



Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations

# 2024

# COMMUNITY AWARDS GALA





Welcome to Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations (CFOFO) 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Awards Gala, where we celebrate the meritorious services and achievements of our Fiji-Canadian community.

The CFOFO Executive Committee would like to congratulate this year's award recipients for their milestone achievements and their invaluable contributions towards their respective communities! We would also like to extend our gratitude to all of those attending the gala function. Together, we cultivate a community of support, inclusivity, and empowerment.

A special thank you to this year's event contributors:

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# WINGS

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Fiji Island Supermarket: Kiran Patel, Sadhana Saree House, Sarda Naicker,  
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*Event Volunteers:*

Talia Naidu, Vikal Reddy and Hasim Saif



The Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations (CFOFO) is a network that represents the interests and cultural heritage of Fijians living in Canada. It aims to promote Fijian culture, facilitate community engagement, and provide support to Fijian Canadians. The Federation often organizes events, cultural celebrations, and community outreach programs to strengthen ties within the Fijian diaspora and between Fijians and the broader Canadian society.

It's great to see so many innovative minds gathered here today. Each of you brings unique experiences and perspectives that can inspire and elevate one another.

As entrepreneurs, we face challenges and opportunities that require creativity, resilience, and collaboration. Remember, it's not just about what you know, but also who you know. Take this chance to network—share your ideas, seek feedback, and explore potential partnerships.

It's wonderful to see the Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations (CFOFO) committed to acknowledging the contributions of Fiji-Canadians. Highlighting meritorious services not only fosters a sense of community but also inspires others to get involved.

Don't hesitate to lean on each other for support; after all, we're all on this journey together. Let's create an environment of openness and encouragement. Here's to fostering collaboration and driving innovation!

Thank you, and I look forward to the conversations we'll have!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bobby Naicker". The signature is stylized and fluid.

**Bobby Naicker**  
Fijian Honourary Consul

# WINGS

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# CFOFO's Commitment to Community Recognition



Back in June of 2006, CFOFO was one of the first organizations to host a Recognition Night where Fiji-Canadian community leaders, organizations, volunteers, and youth were acknowledged and shown appreciation to for their efforts and contributions (as pictured above).

15 years later, CFOFO drew back to our organization's roots and sentiments by hosting our first "Community Awards Gala" in October of 2021. All these years later, CFOFO continues to stand on our founding principles and objectives.

## 2024 Community Awards Gala Program

Cocktail Reception & Networking  
Awards Program Commencement  
Opening Remarks by Emcees  
Welcome by CFOFO Chairperson  
Entertainment  
Wedding Anniversary Awards  
Entertainment  
Youth Scholarship Awards  
Youth Volunteer Service Awards  
Dignitary Speech  
Community Leader Awards  
Organization Leader Awards  
Innovative Business Awards  
Closing Remarks  
Group Pictures

# About CFOFO

With several political and natural disasters occurring in Fiji around the late 1990s to early 2000s, the Fiji-Canadian community in Greater Vancouver wanted to take action and provide aid to those back in Fiji.

As several Fiji-Canadian organizations were independently attempting to help Fiji's citizens, it became evident that unified community representation was more effective in gaining the attention of governments. A unified approach was not only essential to bolster community strength, but also to enhance credibility to their efforts.

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000, various Fiji-Canadian community leaders from Religious, Cultural, Social, Sporting, Business and Trade sectors came together to participate in a historic community meeting at Fiji Canada Multicultural Centre in Burnaby, BC. It was unanimously agreed to form an umbrella body organization. Thus, prompting the creation of the Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations (CFOFO).

Although CFOFO was initially formed in response to the crises in Fiji, the organization continued to address issues affecting the Fiji-Canadian community and society at large and became duly registered as per the provisions of the BC Society Act on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

Since then, CFOFO has expanded on its mandate and initiatives. From youth programs to community gatherings, to advocacy work, to fundraising—CFOFO continues to thrive for over the past 2 decades with the support of the community.



*CFOFO is a registered non-profit and non-governmental organization (NGO) comprised of Fiji-Canadian organizations from all sectors, including Religious and Cultural, Social and Sporting, Businesses, Trades and Professionals. We act as a unified body representing our various organizations. A few of our aims and objectives include: pooling resources among various organizations and providing aid and assistance to others; recognizing those who provide meritorious and exemplary services to the community; promoting world peace, harmony and democracy; and affiliating with recognized world bodies that represent and advance the interest of our various organizations, Fiji-Canadians and Fiji residents.*

# CFOFO Executive Committee



Chairperson  
Shannon Permal



Vice-Chairperson  
Arvind Prasad



Vice-Chairperson  
Vidya Sharma



Secretary  
Calvin Lal



Treasurer  
Sarda Naicker



Assistant Secretary  
Aarthi Naidu



Assistant Treasurer  
Vineet Dalton



Executive Member  
Albert Kumar



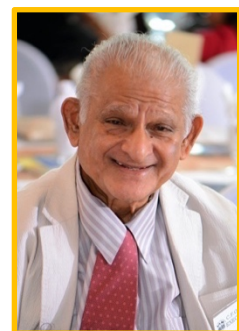
Executive Member  
Ilene Kumar



Executive Member  
Suman Kumar



Executive Member  
Shivangni Naicker



Trustee  
Wasu Naidu



Trustee  
Edward Palad

Are you interested in joining our CFOFO Executive Team or becoming a member? If so, kindly connect with us!

