ISSUE NO APRIL 2025



# FILTPINO WEEKEND MARKET



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#### Editor's Notes

Welcome to this edition, celebrating the Filipino Canadian community in Victoria.

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Stay updated with important community news.



### Inauguration of VFCA Board and Officers

The 2025 Inauguration of Officers marks a fresh start for the Filipino Canadian community in Victoria, celebrating new leadership, cultural pride, and a united vision for the future — read more about this inspiring event!

#### Maria Cacao: BCC's First Major Voyage Lands with Success

BCC's first major production, Maria Cacao, sets sail with success blending folklore, music, and community talent in a powerful cultural showcase. Read more about this unforgettable debut performance!

# "Filipino Weekend Market Brings Culture and Community to Downtown Victoria"

Experience the sights, sounds, and flavors of the Philippines at the heart of downtown Victoria! The Filipino Weekend Market brings together food, culture, and community in a vibrant celebration like no other—plus a unique fusion with Japanese traditions. Read more (page, 14)



# FROM THE EDITOR

Hello everybody, and welcome to our latest issue!

As you may have noticed, things look a little different around here. This issue is shorter than previous publications, but that is because we are undergoing an exciting transition from *llaw* Magazine to *llaw* Newsletter. This transition aims to create a brand-new dynamic that will allow us to reach into the hearts and minds of a broader and diverse Filipino community. To bring this to fruition, we thank you for your ideas, creativity, and love for the community. We consider this our "pilot issue," a preview to assess the transition, gauge what works, and adjust for a smoother publication in our next issue.

While we look to the future of this transformation, change is also about honouring the past. In this letter, I want to take a moment to recognize those who came before us- those whose vision, minds, creativity, and dedication built llaw and have laid the foundation upon which we continue to build. Ilaw has been and will continue to be a community strengthened by nationalism, identity, and culture.

This shift braves a new chapter for the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association and for all those that it represents. Change is often challenging, and it brings a lot of growing pains. However, we stand firm in our ability to show the greater Filipino spirit through thoughtful storytelling and meaningful connection. You are the heart and soul of *llaw*. You are our team.

Waraming Safamati

Suzanne Peñola

Editor-in-Chief



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The llaw Newsletter of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association respectfully acknowledges that it operates on the traditional territories of the Lekwenen (Songhees and Xwsepsem/Esquimalt) First Nations, and the WSÁNEĆ Peoples. As Filipino Canadian writers and storytellers, we are grateful for the opportunity to express thought and share culture. Through our pens and our voices, we stand in solidarity with the First Nations of this land as we bring our knowledge of our own colonial history.

# SECTION 1: MAJOR COMMUNITY EVENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS



In the Photo: Taken during the inauguration of VFCA, with the VFCA Board of Directors alongside all the honorable guests.

# 2025 Inauguration of Officers: A New Era for the Filipino Canadian Community in Victoria

by: Melissa Badua

Victoria, BC - The Filipino Canadian community in Victoria is embarking on an exciting new chapter, with leadership stepping forward to guide two prominent organizations. 2025 Inauguration of Officers, held the Bayanihan Community Centre on Blanshard Street on February 1, was a lively celebration of unity and renewal, with influential quests Victoria MP Laurel leading the ceremony.

Michael Caparas was one of the key leaders inducted as the new president of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA).

A newcomer to Victoria,

Michael arrived in December 2022 and brings his background in marketing to the role. Since then, he has been focused on expanding the reach of the VFCA and supporting its growth. As president, he is focused on increasing its visibility within both the Filipino community and the broader Victoria area. His leadership is centered fostering greater community involvement and ensuring that the VFCA continues to play a key role in representing the diverse voices of Filipino Canadians in Victoria.

Another notable new leader is Melissa Badua, who was elected president of the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS). The newest comer to Canada, Melissa arrived in April 2024 with her family and brings with her nearly 15 years of experience in Human Resources leadership.



In the Photo: Mike Caparas (VFCA) , Melissa Badua (BCHS)

Her extensive background makes her well-equipped to lead BCHS as it continues to serve the Filipino community. Her approach leadership is centered on building unity, fostering a sense of belonging, and providing social support. Melissa is dedicated to enhancing the cultural and social fabric of the community, ensuring that everyone-whether new arrivals or long-established residentsfeels connected and supported.

The inauguration ceremony featured two standout cultural performances that highlighted the richness of Filipino Daisy Breuer heritage. of Sampaguita Dancers performed in a vibrant traditional dance that brought energy and elegance to the stage. Meanwhile, Jean Peñola of the Bayanihan Creative Collective (BCC) delivered a compelling performance of traditional dances from Mindanao, enchanting the audience with live music and vibrant traditional wear. Together, these performances reflected the spirit of unity and collaboration that defines community, underscoring the vital role of art in preserving cultural identity.

