



**Federation  
of Calgary Communities**  
Improving neighbourhood life in Calgary

**Cindy Stephen  
for the Federation of  
Calgary Communities**

At a recent community sustainability conference in Calgary, a woman told a story about her new neighbours — a Chinese couple recently landed in Canada. Being a friendly sort of person, she made sure to smile and wave. Her attempts, however, were met with icy stares or a turned back.

With a growing immigrant population and more visible minorities expected to arrive in the decades to come, scenarios like this will do little to create cohesive and safe communities. That's why the Federation of Calgary Communities and the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC) have begun a dialogue with the hopes of connecting our established community associations with the ever expanding ethnic community.

"A group of leaders has come together and is facilitating a collective voice for visible minorities so they can fully participate in Canadian life — economically, socially and politically," says ECCC executive director, Marichu Antonio. "Eliminating the barriers that the ethno-cultural communities face is our main objective."

Representatives from 27 member

immigrant and cultural organizations have joined the association, founded in 2003, to develop training programs and workshops to help new Canadians adapt to a new culture and to resolve problems in their own community. Issues such as isolation, youth gangs and the empowerment of immigrant women can be dealt with by peer groups.

"For example, if someone says they'd like to talk to a government official about an issue that's affecting them, we train them on how to prepare for that," says Antonio, herself an immigrant from the Philippines.

Another mandate of the group is to help connect the Calgary community to the immigrant community by dispelling myths about immigrants and addressing real or perceived fears about cultures that are different.

"Integration is a two-way process — the new people who have just come and the people who were already here. It's not that easy. There are fears on both sides," she emphasizes.

Antonio is excited about working with the Federation to develop an understanding of ethno-cultural differences at the neighbourhood level.

"There are three levels of connection. One is developing programs for our community leaders to further understand what community associations are and the relevance to visible minorities. Another is connecting specific ethno-cultural groups with specific community associations and exchanging

# Communities helping to tear down invisible barriers



**Jason Luan, left, and Marichu Antonio are seen giving a presentation on Cultural Diversity and Inclusiveness at the Community Sustainability Conference on November 7.**

*Photo by Brendan Murray*

contact information and holding meetings between the two groups to make them comfortable with each other," she says.

The third point of connection Antonio says is to hold events and to be persistent in inviting members of diverse communities.

"There was a Pakistani group who kept inviting a community leader, who was a white woman, to their events," she says. "She was afraid to go because she didn't want to be the only white person there. Finally, she agreed to go and found that everyone was very friendly and welcoming."

As for the woman who was given

the cold shoulder by her new Chinese neighbours? Turns out they couldn't speak any English and were avoiding contact because they were embarrassed.

"If we prepare for fears like that, we could bridge the gap. You could bring in Chinese interpreters to facilitate friendship right from the start," she says.

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## The Northern Hills

The Northern Hills Community Association consists of the communities of Harvest Hills, Coventry Hills, Country Hills Estates, Panorama Hills Estates, Country Hills and Panorama Hills.

These communities are all new developments and are located in the city's northwest. There are several golf courses in the area, as well as numerous restaurants, shopping facilities and a theatre. Two historical sites, the Reverend George McDougall Cairn and the John A. Lewis Rock Quarry are located in Panorama.

Residents of Northern Hills can access the Nose Creek Valley and the West Nose Creek Valley. LRT extensions to this area are planned. Northern Hills is home to numerous public and separate schools.

The Northern Hills community association office is located in the Genstar wing of Cardel Place. As the community association for a rapidly developing community, the association is primarily concerned with urban planning and

development proposals. The association also offers sports programming for local residents, including soccer. Cardel Place, operated by the Nose Creek Sports and Recreation Committee, opened in 2004. The centre includes two skating rinks, three gymnasiums, an aquatic complex, climbing wall, and workout area. It also houses the Calgary Public Library. The association also publishes a monthly newsletter for local residents. Please visit them online at [www.northernhills.ab.ca](http://www.northernhills.ab.ca)

### Schools

- Harvest Hills – Catholic Elementary
- Coventry Hills – Catholic Elementary and Public Elementary
- Panorama Hills – Catholic Elementary expected to open Jan 2008
- Panorama Hills – Public Elementary expected to open Sept 2008
- Catholic High School located in Coventry serves all of the Northern Hills Communities.

Funding for public middle schools in both Coventry and Panorama is expected to be announced soon

### Demographics

Located in Ward 3, Country Hills has a population of 3,615 (2006 Civic Census) with approximately 21.7 per cent comprising the immigrant population (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada). A total of 645 families accounted for 1,130 children still living at home with 35.4 per cent of these being 6-14 years old. According to Stats Canada, 2001 Census of Canada the median household income for Country Hills in 2005 was \$76,937. In addition, 49 per cent of the population over 20 completed college, attended university or graduated university with a degree — an additional 7.4 per cent graduated from Trade Schools (Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada).

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