Email: [info.cfofo@gmail.com](mailto:info.cfofo@gmail.com) | Website: [cfofo.ca](http://cfofo.ca)





On October 16, 2022, the contributions and achievements of the Fiji-Canadian community were celebrated at CFOFO's 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Awards Gala. Hosted in Surrey, BC, the community gathering honoured those who have made significant strides, locally and internationally, in enhancing collective well-being and success.





# Anniversary Celebration Awards



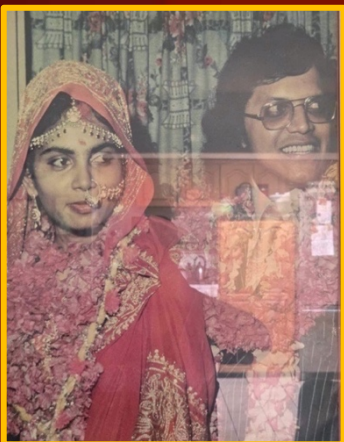
## **Narain & Padma Basaiya**

Narain and Padma Basaiya had an arranged marriage on May 3, 1975. Despite being an arranged marriage, the couple have stood strong through a beautiful journey of ups and downs, through 'dukh aur khushi', and in sickness and in health. They continue to live life and enjoy the good times spent with their 4 beautiful children. Narain's words of wisdom to achieve a long-lasting relationship: "Happy Wife toh Happy Life!"



## **Andy & Mehazafin Chand**

Andy and Mehazafin met back in college. The college sweethearts married young on February 3, 1989. In 2000, they moved to Canada with their family. They are proud parents to two wonderful boys, Praneel and Darren, and proud grandparents to two grandchildren. Mehazafin works as a Restaurant Manager while Andy works as BC's Commercial Regional Manager at Coast Appliance. While best known for spending his spare time DJing events, Andy also spends his time volunteering with his wife. Mehazafin is the President of Canadian Empowered Women of Fiji Foundation. The couple continues to spend many hours towards volunteering for charitable causes.



## **Gabriel Bal & Veena Dass**

While embarking on a world tour in 1974, Gabriel was set to make his final stop in Fiji before returning to his home in Vancouver. While visiting, his parents encouraged him to get married. His family members had introduced him to Veena who hails from Vinimono, Nausori. The couple had an arranged marriage in Fiji on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1974. The couple came to Canada and started their life as newlyweds in Vancouver but later relocated to Coquitlam to reside there for the past 47 years. Their family includes daughter, Melissa, son, Darrell, and three loving grandchildren. The couple's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary coincided with Gabriel's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. To celebrate these remarkable milestones, the couple took a pilgrimage tour to Western Europe and were blessed at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima.

# Anniversary Celebration Awards



## Amee & Lila Lal

Like two peas in a pod, the bond Amee and Lila Lal share is not only as partners but as best friends. The couple have been inseparable for over 70 years; embarking on their journey together in their early twenties and getting married on January 24, 1953! Through every challenge and joy in life, their common goal has always been to support and understand one another. When asked about what makes a successful marriage, the advice they share is to foster respect and open communication. Building these fundamental principles will allow for a lifetime of love like theirs!



## David & Gyan Lingam

David was 8 years old when his sister had mentioned a friend who was very talkative and cute. He expressed interest in meeting her but unfortunately that opportunity never came up. In 1973, David met Gyan at the bus station and started dating shortly thereafter. One day in downtown Suva, David's sister ran into them and told them that Gyan is the girl she had talked about years ago. The couple got married that same year. In 1976, they immigrated to Canada with their daughter, Reema Ramritu, who was two years old at the time. They welcomed their second child, Michelle Lingam, in 1982. In 2006, the couple started a Fijian newspaper called "Fiji Times" Canada, which was distributed to the community free of charge for several years. In 2023, they celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in Fiji. Their milestone was recognized by Madam Mary Simon, the Governor General of Canada, who sent a congratulatory note.



## Pramesh & Madhu Mishra

Pramesh and Madhu Mishra, born in the Fiji Islands, were married on December 21, 1992. Despite their contrasting personalities, their relationship has stood the test of time. Thirty years of togetherness! Pramesh and Madhu are one such couple that cherish their time together. Together they have designed and constructed their home, established their own business, and now travel as time allows. As Akshay is to Twinkle, or Ajay is to Kajol, Pramesh is to Madhu; a story that love conquers all. Today they continue to grow and expand their journey and instill their values to their two handsome sons as they set to engage in their own journeys of marriage.

# Anniversary Celebration Awards



## **Soma Sundharan & Nirmala Mudliar**

The couple began their newlywed life on May 2, 1967. For the majority of their lives, they lived in Lautoka, Raki Raki, and Ba in Fiji Islands. While Soma Sundharan was the breadwinner of the family, Nirmala was a supportive partner and wonderful mother. Soma Sundharan has an abundance of volunteer experience with Tirikuthu Naach and has led many prayers alongside his wife. Soma Sundharan has been a vital part in keeping culture and traditions alive within our community as a BC Government registered Pundit/Pujari with TISI Sangam Society. Nirmala has always made sure whoever comes to their door is well fed and happy when they leave. The couple has four children, eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.



