

Diversity Committee – JANUARY 2009

Black History Month - Canada

February 1 – March 1

Every year Canadians are invited to take part in the festivities and events that honour the legacy of Black Canadians, past and present, during Black History Month.

DATES TO CELEBRATE – FEBRUARY

2 - Groundhog Day	20-24 - Brazil, Carnival
2 - Imbolc (Wiccan)	22 - George Washington's Birthday (United States)
5 - Mexico - Constitution Day	24 - Flag Day (Mexico)
9 - Tu b'Shvat or Tu B'Shevat* (Jewish)	24 - Mardi Gras (United States)
11 - National Foundation Day (Japan)	25 - Ash Wednesday (Protestant, Roman Catholic)
12 - NAACP Founded	
14 - Race Relations Day	
14 - Valentine's Day (United States)	

[International Mother Language Day](#)

February 21

Proclaimed by UNESCO in November 1999, and observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.



ON TOP OF DIVERISTY EVENTS

Women of Power Summit. | February 11--14, 2009. Orlando, FL. Ontario.

Check www.blackenterprise.com/events/ for more details as they become available.

Mastering Aboriginal Inclusion Workshop. | February 24--25, 2009. Toronto, ON.

Discover proven tactics to recruit, retain and advance aboriginal talent while building a work culture that flourishes through diversity.

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LOCAL DIVERSITY

One in a series on area immigrants pursuing their dreams

Acting local, hiring global January 3, 2009

Jennifer O'Brien Sun Media

There was a time when Sciencetech Inc., a London firm that designs and makes optical instruments, couldn't find qualified people to fill its jobs. Then SkillsInternational.ca a database of screened, qualified, foreign-trained area job seekers -- came along.

The staff at Sciencetech Inc., a London optical instrument maker, is literally a mini-United Nations, recruited from around the world. From left are Sr. Wengin Zhou of China, Jesse Melo of Portugal, Drita Shabani of Kosovo, Pilar Gomez of Colombia, Alexander Shevedov of Russia, Nick Saika and Michael Sayenko of Ukraine, Jack Sadek of Syria, Lucy Quaglia of Argentina and Bo Chen of China. (SUSAN BRADNAM/Sun Media)

These days, Sciencetech is "like a little United Nations," says its human resources manager, Lucy Quaglia. "We were never trying to chase any particular country or race or group, but whoever has the kind of skill we need is welcome here," said Quaglia. She notes a quarter of Sciencetech's staff is made up of internationally-trained immigrants.

"Our instruments are very unique and they require specific skills and we found our professionals had to be immigrants because Canadian universities weren't offering many of the programs, such as optical engineering," she said. "So our person in charge of optical engineering is Chinese."

That's just fine for Sciencetech, which has used the expertise of its four Chinese researchers to expand its export market to that country. "We also have people from Russia, Israel, Lebanon, India, Germany (and) a Ukrainian mechanic," Quaglia said. "And we sell all over the world."

The experience has led Quaglia to join the London and Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council, funded by the province and operated from the office of the WIL Employment Connections, a London agency that encourages the hiring of skilled immigrants.

"I think anybody should do this," said Quaglia, a retired teacher who emigrated from Argentina 23 years ago. "Being part of a group of people with different nationalities helps to expand into other markets . . . It is very important to have the possibility of people who know the language and have better communication with others."

Hers is a message the council wants to shout to the world.

Since it began in 2006, the council has attracted employers such as the Royal Bank, 3M Canada and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

For years, WIL Employment and business partners, including the London Economic Development Corp., have lobbied employers to look to the immigrant workforce to help fill the growing shortages of skilled workers in many fields.

The LEDC supports the cause with initiatives such as Global Talent, a campaign to educate employers on the benefits of hiring immigrants. City hall is also directly involved, with initiatives such as an online portal for immigrants, aimed at attracting foreign talent and giving them information when they arrive.

In today's brutal economic climate, with Ontario battered by manufacturing layoffs and its workforce picked over by other provinces, appealing to employers to consider foreign workers can be a tough sell. But some say the bottom line remains the search for the best workers available -- and in a country whose birth rate isn't keeping pace, the only alternative is often offshore.

"We don't have the birth rate to replace the people who will be retiring in the next few years and we have to rely on integrating the immigration numbers that come in," said Lee Smithson of the Stiller Centre, a London research hothouse set up to bring biotechnology innovation to market.

SkillsInternational is considered a leading job bank database, also operated from the WIL Employment

Centre. The Ontariowide job board lists about 3,000 active job seekers and 500 employers, including major ones with significant local operations, such as General Dynamics, CIBC and Union Gas.

Job candidates must at least be permanent residents, legally able to work in Canada, and their qualifications and certification listings are screened, said Sohail Khan, who heads SkillsInternational.

Because of the success of its matchmaking ability, the program has expanded to include kiosks in 63 job-search workshops set up in centres across Ontario and funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

In London, a kiosk at the Cross Cultural Learner Centre allows candidates to take part in a video-recorded mock interview using a computer. The interview program contains thousands of realistic questions. Candidates can e-mail their performance to themselves or to counsellors who can evaluate them and help with more preparation.

"Interviewing is a skill you have to get good at," said Khan. "We were finding that employers said candidates had good skills but couldn't communicate them in an interview, so we wanted to look at ways for candidates to practice."

Jennifer O'Brien is a Free Press diversity reporter.