

## CANADA IS A PLACE FOR ALL

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Toronto – July 1, 2021: CANADA is indeed a place for all as it has and continues to welcome people of all cultures illustrating to the world that through our devotion to multiculturalism and our diversity, we find our strength.

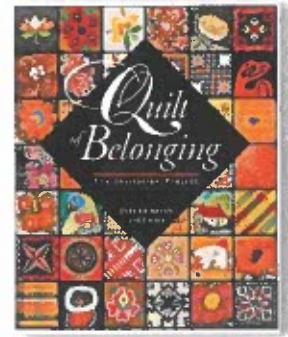
Following in the footsteps of the Ukrainian Canadian Senator Paul Yuzyk (1913-1986), remembered as the Father of Multiculturalism, who expounded in his maiden speech of 1964 in the Senate of Canada, the principal of "Unity in Diversity", on October 8, 1971, Multiculturalism became an official policy of the Government of Canada, making Canada, the 1st country in the world to have such a policy. Multiculturalism was enshrined in law on July 21, 1988, as The Canadian Multiculturalism Act. It has been adopted in numerous laws such as in s.27 of *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)*, *The Broadcasting Act (1991)* and celebrated annually on June 27th. By Royal Proclamation on November 13, 2002, June 27th was declared by the Government of Canada as *Canadian Multiculturalism Day*, on which date we celebrate our diversity and recognize the many contributions that ethnocultural communities have made and continue to make in shaping and enriching our great country, Canada.

On *Canadian Multiculturalism Day* (June 27, 2021), the Honourable Justice Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, stated:

*"Canada's commitment to multiculturalism is an example to the world and at the heart of our success as a country. For generations, Canadians have known we are stronger when we recognize and honour our differences and diverse roots and work together to build a more inclusive future for all."* [1]

Multiculturalism not only shows our strength in our diversity in an inclusive democratic society but also instills a sense of belonging. A testament of multiculturalism is found not only in Canada's policy and laws but also in the Quilt of Belonging, a collaborative textile and work of art, envisioned by the renowned Canadian artist, Esther Bryan, consisting of 120 feet long quilt of 263 squares/blocks that can be seen and touched, and which represent the many countries and origins that make up Canada.

In the 'Forward' to the 5th Edition of the book, *'Quilt of Belonging: The innovative Project'* in my capacity as President of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC) [2], which has and continues to play an active role in the representation, advancement, promotion, and preservation of the multicultural reality of Canada, I set out the significance and majesty of the Quilt of Belonging and its 'lasting testimony to Canada's heritage and identity'.



*"When people describe Canada, they cannot help but talk about the majesty of its land and the diversity of its people. Our nation's evolving history is stitched together in stories that are reflected in the 263 squares of Quilt of Belonging, representing the many countries and origins that create Canada. The stories tell of hardship and prosperity, success, and failure. They serve as a point of reference, a source of strength and inspiration for today's generations and for immigrants aspiring to become new citizens."*

*In 1994, visual artist Esther Bryan travelled with her father to his homeland of Slovakia and returned to Canada with an idea: To create a project that would, through the medium of textile, tell the story of the peoples of Canada and the world. Travelling home gave her a sense of her roots. Returning to Canada gave her a sense of where she belonged."*

*Textile is a democratic medium—basic and accessible to all of us. Even those who came to Canada with nothing, arrived with clothing on their backs. A quilt represents individual elements, some new, some old, that are brought together to create a greater whole. What better medium to tell the story of Canadians?*

*The Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC) which represents ethnic communities in Canada, shares the*





*inspiration and the mission that Quilt of Belonging symbolizes. The CEC has fervently supported the project since its conceptual beginnings to the present. CEC facilitated the unveiling of the first Quilt blocks in the halls of the Parliament of Canada and played a key role at the Quilt of Belonging's launch at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Not only does the quilt elegantly and artistically portray Canada's multicultural diversity, it symbolizes our nation's fundamental values of equality and mutual respect for its people, values which are intrinsic to and shared by the CEC.*

*Quilt of Belonging tells a story of Canada that is stunningly visual. So many cultures occupying the same place, intertwined as are the braids of the Quilt. Each is separated by enough space to retain their individual identity. Yet we remain connected in our need for each other, knowing that our actions have an impact on our neighbours. At a time when forces in the world seem intent on driving us apart, the message of the Quilt is more important than ever.*

*The premise behind the Quilt is that "belonging is a fundamental need of each human being, that there must be a valued place for everyone in our world." While the physical Quilt represents that need, as we look deeper, we realize that the real quilt that is created here is the human quilt. It is about the relationships—the invisible tapestry of humanity.*

*Canada is a country woven from many people, many cultures—each contributing their thread to strengthening our sense of purpose and our unity in our diversity. There is no better symbol of this than the magnificent Quilt with its origins in the small pre-confederation town of Williamstown, Ontario. Pieced together by thousands of volunteers from coast to coast to coast, Quilt of Belonging has reached hundreds of thousands of people with a quiet, dignified, and powerful message of hope and*

*belonging. It is a message that touches every person, whether new to Canada or with roots deeply entrenched in our history. Quilt of Belonging inspires us to remember our debts to the past, our obligations to the future, and our responsibilities to those who are connected to us by the threads of our common humanity. The Quilt is truly a modern "wonder of the world...." [3]*

Multiculturalism is a cornerstone of our values and a very fundamental part of our Canadian society. Today we face many challenges, but we must continue to find 'common ground' in our differences and/or diversity and thereby combat these challenges by working together and standing alongside each other. Canada is indeed a place for all. It must continue to be the beacon of the world and showcase the success of our multicultural society, inspiring other countries around the world as the Quilt of Belonging does through its magnificence and exhibitions.

**Dominic Campione**  
Canadian Ethnocultural Council

1. Ottawa June 27, 2021 – Statement issued by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Honourable Justin Trudeau, on Canadian Multiculturalism Day.
2. "The Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC), established in 1980 is the only non-for-profit, non-partisan national coalition of national ethnocultural organizations dedicated to working together for the purpose of promoting intercultural dialogue and furthering the understanding of the multicultural reality of Canada, and thereby ensuring equality of opportunity, rights and dignity for all Canadians. The CEC has played a very important role over the last 40 years in the successful advancement of our diversity, including but not limited to advocating for the adoption by the Government of Canada of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, the Employment Equity Act and the inclusion of section 27 (Multiculturalism) in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."
3. Quilt of Belonging: The Invitation Project/Esther Bryan and Friends, printed in Canada 2017, by Marquis, P.7.