## **Arvind & Shobna Prasad**

Celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Arvind and Shobna's marriage continues to thrive through their shared understanding, support, and love for one another. Once married, they focused on building a home and a future together. Later on, they were blessed to have their daughter, Brianna, who they always encouraged to stay actively involved in the community. Arvind and Shobna are also leaders of the community through the establishment of the Miss Fiji Canada (MFC) Organization. Not only is MFC a beauty pageant geared towards the promotion of Fijian youth, but it was also extended to the promotion of culture and charity through the creation of the MFC Dance Team and Youth Team. Furthermore, the couple have supported countless other organizations such as CFOFO, Fiji Canada Business Association, and Fiji Professional Women's Network Society.



## **Arvind & Dhan Sharma**

The pair met during college at Derrick Technical Institute in 1968 and got married on March 28, 1971. One year after marriage, they were blessed to have their son. The couple enjoyed success in personal development, community service and sound careers. They had commenced employment out in Toronto in 1974, moved to Edmonton in 1979 and then finally settled in Surrey in 1990. The couple worked hard to pave their path and end up to where they are today.

# Anniversary Celebration Awards

## Pt. Gaya Prasad & Sushila Sharma



Pundit Gaya Prasad and Sushila Sharma married on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1960, in Ba, Fiji Islands. Living in Fiji, they had a traditional life together, Pundit working as a police sergeant and Sushila as a homemaker while both also working a sugarcane farm. They built a family consisting of two daughters and a son. The couple immigrated to Canada in 1990 to seek better opportunities and reunite with family. The couple's marriage remains strong through their belief and service to the community. Both Pt. Gaya Prasad and Sushila are respected members of Sanatan Dharm Cultural Society, where they provide religious services, donations, and guidance to others. In 2015, the couple reaffirmed their vows to each other on their 55<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in the presence of their three children and two grandchildren. Their commitment to each other, their family, and the community serve as a testament to the strength of their sixty-four years of marriage.



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Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations

info.cfofo@gmail.com

# Youth Programs & Events

## Youth Talent Show

Launched in 2004, CFOFO invited youth across the Greater Vancouver region to take the stage and showcase their talent ranging from dancing, singing, devotional items, motivational speeches and more! Furthermore, young visual artists and writers are also invited to showcase their creative works. Having gained immense popularity and demand, the event has been hosted for 17 years. CFOFO continues to make YTS an annual family friendly event where all generations of a family can come together and enjoy entertainment brought to you by our local youth.



## Youth Business Conference

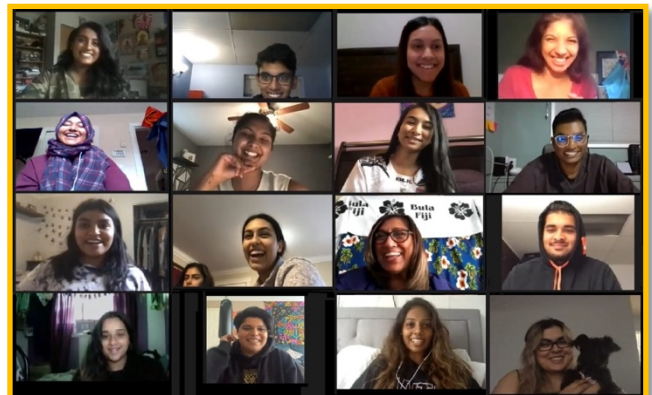
CFOFO's Youth Committee uniquely curated this event with the future professional and educational success of young students in mind. CFOFO's Youth Business Conference is designed to help students build valuable connections and opportunities with local businesses and professionals. In addition to networking, youth gain mentorship and participation in skill training activities that will benefit them in both their personal and professional endeavours.

The key themes of the conference hosted in April 2023 included: entering the workforce, collaboration, and entrepreneurship. From resume writing tips and tricks to debunking media and marketing myths, youth participants were able to collaborate and take away unique insights of our wonderful mentors.

# Youth Programs & Events

## South Asian Youth Mental Health (SAYMH) Ambassador Training

Since December 2019, CFOFO has had the pleasure of partnering up with South Asian Mental Health Alliance and 3E Organization to create a variety of mental health programming and cultural education to local Indo-Fijian and Indo-Caribbean youth over the years. From virtual workshops to outdoor training picnics, the programming has included mental health education, overdose response training, cultural wellness and safety workshops and outreach.



## Youth Committee

CFOFO's Youth Committee is an active body of youth volunteers who organize and assist in various CFOFO events and charitable activities. Our youth volunteers gain a network of positive role models and friends, lots of internal and external opportunities, opportunities to gain various leadership roles, skill development, and professional references.

# Youth Award Programs

## Youth Volunteer Service Awards

Following the discontinuation of the Canadian Federal Government's Canada Day Award Program, CFOFO initiated our own Volunteer Service Award program in April of 2011. CFOFO's Volunteer Service Award was designed to recognize and reinforce the positive contributions of youth to their respective communities and, by extension, for the betterment of Canada. Any youth who has dedicated a minimum of 100 hours towards community service are eligible to apply and receive the award.



