation programs to improve their language.”

Wafa has since continued her volunteerism, with a focus on helping immigrants on a broader basis. “I am volunteering right now with Immigrant Advisory Roundtable, also with the Social Policy Advisory Committee of the City of Surrey, which provides advice to Surrey City Council to enhance the social well-being of Surrey residents,” she says. “I volunteered because I not only wanted to give back to my community, but also to create connections with people.”

Her immersion in the immigration realm as a volunteer led to a business idea focused on another group of migrants: international students. Suddenly, Wafa was an entrepreneur.

Her consulting business, Leadership Education



**“I volunteered because I not only wanted to give back to my community, but also to create connections with people.”**

Consulting, is a Canadian agent that offers educational services to students around the world who want to study at language schools and universities in Canada, U.S.A. and Spain.

“The whole journey of launching my business was challenging and exciting. I had a good network in the Middle East that helped me to promote Canadian education overseas,” she says.

Entrepreneurship has become an essential part of who Wafa is, so when asked to describe herself, it’s not surprising the word “ambitious” comes up. Entrepreneurial dreams are even part of her downtime: she loves being inspired by watching *Dragons’ Den*.

When not on the go, you might find Wafa recharging in the beautiful outdoors; Tynehead Regional Park is her favourite spot. But the people she meets are what make Surrey such a welcoming place for Wafa: “I like the diversity in Surrey. I find people so nice and helpful. When my kids started playing hockey, I had no idea about the equipment or even the game. I found huge support from the other parents who were very helpful.”

**BUSINESS OWNER  
HOCKEY MOM OF 3 DAUGHTERS  
CAME FROM IRAQ 4 YEARS AGO  
OUTDOORS ENTHUSIAST  
MEMBER OF THE CITY’S SOCIAL POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE CARING

**AMRIK**

**DOTING DAD**

**OF SIKH FAITH**

**WORKS HARD AT  
TWO JOBS**

**PIZZA LOVER**

**RECEIVED 2014  
CARING CANADIAN  
VOLUNTEER AWARD**

**DAVID**

**PHYSIOTHERAPIST**

**HELPS CHILDREN  
AND SENIORS**

**PLAYS GUITAR**

**DEDICATED TO  
COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**CO-FOUNDED  
SURREY INTERFAITH  
COUNCIL**

# WE ARE SURREY

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**AMRIK SINGH AULAKH**

**Caring about the Community**

Surrey’s Newton neighbourhood is a popular choice for Sikh immigrants from the Punjab region of India, and Amrik Singh Aulakh is among those who have chosen to call this area home. Upon first meeting Amrik, you’ll notice his brightly coloured turban, long beard and often serious expression. But look beyond, and you’ll see the warmth in his eyes, the caring in his heart, and the desire to reach out beyond his Indian community to make Surrey a better place for all. Amrik is so much more than initially meets the eye.

Amrik has been in Canada — and Surrey specifically — since 1991, giving the simple answer that he came here from India for “a better life.” He’s been working hard ever since, as a full-time operations worker for the Richmond School Board and more recently as a part-time insurance advisor with Westland Insurance Group. He starts his day in insurance mode, from 9 a.m. to noon, heads home for lunch — pizza is his favourite! — before leaving for his full-time job. Most nights, he comes home close to midnight.

Amrik is determined to make a good life for his family. At age 50, he is a busy parent of a toddler and loving every minute of it, enjoying showing his three-year-old daughter his favourite local spots like the Cloverdale Rodeo. His goal is to raise her to be a strong, smart and happy girl.

While there are often impressions that girls are undervalued in Indian culture, Amrik’s devotion to his daughter proves that stereotype doesn’t apply here. On his nightstand, you can even find his favourite book — *I am Malala*, which follows the journey of the brave Pakistani girl who was shot for fighting for the rights of girls.

Life gets hectic, juggling two careers and raising a child, but Amrik is committed to making Surrey more welcoming and safe for all. He has dedicated thousands of hours to volunteering, primarily in the area of crime and safety, including as a Surrey RCMP Auxiliary



**“I am always eager to help those who need some support, I believe that you must not give up; only work hard toward your goals and you will be successful.”**

**DOTING DAD  
OF SIKH FAITH  
WORKS HARD AT  
TWO JOBS  
PIZZA LOVER  
RECEIVED 2014 CARING  
CANADIAN VOLUNTEER  
AWARD**

Constable, and a volunteer with the Surrey Crime Prevention Society.

“No one wants to live in a troubled neighbourhood. I want my city to be a safe and better place to live in,” says Amrik, who received the Governor General’s Caring Canadian Award (2014). “Be the change you want to see in the world” said Gandhi,” he says as the reason behind his volunteerism.

While Aulakh admits he has faced discrimination in his volunteering efforts, recollecting how one of his volunteer co-ordinators openly doubted his ability to pass the training, it has only made him more determined to do good. “Professionalism, patience and dedication are all qualities that helped me to overcome these challenges,” he says.

“I am always eager to help those who need some support,” he adds. “I believe that you must not give up; only work hard toward your goals and you will be successful.”

And for him, Surrey is the perfect place to fulfill his dreams. “Surrey has diversity and is the best place to live and work.”

**DAVID DALLEY**

## Connecting People of Diverse Faiths in Surrey

Canadian-born David Dalley wants to help connect people of different faiths in Surrey. As co-founder of the Surrey Interfaith Council, David cares about bringing people together, and ensuring the community of Surrey — specifically Newton — where he's lived for 14 years, is a welcoming and harmonious place to live for all.

The goal of the Surrey Interfaith Council is to create respect and understanding among different religious and spiritual communities, through education, making connections and demonstrating compassion and social justice.

That's no easy task. As world events show, religious differences can be a divisive force. But in a country like Canada that is committed to multiculturalism and religious freedom, it's imperative that bridges are built between people of different faiths. And that's what David, who defines himself as a Humanist Unitarian, hopes to do.

"I am drawn to people and projects that create a safe space for all of us to work collaboratively across differences of race, culture, power and status," he says.

Despite his desire to effect positive change, David understands that the issues are complex, that systemic racism exists, and that, as a Caucasian male, he is coming from a place of privilege.

He remembers a pivotal moment that put this into perspective for him. "I was talking to an acquaintance who is a visible minority who was encountering difficulties in organizing a community event. She attributed the difficulty she was having to racism and people not wanting to work with her because of her ethnic background. She said, 'But you are white, so you wouldn't understand.'"