Prominent community leaders such as Annette Beech, president of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers / Migrant Workers / TFWs Association (VFCCA), and Teresita Quigley, president of the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA), also participated in the event. Their ongoing involvement underscores the importance of collaboration and the strength of the Filipino community in Victoria.

Guests of honor included MP Laurel Collins and Erin Willis, constituency advisor to MLA Grace Lore.

The presence of local business leaders like Kevin Lee, VP of BC Ferries, Sandy Findlay, Tim Horton's owner, and Gordy Dodd, owner of Dodd's Furniture, further highlighted the strong bonds between the Filipino Canadian community and the broader Victoria business and political sectors.

As the new leadership steps forward, the Filipino-Canadian community in Victoria is poised for continued growth and success. With a renewed focus on cultural preservation, community engagement, and support for newcomers, there is a palpable sense of optimism. The future looks bright fresh faces as these to collaborate strengthen ties. celebrate Filipino heritage, and create welcoming inclusive and environment for all.



In the Photo: Annette Beech (VFCCA), Dominga Passmore (BCHS), Erin Willis (from Grace Lore), Mike Caparas (VFCA), MP Laurel Collins, and Melissa Badua (BCHS).

Listed the Board of Directors who will be serving a two-year term from 2024 to 2026.

# Victoria Filipino Canadian Association – Board of Directors 2025"

- President: Michael Angelo Caparas
- 1st Vice President: Isidoro Emmanuel

- 2nd Vice President: Jinky Apayo
- Secretary: Melissa Badua
- Assistant Secretary: Edlaine Constantino
- Treasurer: Rosemarie Empig
- Assistant Treasurer: Dominga
- Passmore
- Public Relation Officer: Leia Elaine Unarce
- Auditor: Laila Pires

#### **Board of Directors**

- Sheelah Benedito
- Amy Noonan
- Teena Santiago
- Eileen Tiamzon
- VFCCA President: Annette Beech
- VFCSA President: Teresita Quigley

# Bayanihan Cultural & Housing Society - Board of Directors 2025"

- President: Melissa Badua
- Vice President: Dominga Passmore
- Secretary: Edlaine Constantino
- Treasurer: Laila Pires

#### Board of Directors:

- Michael Angelo Caparas
- Isidoro Emmanuel
- Jinky Apayo
- Teena Santiago
- Eileen Tiamzon
- Rosemarie Empig
- Leia Elaine Unarce
- VFCCA President: Annette Beech
- VFCSA President: Teresita Quigley
- Board Members at Large:
- Rex Noblejas
- Violeta Reves Bague
- Runelle Tria

# Building Stronger Communities Together at the Bayanihan Community Centre

by: Mike Caparas



In the Photo: Hon. Sheila Malcolmson, MP, Hon. Anne Kang, MLA Dana Lajeunesse, MLA, Rohini Arora, MLA

We were honored to welcome MLAs distinguished Ministers to the Philippines Bayanihan Community Centre in Victoria for meaningful discussion on collaboration and community development. This provided gathering opportunity for local leaders, government officials. community members to share their vision for a stronger, more connected future.

Dana Lajeunesse (MLA for Juan de Fuca-Malahat), and Rohini Arora (MLA Burnaby East). Their presence and engagement reinforced the importance of working together to support and uplift our diverse community.

During the event, community leaders shared their inspiring visions for the future, highlighting the significance of education, cultural preservation, and social support systems.

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In the Photo: Board of Directors of VFCA, BCHS, VFCCA, and VFCSA, alongside Honorable Guests, including MLAs and MPs.

Among the esteemed guests were Hon. Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MLA Nanaimo-Gabriola Island), Hon. Anne Kang, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (MLA Burnaby Centre),

The Victoria Filipino Canadian Association also shared how, since its founding in 1967, it has been dedicated to helping and supporting fellow kababayan in Victoria, fostering a strong and united community.

The event was presented by the

Board of Directors from the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society (BCHS), Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregiver Association (VFCCA), and the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA). Their collective efforts are key to the ongoing success and growth of our community initiatives.

We also had the opportunity to reflect on the rich history of the Bayanihan Community Centre—a space built on the values of unity, resilience, and the spirit of Bayanihan (the Filipino tradition of communal unity and cooperation).

We proudly shared the beautiful stories of how our community and center came to life, honoring to the hard work and dedication volunteers and leaders who saw the need for a gathering place that fosters cultural pride and social connection. From humble beginnings to becoming a vital hub for Filipino Canadians in Victoria, our journey is a testament to what can be achieved when people come together with a shared purpose. As we look ahead, we are excited to continue working with our government partners create meaningful initiatives that benefit our community. Together, we are stronger.

# A Celebration of Culture, Unity, and Filipino Pride at the Welcome Day Expo

by: Mike Caparas



In the Photo: Filipino community volunteers during the Welcoming Day Cultural Fashion Show.

