

PROVINCE

Traditional cultures told to integrate Canadian values

VANCOUVER (CP) — Some South Asian parents are so afraid of losing their culture that in rare cases they resort to extreme measures, including murder, to control their Canadian-born kids, says a spokeswoman for a community group representing 60 organizations.

"Their identity is threatened so they've got to protect their identity," said Uzma Shakir, executive director of the Toronto-based Coalition of Agencies Serving South Asians.

Shakir was commenting on the case of a British Columbia woman murdered because she defied tradition by secretly marrying a man her parents disapproved of.

Jaswinder Sidhu, 25, was killed in India last month after she married a man she met while on a trip there. Her wealthy parents in Maple Ridge, B.C., east of Vancouver, strongly objected to her decision. Indian police issued an arrest warrant Monday to have Sidhu's mother and an uncle extradited to India.

Police in India have also arrested nine people in connection with the murder, including another of Sidhu's maternal uncles there.

Indian police say those involved in Sidhu's beating and strangulation and the attempted murder of her husband were paid \$51,000.

Sidhu, a beautician, was born and raised in

Canada. Surjit Singh Badesha, Sidhu's uncle and a prominent Sikh leader in the Vancouver area, has said the family objected to the marriage because the husband is from Sidhu's mother's village and has the same family name.

Sikh families consider Sidhu to have married a relative, although there are no blood ties between the couple.

Shakir said parents have high expectations for their children's marriage partner, which include marrying within caste and religion. They also have expectations for themselves and if they aren't upheld, shame is brought on the family.

"Don't forget, a lot of the parents have migrated

here for the sake of the children," she said.

The parents feel they have no reason to exist if their kids marry outside the boundaries their families have set. When traditional values conflict with western ideals, the family system is thrown into turmoil, Shakir said.

"Obviously they are overreacting to a point where they're committing a criminal offence and they're losing their child altogether," she said. "But you have to understand the trauma that they probably feel, that it is better to lose their child than to have that child become something else, which I think is completely inexplicable as far as I'm concerned."

March marks 2,000 deaths from overdose in Vancouver

VANCOUVER (CP) — Tree-lined Oppenheimer Park — with its gravel infield and lush, green outfield — is a popular spot for softball games, sleeping, drug dealing, shooting up and dying.

The inner-city park in one of the most drug-infested neighbourhoods in Canada was the gathering spot Tuesday for about 200 addicts who marched there to stand before 2,000 makeshift crosses erected to mark overdose deaths in B.C. since 1992.

"Overdosing is the leading cause of deaths in B.C. for people aged 30 to 49," said Bud Osborn, an activist for the blighted area.

"Three years ago we marched here and erected 1,000 crosses and now we've got 2,000," added the former heroin addict and current street worker with the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users.

The wooden crosses provided a dramatic effect as some addicts walked slowly between endless rows, writing names of friends and loved ones who had died.

At the back of the park, a huge red flag with The Killing Fields emblazoned in yellow print loomed over the crosses.

Harold House, a heroin-addicted Cree from Hobbema, Alta., stood next to one cross marking the overdose death three years ago of his common-law wife.

"Ninety per cent of the people I know here are drug addicts," said House,



CP photo

Downtown East Vancouver resident Vicki Fraser hangs on to a cross during a demonstration in Vancouver Tuesday as she cries for a friend who died from a drug overdose. Two thousand wooden crosses were placed in a park to symbolize overdose deaths.

who buys five to six heroin "flaps" a day.

"The government should look into this problem more seriously. They should come here and look at the crosses."

Getting heroin in the area is easy and cheap and he said he gets his drug money honestly.

"I do a lot of recycling. I don't do crime."

The markers also provided a back-

drop for speaker after speaker who chastised the three levels of government while advocating a more liberal approach to drug use as practised now in the Netherlands, Switzerland and some other European countries.

"These are all preventable deaths," said Osborn, who was among those calling for the establishment of safe injection sites, methadone programs and treatment centres.

The groups say the B.C. government

spends \$50 million annually on drug and alcohol programs, while the Health Ministry's total budget nears \$8 billion.

The rampant drug use has contributed to huge increases in tuberculosis, syphilis, hepatitis A, HIV and AIDS and hepatitis C.

Vancouver isn't unique in Canada in having a skid row frequented by people addicted to heroin, cocaine, alcohol and other drugs.

Politicians refuse to proclaim Gay Pride

TERRACE (CP) — A number of municipal politicians across the province are balking at proclaiming Gay Pride days.

Terrace city councillors have refused to sign a gay-pride proclamation, to the dismay of a local tolerance committee.

Fort St. John Mayor Steve Thorlakson refused to sign a gay-pride proclamation in his city. He cited religious reasons.

In Nanaimo, four councillors walked out of the council chambers as the mayor proclaimed Aug. 5 as "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pride day."

Mayor Gary Korpan read the proclamation, but went on record as opposing it.

Last month, the Gay Pride Parade in Kelowna went ahead despite Mayor Walter Gray's refusal to proclaim the day.

Gray was rapped on the knuckles by a B.C. Human Rights Commission tribunal panel for refusing to proclaim "pride" in the parade's title.

Since then, he has simply refused to proclaim any events on behalf of the city.

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