## Post-Secondary Educational Scholarship Awards

CFOFO established its post-secondary educational scholarship program in 2004 with the goal of motivating youth to pursue higher education. To-date CFOFO has awarded 50 scholarships, totalling over \$29,500 over the years. This year, we are proud to award another three students with funds to further pursue their post-secondary education!



# 2024 Post-Secondary Education Scholarship Award Recipients



## **Desha Naidu**

Currently in her graduating year at Matthew McNair Secondary, Desha Naidu looks forward to attending the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business to gain the educational background needed to obtain a leading occupational role in the field of Marketing. Besides her academic endeavours, Desha is proud to have been selected as the youngest player for Vancouver Fiji FC Academy's 2023 Fiji Soccer Tour Women's Team. Desha shares that her goal as a soccer player and coach is not only to teach, but to also overcome male superiority in sports.



## **Asra Sidik**

Asra Sidik is currently in her first year of post-secondary education at Langara College. Enrolled in the Faculty of Health Science, Asra aims to become a registered nurse in the future. Outside of school, Asra is a soccer player for Vancouver Fiji FC Academy and is an avid volunteer for the Muslim Community Care Foundation. She shares that seizing available opportunities has allowed her to gain a meaningful connection with her Fijian self-identity and encourages other youth to do the same.



## **Gurleen Sran**

Currently in her second year at the University of British Columbia, Gurleen Sran is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree with a major in Political Science and minor in Law & Society. Upon completing her undergraduate studies, she looks forward to obtaining a Master's Degree in Legal Studies and finding work in the field of criminal law. Gurleen is also an avid volunteer who dedicated hours to SurreyCares Community Foundation, Vancouver Police Department's Citizens' Police Academy, Royal Canadian Mounted Police's National Youth Advisory Committee, Society for Children and Youth Committee, and co-founding BC's Childhood Cancer Society.



# Youth Volunteer Service Award Recipients



## Shiv Om Anganu

Shiv Om Anganu is a 16-year-old, Grade 11 student, who dedicates his time towards volunteering with various societies and organizations. Since the age of seven, he has volunteered for Suman Sargam Music School where he has been doing dholak and tabla performances at various functions. Moreover, he volunteers at the Maha Kali Mandir where he spends his time assisting with set-up for religious functions and plays the dappla. Shiv is also known to lend a helping hand to the Canadian Empowered Women of Fiji Foundation's various fundraising events.



## Justin Chand

20-year-old Justin Chand initially joined the Yo Bro Yo Girl Youth Initiative (YBYG) in Grade 8 out of the need to seek shelter from being bullied by older students. Beginning his journey as a program participant, he learned self-defence strategies, wrestling techniques, and how to develop healthy relationships with peers. His involvement later led him to becoming a Youth Leader, where he mentored younger participants, shared his experiences, and encouraged them to follow a positive path. In recognition of his strong commitment and leadership, YBYG offered him a role as a Program Assistant. Now seven years later with YBYG, Justin continues to transform the lives of other youth.



## Shivangni Naicker

22-year-old Shivangni Naicker has spent countless hours devoted to the promotion of culture by volunteering regularly for TISI Sangam Society, Sangam Seniors, and Kaliamma Temple during religious functions and events. Furthermore, Shivangni has helped behind the scenes and on screen as a Production Team member for Viti Vibes TV. When not at the Mandir, working full-time or pursuing post-secondary studies, Shivangni is a talented classical dancer who performs free of charge at local community events such as Diwali shows, BC Heart & Stroke fundraisers, birthday parties and many other occasions.



# 2023/2024 Highlights

## Indo-Fijian Youth Wellness Ambassador Retreat

The once shelved mental health camp project from 2019 was brought back to life and spearheaded by CFOFO's Chairperson, Shannon, with the help of co-coordinator, Shawn Kumar, South Asian Mental Health Alliance (SAMHAA) and 3E Organization (3E). The 3-day and 2-night retreat took place in August of 2023 at a retreat centre in Squamish, BC.

This one-of-a-kind ambassador program, exclusive to Indo-Fijian youth ages 16-26 included:

- Mental Health Education
- Overdose Response Training
- Naloxone Administration Training
- ASSIST Suicide Alertness Certification
- BC Peer Support Training Curriculum
- Indo-Fijian History Presentation
- Mental Health Education in Fiji-Hindi
- Neurodivergence Educational Workshop
- Community Outreach Project Planning
- Art Therapy Activities
- Wellness & Mindfulness Activities
- Team Bonding & Networking

Supported by the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, the program was entirely free of cost to remain accessible to youth who are truly passionate about mental health education and advocacy work!