David wasn't sure how to react.

"There is truth to this in that no one can fully understand the experience of another, especially across cultural and racial differences.



**"I am drawn to people and projects that create a safe space for all of us to work collaboratively across differences of race, culture, power and status."**

However, the comment seemed to say that my ideas were of less value and I felt that it limited possibilities for dialogue and trust-building rather than to build them up. While I know that we do not all share the same experiences, I want to understand the experiences of others as much as I can. I am grateful for people that invite me into their stories and perspectives in ways that allow us to work more effectively toward justice and equality."

David, who is a physiotherapist by profession, cares deeply about making a difference in his community. Through his work, he strives to improve the health of kids and seniors.

David, a dedicated family man who loves spending time with his kids, is also a leading volunteer with two other Surrey organizations: Village Surrey Transition Initiative and the Friends of the Grove.

Based on all of his experiences and efforts, David says he sees Surrey as a community in transition, with people from all corners of the globe trying to understand how they fit together.

**PHYSIOTHERAPIST  
HELPS CHILDREN  
AND SENIORS  
PLAYS GUITAR  
DEDICATED TO  
COMMUNITY SERVICE  
CO-FOUNDED SURREY  
INTERFAITH COUNCIL**

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE GIVING

## MAINU

HAILS FROM  
SOUTH AFRICA

HEADHUNTED TO  
CANADA 8 YEARS AGO

FINANCIAL MANAGER

SPEAKS ENGLISH  
AND AFRIKAANS  
(DUTCH)

DIRECTOR OF  
MUSLIM FOOD BANK  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICES

## JEFF

CHARTERED  
PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTANT

GREAT-GREAT  
GRANDFATHER WAS  
FROM SCOTLAND

WORLD TRAVELLER

FAVOURITE CITY  
IS BARCELONA

CHAIR OF SURREY  
CARES COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

# WE ARE SURREY

CURIOUS? LEARN MORE ABOUT WHO WE ARE AT [WWW.SURREYLIP.CA](http://WWW.SURREYLIP.CA)



**MAINU AHMED**

**Giving Businessman**

When you meet Mainu Ahmed, you'll notice a few things right away. He is a bundle of energy, wrapped in a stylish suit, and topped off with a quick grin. You may also think that he is of South Asian origin. But, when he introduces himself, you hear a surprising lilt to his English. The quick-to-assume might say his accent is "British," which is an easy guess given the colonial history between Britain and India. But pay closer attention, and you'll recognize his sophisticated twang is actually of South African origin.

"Well, perhaps it's a little mixed now, as my wife is from England!" he says with a chuckle, adding that he also speaks Afrikaans (Dutch) and a smattering of German, but no Punjabi or Hindi.

Mainu was, in fact, born in South Africa, a country that Canadians may not typically associate with a large Indian population. But, for Mainu, growing up in the African country as a second-generation Muslim South Asian was his everyday normal.

While Mainu did his post-secondary studies overseas in the U.K. and Germany, he never expected to emigrate from South Africa on a permanent basis, let alone to Canada. But when an opportunity came knocking from a headhunter in Canada for the accounting professional with retail expertise eight years ago, he decided to give it a chance.

"I was internationally recruited by Best Buy Canada to their head office in Burnaby, to lead their operational accounting team," says Mainu, who also has a post-graduate diploma in management from the University of Cape Town.

Mainu, who had built a solid career in financial management with Woolworths in Cape Town, decided to give Canada a shot, and made the move with his wife, and their two children.

Mainu's skills were quickly put to use first at Best Buy and then at Great-West Life, where he currently leads a team of 20 staff. "My key strengths are people leadership, motivation and staff development," he says.

The generous Panorama Ridge resident has



**"One of my passions has always been to support the uplifting of the community I live in."**

also utilized his expertise to give back to his new community. "One of my passions has always been to support the uplifting of the community I live in," he says. "Since moving to Canada, I have been involved as the director of the Muslim Food Bank Community Services/ASPIRE."

The Muslim Food Bank distributes food hampers that cater to specific dietary needs; all food items are halal (produced in accordance with Islamic law), and most of the clients are refugees or new immigrants. To complement the food hamper program, the Muslim Food Bank adopted Mainu's brainchild, ASPIRE Community Services, which helps food bank clients take the next steps to integrate into Canada.

**HAILS FROM SOUTH AFRICA  
HEADHUNTED TO CANADA 8 YEARS AGO  
FINANCIAL MANAGER  
SPEAKS ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS (DUTCH)  
DIRECTOR OF MUSLIM FOOD BANK COMMUNITY SERVICES**

"During the past year, the Muslim Food Bank has been closely involved with the resettlement of hundreds of Syrian refugee families into Surrey," he says. "I have been thrilled by the great compassion and generosity shown by the Surrey community in welcoming the Syrian newcomers — from the large number of donations to the volunteer support in our community support programs."

**JEFF HECTOR**

**Legacy in Action**

Canada is called a nation of immigrants, because unless you're of Aboriginal origin, you can trace the generation that your ancestors "immigrated" to the New World. For Surreyite Jeff Hector, that generation was pre-Confederation.

"It was my great, great-grandfather who came over. He was born in Scotland and then was educated in England," says Jeff. "He was a lawyer in Toronto, a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada in the mid-1800s."

That would have been a prominent position for his ancestor, John Hector. In fact, he was a bencher — a member of the society's board of directors — at the same time as John A. MacDonald — another Scottish-born immigrant whom we all know as the first Prime Minister of Canada!

Coming from such a long lineage in Canada, Toronto-born Jeff is proud of his country and particularly his adopted community of Surrey, in which he has resided for 24 years. A chartered professional accountant (CPA) working as a senior wealth advisor with the Legacy Family Office at Assante Financial Management, Jeff uses his financial knowledge to better his city through philanthropy.

He devotes countless volunteer hours as the chair of SurreyCares Community Foundation, a member of the Community Foundations of Canada, which strives to build a resilient and resourceful community. Otherwise known as a "charity for charities," the foundation raises contributions to a community endowment, money that is then used to offer grants to fund community causes and charitable programs.

Jeff had been looking for giving opportunities for his legacy clients when he first heard about SurreyCares. It was a fledgling foundation at the time, and Jeff stepped in to help lead the non-profit organization to new growth. Its endowment fund has risen from its initial \$200,000 in 1992 to \$4 million today.

