

CELEBRATING CANADA DAY

Welcome to a 'better country'



BRUCE EDWARDS, THE JOURNAL

Tie Li, from China, shows his enthusiasm Monday at a Canada Day barbecue held by English as a Second Language students for local dignitaries, including Health Minister Anne McLellan and Mayor Bill Smith.

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Celebrating her first Canada Day, Shakibeh Edani's eyes tear up when she thinks of the recent war that ravaged her home country of Iraq.

"I feel happy that Canada didn't share in it," said the mother of two, dressed in traditional long robe and head scarf. "We want to get rid of Saddam (Hussein), but there are other ways to do it than war. We've had enough war. We came to Canada because we want peace."

Edani and her husband, Totig Sari Al-sari, daughter Zdinab, 9, and son Mohammed, 6, came to Edmonton earlier this



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Tereze Mathiang Out sings at a Canada Day barbecue Monday.

year to start new lives. They fled Iraq in 1991 to escape the

Gulf War and spent 12 years as refugees in Iran before coming to Canada.

"This is a better country for raising children," she said. "We have more freedom and we have peace."

A doctor by profession, she's brushing up on her English hoping to get her licence. She practised medicine for three years in Iran—one year with the group Doctors Without Borders and the other two with a relief agency. Her husband, an electrical engineer, is also studying English so he can work as an engineer.

They were among 400 immigrants and refugees celebrating on Monday at a Canada Day barbecue organized by NorQuest College's English as

a Second Language program. The event is held annually on the last working day before July 1.

Other ESL students had similar stories about fleeing trouble spots to enjoy the peace and prosperity of Canada.

Tereze Mathiang Dut, a mother of nine, fled wartorn Sudan in 1999.

"It was a frightening place to live," she said. "I wanted a better life for my children."

A nurse by training, she is studying English at NorQuest and hopes to become proficient enough to get a nursing job. Her oldest daughter is in medical school at the University of Manitoba.

Nubia Faccini, 20, came to
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Edmonton four months ago from Brazil, hoping to go to university to study health sciences.

“The small cities in Brazil don’t have universities and the big cities are too dangerous,” she said.

Lyuba Muzychenko, from Ukraine, was shocked to see Mayor Bill Smith’s car sitting unguarded on the street while he and other dignitaries, including Health Minister Anne McLellan and MLA Brent Rathgeber, attended the barbecue.

“Even in small towns in Ukraine, you never see the mayor unless he’s surrounded by the police or the army,” she said.

Tie Li, who came to Canada three months ago from China, said he enjoys “the fresh air, green trees and the freedom” of this new country.

“People are very warm here,” he said.

Lilli Fortier, dean of language training at NorQuest,



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Halima Ismaili came to Canada from Somalia.

said she started the annual Canada Day barbecue six years ago to give ESL, students a chance to celebrate their new home.

“We have a broad range of

ethnic mixes, and this brings us all together,” she said.

As is often the case, new Canadians tend to be more appreciative of their adopted country than those who have

lived here all their lives, she said.

“As a school we teach citizenship, and this is what citizenship is all about,” she said.

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Anthem lyrics

O Canada!

Our home and native land!

True patriot love in all thy sons command.

With glowing hearts we see thee rise

The true North strong and free!

From far and wide,

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

God keep our land glorious and free!

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.