On February 17, 2025, the vibrant spirit of the Philippines was on full display at the Welcome Day Celebration & Newcomers Expo, an annual all-ages event in Greater Victoria. Held at the Commonwealth Recreation Centre in Saanich, this year's expo served as a vibrant celebration of diversity, connection, and shared human experience. The community, as one of the proud participating communities, helped bring together cultures, stories, and dreams under one roof.

This special day was not just a warm welcome to newcomers but also a tribute to the rich diversity of the Greater Victoria region. It provided a platform to showcase the Filipino story through culture, fashion, community, and connection. The standout highlight of the event

was the cultural fashion show. where participants from various countries, including Nepal, Myanmar, Peru, Vietnam, the Philippines, and more, proudly displayed their traditional attire and modern interpretations. Each ensemble reflected the distinct artistry and heritage of its regionfrom intricate woven fabrics and patterns elegant, contemporary formal wear.

The runway became a vibrant celebration of identity as our models—comprised of proud community members and volunteers—carried each piece with grace and dignity. It was not just a fashion show; it was a powerful expression of unity, culture, and pride.

Philippine representation was made possible through the collaboration of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society (BCHS), Victoria **Filipino** Canadian Caregiver Association (VFCCA), and the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association Seniors (VFCSA). Together, these organizations demonstrated the true community-one that preserves heritage while building bridges with others in our multicultural society.

We are deeply grateful to our volunteers—those who prepared our booth, welcomed visitors, walked the runway, and supported us in countless ways. Their dedication, passion, and love for our culture truly made this event special. Their efforts ensured that we represented the Philippines with pride, and their contributions did not go unnoticed.

As we reflect on this meaningful experience, we are filled with pride and gratitude. Events like these remind us that, even when far from home, we carry our culture with us every day—in our traditions, our stories, and the way we support one another.

Together, we continue to share the Filipino spirit with the world—one smile, one story, and one celebration at a time.



In the Photo: Volunteers of BCHS and VFCA representing their booths during the Welcoming Day.

# All is Fair in Love & Community: VFCCA Valentine's Celebration

by: Sheelah Benedito



In the Photo: The VFCCA Board Members 2025 (Missing in the Pictures are: Archie Dizon, Flo Oddoux, Gretzel Tauro, Helen Schaefer, Sarah Punzalan and Nhem Catoy)

The Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers / Migrant Workers / TFWs Association (VFCCA) held another successful Valentine's Day Party on February 8, 2025, at the Saanich Commonwealth Place. attended by 330 people. A delicious variety of Filipino food was served, adding to the festive atmosphere. Acknowledging Gordy Dodds. Sandy Findlay of Tim Hortons, Benjamin Restaurants, and all the other sponsors who made this event possible.

There was a DJ, which kept the dance floor lively throughout the night.

The highlight of the event was the crowning of Mr. and Mrs. Senior, Ms. Valentine, and Little Valentine. Attendees voted for their favorites, and the judges were called in on the spot to make unbiased decisions and crown the most deserving contestants.

The winners were:

- Senior Valentine: Esmeralda Agbulos
- Mrs. Valentine: Neha Attri
- Ms. Valentine: Jessica Dumaguite
- Mr. Valentine: Josh Langer
- Little Valentine: Ava Ronaghi

This event is held annually and has strong support from various sponsors and organizations, including the Victoria Filipino Association (VFCA), Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA), and Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society (BCHS).



In the Photo: Mr Valentine, and Mrs. Senior, Ms. Valentine, and Little Valentine Winners with Annette Beech (VFCCA)

VFCCA President Annette Beech is actively working to support individuals who have lost their jobs and have been sent home. She is reaching out to the government and other organizations for assistance.

As the organization looks ahead, VFCCA is proud to introduce its newly elected 2025–2026 Board Members, who are dedicated to serving the community and continuing the organization's mission of advocacy, cultural celebration, and support:

# VFCCA 2025–2026 Board Members Executive Board

- President: Annette Beech
- 1st Vice President: Erwin De Guzman
- 2nd Vice President: Annie Arciaga
- Secretary: Marilyn Duenas
- Assistant Secretary: Gretzel Tauro
- Treasurer: Flo Esmeralda
- Assistant Treasurer: MJ Cadiz
- Board of Directors
- Trustees: Leny Jay Fuentabella, RJ Celdran, Loema Mcdonald, Lotis Dizon
- P.R.O.: Amor Dizon, Sheelah Benedito, Victor Lasat, Lynn Merced
- Custodian: Archie Dizon
- Members:
- Felisa Mangabat, Nhem Catoy,
   Mary Jetko, Leni Carbonell, Reynald
   De La Cruz, Sarah Punzalan
- Member at Large: Angel Dizon
- Advisers: Evelyn Gabriel, Helen Schaefer

Looking forward, the VFCCA is gearing up for its next big initiative: the Consular Outreach Program, which will take place on May 3 & 4, 2025, at the Philippine Bayanihan Centre.