Jeff has always focused his giving efforts locally. When his four children were school-aged, he co-founded Southridge School. Jeff served on the school's board for six years, and as its chair



**"It was my great, great-grandfather who came over. He was born in Scotland and then lived in England."**

**CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT  
GREAT-GREAT GRANDFATHER WAS FROM SCOTLAND  
WORLD TRAVELLER  
FAVOURITE CITY IS BARCELONA  
CHAIR OF SURREY CARES COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

for three. With a slogan of "We Are All ONE," the school aims to foster a sense of belonging and caring for others, and teaches its students to build community wherever they go in life.

One of his sons went to live and work in Cambodia, and it's become one of travel-loving Jeff's favourite places to visit. Jeff talks avidly about the history and the sites he visited there, including the Temple at Angkor Wat, which is a UNESCO Heritage Site, and a film site for the Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom movie.

Living in such a multicultural city as Surrey, Jeff has a keen interest in other countries and cultures. Now that he and his wife are empty nesters, they definitely have more flexibility to travel and explore other cultures. Spain and Italy were two other favourite spots.

Next on his list of travels? France, Germany, Austria, Belgium and the home of his ancestors, Scotland.

"Soon!" Jeff says, enthusiastically. But he will always return to his favourite place of all — his home, Surrey.

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE INSPIRED

**ZHAN-ZHAN**

BORN IN CHINA

AWESOME 13-YEAR-OLD

DOES COMPUTER  
PROGRAMMING FOR FUN

RECEIVED A  
COMMUNITY GRANT

ORGANIZED SUMMER  
BASKETBALL FOR  
COMMUNITY KIDS



**EBRAHEEM**

PALESTINIAN-  
SYRIAN REFUGEE

LEFT SYRIA ON HIS  
OWN AT 18

WANTS TO GIVE BACK  
TO CANADA

RECEIVED A  
COMMUNITY GRANT

FORMED A PEER GROUP  
FOR ARABIC YOUTH  
IN SURREY

# WE ARE SURREY

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**ZHAN-ZHAN GE**

**One Awesome Kid**

Zhan-Zhan Ge doesn't remember much about his time in China; he was just two years old when his parents decided to immigrate to Canada. But the now 13-year-old understands that, "they moved here because they wanted me to live in a better environment."

The family chose to live in Surrey, and Zhan-Zhan says he feels right at home. Now in Grade 9 at Fleetwood Park Secondary School, he adds that he has never experienced any real racism. He can recount only one account of bullying in his life: "One day I wore pink pants to school and got picked on," he says.

If that's the only moment of bullying he can remember, Zhan-Zhan is well ahead of many other kids. It could be because he is well-liked and positive, or that he's just plain awesome (at seven years old, he gave himself the moniker of Zhan-Zhan the Awesome, and it still sticks!)

These days, a more mature Zhan-Zhan defines himself as curious and intellectual. He is definitely a little more inspired than many youth his age. While he enjoys playing video games as much as the next kid, he might be one of only a handful who actually started teaching himself computer programming to improve his game. "I taught myself modding for Minecraft through Javascript," he says.

It's not his computer programming skills that are most impressive, however; it's the way he engages with other youth, his neighbours and the community at large.

At just 10 years old — just 10! — he planned a community event called Diversity in Art. "I just had an idea to show art from different cultures," he says. "My mom told me about a program where you apply for a grant to make the community a better place." So, with his mom Mary's guidance, he applied for a Neighbourhood Small Grant from the Vancouver Foundation. These small grants of up to \$500 aim to build community at the neighbourhood level.

With the grant, he rented the clubhouse in his townhouse complex and set up different



**"My mom told me about a program where you apply for a grant to make the community a better place."**

**BORN IN CHINA  
AWESOME 13-YEAR-OLD  
DOES COMPUTER PROGRAMMING FOR FUN  
RECEIVED A COMMUNITY GRANT  
ORGANIZED SUMMER BASKETBALL FOR COMMUNITY KIDS**

stations featuring art from various cultures. The industrious boy printed up flyers and handed them out among his neighbours and fellow students. "We had a lot of people coming in. Most of them were kids, with some parents, too," he says. "I feel kind of good about helping out the community."

In the last three years, he went on to apply for several other grants for more of his inspired ideas, and, most recently, Zhan-Zhan became a mentor in the grant process. He helped a friend who had an idea for a community basketball program to co-apply for a grant.

"My friend wanted to see younger, elementary kids learn basketball," says Zhan-Zhan. "We mostly did games and some drills to sharpen their skills."

Soccer is Zhan-Zhan's preferred sport, however, and he plays with the Surrey United Soccer Club. In school, IT and science are his favourite subjects. "I want to be an electrical engineer when I grow up," he says.

There's no doubt that Zhan-Zhan will work hard to achieve any goals he has in the future.

**EBRAHEEM ABO-KORJ**

## Inspired to Action

The arrival of 25,000 government-sponsored Syrian refugees to Canada between December 2016 and February 2016 raised much debate about whether it was the right thing to do, about the Syrians’ Islamic faith and the country’s ability to handle this influx of new immigrants. Most of the refugees also didn’t speak any English. So how would they integrate? Would they be happy to become Canadian?

To help answer some of these questions, they could have looked at the examples of Syrian refugees who had already arrived in Canada months prior. One of them is Palestinian-Syrian Ebraheem Abo-Korj.

He’s a motivated youth who is learning English and working hard to give back to his new community of Surrey.

“I left Syria in the beginning of 2013 escaping the war to Lebanon, where my asylum seeking journey started,” he says. “I stayed in Lebanon for nine months until I decided to leave to Malaysia. There I stayed for two years until my Palestinian travel document expired and I was detained by the Malaysian authorities and told that I was to be deported back to Syria, where it was likely that I would face torture and possibly be killed.”

Ebraheem spent 62 days detained in the airport in Malaysia, not knowing where to go or where he belonged. “This is when the UNHCR [The UN Refugee Agency] stepped in and notified me that I would be leaving to Canada as an asylum seeker.”

He landed in October 2015. “When I got to Canada, I was able to sleep at night and have a sense of security that I haven’t felt for a long time,” he says. “I was at peace knowing that I was far moved from war, torture and death.”

He made a promise to himself and his new community that he would show his gratitude by giving back to Canada. “I will give back to Canada as much as it has given me, especially that sense of security that I was not able to feel elsewhere,” he says.



