



THE ST. VINCENT AND GRENADINES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO INC. (SVGAT)

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KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY INFORMED THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Quarterly Newsletter

SUMMER ISSUE

July 2019



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

To all of my fellow Vincentians, Family and Friends: As newly elected President of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto (SVGAT)

I thank you all for having the confidence in me to lead this outstanding organization and at this historic juncture year. As we mark our 50th anniversary I am humble to all who in one way or another made a contribution to our organization.

In this momentous year, there are three things that we should all be thinking about, the three R's, Reflect, Renew and Return.

Reflect is perhaps the easiest of things for us to do in the 50th year of our organization. We have come a long way from our small beginnings as one of the first Vincentian organizations within Ontario to our current membership. In our reflection we should also remember the reason why the organization was formed - to help others. At our anniversary church service held in April, one of our past presidents, Eddie DeFietas, reminded us that our organization started as a means to give back to our community at home, from abroad. This is something we should keep in mind as we look to the future. I also ask that each member of the organization reflect on the reasons why he/she became a member of the organization in the first place. It is through this reflection that we can truly grow.

As we look to the past, we must also be thinking about the present. Part of this is using our past to inspire us in the moment. One of the first things the organization did in its foundation, was unite together, to help Vincentians at home recover from Souffriere. We should use moments like these to help us renew our efforts and commitments to our organization and island home.

In renewing our commitments we must return to our roots as an organization and remind ourselves of the roles we each play. Especially as we prepare this organization to look and move towards the future. Returning to the organization can mean many things including renewing memberships, renewing commitment to the organization and returning to the original values and goals of the organization.

As we look to the future, we can also look at future association events as ways for us to return and support the organization. The first event on July 20th is our Unity Picnic, where the SVGAT's of Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal unite.

Keeping in theme with returning to the organization, we will be hosting a Town Hall Meeting on July 28th. It will be a chance for us to focus on the next few decades of the association. It will also be a time to share your opinions on ways the organization can improve for the future. Justice Emille Cox, a Vincentian judge residing in New Jersey will address the audience. We will have several past presidents there to offer advice, suggestions and ideas. We invite youth to come out and share their ideas on programs that will be relevant to the next generation of leaders. We are looking forward to having you there and being part of this history going forward.

It is time for us to reflect, renew and return to the organization as members to the organization's humble beginnings. As our motto for this year says "much has been accomplished, much more to achieve".



LET'S TALK!!

SVGAT TOWN HALL Meeting

JULY 28TH., 2019 @ 3:00 p.m.
Scarborough Civic Centre Rooms 1 and 2
150 Borough Drive, Scarborough

Let your voice be heard ... Join the Conversation
and help forge the way forward for the Association

Come on out . . .

SVG-born eminent Jurist, the Hon. Judge Emille Cox, from New Jersey, will address the audience.
Bring your family and friends, share your suggestions and ideas and help the Association leave a legacy for the next generation.

Refreshments will be served

Much Has Been Accomplished ... Much More To Achieve

On April 28, 2019, the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto (SVGAT) launched a series of events, with a Church Service, to commemorate 50 years of community service to the SVG - Toronto diaspora. Read the full article below published in the Caribbean Camera.

Vincentian group in Toronto marks 50th Anniversary

By **Lincoln DePradine**

Reprinted from "The Caribbean Camera" Thursday, May 2, 2019

A full 10 years before St Vincent and the Grenadines became an independent nation on October 27, 1979, a group of Vincentian nationals in Toronto met to form an association to assist with a playing field project in their Caribbean homeland. Members of group and other Vincentian nationals met last Sunday at a Scarborough church to celebrate the golden jubilee 50th anniversary of what's now known as the St Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto (SVGAT) Inc.

"Fifty years is a generation plus," former SVGAT president Eddie DeFreitas said in a message at the service at Wesley Chapel Free Methodist Church. The congregation included current and former SVGAT executive members; Marjorie Liverpool and Vilna Liverpool, whose husbands served as association presidents; St Vincent's Consul General in Toronto, Fitzgerald Huggins; and visiting Vincentian Member of Parliament Nigel Stephenson.

Pastor Dennis Campbell, in his sermon, congratulated SVGAT on the "great work" it has done since its formation in 1968, saying God has blessed the association. Like he did with the Nation of Israel in the Bible, God also has shown grace to St Vincent and the Grenadines, Campbell added. "Israel possessed no special personal qualities which would warrant such a choice and neither do we," the pastor said. "God



(From l-r) Vincentian MP Nigel Stephenson; SVGAT President Jim Lewis; Edna Hunte, first SVGAT Treasurer; and St Vincent's Consul General in Toronto, Fitzgerald Huggins

has chosen to bless this tiny island called St Vincent."