# VFCSA Highlights: Celebrating Leadership, Community, and Culture

by: Cristeta Araquel

The VFCSA has started the year with a variety of activities, from welcoming new officers to hosting community events that encourage camaraderie and engagement. As the year progresses, members can look forward to more celebrations, wellness sessions, and social gatherings.

# VFCSA New Officers Elected

On December 2, 2024, a new set of officers was elected for the VFCSA, with the following individuals taking office for the 2025-2026 term:

- President: Tita Quigley
- Vice President: Lourdes Abanto
- Secretary: Lucy Scott
- Treasurer: Myrna Cubangbang
- Assistant Secretary/Treasurer:
   Lilia Panganiban
- Public Relations Officer: Miriam Pardillo
- Board Members:
- Elena Alvarez
- Linda Bartulabac
- Cora Celiz
- Matty La Torre
- Bethy Layo
- Josie Manuel
- Ligaya Panter
- Activity Coordinator: Connie Custodio
- Adviser: Cristeta Araquel



In the Photo: Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA) Board Members 2025

# Officers Inaugurated

The officers were formally inaugurated on December 14, 2024, during the Senior's Christmas Party. The inauguration ceremony was officiated by Esmeralda Agbulos, who, along with her husband, relocated from Alberta to retire in Victor.

#### First Meeting of 2025

On January 6, 2025, the VFCSA held its first meeting of the new term. It was a "getting-to-know-you" session where members reconnected with old friends, shared fond memories, and welcomed new faces. A light lunch was served to foster camaraderie.

# Valentine's Party – February 8, 2025

The VFCCA sponsored a Valentine's Dance at the Saanich Commonwealth Place. The event's highlight was the selection of queens in various categories, celebrating both the youngest and senior members of the community.

# Encouraging Youth Engagement – February 17, 2025

At our next meeting, we invited the younger generation to join us and

learn more about our activities. Some attended, and we hope they'll return in the future. We aim to create a sense of camaraderie and belonging to encourage their continued participation.

We also celebrated the birthdays of Lourdes Abanto, Linda Bartulabac, Leila Narciso, and Hermie Remillano. Marlon Narciso, a talented pianist, led us in song, and the crowd responded enthusiastically.

# "Maria Cacao" Premier Show -February 21, 2025

The seniors had the honour of being the first group to attend the premiere of Maria Cacao at the Bayanihan Centre, directed by Jean Peñola. This culturally rich show brought to life the myth of Maria Cacao, offering seniors a meaningful experience that deepened community ties, celebrated cultural identity, and honoured Filipino traditions.

"The United Way of Vancouver Island has provided a 2024–2025 grant to VFCSA under Kapwa: Supporting Elders' Wellbeing in the Filipino Canadian Community, supporting VFCSA activities throughout the year"



# March 3, 2025 - First Meeting of the Month

We celebrated the birthdays of Lucy Scott, Lolita Ring, Rene Abanto, Connie Custodio, Leonor Santos, and Mary Jetko. Together, they blew out the candles to kick off their celebrations. Marianne Fox, a physiotherapist, presented a video on exercises designed to strengthen the aging body. Regular exercise can help slow the aging process by counteracting the loss of muscle tone and increasing bone strength.

# March 17, 2025 - Cell Phone & Internet Safety

VFCA President Mike Caparas attended our meeting and provided valuable tips on making the most of cell phones, navigating the internet, and staying alert to common scams, which are becoming more prevalent.

#### **Upcoming Events:**

- April 18, 2025: Join us in Good Friday through our traditional "Pabasa" (Pasyon) at 7:00 AM, taking place at the Bayanihan. Light snacks are welcome, but please refrain from bringing any food that contains meat. Norma Duy and Flordeliza Legaspi will be leading the readings
- May 5, 2025: There will be a meeting for Seniors at the Bayanihan starting at 12:00 noon with a light lunch. Birthday celebrations for those born in May will follow. At 1:30PM Marlon will lead the group in Music and recall songs that are near and dear to Seniors' hearts.
- May 10, 2025 is our Big Day as we gather for a Hawaiian Party. It will be held at Strawberry Vale at 11 High Street in View Royal. Starting time is 5PM.

  Come dressed as 'Wahines' and "Kanes" and win the "best dressed Hawaiian" category. Tickets are only \$40.00. There will be good food, enchanting music and good company.

See you all there ... Aloha!!!