**“I wanted to create a group whereby youth of Arab origins will be able to exhibit the beautiful and peaceful nature of our home cultures”**

Despite still learning English and settling in himself, Ebraheem was inspired to start giving back as soon as possible. He decided to form a group for other Arabic-speaking youth like himself to support and learn from each other, and to connect with their Surrey neighbours.

“I wanted to create a group whereby youth of Arab origins will be able to exhibit the beautiful and peaceful nature of our home cultures,” he says.

Ebraheem learned about the Neighbourhood Small Grant program from the Vancouver Foundation, which provides small grants of up to \$500 for community-building projects, and he successfully applied and launched the Ehar Organization group.

It’s a small first step for Ebraheem, but one that foretells many good things to come from this young refugee in the coming years. “I long for the day that I get my Canadian citizenship, because it is this country in the whole world that has given me back my sense of humanity and dignity.”

**PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN REFUGEE**

**LEFT SYRIA ON HIS OWN AT 18**

**WANTS TO GIVE BACK TO CANADA**

**RECEIVED A COMMUNITY GRANT**

**FORMED A PEER GROUP FOR ARABIC YOUTH IN SURREY**

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE MARRIED

**JENYA**

BORN IN RUSSIA

AUTO TECHNICIAN

A BIT OF A PERFECTIONIST

LOVES MAKING AND EATING BREAD

MET WIFE ON MEDITATION RETREAT IN INDIA



**MADHURIMA**

MOM OF 2 TEEN BOYS

LAWYER IN INDIA

CAN SPEAK RUSSIAN

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

TEACHES SAHAJA YOGA MEDITATION

# WE ARE SURREY

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**MADHURIMA AND JENYA  
MARYCHEV**

**Love, Marriage  
and Meditation**

When people of different cultures live together in a multicultural country like Canada, there will no doubt be a few who fall in love. That happened to Madhurima and Jenya Marychev, although their love story began long before they immigrated to Canada.

In fact, they first met in Madhurima's homeland of India at a meditation retreat. Madhurima, a lawyer, and Jenya, a successful heavy duty machinery businessman from Russia, were both practitioners of Sahaja Yoga meditation, a unique method of meditation based on an experience called self-realization (kundalini awakening).

Seeing beyond their different races, cultures and languages, Madhurima and Jenya connected over their meditation practice and fell in love.

Madhurima joined him in Russia in 1997. "In those days we had broken many cultural barriers and taboos," she says. "Indian people did not trust someone outside the culture to be married."

But the couple followed their hearts, got married and started a family, blending their two cultures. They have two sons, one with a Western name, Gabriel (now 17), and one with an Indian one, Chaytanya (now 15).

Fortunately, in Russia, they didn't face many challenges as an interracial couple. "When people found out I was from India, we were always welcomed," she recalls.

But Madhurima had to make a lot of adjustments, including learning the Russian language. "I had to adapt to the language and culture of the country," she says.

Reciprocally, Jenya started learning more about her Indian culture, finding a deep appreciation for its music. (These days, you can find him learning and playing Indian classical music on a tabla and harmonium.)



MOM OF 2 TEEN BOYS  
LAWYER IN INDIA  
CAN SPEAK RUSSIAN  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATOR  
TEACHES SAHAJA  
YOGA MEDITATION

**"Canada was also country of choice for me as it enjoys one of the highest standards of living. I also wanted to educate my children in English."**

**MADHURIMA AND JENYA  
MARYCHEV**

**Love, Marriage and Meditation cont.**

But something for the family was missing in Russia — the Maryshevs wanted a modern, multicultural setting in which to raise their children.

In 2005, moving to Canada was the answer.

“We moved to Canada in search for a better social life where cultures of the world unite,” says Jenya. “I enjoy being surrounded by people from a different culture than mine.”

Madhurima adds: “Canada was also country of choice for me as it enjoys one of the highest standards of living,” Madhurima says. “I was also wanted to educate my children in English.”

They found their home in Surrey, now living in a duplex in Fleetwood.

“With Canada being so multicultural, there was no barrier at all for us,” Madhurima says of their integration. “People are usually delighted to find out that we are an interracial couple.”

On the career front, Madhurima decided not to go through the many hoops to relicense as a lawyer in Canada. Instead she chose a path as an early childhood educator. “I work with preschool-aged children who are just starting to speak and understand the world around them,” she says.

Jenya is an automotive service technician with Murray GM, building on his electrician and automotive background from Russia.

Outside of work and family responsibilities, the couple stay connected through their shared commitment to Sahaja Yoga. They volunteer with the Vishwa Nirmal Dharma Education Society, where she gives free meditation classes, and he helps promote the practice.

“Our life is firstly dedicated to the culture of the spirit. We believe that we need to connect to our inner being, therefore practising Sahaja Yoga together gives us immense pleasure,” says Madhurima.



**BORN IN RUSSIA  
AUTO TECHNICIAN  
A BIT OF A  
PERFECTIONIST  
LOVES MAKING AND  
EATING BREAD  
MET WIFE ON  
MEDITATION RETREAT  
IN INDIA**

**“We moved to Canada in search for a better social life where cultures of the world unite. I enjoy being surrounded by people from a different culture than mine.”**



WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE NURTURING



**SILVIA**

BORN IN ARGENTINA  
PROUD OF HER 2 SONS  
CAREER AND LIFE COACH  
GROWS OWN VEGGIES  
SUSTAINABLE  
FOOD ADVOCATE

**MUNA**

SOMALIAN-BORN,  
OTTAWA-RAISED  
SINGLE MOTHER TO 4 KIDS  
READS SHAKESPEARE  
LOVES TO COOK  
HELPS NEWCOMERS  
FIND HOMES

# WE ARE SURREY

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**SILVIA DI BLASIO**

**Nurturer by Nature**

Silvia Di Blasio is a powerhouse of knowledge about living a sustainable, authentic life. She has credentials on a myriad of topics from permaculture to food sovereignty to community resilience to emergency preparedness.

Silvia is what you might call an engaged citizen. Her motivation? Making the planet, her country and her community of Surrey, a better place for all. "I'm passionate about truly sustainable and simple living," says the Argentinean-born mother of two boys.

On evenings and weekends you might find her running a workshop on pickling vegetables, helping people to prepare for emergencies or working in the community garden she co-ordinates for the Surrey/White Rock Food Action Coalition. "I grow most of my vegetables and all my herbs at home and experiment with making my own cheese, yogurt, bread, fermented foods, vinegars, soaps ... you name it!"