The pastor, who was born in St Vincent and came to Canada at 13, encouraged Vincentians to give thanks to God with humility. "As you and I stand and simultaneously look backwards and forwards on this golden Jubilee, how should the knowledge and the goodness and the grace of God to us, and our St Vincent, affect the way you and I live today and in the future?" He asked. "The receiving of God's grace, of his blessings, should produce in each of us a deep humility." Campbell said the baton of leadership must be passed to the next generation, who ought to be told of God's faithfulness. "God wants to bless our land to a thousand generations," he said.

Jim Lewis, current SVGAT president, described the service as "beautiful", saying "a lot came out here today". As the association moves into the future, said Lewis, it wants it to establish a stringer connection with the Vincentian community. Canadian citizens of Vincentian heritage also must get more involved in the political decisionmaking process here and vote in elections, Lewis said. "Our kids won't get involved if we don't start now," he said. "If we don't, others will be making decisions about us and for us, which we don't have control over."

Unity Picnic 2019

"Together let us celebrate, ourselves we must appreciate ah jubilee, come join with we". from the band, Touch by Andy Lavia

As Vincentians back home put the bow on another carnival season, the focus now shifts to the north eastern seaboard. Over the next 60 or so days, Vincentians residing in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, New York and Philadelphia, have at their disposal a series of events with unity and togetherness as the central theme.

On July 20th, Browns Bay Provincial Park will, for one day, bear a striking resemblance to Kingstown SVG. Thousands are expected to hug and shake hands while providing answers to the all important Vincy questions: "Way yo from?" "Way yo going?" "Way yo mother?" "When last yo been home?"

Once again, picturesque Thousand Islands will serve as the backdrop for this annual gathering, as the hard-at-work UPC (Unity Picnic

Committee) creatively seeks to outdo previous years by putting together a fun package for all ages; bouncy castle for the kids, a territorial DJ and domino competition along with guest artiste, Scorchers, for the adults should be enough to keep us stage side for a few hours. Expect addresses from the dignitaries on hand, including Consul General Fitz Huggins, and a surprise or two, as we are usually graced with the present SVG government officials, who annually make this picnic an important stop on their vacation calendars.

As our unity picnic grows from year to year, we ask the patrons to continue to be mindful of the fact that we are tenants at this park. Our exemplary behaviour allows us continued access to this fantastic spot. This year should be no different. If you are driving from your home cities, please, do not drink, and if you are drinking, please do not drive. Let's preserve this picnic for generations to come and make sure that it continues to be the envy of all other Caribbean picnics all across North America.

"Now all you Vincentians, stand up, shake each other's hands. Give your country a round of applause and say....

"CONGRATULATIONS" *Winston Soso*

SVG beats El Salvador to UN Security Council seat



Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves proudly cast his vote on behalf of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to secure a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council on the morning of June 7, 2019.

by Bria King

St Vincent and the Grenadines' (SVG) becoming a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is reaffirmation that "although we are not better than anyone, no one is better than us".

These are the words of Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves, who made a public address to the nation yesterday, following this country's successful election to the Security Council last Friday, June 7.

In celebration of this achievement, Tuesday, June 11 was declared a public holiday and a motorcade was held. A celebration rally also took place on Sunday when the Prime Minister returned to the country. "Never in the 74-year-old history of the United Nations, has such a country as small as ours been elected to the security council, the 15-member institution responsible for the oversight of international peace and security," Gonsalves said during yesterday's address.

"Our election to the security council has been truly historic. Vincentians at home and abroad, the people of the Caribbean and Latin America, the citizens of the small island developing states and the peace loving people of the world rejoice in celebrating our remarkable victory."

Of the 193 member states of the UN General Assembly, SVG secured 185 votes. El Salvador, who ran for the same seat, received 6 votes. There were two abstentions.

The prime minister said that the country had little to no money to spend on the campaign, which spanned the last 10 years and SVG's win was hinged on "an overflowing of ideas, solid work, creative diplomacy and mature, committed leadership".

The campaign tools of this country's most recent win included seven books published by the prime minister in the last nine years, one book published by health minister, Luke Browne and a final book published recently by finance minister, Camillo Gonsalves.