# "Maria Cacao: Ang Pagbawi" A Story of Retribution and Restoration

by: Ilaw Collaborators



Through a provocative and groundbreaking dance theatre, the Bayanihan Creative Collective (BCC) tells a powerful reimagining of the myth of Maria Cacao, interwoven with the catastrophe of 2011 Typhoon Sendong. This sorrowful yet vibrant piece captivated audiences over its four-day run and concluded successfully, delivering an emotionally rich experience. Under the visionary direction of Jean Peñola, environmental advocacy and folklore come to life. Jean's direction, as she recounts in her director's notes, is driven by the haunting recollections of that fateful night, where her family survived Sendong unscathed but faced an overwhelming vision of despair and devastation. She weaves each narrative with profound care and respect, showcasing masterful storytelling that can be as powerful as it is gentle. The choreography of Geoffrey Peñola takes the audience on an eventful journey through a blending of traditional and contemporary movements, portraying the tragic realities of the typhoon's impact. This poignant narrative of loss, survival, and healing was brought to life by their daughter, Suzanne Alexa Marie Penola, in her debut as Maria Cacao and their son. Sean Benedict Penola as part of the

intimate ensemble.

Hailing from the distant shores of Iligan City, composer Michael Lagura's original score becomes the production's heartbeat, intensifying the emotional depth of the narrative with its haunting melodies.

This production would not have been possible without the generous support of the City of Victoria and the Capital Regional District (CRD), and the collaboration between the Victoria Filipino Canadian
Association and the Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society. We thank the cast and production, whose artistry brought this story to life.



The title "Ang Pagbawi" translates to "The Restoration," a fitting tribute to the resilience of the Iliganons, and the larger Filipino spirit, which remains steadfast in the face of calamity. This debut marks an inspiring beginning for the Bayanihan Creative Collective.

# Empowering Youth through Cultural Pride and Practical Skills: "Dangal at Paglinkod

by: Mike Caparas / Eileen Tiamzon

The "Dangal Paglinkod" at a transformative initiative designed to equip program youth from equity-seeking communities with practical, marketable skills that support their personal growth contribute to the well-being of their community. Focused on Filipino youth, the project creates an inclusive environment

Certification for 10 youth on March 1, and First Aid Training for 30 youth, which was completed on March 8 and March 22. These certifications empower the youth to contribute meaningfully community health and safety while expanding their career prospects. Aid The First Training, partnership with Alert First Aid, equips youth with the skills to assist in emergency situations, further boosting their sense of confidence and leadership.



In the Photo: Youth in action during their sessions on Food Safety and First Aid courses.



where participants can build confidence, gain valuable skills, and overcome challenges such as diminished self-esteem and feelings of isolation due to their cultural backgrounds and unique experiences.

Through hands-on training and certification, youth are better prepared for employment opportunities and can strengthen their resumes. ey achievements include the completion of Food Safe

On April 25, the program will host two exciting events: a Culinary Workshop and a Community Meal. During the workshop, youth will learn to prepare traditional Filipino dishes, blending cultural pride with practical culinary skills. The day will culminate in a shared meal, created by the participants themselves. This communal experience fosters a sense of accomplishment and connection, celebrating not only the food but also the bonds built through collaboration and shared heritage.





"Dangal at Paglinkod" is made possible through the generous support of United Way BC - Southern Vancouver Island, and with facilitation by the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS), Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), and Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers Association (VFCCA). Together, these organizations are investing in the next generation—empowering youth embrace their roots, develop critical life skills, and step confidently into their futures.

Building a Filipino Legacy in

# Victoria: The Future Bayanihan Centre

by: Darryl Wilson

In 2001, the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society opened the Bayanihan Centre in Victoria with the intention of serving the needs of our kababayans. Over the past two decades, the centre has welcomed Canadians of Filipino various forms ancestry in including new immigrants, caregivers, temporary foreign workers, families, and seniors. It is a place where the spirit of cooperation community and providing mutual assistance to help one another has been embraced. More than twenty years since its inception, the spirit of Bayanihan continues to live on, but inhibited by the size of the existing centre to meet the demands of a growing city and local Filipino community.

# An Exciting New Vision by Filipinos for Victoria

We are excited to introduce a vision for a new Filipino Cultural Centre in Victoria. It will be a vibrant and inclusive space that celebrates Filipino culture while nurturing community connections and growth. The new Centre aims to serve as a hub for cultural engagement, offering a variety of spaces and services for the Filipino community and the people of Victoria and Vancouver Island.



Key features of the new Filipino Cultural Centre include:

**Gathering Spaces:** Areas for families, friends, and visitors to connect, share, and build relationships.

**Learning Areas:** Dedicated spaces to celebrate and share Filipino heritage through educational programs and cultural events.

•**Performance Venues**: A platform to showcase Filipino arts, music, dance, and performances.

**Affordable Housing**: Providing safe, accessible housing options for community members in need.

The new Filipino Cultural Centre will be more than just a building. It's a space where culture thrives, families grow, and connections are made.