All her community work is in addition to her day job as a certified career practitioner with Immigrant Services Society of B.C. "I help people in their career planning and job searching as well as thinking outside the box to create their own jobs or going solo as entrepreneurs," she says.

This inspired community builder has come a long way since first arriving in Canada in 2004, with no job, almost no English, no connections and no prospects.

"My first two days were spent inside a basement with my kids. I was scared of going outside!" she admits. "All that I do today wouldn't be possible if I didn't have the amazing love and support of my partner."

Silvia, who had experience in adult education and training, started looking for work soon after arriving, but to no avail.

With her teaching experience, she decided to open a family daycare, allowing her to be at home for her own young children as well. "However, the feelings of isolation and frustration didn't go away. I started to feel really old and thought my career and professional



**"I believe that what we do for a living ('career') is deeply attached to 'life,' which includes values, ethics, intentions, relationships, causes and communities."**

life were over. Not talking to adults all day long and the lack of separation between work and home took a toll on my health."

When her youngest started school, she closed the daycare and started looking for jobs. But, again, she didn't have much luck. "When it didn't work as expected, I decided to go to a career planning workshop that saved my life. There, looking at the facilitators and counsellors, I saw myself. My goals of social justice and empowering people could now be achieved through a slightly different role. And I became an employment counsellor."

As she coaches new immigrants to re-establish their careers in Canada, she uses all her perspectives to help them find the fulfillment she has achieved for herself, with what she calls the "right livelihood."

**BORN IN ARGENTINA  
PROUD OF HER 2 SONS  
CAREER AND LIFE COACH  
GROWS OWN VEGGIES  
SUSTAINABLE  
FOOD ADVOCATE**

"I believe that what we do for a living ('career') is deeply attached to 'life,' which includes values, ethics, intentions, relationships, causes and communities. Our careers shouldn't be disconnected to who we are or are called to be." As her Ethical Pathways coaching services motto says: "Let your life be your message."

**MUNA AMIR**

**Surmounting Struggle**

To look at Muna Amir, you might not guess that she was born in Somalia. “When I talk in Somali, people often look confused. They ask, ‘You’re Somali, really?’” She is, in fact, part of the African country’s Arabic ethnic minority population from the city of Mogadishu.

But she has actually lived in Canada for most of her life. “I came to Ottawa when I was 15 as a refugee,” says Muna. “During the war in Somalia, my family got separated, and I came to Canada with my grandmother.”

Muna came with very little formal education — “because of the war, we had to move around a lot” — and no English skills. “I struggled a lot when I came to Canada, especially in high school because of the language,” she says. “My grandma was trying her best to help me, but it was tough.”

Muna had dreams of going to university and working with newcomers, but her life path veered into a different direction. She got married and had four children — Amira, 11, Ahlam, 9, Aadil, 8, and Adnan, 6. She found work at a local Tim Hortons in Ottawa to help support her family. But she had to apply to five Tim Hortons locations before she got hired. “They said no to me wearing the hijab while working,” she says, referring to the head covering she wears according to Islamic religious teachings. “Finally, one location had a manager from Iran who understood.”

But Muna wanted more out of life, and she and her husband decided to move to B.C. for new opportunities and to be closer to her parents and siblings who had found their way to Portland, Oregon, from Somalia.

Muna started looking for a new job here in Surrey, but then faced yet another daunting struggle: her husband left her.

She was now an out-of-work single mother living in a city she didn’t know. “I didn’t know where to turn. But, finally, I gathered myself and started to build a life,” she says.

She did some volunteering doing Arabic



**“I understand what newcomers go through. I was once struggling in my life, too.”**

and Somali interpretation for a settlement organization. “The manager there told me I was talented and that I should get paid for my work,” she recalls. “Sometimes you just need someone to tell you how talented you are and that you can do this.”

She later volunteered with the Somali Youth Association of B.C. and the Muslim Food Bank in Surrey, which trained her as a case worker, and her dreams of a career as an immigrant settlement worker came that much closer. When a position opened up at Immigrant Services Society of B.C. as a house search worker, everything came full circle. Muna was hired.

“I understand what newcomers go through,” she says of her suitability for the job. “I was once struggling in my life, too.”

**SOMALIAN-BORN,  
OTTAWA-RAISED  
SINGLE MOTHER TO 4 KIDS  
READS SHAKESPEARE  
LOVES TO COOK  
HELPS NEWCOMERS  
FIND HOMES**

While juggling being a single mother and having a career is no easy feat, Muna has created a very special life for her family in North Surrey. They play a lot of games together, visit the city’s many parks and enjoy baking cookies and cakes together. “The kids love all that sweet stuff,” she says with a smile.

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE PROUD

**GARY**

FILIPINO

46-YEAR-OLD  
COLLEGE STUDENT

ADORES HIS SHIH TZU  
POODLE, GUCCII

PINOY PRIDE  
VANCOUVER CO-CHAIR

MR. GAY SURREY 2015

**ALEX**

BORN IN ENGLAND

HAS 2 MASTER'S  
DEGREES

SOCIAL WORKER

LOVES THE MOVIE  
*GLADIATOR*

FOUNDER OF LGBTQ  
SUPPORT GROUP,  
SHER VANCOUVER

# WE ARE SURREY

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**ALEX SANGHA**

**Point of Pride**

It isn't easy to be "out" in a traditionally conservative culture. Indo-Canadian Alex Sangha is all-too familiar with the stigma that can come with it, but he hasn't let it stop him from proudly sharing his story and advocating for the LGBTQ community. In fact, it has inspired him to found Sher Vancouver, a social, cultural and support group for LGBTQ South Asians and their friends and families.

"With Sher, we would like to help bring about more acceptance and cross-cultural understanding surrounding LGBTQ issues including bullying, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We hope to reduce the alienation, isolation, loneliness, depression and suicidal ideation of people dealing with sexuality, gender and coming-out issues," says Alex, a Sikh Punjabi who was born in England and raised in Canada, specifically Surrey, since the age of five.

Alex says his experiences overcoming discrimination in his own life, including some tough years being bullied as a teenager, has led him to become an advocate for others. "It was hard for me to come out of the closet [in my community]. And, as a person of colour, I used to feel like an outsider in the mainstream gay-lesbian community as well," says Sangha, who was the first Sikh to ever be a grand marshal at the Vancouver Pride Parade this past summer. "But I feel that if you give back and help others, then you reap rewards of positive energy, positive feedback, and an intrinsic feeling of health and wellness."