Gonsalves said that the government also "crafted our speeches and governmental publications in thoughtful and innovative ways, brimful with mature analyses and workable prescriptions." and he said that SVG's victory at

the General Assembly should serve as an inspiration for young people to set meaningful goals and work assiduously to achieve them.

SVG's term on the UN Security Council begins on January 1, 2020 and ends on December 31, 2021.

Finance minister, Camillo Gonsalves, while speaking on We FM on Sunday outlined several benefits for the country in earning a seat on the Council. "I think St Vincent and the Grenadines will play an important role in shaping how the Security Council treats with issues relating to climate change...not in alleviating climate change – because that's not the job of the Security Council, but in dealing with the security implications of climate change," he said.

The younger Gonsalves said that security implications of climate change come through hardships people face such as droughts and tsunamis, which have the potential to create refugee crises through migration.

He said fights can result over a lack of food, water or other resources and these are the implications that go beyond reducing harmful emissions that are often talked about in conjunction with climate change.

"We also want to deal with the nexus between development and peace because a lot of times, the security council reaches the party late. The war has broken out already, knives and guns and cutlasses are drawn, but if you looked at the situation a little earlier, you would realise that there is a linkage between underdevelopment or inequality and some of the challenges we face," the finance minister said.

Gonsalves said that SVG does not want the Security Council to become a development agency, but rather understand that fights often develop due to developmental issues or resource scarcities.

He also said that there are specific issues that exist in the region that SVG also hopes to shed light on while it holds a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

There are five permanent members of the UN Security Council. They are the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the Republic of France.

The other non-permanent members who will sit on the Council are Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia, South Africa, Niger, Tunisia, Vietnam and Estonia.

Reprinted from: News 784 July 7, 2019

SVGAT Continues its Adopt-A-Child Program

The St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc., an organization of SVG nationals residing in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Canada, launched the Adopt-A-Child Program in 2007 with the goal of assisting children in primary schools in SVG with their basic needs in order to get a sound foundation during their early school life.

Two students, one from the Spring Village Methodist School and one from Cane End Government School were the initial beneficiaries of this program in 2008. In 2013, another two children, one from Fairhall Government School and the other from Tourama Government School benefitted. From the reports at the completion of the sponsorship of those children, all of them did very well and credit was given to the financial assistance the program provided them.

In 2018, which happened to be the 50th year of operation for the organization, with the assistance of other parties, the organization decided to sponsor six (6) other children from six primary schools – Buccament Government, Calliaqua Anglican, Dickson Methodist, Lauders Primary, Lower Bay Public in Paget Farm, Bequia and Marriaqua Government.

Mr. Odel “Ewan” Lewis and Ms. Silma Millington, two former presidents of the Association who have returned to live in SVG are liaison personnel for the Association here and made the most recent presentations.

Each time a group of students is to be selected, the Association draws randomly from a list of primary schools in SVG and when the schools are selected, the Association communicates with the school instructing them to form a small committee including a community resident who is not a school teacher to select a child based on his or her financial needs to receive the financial support for a five-year period. The committee acts as trustees for the selected students and liaise with the child, parent and the Association during the term of sponsorship.

The Association is proud of this program as one way for persons in the diaspora to assist with the education of young people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Board of Directors of the Association is grateful to the members and other individuals who support this program, to the schools that participate in the program and the children and parents who accept the gesture.

One of the Association's most popular programs among the Toronto Vincentian community is its Adopt-A-child Program. In 2019, the number of children in elementary schools in SVG that were adopted through the Association increased substantially. A total of six children now receive funds to assist with their education. If you would like to donate to the Adopt-A-Child program, kindly contact the Association's secretary at secretary@vincytoronto.com or Gideon Exeter, Program Co-ordinator, at 416-992-4353. Read the article on this page from SVG's 784 News.



Student Winston Saunders of Dickson Methodist School with his teacher behind him along with Ewan Lewis and Silma Millington

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Immigration Matters

Spousal Sponsorship: Does Age Really Matter?

Contributed by: Sandra Sutherland, RCIC

“Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter.” This is a popular quote by Mark Twain which I respect. Generally speaking it has merits but how much merit does it have with Canadian immigration officials in relation to sponsors and their spouse, common-law or conjugal partner who are being sponsored for permanent residence in Canada?