**Indo-Fijian History presented by CFOFO Chairperson**



**Fun with the Farm Animals!**



**Community Outreach Project Planning**



**Pinata Time!**

# Indo-Fijian Youth Wellness Ambassador Retreat Highlights cont.



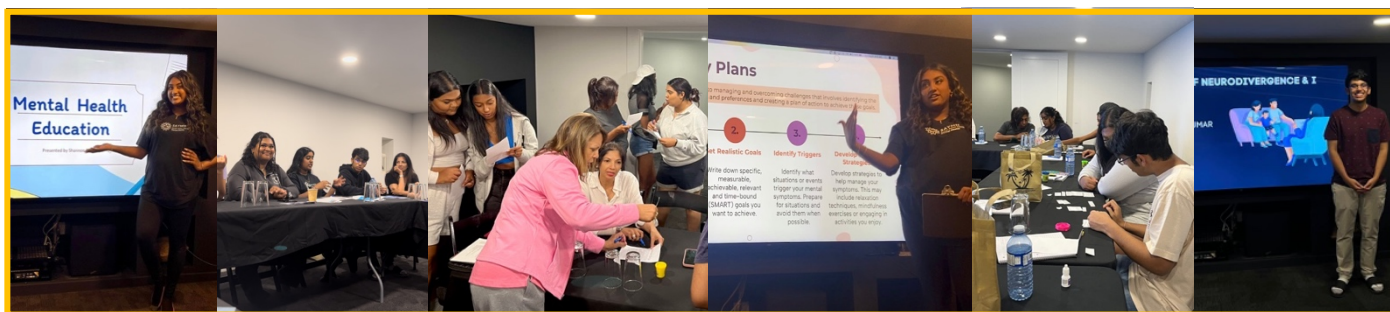
**Learning about Art Therapy**



**Suicide Alertness Certification Training with Ashna Kumar**



**Overdose Response & Naloxone Training with Students Overcoming Substance Use Disorder and Addictions (Team SOUDA)**



**Training Time! Various workshops and trainings facilitated by Shannon and Shawn.**



**Team Bonding Moments!**

# 2023/2024 Highlights

## Summer BBQ Fundraiser Event

CFOFO's Youth Committee members spent their summer break organizing a barbeque fundraiser event to generate funds for 2024's Post-Secondary Educational Scholarship program and youth projects. The day consisted of lots of children's games and activities, good food and good vibes!



## Meeting with Minister Whiteside

CFOFO had the honour of presenting to BC's Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Hon. Jennifer Whiteside, about the Indo-Fijian Youth Wellness Ambassador Retreat, alongside other previous and current South Asian Mental Health Alliance's program coordinators.

## South Asian Discussion Forum

CFOFO takes great pleasure in connecting with other likeminded individuals and groups. CFOFO's Chairperson was invited as a representative of the Indo-Fijian community to engage in a South Asian community engagement session hosted by South Asian Collective Society in Port Coquitlam.



# 2023/2024 Highlights



## Karaoke Night Dinner & Dance Fundraiser Event

Bringing the community together for a good cause, CFOFO hosted its first ever Karaoke Night Dinner & Dance Fundraiser on March 2, 2024. The night featured local singing enthusiasts, youth dance performances, raffle giveaways and more! All funds raised have been allocated towards CFOFO's Youth Committee, youth initiatives and Post-Secondary Educational Scholarship program!



## 2024 Fiji Canada Expo

CFOFO's Executive team spent time connecting with the community at the 2024 Fiji Canada Expo from August 3-4 at Newton Athletic Park. CFOFO's Chairperson had the pleasure of organizing the programs, entertainment, beauty pageant competition and emceeding the two-day Expo on behalf of Fiji Canada Business Association.



# 2023/2024 Highlights

## Indo-Fijian Culture Day

CFOFO's youngest Executives had the pleasure of participating at the first ever Indo-Fijian Culture Day event held on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at the Museum of Surrey in Cloverdale. Hosted by the Indo-Fijian Cultural Society of BC, this public community event allowed museum goers to interact with various Indo-Fijian cultural aspects and vendors.



## Youth Features

### Talia Naidu

18-year-old Talia Naidu is a first-year university student and Bharatnatyam performer of the Sudnya Dance Academy. Talia first participated as a performer at CFOFO's annual Youth Talent Show and shortly afterwards became an active member of CFOFO's Youth Committee. From lending a helping hand at events to sharing her ideas at youth meetings, Talia has exponentially grown as a young community contributor in such a short time! Talia shares that being a part of CFOFO's Youth Committee has allowed her to gain a group of new friends who she enjoys spending time with and learning from.



### Ashsita Gounder

12-year-old Ashsita Gounder first got involved with CFOFO when she was just 6 years old! Since becoming a participant of CFOFO's annual Youth Talent Show in 2018, she has continued to come back to perform every year. In recent times, Ashsita has shown more interest in volunteering and helps with youth recruitment and event set-up for other CFOFO programs. Ashsita shares that CFOFO's youth initiatives such as the Youth Talent Shows and Youth Business Conference have allowed her to gain confidence, gain new knowledge, and be proud of being Fijian!



# Community Leader Award Recipients



## Kavin Chand

Kavin Chand, born in Suva, Fiji, exemplifies exceptional dedication to both the Fijian community in Canada and in Fiji. As President of the Fiji Disaster Relief Society (FDRS) and the Fiji Canada Business Association (FCBA), Kavin has shown remarkable leadership and compassion, especially during crises. FDRS has raised vital funds for disaster relief to Habitat for Humanity. Furthermore, Kavin has led FCBA in making substantial contributions to PICS Guru Nanak Diversity Village Project, supporting essential services for seniors. Most recently, Kavin and the FCBA team hosted the inaugural Fiji Canada Expo in August 2024. The two-day expo featured several aspects of Fijian culture and successfully brought Fijians across Canada together.



