

Local news

60 THIS YEAR

Many refugees expected here

by BEV CHRISTENSEN
Staff reporter

Despite the fact they no longer make headlines, refugees continue to seek shelter in Canada, says a spokesman for the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society here.

As many as 60 refugees are expected to arrive in Prince George this year, says Baljit Sethi, manager of the local office of IMMSS.

Although the flood of refugees from Vietnam has slowed to a trickle, people continue to flee from persecution in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Central and South American countries and find their way to Canada, she said.

For example, during the past year, 18 refugees have arrived in the area from Iran. They are members of the B'hai faith and were fleeing religious persecution in that predominantly-Moslem country.

Recently, the first group of Cambodian refugees arrived in Prince George and refugees also continue to come to Canada after escaping from Iron Curtain countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland, she said.

Others flee from Central and South American countries and seek refuge at a Canadian embassy.

The refugees have a year in which to learn to speak English and find a job. During that period the federal government provides them with a living allowance.

They face another crisis if they cannot find a job within the first year, Sethi said.

"We've had doctors, lawyers and town planners who came here as refugees who've had to go on welfare," she said.

"They feel so small and low and we have to try to console them and say, 'Don't worry, you will be working and contributing taxes.'"

"We've had people who've had a nervous breakdown at that point."

The refugees are assigned to communities such as Prince George, where there are well-established programs to assist them.

"Usually we receive a notice from the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission telling us when they're arriving and asking us to greet them at the airport," Sethi said.

That marks the start of a special relationship between the newly-arrived refugees and the society which helps them find a place to live and begins the long process of helping them to integrate into Canadian life.

"We become part of their family and take them to different places and often, in the beginning, we are the only ones they can come to with their problems and their fears," Sethi said.

"But we can only do the necessary services, such as help them

obtain the essential things such as an apartment, food, clothing and schooling," Sethi said.

"For emotional support we need more help, so we introduce them to immigrant women who are already established here."

Folkfest and other multicultural events are another big step in the integration of refugees and immigrants because they really want to do something for their new homeland, she said.

The first step toward integrating into Canadian life is learning to speak English and the customs and laws of Canada.

English classes often begin in a space provided by a church. A group of Cambodians is presently taking part in a pre-English as a second language program at St. Andrews' United Church.

"Those classes are mostly to get the people ready for the six-month English as a second language classes offered at the College of New Caledonia by CEIC," Sethi said.

School District 57 also offers English as a second language classes. But these are six-week courses and students can enter at any time.

During the summer, the school district is offering special classes for new Canadians which not only include learning to speak English but also teaches them how to use banking and other services.

★ Students hired to aid program

A six-week summer program to teach immigrants "street English" begins Monday.

Arranged by the continuing education department of School District 57, the program will consist of a combination of classroom instruction in English and excursions to become familiar with the community and to learn how to shop, fill out forms, use the banking system and the public library.

"We'll be giving them an opportunity to learn street English instead of just theory," says Denise Goodkey, co-ordinator of the district's continuing education programs.

Two university students have been hired for the project using money obtained through a Challenge '86 grant.

They will assist the English instructors and take students on field trips.

The cost of the six-week program is \$50 per person. A limited amount of assistance is available for students who cannot pay the entire fee, Goodkey said.

Fisheries men pelted with marshmallows

by Canadian Press

KITWANGA — Gitwankak Indians chose marshmallows as their weapons against three unarmed federal fisheries officers investigating illegal fishing at a traditional site along the Skeena River Thursday afternoon.

About 25 Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Indians had pillows at the ready, if the marshmallows weren't enough.

The Indians set up a protest fishery earlier this week at a camp about 180 kilometres east of Prince Rupert in west-central British Columbia.

They illegally set a net Thursday to protest the federal Fisheries Act, which requires that there be no fishing on Thursdays on the Skeena River and that Indians must have fish-food licences.

The Indians contend that they should be allowed to fish when they want and that they should not be required to register for the free fish-food licences.

When officers arrived Thursday, they were refused entry to the An-Ki-Iss fishing grounds and were stopped by a human barricade.

Hereditary chief Glen Williams told Robb Wilson, the assistant district supervisor from Prince Rupert, that Indians have their own laws and that they would defend their territory.

Wilson replied that he had no issue with the aboriginal laws, but he had an obligation under the Fisheries Act to investigate the net.

Williams said Wilson would not be allowed to "trespass" on Indian land.

But Wilson told the chief he has the right under the Fisheries Act to go on private property and Indian land to uphold the act and its regulations.