For Canadian immigration purposes a couple must be legally married to be eligible for spousal sponsorship. In Canada the minimum age for marriage varies from province to province. In Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan the minimum age for a legal marriage is 18. The minimum age is 19 in the other provinces and territories. If a person is under the minimum age parental consent is required. In other countries the minimum age for marriage varies based on their laws and traditions. In order to be eligible to sponsor a spouse, common-law or conjugal partner a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada must be 18 years of age or older. The spouse or partner being sponsored must also be 18 or older.

Can Canadian immigration officials discriminate if it is felt that a couple is too young, too old, or has a huge gap in their ages? No! Immigration officials have discretionary authority to approve or refuse a foreign national’s application for permanent resident status based on several criteria and factors. Age sometimes could be a contributing factor but it should not be the primary factor. While an officer may not likely refuse an application just because the applicant or sponsor is too young, too old or have a big age gap s/he has the authority, before rendering a decision, to conduct an interview to assess the genuineness of the couple’s relationship or to ascertain if s/he thinks that the relationship was entered into for immigration purposes.

In my many years of practice I have represented couples with their sponsorship application and with their appeal cases. Because I do many sponsorship appeals I get to know firsthand the type and nature of questions posed by officers during interviews at visa offices and those posed by the Minister’s Counsel (who represents the government of Canada) at an appeal hearing. I’ve been privileged to have gleaned good insight

into the mindset of immigration officials, Minister’s Counsel, and Members (the decision makers at appeal hearings). This insight helps me to present my clients cases more soundly and avoid the interview process and obtain approval. Thankfully a vast majority of my cases bypass the interview stage and gets approved which further increases my success rate.

My approach when dealing with age disparity is to interview clients and get to know and understand the unique intricacies of their relationship, situation and circumstances, and to personalize each case and present a complete and sound application package to immigration. An approach that worked for one couple may not work for another couple facing a similar situation or circumstance. Taking a keen interest in my clients’ cases and presenting a customized application package is vital to my clients’ success as well as my success.

There is a minimum age limit of 18 for a sponsor and applicant but there is no maximum age limits or age gap. I’ve represented couples who could be considered to be too young, too old, or have an age difference that is too huge. The oldest couple I have represented was an 89 year old applicant and his 93 year old sponsor. Unfortunately the sponsor passed away before the processing was complete. The largest age gap was 50 years. So when it comes to age in the sponsorship of a spouse, common-law or conjugal partner for permanent residency in Canada, I say: if clients don’t mind their ages it does not matter to me and should not matter to immigration officials.

Sandra Sutherland is an authorized immigration representative and counsel. She specializes strictly in immigration and is licensed with the Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC) as a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC). She can be reached at (416) 431-2829 or via e-mail at :

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View her advertisement under *Suthern Immigration & Paralegal Services Inc.* in this publication for more information.

Viola Desmond - on the new Canadian \$10 Bill

Viola Irene Desmond (née Davis), businesswoman, civil rights activist (born 6 July 1914 in Halifax, NS; died 7 February 1965 in New York, NY). Viola Desmond built a career and business as a beautician and was a mentor to young Black women in Nova Scotia through her Desmond School of Beauty Culture. In 1946, Viola Desmond challenged racial discrimination when she refused to leave the segregated Whites-only section of the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. Viola Desmond was arrested, jailed overnight and convicted without legal representation for an obscure tax offence as a result. Despite the efforts of the Nova Scotian Black community to assist her appeal, Viola Desmond was unable to remove the charges against her and went unpardoned in her lifetime. Desmond's courageous refusal to accept an act of racial discrimination provided inspiration to later generations of Black persons in Nova Scotia and in the rest of Canada. In 2010, Lieutenant-Governor Mayann Francis issued Desmond a free pardon. In December 2016, the Bank of Canada announced that Viola Desmond would be the first Canadian woman to be featured by herself on the face of a banknote — the \$10 note released on 19 November 2018. Viola Desmond was named a National Historic Person by the Canadian government in 2018.



Early Life and Family

Viola Desmond was brought up in a large family with 10 siblings. Her parents were highly regarded within the Black community in Halifax. Her father, James Albert Davis, was raised in a middle-class Black family, and had worked for several years as a stevedore before establishing himself as a barber. Her mother, Gwendolin Irene Davis (née Johnson), was the daughter of a White minister and his wife, who had moved to Halifax from New Haven, Connecticut. Although racial mixing was not uncommon in early 20th-century Halifax, intermarriage was rare. Nonetheless, her parents were accepted into the Black community and became active and prominent members of various community organizations.



