



*Barter and Trade festival of native inhabitants and Asian traders: "Ang Bayan Ko (My County)"*

## Diverse Filipino Culture

Filipinos in Windsor-Essex are the same as their counterparts in many parts of the world: a people whose very essence is multi-faceted - their genetic make up, their food, and especially their arts and traditions. While being indigenously Filipino means being Malay (brown), it is unusual to find a Filipino whose ancestry does not include one or more other nationalities such as Chinese, Japanese, East Indian, Spanish or American.

This generational diversity has greatly influenced the evolution of Filipino society to what it is now, and is reflected in Filipino literature as well as in performing and visual arts. It is also what immigrants have brought with them to Canada.

The arrival of traders from China and India and Islamic

presence in the south had earlier influences on the Malay inhabitants of the islands before they became the Philippines.

The most extensive cultural influence is likely from Spain whose occupation of the country lasted three centuries beginning in the 1500's. Spanish rule was founded in Catholicism and most people in the lowlands converted and adopted the traditions. Muslims in the deep south and tribes up north were more resistant to the changes. Early in the 20th century, Americans came to the Philippines, for one of three reasons: military, business, or religious missions, and their presence eventually led to the declaration of Philippine Independence in 1946.

Despite centuries of foreign rule and cultural influences, some Malay traditions have withstood the test of time. The work of Filipino artists, writers and musicians are filled with these varied themes and cultural elements that have helped shaped a very rich national identity.

The first recorded Filipino settlers in Windsor-Essex arrived in the 1950's, many of whom were medical professionals. All were equipped with education and skills, a strong work ethic and a burning aspiration to achieve a better life for their families. Although adaptable to any new home, Filipinos' love for their cultural identity is further enhanced when they leave their homeland. Older Filipino-Canadians try to instil this same love in Filipino youth.

Today, although there are more Filipinos in the county, they account for less than 2% of the total population.



*Natives and waves of earlier migration to the islands*



*Phillipine Jota*