That belief explains why he chose the profession of social work, which demands the compassion to understand others and the courage to fight passionately on their behalf. Alex has plenty of both qualities, displaying it both in his work as a registered clinical social worker with Fraser Health Authority and his LGBTQ advocacy.

"I felt it was necessary to make the most of my opportunities in Canada and fight for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed," says Sangha, who earned two master's degrees, one in public administration and public policy from the London School of Economics and the other in social work from Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia.



**"I felt it was necessary to make the most of my opportunities in Canada and fight for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed."**

"I have my grandfather's spirit in me," Alex adds. "My grandfather spent his whole life helping South Asian immigrants in England settle in that country. My mother was also devoted to giving back because it was a tenet of her Sikh faith. And I learned values of caring, sharing and collective goodwill through my career as a social worker."

His current professional focus is on working with seniors with dementia, Alzheimer's and mental health concerns.

Alex is also an avid writer on social issues, including blogging for Huffington Post – B.C. Edition, and writing non-fiction books, including his latest called Catalyst.

After a busy week of work, writing and advocacy, you'll likely find Alex relaxing in his chic Surrey Central condo or opening up his space to host a party for his friends.

Beyond his own four walls, Alex considers Surrey his home. "Surrey is an example to the rest of the world on how to live with people of all backgrounds, religions, and races," he says.

**BORN IN ENGLAND  
HAS 2 MASTER'S DEGREES  
SOCIAL WORKER  
LOVES THE MOVIE  
GLADIATOR  
FOUNDER OF LGBTQ  
SUPPORT GROUP,  
SHER VANCOUVER**

**GARY LISING**

**Pinoy and Proud**

When Gary Lising was named Mr. Gay Surrey of 2015, only three years after moving to the city in 2012, he couldn't have been prouder. It was a joyful moment of celebration crowning many years of advocating for the LGBTQ population, specifically among his Filipino community.

Gary is a founding member and co-chair of Pinoy Pride Vancouver, a social support group started in 2011 for Filipinos who are LGBTQ. It is, in fact, the first Filipino-Canadian gay and lesbian group in B.C.

Gary helped form the group to support understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ people in a community known for its traditional family values and strong Catholic foundation. Over its five-year history, the group has become a safe place and advocate for gay Filipinos, whether first-generation Canadians or immigrants, who have faced cultural backlash because of their sexual orientation.

Born in the Philippines, Gary was only four years old when his own family came to Canada. "When they knew I had some gay, feminine attributes when I was growing up here in Canada, they really went after that, correcting those behaviours," Gary says about some of his relatives back home.

Despite the stigma, a Gary came out as gay in his 20s, and quickly began advocating for others, including on the radio as a host with Vancouver Co-op Radio, in addition to launching Pinoy Pride Vancouver.

"We do have many supporters in the Filipino community, whom we treasure," says Gary, who lives with his loving partner and their Shia Tzu poodle, Guccii, in a condo in Whalley. "We promote acceptance and inclusiveness, and the support we receive shows that our community is ready to recognize and embrace diversity."

Gary's experience in LGBTQ social activism has not only been a profound personal journey, but it has given him inspiration to



**"I have seen people from diverse backgrounds like myself spearhead change and address social challenges. Immigrants will continuously help grow this country."**

effect change in other ways as well. A retail manager for 20 years, 40-something Gary recently returned to college to launch a new career focused on community building.

"I have decided to pursue further education toward addressing 'impoverishment,' which I define as a lack of emotional, physical, mental, social and including spiritual human basic needs," says Gary, who completed a basic counselling skills course at Vancouver Community College, and is now a full-time community service worker student at Discover Community College in Surrey.

It's not clichéd to say that Gary wants to make his community a better place. "After living in Canada for the last 42 years, I have seen this country grow and change," he says. "I have seen people from diverse backgrounds like myself spearhead change and address social challenges. Immigrants will continuously help grow this country."

And Gary, a 2014 Vancouver Pride Society Legacy Award nominee, can definitely count himself among that group of diverse community builders.

**FILIPINO  
46-YEAR-OLD  
COLLEGE STUDENT  
ADORES HIS SHIH TZU  
POODLE, GUCCII  
PINOY PRIDE  
VANCOUVER CO-CHAIR  
MR. GAY SURREY 2015**

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE RESILIENT

**AHMED**

SOMALIAN REFUGEE

FUN DAD

MASTER SMOOTHIE  
MAKER

PLAYS SOCCER

VOLUNTEERS WITH  
SOMALI YOUTH  
ASSOCIATION OF B.C.

**CANDACE**

REFUGEE FROM  
MYANMAR

SCHOOL SETTLEMENT  
WORKER

LOVES TIM HORTONS'  
ICED CAPPS

PHOTOGRAPHY BUFF

CHAIR OF KAREN CULTURAL  
SOCIETY OF B.C.

# WE ARE SURREY

CURIOUS? LEARN MORE ABOUT WHO WE ARE AT [WWW.SURREYLIP.CA](http://WWW.SURREYLIP.CA)

**AHMED MOHAMED**

**Resilient Refugee**

Somalian-born Ahmed Mohamed is a security officer in Canada. True, it's a stereotype that immigrants tend to fill security jobs, but to Ahmed, his work is a stable, respectable position that is helping him to build a safe new life in Canada just three years after arriving as a government-sponsored refugee.

The 27-year-old had been living in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, the largest in the world, since he was three years old after his parents fled the brutal civil war in Somalia. "At Dadaab, life was very difficult, with inadequate resources for basic human requirements, scorching heat — 37 degrees Celsius daily — and limited freedom of mobility," Ahmed says.

"Frankly, life there was kind of like a jail. So I felt so happy and excited when accepted as a refugee to Canada. It was the country that most people in the refugee camp wished to go."

So working as a security officer in his new country, even on the graveyard shift, is a welcome opportunity to Ahmed.

It is also helping him build a foundation here for his wife, Asha, and five-month-old daughter, Suham, who are still in Kenya, as they await their family sponsorship application to be approved. "I am confident they will land in Canada as permanent residents soon," he says with hopefulness. Ahmed and Asha had met at Dadaab one year prior to his coming to Canada and they kept in touch. He went back to Africa in 2015 for three months during which time they got married. "Now we communicate daily and she sends me new pictures of our daughter on a weekly basis."

