

Building a refugee community: the Vietnamese Canadian Community in Ottawa

**Can D. Le, President
Vietnamese Canadian Centre
Presentation to the Syrian
Community
November 11, 2018**



Overview

- **Vietnamese community in Canada: about 241,000 (2016 Census)**
- **Ottawa: about 9,000**
- **Most came to Canada following the fall of South Vietnam to the North Vietnamese Communists in April 1975**
- **Project 4000 (1979): spearheaded by late Ottawa Mayor Marion Dewar**

Community Evolution: Priorities / Activities

- **Resettlement / integration & building structure**
- **Reaching out: multicultural activities, main-stream engagements**
- **Political participation**
- **Leaving memories for future generations**

Activities

Resettlement / Integration

- **English conversation classes, 1975**
- **First Vietnamese language classes for children, 1977**
- **First Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, 1979**
- **Sponsorship of refugees, 1988-1992;**
Freedom at Last Project, 2007

Visit to Rideau Hall, 26-7-2008



Visit to Gatineau National Park, October 11, 2008



Activities

Building structure

- **Vietnamese Canadian Community of Ottawa-Hull, 1977**
- **Vietnamese Canadian Federation, 1980**
- ***Spirit of Vietnam* Radio Program, 1984**
- **Vietnamese Canadian Centre, 1987**
- ***Van Lang* Non-Profit Housing Centre, 1992**

Vietnamese Canadian Centre, 1987

(249 Rochester St.)



Van Lang Non-Profit Housing Centre, 1992 (Scott & Churchill Sts.)



Activities

Reaching out: multiculturalism, Main-stream engagements

- **Homelands/Les patries, 1979**
- **Asian Heritage Month celebrations, 2007**
- **Contributions to area hospitals: Ottawa Civic Hospital, Children Hospital of Eastern Ontario, St. Paul Hospital**

Asian Heritage Month Celebrations

Community Parade, May 31, 2009



Asian Heritage Month Celebrations Community Parade, May 31, 2009



Asian Heritage Month Celebrations Community Parade Reception, May 31, 2009



Activities

Political participation (Canada wide)

- **Organizing election debates**
- **Running in municipal elections: Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa**
- **Election of Provincial Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLA): Alberta (2)**
- **Election of Members of Parliament: Quebec (3)**
- **Appointment of Senator: Ontario (1)**

Freedom at Last Project

- **Established in June 2007 to resettle refugees who had been stranded in the Philippines for almost 20 years**
- **Community support groups organized in Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Montréal**

Freedom at Last Project

- **Canada wide: 92 families (278 persons) approved**

Ottawa:

- **All 17 families (59 persons) sponsored arrived**
- **They were helped by 9 sponsor groups with accommodations, employment, and other resettlement tasks.**

**Nhan Nguyen's family
arriving in Ottawa, April 17, 2008**



Vietnamese Cultural Day, Ottawa, May 3, 2008, with Minister Diane Finley



Photo: Thoi Bao /
SamSey, 2008-05-09

Christmas party for refugees

December 12, 2009



**Christmas party for refugees
December 12, 2009**



Activities

Memories for future generations

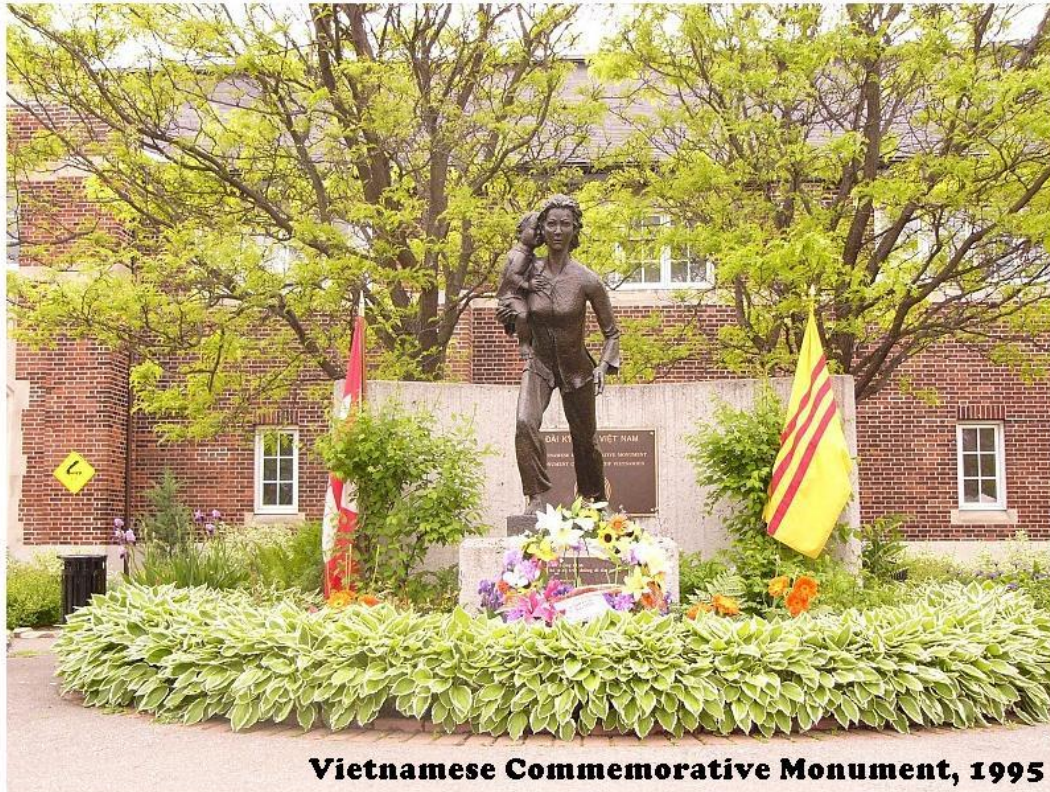
- **Saigon Court, 1984**
- **Vietnamese Commemorative Monument (*Regugee Mother & Child* statue), 1995**
- **Saigon Square, 2018**
- **Vietnamese Boat People Museum Project: launched in 2005**

Saigon Court, 1984



**Saigon Court,
1984**

Vietnamese Commemorative Monument, 1995 (Preston St. & Somerset St. W.)



Vietnamese Commemorative Monument, 1995

Saigon Square, 2018

(Preston St. & Somerset St. W.)



Vietnamese Boat People Museum Project: launched in 2005



Vietnamese Boat People Museum Project (Future site: Preston St. & Somerset St. W.)



Lessons Learnt – Success Factors

- **Individual resettlement:**
 - **Good health**
 - **Hard working**

- **Community development:**
 - **Perseverance**
 - **Unity**
 - **Financial transparency**
 - **Integrity**
 - **Non partisanship**

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