Come As a Visitor, Leave As Family Hospitality is a fundamental aspect of our Philippine culture, where strangers are welcomed as friends, and guests are treated like family. This warm and inclusive atmosphere that has been the signature of the Philippines and Filipinos around the globe, has also become a hallmark of our Bayanihan Centre rooted in the value of magiliw na pagtanggap – to treat guests with kindness and generosity. In Victoria, our hospitality is not just a gesture, but

is part of our core identity that will become the signature of our new cultural centre. It is where our tradition of building strong bonds and relationships between Filipinos and relationships between Filipinos and with the wider community will remain a top priority. It is where visitors of all ethnicities will come, and leave as members of our family.

# The Bayani Challenge: A Filipino Legacy for Victoria

Your support is vital in bringing this vision to life. With your help, you can help us create a space where everyone belongs – a place where Filipinos can connect to serve the wider community of Victoria showcasing Filipino culture and hospitality.

We are asking you to be a Bayani! With your donation, we can:

- Build a community that embraces
   Filipino culture
- Provide affordable housing for those in need
- Create a space for all to come together and celebrate

Together, we can create a space that builds a culture of caring by Filipinos for Victoria. It will serve our kababayans, our community, and our city. This is our legacy, this is our future. Walang iwanan!

# ASEAN+3 Societies in Action (ASIA) in Victoria Collaborative

by: Kirsten Mah



In the Photo: Collaborating Community Leaders with Clarissa Cecilia Mijares, ASIA in Victoria Project Manager; Kirsten Mah, Liaison Officer; Pauline Caparas, Monet Nobuso, and Gayle Nye.

ASEAN+3 The Societies in Action (ASIA) in Victoria Collaborative is bringing together Asian community groups across Victoria to create collaborative space for fostering cultural, social and resource exchange between societies, Asian local communities, institutions and business in Victoria.

Our founding members are the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society, the Victoria Chinatown Lioness Lions Club, the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association and the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society. With funding from the Victoria Foundation, they have hired a project manager and three cultural liaison officers who collectively make up our Secretariat.

Our work is focused in two main areas: building capacity of Asian community groups in the region, and creating greater integration of Asian Canadians within our broader community.

To achieve our goal of building capacity among Asian community groups, we will be coming together on May 26th, 2025 to discuss strengths and needs, and identify ways we can work together on an on-going basis to deepen connections and learn new skills. If you would like to join,

We're working to increase awareness and foster connections within the broader community through social media upcoming events. This fall, we'll host a festival to showcase Asian community groups, along with summer events for fun relationship-building. Follow us on (@asiainvictoria2025) Instagram and Facebook (ASIA in Victoria) for updates. For more information, email

asiainvictoria2025@gmail.com.



# Ramadan Iftar Hosted by the Turkish Community – March 21

On March 21, the Turkish Community Victoria, in partnership with CentreCanada Newcomer Services Society, hosted a meaningful Iftar dinner at the Philippines Bayanihan Community Centre-the first of its kind at this venue. This special gathering brought together people of different backgrounds in celebration fostering Ramadan. unitv. understanding, and respect for Muslim traditions.

The event was made possible with support from the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS), the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA) Board of Directors, and a team of dedicated volunteers. Guests were given the opportunity to learn about the significance of Iftar, the meal Muslims share at sunset to break their fast during Ramadan.

Beyond the delicious food, the evening highlighted the power of cultural exchange and community connection. The Turkish community, known for its hospitality, led the way in creating a warm, inclusive atmosphere where everyone felt welcome.

This Iftar dinner was a shining example of how communities can come together to honor each other's traditions—promoting empathy, solidarity, and a deeper appreciation for diversity.

# **Communities Within Communities**

February 15: , Attended the presentation of the Filipino BC Report 2024: Weaving Our Voices – Our Story of our Community, alongside more than 10 political leaders in Vancouver, representing Victoria, BC, Philippine Community (VFCA, BCHS, VFCCA, VFCSA.







March 3: , Attended the Oath-Taking Ceremony of Mabuhay House Society Officers in Vancouver, BC, representing Victoria, BC, Philippine Community (VFCA, BCHS, VFCCA, VFCSA)



March 14: A celebration and victory dinner for the successful production of BBC: Maria Cacao, held with the cast and production team.



March 30: A group of Filipinos in Victoria has initiated the launch of a Pinoy Basketball League, featuring 16 participating teams held at TWSAOUT First Nation Gym, Victoria, BC



# **SECTION 2: FEATURED FACES**

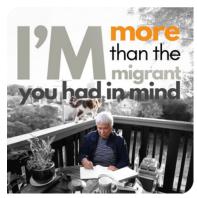
# Filipinos featured in "I'm More Than the Immigrant You Had in Mind"

In the Intercultural Association's powerful project, "I'm More Than the Immigrant You Had in Mind," the voices of sixteen immigrants from eleven countries came to life among them, three proud members of the Filipino community who shared their unique stories and journeys. The project was launched at the Provincial Museum on March 2025. The collection photographs, with links to the podcasts, will be displayed in various parts of the city.