Ahmed's security job has also inspired his dreams to one day work in law enforcement. "I have in mind the dream of being a law enforcement officer particularly in policing," he says. "Every time I attend a meeting for newcomers organized by the community or the police force, they encourage the need for minority people to join the force and this accelerates my hopes and dreams."

Ahmed attends quite a few of these kinds of meetings, as he's a regular volunteer in his



**"Canada is a country of opportunity that has given me a chance to change my life for the better."**

community of Surrey. "My volunteer work involves being an active member of the Somali Youth Association of B.C., where I'm involved in mobilizing youth, organizing outdoor and indoor soccer games, and welcoming new Somali immigrants to Surrey by helping them to integrate, find jobs and provide translation when necessary."

When not at work or volunteering, you might find Ahmed happily kicking a soccer ball on one of the local Newton soccer fields. He plays with an adult league team called Somali Stars.

While coming to a new country as a refugee can be a huge culture shock, Ahmed has taken a positive approach to the daunting transition. "Canada is a country of opportunity that has given me a chance to change my life for the better," he says.

**SOMALIAN REFUGEE  
FUN DAD  
MASTER SMOOTHIE MAKER  
PLAYS SOCCER  
VOLUNTEERS WITH  
SOMALI YOUTH  
ASSOCIATION OF B.C.**

"It will be my first country to issue me legal documents that will provide me equal freedom and rights like other Canadian citizens. God bless Canada and the Canadian people for the warm welcome they showed to me from my landing days until today."



**CANDACE MARVEL**

**Beautiful Determination**

Talking to the young and vibrant Candace “Candy” Marvel, you might not guess that she spent 21 years of her life stateless, and five years living in a refugee camp before coming to Canada as a student refugee.

The 33-year-old beauty is S’gaw Karen, a minority ethnic group of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) that was persecuted by the governing military in the Southeast Asian country.

“The Karen in Burma have suffered oppression at the hands of successive regimes of that country for decades. Forced resettlement and labour, incarceration, and denial of political representation and citizenship status rights, among other human rights violations, have led thousands of Karen to move into Thailand and many other countries,” she explains.

“My grandfather and father were actually involved in the revolution that fought against the Burmese military dictatorship. As a result, they fled and lived in exile in Thailand. That’s where I was born and raised until our village was invaded and attacked by the military soldiers. My family then went to live in a refugee camp in 1995,” she says.

After five years, Candace was determined to leave. “I decided to get out of the refugee camp to explore educational opportunities,” she says. “I left in 2000, got my GED certificate, upgraded my English and completed a distance-learning community management diploma before furthering my studies abroad in New Delhi, India. But I basically took risks because I didn’t have any proper papers or legal status then.”

Fortunately, she was able to resettle in Canada under the sponsorship of World University Service of Canada at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. “I not only wanted to seek refuge, but to also obtain higher education and contribute back to society in any way I can.”

She has definitely been doing her part ever since. After studying for a Bachelor in interna-



**“I just love the fact that I am free to spread my unique tradition and culture while living in Canada. It feels good to be able to be ‘myself’ and not have to try to be someone else.”**

tional development studies at Dalhousie, she came to B.C. 10 years ago, settling in Surrey. Today, she is a settlement worker for the Surrey School District 36.

“I provide settlement support to immigrant students and families who are new to the community, to ease their integration,” she says.

Candace wants to improve the lives of others and make a lasting impact in the community. “I find my job very rewarding and meaningful,” she says. “I continue to learn and grow from all aspects, especially from each and every individual I encounter on a daily basis.”

Candace has also stepped up as chairperson of the Karen Cultural Society of B.C., where she helps raise cultural awareness about Karen people, promotes multiculturalism and unity in the community, and helps resettled Karens adapt to Canadian culture.

“I just love the fact that I am free to spread my unique tradition and culture while living in Canada. It feels good to be able to be ‘myself’ and not have to try to be someone else.”

**REFUGEE FROM MYANMAR  
SCHOOL SETTLEMENT  
WORKER**

**LOVES TIM HORTONS’  
ICED CAPPS**

**PHOTOGRAPHY BUFF**

**CHAIR OF KAREN CULTURAL  
SOCIETY OF B.C.**

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?

# WE ARE STRONG

**TROY**

GITXSAN FIRST NATION / GERMAN  
SKATEBOARDER  
FAMILY MAN  
GOURMET CHEF  
CONSTABLE,  
SURREY RCMP

**MONIQUE**

OJIBWE DESCENT  
WIFE AND MOM  
FORMER TEACHER  
LOVES '80S MUSIC  
RCMP OFFICER  
IN COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT

# WE ARE SURREY

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**TROY DERRICK**

**Skateboarder  
Constable**

Upon meeting Troy Derrick, the first thing you might notice is the skateboard that's been a permanent fixture in his hands since his early teens. You might also catch a glimpse of the skeleton Mountie tattoo on his arm.

That image is a popular skateboarding graphic, so it's a bit of a coincidence — or perhaps serendipity — that Troy would one day become a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Troy, a proud member of the Gitksan First Nation, could have potentially pursued a career in skateboarding had he not blown out his knee. So, instead, the man of many talents became a trained gourmet chef.

While teaching a First Nations culinary program in Surrey, he kept telling his students that you can do whatever you want in this country and strive for any career. Then one of his students puts up his hand and asked: "Hey, Chef Troy, what about you? Can you change and do whatever you want?"

So I asked, "What do you think is the hardest thing a First Nations person could do in this country?"

The student answered, "Why don't you try becoming a cop? We all hate them anyway."

Within two weeks, Troy found himself at an RCMP information session.

As a kid growing up in Prince George, B.C., Troy remembers being hassled by the cops for not only being Aboriginal, but also for being a skateboarder. The parent coach on Troy's youth baseball team was also an RCMP officer, and his son frequently taunted Troy with racist jokes. "His actions rubbed off on the other players and they began to say things, too." It took an emotional toll on Troy. "I knew I would never want anyone to feel that way."

Today, as an RCMP officer in Surrey, working with the First Nation Community Police Service, Troy says, "I am able to 'be' the change in the community." In other words, he's become



**"I felt it was necessary to make the most of my opportunities in Canada and fight for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed."**

**GITKSAN FIRST NATION / GERMAN  
SKATE BOARDER  
FAMILY MAN  
GOURMET CHEF  
CONSTABLE,  
SURREY RCMP**

a role model — an example of the "potential" anyone can achieve.