## Ronald Chaudhary

Born in Nadi, Fiji Islands, Ronald Chaudhary is an exceptionally skilled and notable soccer player who has represented Fiji's National Team on numerous occasions. Ronald selflessly invests his time in helping local youth develop their soccer skills without taking any cost. In 2019, he established the Vancouver Fiji FC Academy Foundation to provide soccer training to youth regardless of gender, race, religion, age, or skill level. The academy started off with three female soccer players and has now grown to 25 male and female players. In July of 2023, Ronald had successfully taken an all Fiji-Canadian Women's Team to play exhibition matches on a Fiji tour. The tour created opportunities for the female players to participate in future tournaments both locally and overseas. His passion for giving back to the soccer community goes hand in hand with his passion for the sport itself.



## Vineet Dalton

Apart from recently joining the CFOFO Executive team, Vineet Dalton has been involved in supporting youth initiatives through the Miss Fiji Canada Organization (MFC) since 2018. Holding the position of Vice Chairperson, Vineet supports Fijian youth in becoming community ambassadors and partaking in fundraising activities to benefit the less fortunate. Vineet has volunteered his time and helped raise funds for many charities including BC Children's Hospital, Surrey Women's Shelter, Surrey Hospitals Foundation and Treasure House Orphanage in Nadi, Fiji. From helping prepare food at food drives or personally donating supplies to fundraising activities, he has made it a point to show up to strongly support the Fijian youth.

# Community Leader Award Recipients



## Samar Jit

Originally from Nasinu, Fiji Islands he worked for the Government of Fiji, Samar Jit is well known for his compassion, knowledge, and supportive leadership roles. In 1997, he migrated to Canada where he became a member of Sanatan Dharm Cultural Society (Shiv Mandir), a life member of TISI Sangam Educational and Cultural Society and a founding member of Canadian Council of Democratic Rights in Fiji (CCDRF) and Canadian Federation of Fiji Organizations (CFOFO), where he served twenty plus years continuously as Treasurer for CFOFO. Samar Jit is very active in helping various organizations in raising funds and assisting in their annual election of Directors.



## Albert Kumar

Albert Kumar is a very keen community contributor and music lover who has been able to combine both his passion for music and dedication towards serving the community as one. For over 20 years and counting, Albert has provided free DJ services to several organizations to benefit their causes. From DJ'ing events for Fiji Canada Seniors to being CFOFO's very own Sound System Technician for several recent fundraising events, Albert has offered his services with no expectation of any gain in return. Albert has also been serving as an Executive Committee Member for CFOFO since 2022. Furthermore, Albert has also volunteered with his church in assisting with various duties and providing free DJ services for the past ten years.



## Sadhana Kumar

Helping those both old and young in various capacities, Sadhana Kumar consistently makes it a point to support all. By profession, Sadhana is an experienced realtor who advocates for seniors by informing them of their legal rights in real estate and providing assistance with the application process for benefits. In her free time, Sadhana is an avid volunteer for many committees and events including 3E Organization, Soroptimist International (New West/Burnaby Chapter), CIBC Run for the Cure Surrey Run Committee and has served as a former Executive Committee Member of CFOFO. As an Executive Member of 3E Organization, she has played a critical role in providing youth scholarships, women empowerment, advocating for mental health awareness in the Fijian community and so much more.



# Community Leader Award Recipients



## Suman Kumar

Since 2006, Suman Kumar has been an active member of the Army Cadet League of Canada, BC branch, where she holds the roles of a Zone Representative and Volunteer Coordinator. Every year, she also assists in the sale of Poppies for the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #133. From 2011 to 2020, Suman was a vital member of the Relay for Life team, also known as the Legacy of Love, in Coquitlam. Her volunteer spirit extends to range of other impactful events, including Breast Cancer Awareness Day and "The Sky's No Limit- She Is Anything"; an initiative aimed at inspiring young women to pursue careers in aviation and BC's Highland games.



## Ganesh Murti

Ganesh Murti is a well-respected community leader who has made notable contributions to many organizations. Since 1990, Ganesh has served TISI Sangam Educational and Cultural Society, from being a former Director, Secretary and to the currently elected President. He also was deeply involved in the Valibar Sangam Society's sports division. As a business entrepreneur of Ganesh Murti Inc. Accounting & Tax Services, he continues to service the community at large and still does philanthropic work by helping many other organizations with their annual financial auditing, deciphering bylaws, and assisting with conducting annual general meetings and the election of office bearers. Furthermore, he has never failed to contribute financially to support other charitable causes as well. Ganesh's resourcefulness, knowledge and cheerfulness makes him a very invaluable community contributor.



## Wasanthi Naidu

Since her early childhood, Wasanthi Naidu was active in the preparation of bhajan books with her father for TISI Sangam Society. In her adult years, she has donated a substantial amount of time, knowledge, and leadership to various charitable organizations such as TISI Maathar Sangam Society, St. John Ambulance Division 881C, Girl Guides of Canada, Heart & Stroke Foundation, Workout to Conquer Cancer and many more! Wasanthi never fails to extend a helping hand or help those in need. In 2013, Wasanthi founded the Notorious Dance Competition at McRoberts High School where high school students from across the Lower Mainland come together to compete. Each year, they host 30 teams to a sold-out audience. All the funds raised from this annual event go towards extracurricular activities in the public education system and support graduating students in the form of post-secondary scholarships.