He also said he didn't want a confrontation, but that obstructing fisheries officers is a Criminal Code offence and carries a maximum penalty of two years in jail.

The Indians maintained their blockade and when Williams said "We'll be back," Williams replied: "We'll still be here."

When the officers turned to leave, the marshmallow attack was launched. The officers

appeared shocked but then laughed as the barrage continued until they got in their truck to drive away.

After the officers left, the Indians removed the real net from the river and replaced it with line with pieces of net dangling and floats.

The fisheries officers did not return Thursday. But the Indians said more protests are planned.

Socred women elect executive

Linda St. Arnault was elected president of the Prince George Social Credit Women's Auxiliary at a recent meeting.

Debbie Strachan was elected vice-president, Bev Strachan, treasurer, and Donna Brait, secretary.

Truck burns

The cab of a dump truck was destroyed by fire early this morning near 125 Ospika Blvd.

Prince George firefighters extinguished the blaze. Cause of the fire is being investigated.

No one was injured in the fire.



Citizen photo by Brock Gable

This young male northern mockingbird sings the blues, and just about anything else, from his perch on a house in the Foothills subdivision.

Can he do Frank Sinatra?

by SHERYL THOMPSON
Staff reporter

Shrill songs fill the air and residents are awakened by the beautiful sounds of a recent arrival to Prince George.

The male, northern mockingbird arrived in the city about a month ago and has been serenading the neighborhood near Tabor Boulevard in the Foothills subdivision from the first light of day until dusk.

The greyish-colored bird, about the size of a large robin, with white under-wing patches and two white patches on his tail has been the centre of attraction and many people have enjoyed watching and trying to identify him.

The mockingbird got its name because of its ability to mimic and imitate the songs of many different birds.

Although this is not the first time a mockingbird has been to this area, it is quite unusual, said Dave King from the Environment Ministry.

"There has been a previous sighting in this area within the past two or three years," said Wilson.

There have been more than 100 sightings in B.C. during the last 10 years but prior to that there had only been a few sightings, he said.

"It seems the bird is expanding its territory into more northern ranges," he added.

Conrad Jarosh, an ornithologist from the College of New Caledonia, said the bird left its wintering grounds in California and probably tagged along with a flock of robins or sparrows when they migrated to the area.

"He's come much further north than he should have," he said.

The young bird has chosen a chimney atop a two-storey house in a garden-like area of the Foothills subdivision because it seems similar to the field pasture hedge and garden area he is used to in California, said Jarosh.

"It's amusing and delightful to have him here," he said, adding that during his 17 years in Prince George this is the first time he has seen a mockingbird in the city.

During the bird's songs he often soars straight into the air from his perch on the roof, flares his long, pointed tail, lands and continues singing.

The dance is done because the male birds are territorial and he is proclaiming his territory and hoping to attract a mate, said Jarosh.

He said the bird imitates the songs of birds in our area including flickers, swallows, robins, California scrub jays (which sound similar to blue jays), nut hatches, buntings, warblers, killdeer, eastern kingbird and western kingbird.

His repertoire of local bird songs also includes the catbird and others from his native climate, which is the southern United States.

On the B.C. bird checklist used by bird watchers, the northern mockingbird is listed as "accidental," which means there have been at least five sightings in B.C. during the past 10 years, according to Don Wilson, a spokesman from the Prince George Naturalist Club, and director for the Federation of B.C. Naturalists.

"It's been fun for us to have him here. It's been a real thrill," said Wilson.

The new city resident will have to pack his bags and head south soon if he is going to survive.

He may or may not be swept up in the southern migration of robins or swallows in mid-July, said Jarosh.



Co-operation

Parts and pieces of the Pineview fire hall are handed to Brian Spence, the Shell-Glenn assistant fire chief, as he and other Shelley and Pineview volunteers dismantle it for rebuilding in Shelley. Pineview volunteer firefighters have promised to help the Shelley group in the reconstruction. The Pineview department will then build a new hall on their site.

Citizen photo by Dave Milne

Tourist alert

The following people are asked to call the contact listed below for an urgent personal message.

Louise Anderson of Alberta, call Maria Crews.

Larry Davies of Vancouver, call Burt Poole.

Doug Hinsche of Williams Lake, B.C., call Judy Barber.

Rev. Jake Marten of Morden, Man., call home.

Ray McBeth of Edmonton, Alta., Ron Arsenault.

Donald Rudds of St. Catherines, Ont., call Eric Rudds.

Jim Woolsey of Vancouver, call Sharon Markham.

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