Troy has twice been nominated for Police Officer of the Year for the City of Surrey. He not only regularly speaks to groups, he also spearheaded a program for high school youth called Code Blue, aimed at building inner strength, self-discipline and confidence.

"There are no winners or losers in this program," says Troy. "The only way you can compete is competing against yourself."

Troy sees great potential in the youth he meets in Surrey. "As 'proud Canadians,' we don't always live up to what it means to be Canadian in terms of being polite and multicultural. We are not always as polite as we think we are and there are multiple pockets of different cultures only sticking to ourselves," he says. "It is the children that have taken the initiative to question why that is. Children are not born rude or racist; that is a learned behaviour. These days, the children's voices are growing and we are starting to see their efforts impact the community in a positive way."

**MONIQUE CRAIGEN**

**Strength in Identity**

Monique Craigen didn't know that she was of Ojibwe descent until she was a teenager.

"Growing up people always asked me 'what I was.' They couldn't figure out what my physical look represented. But I didn't know how to answer that question," say Monique, who was born in northern B.C.

"My grandmother had not wanted her grandchildren to know our truth because of the discrimination she faced. She felt like she was protecting us." Before she passed, her grandmother did share the truth about their indigenous roots. "Today, I proudly know not only 'what' I am, but 'who' I am," Monique says.

As she became an adult, Monique learned more about her Ojibwe heritage, a bloodline that goes back through territory in Quebec and Manitoba. "It really came full circle when I lived and worked in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I connected with the Aboriginal teachings and traditions," she says. "It felt right, and it felt like home. It just fit."

She learned that the Ojibwe people are divided into a number of clans and she was part of Bear Clan, which is responsible for protecting their people. That clicked. Although she had gone to university to become a teacher and had a successful career teaching ESL to adults, she had always had some thoughts of becoming a police officer. She just never felt she could do it.

"I had done a really, really good job of talking myself out of it. I told myself that I was not smart enough, not strong enough," she says. "And there were also some doubts based on the historical relationship between First Nations and the police, which was not necessarily positive. I realized that I wanted to help change that dialogue, and if I'm on the inside, then maybe I could help move things forward."

It took the encouragement from her little brother to give it a go. "I did and here I am, 19 years in the RCMP," says Monique, who was also on the RCMP Musical Ride for years and even co-authored a book on



**"It really came full circle when I lived and worked in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I connected with the Aboriginal teachings and traditions. It felt right, and it felt like home. It just fit."**

**OJIBWE DESCENT  
WIFE AND MOM  
FORMER TEACHER  
LOVES '80S MUSIC  
RCMP OFFICER  
IN COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT**

the longstanding tradition, called *The Spirit of the Ride*.

Today, the constable works in the area of diversity and community engagement for the Surrey RCMP, a role in which she reaches out to not only indigenous people, but also diverse and ethnic communities.

Not smart enough? Not strong enough? Not possible. Monique — also a wife and mom of a busy four-year-old — exudes a strength that comes from truly knowing who you are. And she represents that power not only in her life and work, but also in her hair!

"When I part my hair, I do it in a distinctive zigzag pattern. Well, I was at a Bear Clan gathering in uniform and I was talking to this kid who asked me: 'Hey, is that your symbol?'"

"I wasn't sure what he meant at first, maybe something on my uniform?" The boy then pointed to Monique's hair and said it looked like a lightning bolt. "In indigenous culture, lightning is a powerful image as it's the thunderbirds that bring lightning. So, I said: 'Yeah, I think that is my symbol .'"

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### About this We Are Surrey booklet

This booklet is a compilation of nine posters and stories of 18 Surrey residents who opened up their lives and shared their experiences living in Surrey. The **WE ARE SURREY** public awareness campaign was launched at the True Colours of Surrey Forum in November 2016 at Surrey City Hall.

### About the True Colours of Surrey project

The True Colours of Surrey project aims to better understand the issue of racial discrimination in Surrey through a resident survey, a scan of best practices and the creation of the **WE ARE SURREY** public awareness campaign.

The need for the project was identified through the Surrey LIP consultation processes that took place in 2014-2016, which identified that discrimination was an issue in Surrey. The findings have informed the development of the 2016-2019 Surrey Immigrant Integration Strategy.

The True Colours of Surrey project aimed to support the implementation of the strategy by increasing awareness of and addressing racial discrimination issues in Surrey. Project findings and materials can be found at [www.SurreyLIP.ca](http://www.SurreyLIP.ca).

The project was funded by the Province of British Columbia, led by the City of Surrey, supported by the Surrey LIP project team and guided by an Advisory Committee drawn from the Surrey LIP / Immigrant Advisory Roundtable members as well as other community partners and local residents.

### Thank You!

We would like to acknowledge the generous contribution of the Province of British Columbia in providing funding for this project. We would like to acknowledge the time and commitment of the True Colours of Surrey Advisory Committee:

Neil Fernyhough	Manager, Community Programs	Alex Neighbourhood House
Paul Hayes	Sergeant, Diversity & Community Engagement	Surrey RCMP
Jasvir Kheleh	Regional Director, Community Member Services	Vancity
Eva Touzard	Manager, Project Based Language Training Program	PICS
Erin Desautels / Brianna Collis	Diversity Coordinator	Healthy Communities, City of Surrey
Nav Chima	Project Director, Strategic Engagement	SFU-Surrey
Rehab Marghany	Local resident	Surrey IAR member
Aileen Murphy	Senior Social Planner	Social Planning, City of Surrey
Nada Elmasry	Fresh Voices team member	Fresh Voices, Vancouver Foundation
Jennifer Marchbank	Associate Professor, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Politics	SFU-Surrey
Ninu Kang	Director, Communications & Development	MOSAIC
Jorge Salazar	Manager, Fresh Voices	Vancouver Foundation
Sheryl Thompson	Student	SFU-Surrey

Finally, the **WE ARE SURREY** campaign would not have been possible without the professionalism, expertise and passion of the project's creative team:

Project Lead: Olga Shcherbyna, City of Surrey  
Photographs: Jon Benjamin Photography  
Stories: Margaret Jetelina  
Creative/Design: Doris Cheung Art + Media

# WE ARE SURREY



SURREY  
LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP



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