# Community Leader Award Recipients



## Subbas Narayan

Subbas Narayan is known to be a compassionate and reliable individual whose dedication and passion for helping everyone around him shines through in his unwavering support for various organizations. Subbas has been committed to keeping both culture and tradition alive through his efforts to build a new Temple. In spite of having a busy schedule, he has dedicated countless hours towards leading his Naach team, Ramayan Mandali and the previous Mandir which he has relocated to his residential property after it had closed in November of 2022. Subbas takes great pleasure in sharing the cultural knowledge and traditions that were passed down to him.



## Anita Reddy

With a commitment to spreading love to others, Anita Reddy has embarked on many charitable endeavours to help those in need. Since 2021, Anita has been an integral part of the Canadian Empowered Women of Fiji Foundation (CEWFF). With CEWFF, she has played a significant role in fundraising activities to help benefit the BC Flood Relief, Humanitarian Relief for Ukraine, BC Heart and Stroke Foundation, BC Children's Hospital and BC Cancer Foundation. Furthermore, Anita has volunteered with Surrey RCMP since 2019. Caring for others has always been an intrinsic part of Anita's character, a quality that is reflected in her professional career as a nurse.



## Shivneel Reddy

26-year-old Shivneel "Shivy" Reddy aims to empower individuals across several South Asian communities by acknowledging the struggles faced within these communities and providing advocacy and peer support to help revitalize their cultures and identities. As the Director of Youth Services & Programming for South Asian Healing Network, he helps connect South Asians to mental health education through free social gatherings and peer-level workshops. Beyond that, Shivy also volunteers his time with the South Asian Youth Mental Health Alliance, South Asian COVID Task Force, Delta Youth Council, and the Saraswati Gyan Prakash Ramayan Foundation. Utilizing his experience as a Child & Youth Care Counsellor, Shivy hopes to create a sense of community through supporting individuals with mental health issues, education, and fundraising for marginalized individuals and their families.

# Community Leader Award Recipients



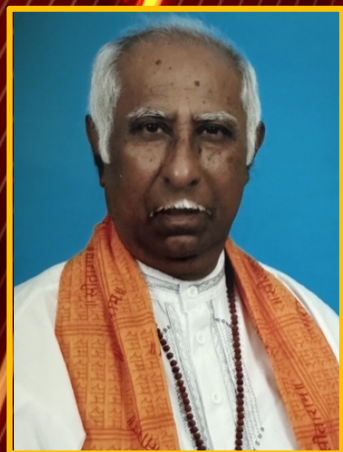
## Jagdish Shankar

Jagdish "Jack" Shankar is a long-time member of Sanatan Dharm Cultural Society (SDCS), having served in various capacities since 2012. Jagdish was elected President of SDCS in 2021 and again in 2023. Spending most of his time at the Mandir, he can be found reciting Ramayan, heading meetings, pressure washing, helping in the kitchen, repairing the building and the list goes on. He is literally a "jack of all trades" and does not ever hesitate to take on any task, no matter how big or small- hence his nickname "Jack". Jagdish also is the leader of the Prem Faag Mandali and performs bhajans and kirtans for poojas, post-funeral prayers at bereaved family residences and various other community occasions. Not only is Jagdish an exemplary leader of SDCS, but he is generous to a fault; never hesitating to help others when called upon. He is very much respected and in high esteem with other community organizations.



## Kamilla Singh

Kamilla Singh is a well-respected media personality, activist, and human rights defender. Kamilla has produced television shows for over 25 years including Asian Pulse TV, Kamilla Singh Show, Fiji in Focus, Viti Vibes and Bula Beats. Apart from her media influence, Kamilla has worked to set up a crisis line in Northern BC before moving to Vancouver and volunteering for crisis lines herself. By profession, Kamilla has worked with Women Against Violence Against Women where she provided counselling, support groups and victim support services. Kamilla has served the community on many volunteer committees and was the Founder and past President of Fiji Professional Women's Network Society (FPWNS). Kamilla's most notable contributions are associated with the 'Fiji Village' senior home being built at PICS Society. Kamilla's goal to create comfortable housing for Fijian seniors has been years in the making and she continues to host fundraisers to be able to achieve this goal.



## Pt. Gaya Prasad Sharma

Pundit Gaya Prasad Sharma, son of Pundit Rama Nand Sharma and Ram Kumari, began his induction into the teachings of Hinduism at 14 years old. As a student to both his father and Guru Devi Sharan Pathak of Tunalia, Fiji he became a fully-fledged Pundit at 18 years old. Sixty eight years later, Pundit Gaya Prasad continues to provide religious service to communities in Fiji and Canada and serves as the head Acharya of the Sanatan Dharm Cultural Society (SDCS) located in Burnaby, BC. At age 86, he continues to provide spiritual guidance and religious services for his community with no signs of stopping. Pundit Gaya Prasad also is the proud recipient of a long service medal from the Fiji Police Force, having served as a police sergeant in Nadi for 31 years before immigrating to Canada.

# Organization Award Recipients



## Canadian Empowered Women of Fiji Foundation

Canadian Empowered Women of Fiji Foundation (CEWFF) is a registered, non-governmental organization that serves to provide poverty relief in the form of providing food and other basic necessities of life to low-income individuals or families and victims of disasters. As an organization, they value diversity and transparency. Since its inception in November of 2021, CEWFF has raised nearly \$70,000 of donations towards charitable causes such as BC Flood Relief, Humanitarian Relief for Ukraine, BC Heart and Stroke Foundation, BC Children's Hospital and the BC Cancer Foundation.

