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2015 WELCOMING OTTAWA WEEK (WOW) CELEBRATIONS FROM JUNE 22-28: With Close to 50 Events Scheduled, Seeks Nominations for WOW Ambassadors

Ottawa (Thursday, May 28, 2015) – The third annual Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) will be celebrated in Ottawa from June 22 to 28, 2015 at various venues in the city, in the run up to Canada Day on July 1st. The celebration this year will build on the success of 2014 WOW, when Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) partners engaged Ottawa residents - both old and new - in a variety of fun and engaging activities. By bringing together immigrants and long-time residents to take part in activities that foster understanding and dialogue, WOW aims to enhance community connections and to strengthen Ottawa's capacity to continue attracting immigrants from around the globe.

The [2015 WOW Calendar of Events](#) features several of the same popular events as last year's successful WOW: photo and arts exhibits, guided walking tours to uncover the unique history of Ottawa's many communities, documentary viewings, food tastings, dance workshops, sports tournament and informative workshops that will assist new immigrants with topics such as voting, building credit history, and understanding Canadian political structures. "The return of so many of the activities that were most appreciated by the public last year is a testament to OLIP partners' commitment to make immigrants feel at home in our city", said Hindia Mohamoud, director of OLIP.

New this year in the WOW Calendar are several activities designed to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Francophonie Ontarienne including a walking tour in the Vanier neighborhood courtesy of the Vanier Muséoparc. This year's WOW Calendar also includes many more platforms for story telling by immigrants to create greater public understanding of the migration journey, its challenges and many rewards.

An exciting addition to the list of [WOW Contributors](#) are all four of Ottawa's school boards. "Schools are an essential component of a welcoming community and their contribution to Ottawa's success in the integration of immigrants is invaluablely significant", remarked Lynn Graham, Co-chair of the OLIP Education Sector Table and the former chair of the board of trustees of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board.

Welcoming Ambassadors Awards

A permanent feature of WOW is the [Welcoming Ambassadors Awards](#), given to recognize and celebrate the genuine and welcoming spirit that Ottawans of all backgrounds have shown to newcomers in all aspects of life.

OLIP invites all foreign-born residents of Ottawa to nominate individuals that made a difference in their journey to making Ottawa home. "We are looking for residents who have demonstrated openness, positive curiosity, and friendly support to new immigrants" said Louisa Taylor, co-chair of the Welcoming Ottawa Week and a freelance journalist.

Nominations can be [submitted online](#) or emailed to WOWAmbassadors2015@gmail.com by no later than 5 p.m. on Friday May 29th, 2015. The selected Welcoming Ambassadors and their nominators will be invited to sit for portraits by the veteran local photographer [J. David Andrews](#), and featured in a special exhibition to be unveiled during 2015 WOW.

Background

The first WOW was held in June 2013 when Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson proclaimed at a breakfast reception at City Hall, that the last week of June of every year to be the Welcoming Ottawa Week, when Ottawans could express our genuine welcome

to newcomers. “The residents of Ottawa are diverse, and a large majority of us originate from immigrants who came, settled, and contributed to Ottawa’s quality of life”, said Mayor Watson in his WOW proclamation speech. “The Welcoming Ottawa Week will underscore our genuine respect and hospitality to newcomers, while at the same time creating opportunities for dialogue and interactions between newcomers and established residents.”

On average, Ottawa attracts 12, 000 new immigrants every year and these include permanent and temporary residents, international students, and refugees. According to the latest statistics, immigration account for 79 per cent of Ottawa’s population growth and 100 percent of the net labour force growth.

The inaugural WOW started with eight events to showcase Ottawa’s thriving diversity and to convey to both new and prospective immigrants that Ottawa values and welcomes new immigrants. “This spirit will be a lot more visible in 2015 WOW, with close to fifty public events designed to contribute to the development of a shared civic culture that builds on the contributions of all residents”, said Sarah Onyango, co-chair of the Welcoming Ottawa Week, host of local TV and Radio programs and the founder of Black411 Website.

WOW is presented by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP), founded in 2009 by the City of Ottawa and Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI). OLIP is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada with the mandate of improving local capacity to attract, settle and integrate immigrants.

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