



Organizational History, Mandate and Principle Activities

Thunder Bay Multicultural Association was formed in 1972 by a number of ethnocultural community groups whose objective was to establish a body which would encourage and facilitate cooperation among ethnic organizations in promoting multiculturalism following the Federal Government's implementation of a Multiculturalism Policy in October, 1971.

Initially, the name was the Thunder Bay Council of Ethnic Organizations. The present name was adopted upon incorporation in 1976. The Association is a non-profit organization under the management of a volunteer Board of Directors composed of elected representatives from 13 ethnic groups in Thunder Bay.

Through a staff of 16, services are provided to the community in the following areas:

- Immigrant settlement including referral, information and orientation for job preparation, medical and dental referral, housing, transportation, accreditation, education, financial planning, citizenship, etc.;
- Interpretation and translation in over 58 languages for documents/certificates, medical appointments/emergencies, immigration, etc.;
- Community programs for recent newcomers including basic computer skills in Microsoft Word and internet research, citizenship preparation, parenting skills, driver's test preparation, etc.;
- Cross-cultural/race relations information on cultural adjustments of newcomers, etc.;
- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Assessments to determine English language levels according to the Canadian Language Benchmark guidelines;
- Matching newcomers with volunteers to assist with adjustment into Canadian society;
- English language instruction for eligible newcomers through the LINC program.



Old Fire hall on Court Street built in 1906

In 1987 the Association purchased the old Court Street fire hall. The original hall was built in 1906 as a brick two-story structure designed for horse-drawn fire wagons, with access provided by four arched wooden doors. Over the years the facade had been transformed with the addition of enormous fire doors for newer fire fighting equipment. TBMA commissioned a local architect to renovate the existing



structure to conform to an office environment on the second floor and a community hall on the first floor, yet retain the basic exterior design of the old fire hall. The renovated structure included approximately 4,000 square feet of office and meeting space, and a 2,000-square-foot hall available for community use. In 2005, the community hall was redesigned to create classrooms for the LINC Training Program. The Centre was designated as a heritage site on February 17, 1996. The community hall has since been renovated to become a LINC School.

Thunder Bay Multicultural Association has broadened its horizons and mandate over the years to provide a full range of services to newcomers, both immigrant and refugee, as well as to promote cultural awareness within the community as a whole. Respect, equality and diversity are the foundation of the services of TBMA through which we facilitate the successful settlement and adaptation of immigrants and refugees into the social, economic and cultural life of the city and region. Newcomers to Canada can access English language assessment and classes, settlement services, volunteer programs, translation/interpretation and information/referral in a one-stop-shop environment. By working together with community partners to develop cultural competence, and by advocating for acceptance and respect of each member of society, the Association helps to build a healthy, vibrant community.

The Association also works with a wide variety of local groups and organizing committees to bring a multicultural flare to area festivals like Folklore, Canada Day, Children's Festival, and other community events.

Ethnocultural groups in Thunder Bay have a long history of participation in the City's cultural life. Many of these groups are well established and have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to our community, enriching our cultural heritage.

Folklore Festival is an annual festival presented in Thunder Bay since 1972, providing an opportunity for ethnocultural groups and organizations to celebrate their cultural heritage through song, dance, crafts, and cuisine. Although there are a number of organizations staging different festivals, Folklore Festival is unique, particularly in the area of ethnocultural arts. Over 1,000 volunteers assist in planning, performing, preparation of site decorations, backdrops, stage, food and exhibit booths, promotions, selling refreshments, organizing games and features in the children's area and maintenance. The Association coordinates the annual event which attracts more than 9,000 people every year.



Folklore Festival's main objective is to provide the City of Thunder Bay with a major festival involving Canadians of many different heritages. Folklore further attempts to facilitate understanding between different peoples in the community by fostering and promoting cross-cultural and intercultural understanding. The Festival also enhances the City's arts and cultural life and encourages regional tourism. The Festival has become a highly successful and visible element in the local community as well as in surrounding areas, and has been a catalyst in the development of other arts-related festivals.