## Daisy's Flower Boutique

Daisy's Flower Boutique began as a new entrepreneurship in business by Daisy Goundar a few years ago, and is proudly serving not only the local clientele but worldwide network as well. Daisy's Flower Boutique is very proud to be Fiji's one and only first registered florist. She provides incredible customer service and the finest floral arrangements to her loyal and everyday customers, but also supports various local organizations and their respective events. Daisy's Flower Boutique has volunteered and donated floral arrangements to Radio Fiji Mirchi functions, City of Surrey functions and more.



# Organization Award Recipients

## Naya Jeevan Church

With a vision to start an Indo-Fijian Church, Chris and Eileen Reddy established Naya Jeevan Church in 1995. Naya Jeevan is the largest Indo-Fijian Church in BC that provides community support such as prayer, counselling, home & hospital visitations, seniors support group and children's ministry. Over the years, Naya Jeevan has partnered with several organizations such as Nightshift Ministries to provide necessities to the underprivileged people in the Whalley area in Surrey, Radio Fiji Mirchi Canada to deliver a one-hour Sunday morning radio program, and WOWS Foundation in Suva, Fiji to provide funds for children's medical treatments and donate household items to families. In June 2024, Naya Jeevan Church fundraised \$10,000 for the development of the Fijian Village Wing at PICS Society in Cloverdale.



## Sanatan Dharm Cultural Society

Originally known as Sanatan Dharm Ramayan Mandali of Fiji, the Society was officially inaugurated on April 1, 1984. In 2007, the name was changed to Sanatan Dharm Cultural Society (SDCS). Starting off with just a few members who held Ramayan Kathas at various homes before the official formation of the Society, SDCS has grown exponentially to now consist of over 600 members who promote Sanatan Dharm by providing religion, culture, education, and annual festivals to the local community. SDCS was the first religious organization formed by immigrants from Fiji to Canada. The Society's first election was held in 1978 in their newly purchased building at 1795 Napier Street in Vancouver. In 2010, SDCS relocated to 5600 Dorset Street in Burnaby and continues to deliver various religious, cultural, and educational programs. SDCS recently celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary since formation!



# Organization Award Recipients

## UBC Fijian Students Association

**UBC FIJIAN  
STUDENTS  
ASSOCIATION**



UBC Fijian Students Association (FJSA) is one of the largest student-led post-secondary associations consisting of young Fijians committed to celebrating and promoting Fijian culture at the University of British Columbia (UBC). UBC FJSA actively promotes cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding through hosting various workshops on navigating and defining Fijian identity. Moreover, they have hosted Fijian cultural events that feature traditional music, dance, cuisine, and language. With membership of 30+ students within the first year of formation, UBC FJSA is hopeful in further expanding their networks and mission.

## Viti Vibes

Launched in May of 2021, Viti Vibes was the first Canadian traditional media platform dedicated exclusively to the representation of Fijian youth. Broadcasted weekly on the Shaw Multicultural Channel, the television show featured Fijian youth from across the globe and discussed topics from a youth-centric perspective. The team itself consisted of young Fiji-Canadians: Director and Host Shannon Permal, along with hosts Tasha Chand, Pranay Sharma, Rebecca Singh, Jolene Prasad and Shivangni Naicker. Viti Vibes was also produced by well-respected media personality, Kamilla Singh. The show received praise from all ages and communities along with features on CBC Radio and 5X Press Media. Viti Vibes left a lasting impression on the community as Fijian youth were taking up space in media and also allowing other Fijian youth to share their stories, voices, and opinions to enable learning and critical thinking.



# Innovative Business Award Recipients

## Dream One Travel Surrey

Dream One Travel Surrey is a family-owned business founded by mother-daughter duo, Veena Krishna and Rashmi Krishna. Dream One Travel Surrey provides 24/7 service as a one stop shop for all your travel and event planning needs. Their personalized approach of providing both travel and event planning services such as destination weddings or group vacations is what sets them apart from the rest. By utilizing their extensive network of suppliers worldwide, they help support other businesses and the economy. Rashmi's passion and expertise in the travel industry has allowed her to go above and beyond in providing customers a stress free and unforgettable vacation experience. In addition to business excellence, the owners have supported Canadian Empowered Women of Fiji Foundation's BC Children's Toy Drive as a sponsor.



## SkinVisual Med Spa

Established in 2018 by Dorin Reddy, SkinVisual Med Spa is a sanctuary for clients seeking effective and innovative medical esthetics. With a commitment to excellence and client satisfaction, the spa offers advanced treatments that promote fast recovery and minimal to no discomfort. The business prides itself on its high-quality services through the research and use of the latest FDA approved technology such as the Alma Soprano Laser, Hydrafacial MD, DermaSpark (Micro-needling) and Oxygeneo Technology. Consisting of an exclusive team of certified and extensively trained medical estheticians, SkinVisual Med Spa prioritizes individualized care and tailored treatments for clients to achieve their aesthetic goals. Beyond being innovative in their industry, they have supported charitable causes such as BC Children's Hospital and Heart & Stroke Foundation.



# Skin Visual Med Spa

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