Clarissa Cecillia "Issa" Mijares arrived in Canada in 2020 with a strong academic background from the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University. Facing the challenges of immigration, she rebuilt her identity and found purpose in promoting Filipino heritage through dance. As a dance sociologist, Issa views movement as a powerful medium for storytelling and cultural connection.



Active in the Filipino community, she encourages pride in cultural roots while bridging traditions and experiences. Now pursuing a PhD in sociology at Simon Fraser University, her work explores the links between culture, movement, and identity. Issa lives by a lesson from a professor: "Sayaw sa saliw ng buhay"-"Dance with whatever life brings."



Marilynn (Meyen) Quigley has lived in Canada for 17 years, navigating the challenges of being part of a mixedrace family and building a new cultural identity. She observes that immigrants, contributing to Canada's diversity, are often taken for granted. Meyen passionate about is organizations that preserve immigrant stories and promote cultural heritage. As a member of the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association, she actively educates young Filipino Canadians and highlights the accomplishments of the Filipino diaspora. She was previously the editor of the VFCA

magazine llaw and is committed to collecting the stories of Filipino pioneers. Through writing and oral storytelling, Meyen powerfully shares her immigrant experience, as seen in her dramatic recitation for the ICA production im:print2024.



Suzanne "Sam" Penola immigrated to Canada with her family in 2017 as a teenager. One of her biggest challenges has been navigating lateral violence within her community, where frustrations and aggressions are directed toward her and her family rather than addressing systemic issues like racism, discrimination, and economic struggles. Despite this, she completed her degree in Political Science at the University of Victoria. In a podcast, Sam read an excerpt from her poem "Lessons in Borders," reflecting on the painful realities of invisible borders that divide people, a result of systemic conditions around migration. Currently, Sam is active in the Filipino community, using music, dance, and theatre to showcase Filipino artistry and enrich Canadian life while defining her own identity.



# SECTION 3: CULTURAL CORNER

# Filipino Weekend Market Brings Culture and Community to Downtown Victoria

by: Cobb Carbonel

Victoria, BC - The Filipino Weekend Market is in full swing at Centennial Square in downtown Victoria, bringing excitement and cultural celebration on April 12 and 13, 2025, from 10 AM to 6 PM. This vibrant event highlights Filipino culture, entrepreneurship, and community spirit through a unique marketplace experience.

As part of the 4th annual Filipino Restaurant Month in Canada, this event serves as the Philippine Bayanihan Community Centre's special way of celebrating and promoting the rich culinary traditions of the Philippines. Filipino Restaurant Month is a national initiative that showcases the best of Filipino cuisine and supports Filipino-owned businesses across Canada – and this year, we're bringing the celebration to Victoria



with its first-ever Filipino Weekend Market.

Supported by the City of Victoria through the OurDTWN Ideas Fund, this initiative is revitalizing the downtown core by funding events, programs, and projects that enhance public spaces and foster community engagement.

# **Unique Market Experience**

Unlike traditional6 markets with scheduled entertainment, the Filipino Weekend Market features an open mic stage, where community members and

performers are showcasing their talents in an informal, welcoming setting.

Attendees are also enjoying interactive photo opportunities, including a 360-degree photobooth by PICCS Photobooth and

beautifully decorated static photobooth by Island Balloons, creating memorable moments.

Additional activities include chalk art, a coloring activity for kids, playing Sungka (Mancala), playing Piko (Hopscotch), and exciting prizes from the vendors, ensuring fun for attendees of all ages.

Today, April 13, Nanaimo-based professional Filipino DJ, DJ Polo of AquinoGigs, is hosting a short program starting at 2 PM. Additionally, Zumba sessions are happening on both days, led by Rufo Borja from 1 to 2 PM and Khrys Tata Jagolino on April 12 from 10 AM to 12 NN, bringing

energy and movement to marketgoers.



# A Fusion of Filipino and Japanese Market

The market hosts over 40 vendors and organizations, featuring a diverse selection of food, arts, crafts, and services. It also includes vendors from the Japanese Spring Market, a project initiated by Haruhi Nakai, a Japanese high school student who organized the market as part of her school project. This blend of Filipino and Japanese cultures adds a dynamic, multicultural dimension to the event.

#### **Meet the Vendors**

#### Food & Beverage:

Andi's Cravings by BCHS, Ate \*A Restaurant. Benjamin's Cafe Restaurant Ltd., Bigbadbobhotdogs, ChuChu Water, Country Crepes, Friends & Family Bake, Good Filling Sankaku, Havana's Inasal, Hotdog Hustlin', Ice Keem, Jempoy's Lechon, Karinderia sa Victoria, Lechon Bai, Manna Bread, Meg's Kitchen, Moms Cake Café. Niloo's Restaurant. NomNoms, Pinov Snack Bar, Roll & Bowl, SaWrap, Subzero Ice Cream, and Usual Café.