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Apology issued by Queen's University 101 years after expelling West Indian Medical Students in 1918

The June 27-July 10, 2019 issue of Share newspaper carried a story under the heading "Expulsion of W.I. med students from Queen's U in 1918 revisited". According to the article, on April 16, 2019, Queen's university formally apologized for its Faculty of Medicine's decision in 1918 to expel 15 of its medical students of which the majority was from the Caribbean. At the time, according to the SHARE story, Queens said that the reason for the expulsion was that soldiers wounded in the war did not want to be treated by Black doctors.

Share stated that the expulsion of the medical students came to light when the university's research and innovation administrator, Mr Edward Thomas, after attending a meeting in 2017 that had to do with a student's bigoted act, went looking through the school's encyclopedia for answers as to why there were recurring incidents of racist behavior by the university. Thomas' research led him to believe that the expulsion of the students had nothing to do with whether soldiers wanted to be treated by black doctors but rather was the result of the university aligning itself with the then racist policies of the American Medical Association, the organization that ranked medical schools in North America.

According to Share, several descendants (a number of whom became doctors) of some of the expelled medical students, attended a dinner given by the university where an apology ceremony took place.

For the full story, go to www.sharenews.com

Play Mas with the SVGAT *by Cordel Telfer*

For the third consecutive year, the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc. (SVGAT) will participate in the annual Toronto Caribbean Carnival as a section in the Council of Caribbean Associations Canada (CCAC) guest band. CCAC encourages all of its member organizations to participate under the theme, Cultural Expressions of National Pride. In our first years which saw over 75 participants joining other CCAC organizations on Lake Shore Boulevard, the SVGAT displayed national pride with a T-Shirt section entitled, This Island is Mine. The following year, with support from the Cultural Arts Studio in Ottawa, the SVGAT paid tribute to the Indigenous Garifuna people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines with Garifuna Expressions: Rhythm and Colours. This year, we will be celebrating the historic Trinidad and Tobago Road March 2019 win by Vincentian artiste, Skinny Fabulous, presenting his monster hit song Famalay which he did in collaboration with Trinidadians, Machel Montano and Bunji Garlin. Our Dominican partners in CCAC will not be left out and will also be paying tribute to Famalay as the song's producer, Krishna "Dada" Lawrence is from Dominica.

We are encouraging participation from all Vincentians and would love to see Vincentians on Lake Shore in not only T-Shirts, but their own hand made cultural wear. After all, the theme has always been Cultural Expressions of National Pride. Come out and represent!

SAVE THE DATE
November 2nd, 2019 ...
for Two Celebrations!!

The St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto invites you to celebrate the **40th anniversary of the Independence of St. Vincent and the Grenadines** and its **50th anniversary of Community Service**. A spectacular Gala is in the planning stage. Stay tuned for more information.

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Sonil Ambris: Vincentian batsman/wickets keeper

by Jimmy Lewis



The name is Sonil Ambris: Vincentian and West Indian batsman/wickets keeper, became the first Vincentian to make a century in West Indies cricket. Playing in a tri-nation series, in Ireland on May 11th 2019, West Indies chasing 328 for victory, with Hope and Ambris opening. Ambris, in only his fourth ODI at this level put on 84 for the first wicket. He batted for 40 overs, and when he was out for 148 the score was then 252 for 4, with West Indies well on their way to victory. He hit 19 fours and 1 six. Ambris who was not in the 2019 World Cup squad to be played in England a few weeks later, was kept as a backup for the injured opener, Evin Lewis. He was drafted into the squad when Andre Russell had to pull out because of injury. He went on to play in two matches when he made 31 and 5. He later lost his contract with the West Indies Cricket Board, but was selected to the West Indies A team, where he has a chance to make it back to playing for the full West Indies team again. Look out for this name: Sonil Ambris, one that the West Indies can build their future World Cup team around.

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Mission Statement

The St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc. (SVGAT) is a non-profit community-based Association. We are committed to providing assistance and support to groups and institutions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ontario, and wherever the Association deems fit. We are also committed to provide an anti bias forum for Cultural, Educational, and Social and Recreational enrichment and to maintain a network of communication through information and referral.

- Objectives:**
- To maintain a high level of volunteerism through recruitment, training and effective utilization of skills
 - To provide a forum to promote leadership and advocacy for the enrichment of Culture and Education
 - To provide an anti bias environment for the discussion of matters of general interest to its members
 - To plan, implement and participate in fundraising activities to meet urgent human needs.
 - To promote social and recreational events to enrich the lives of Children, Youths, Adults and seniors
 - To maintain a network of communication through information and referral

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