#### Arts, Crafts & Services:

Alora's Boutique, AquinoGigs, Emerald Eye Care, Emerald Skin Care, Greatway Financial, Hana Harmony, Hiraya, Island Balloon, Maevelous Finds by BCHS, Padayon T-shirt Printing, PICCS Photobooth, and Vancouver Island Cordillera Association (VICA).

# **Community & Organizations:**

Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS), BCHS Building Committee, Asia in Victoria, Jesus is Lord Church, Miracle Life Church, Saanich Police, The Feast Light Victoria, Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA).

# **Event Management**

The Filipino Weekend Market is organized by the Bayanihan Cultural and Housing Society (BCHS) with Melvin "Cobb" Carbonel as the project manager. Carbonel also led the past two editions of the Mabuhay! Festival, further showcasing his dedication to promoting Filipino culture in Victoria, British Columbia. This event is presented in collaboration with the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA), and Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregivers Association (VFCCA).

# SAWRAP SALORINA SALORINA

# A Celebration of Culture and Community

The very first Filipino Weekend Market is more than just a marketplace—it's a celebration of culture, connection, and community. It offers a unique opportunity to savor authentic Filipino dishes, discover handcrafted goods, and support local businesses, all while engaging with a vibrant and welcoming community.

Held in the heart of downtown Victoria, at Centennial Square, this dynamic event brings together Filipinos and non-Filipinos alike to share in the rich cultural heritage of the Philippines. Visitors can enjoy delicious Filipino street food, explore local artisans' creations, and connect with neighbors in a warm, inclusive environment.

If you're in downtown Victoria, stop by Centennial Square to experience this dynamic cultural event!

# **Exciting Upcoming Events**

# SECTION 4: COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS



# April 20, Easter Egg Hunt at Glanford Park 2025

11:00 AM - 02:00 PM

Join us for the Easter Egg Hunt at Glanford Park on April 20th, hosted by the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA). Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society (BCHS), Victoria Filipino Canadian Caregiver Association (VFCCA), and the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA). This family-friendly event is perfect for kids and families to enjoy an afternoon of egg hunting and outdoor fun.

# 2025

# May 17, Gordy Dodd's One World Cultural **Festival**

Celebrate global cultures at the One World Cultural Festival at the British Columbia Parliament Buildings on May 17th, from 10 AM to 7 PM. Don't miss the Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA) Sampaguita Dancers performing traditional Filipino folk dances. A full day of performances and cultural experiences awaits!

#### May 19, Annual Thrifty 2025 **Foods Victoria Day Parade**

Victoria's beloved Victoria Day Parade returns for its 125th year, celebrating the start of summer with vibrant floats, marching bands, and community groups. We invite all Filipino individuals and communities in Victoria to march with us and proudly represent the Philippines. Whether wearing national attire or showcasing regional dress, this is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Filipino culture and share it with the whole city!

# **June 14-**15, 2025

## **Mabuhay** Celebration

The Mabuhay Celebration brings Filipino culture to Victoria with music, food, and performances. Join the fun on June 14-15 to experience the rich traditions of the Filipino community.

# **June 16,** 2025

## All Male Ensemble Concert

Don't miss the Male Ensembles (Men's) Ensemble (part of Madrigal Singers) concert in June. Expect a powerful and moving performance from one of the city's most celebrated choral groups. Supported by United Way under Kapwa

Stay tuned! In our next issue, we'll feature an exclusive interview with the Bayanihan Creative Collective (BCC) together with Jean Peñola, where she shares insights and exciting plans for the upcoming projects of the BCC.

# Pride and **Gratitude:** Victoria Filipinos Congratulate **Mable Elmore**



Victoria. BC - The Victoria Filipino Canadian Association (VFCA), Bayanihan Cultural Housing Society (BCHS), Victoria Filipino-Canadian Caregivers/Migrant Workers/TFWs Association (VFCCA), and the Victoria Filipino Canadian Seniors Association (VFCSA) proudly congratulate MLA Mable Elmore on her historic appointment as Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.

MLA Elmore's achievement as the first person of Asian and Filipino heritage to hold this role is a moment of immense pride for our community. Her continued support and advocacy for the Filipino-Canadian community, particularly in Victoria, has uplifted caregivers, seniors, migrant workers, and countless others.

Through her years of public service, Mable has stood as a champion for social justice, equity, and the inclusion of underrepresented voices. We deeply appreciate her commitment to the Filipino community and look forward to working together to build a more inclusive and empowered future.

Mabuhay ka, Deputy Speaker Mable Elmore!





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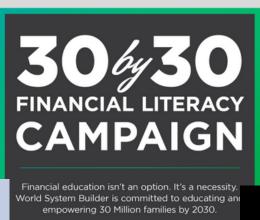
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We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our funders and community partners whose continued support makes our programs and initiatives possible.

Maraming salamat for standing with us in promoting cultural pride, inclusion, and community wellbeing.















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