

6.2.5 Cultural Awareness Program

The Cultural Awareness Program is composed of the **Culture Program** and the **Cultural and Racial Diversity Program**. The rationale of **Culture Program** activities is that by focusing on contemporary Asian culture, Canadians will better understand and appreciate Asian peoples and their societies. This will help to produce an environment where business relations between the two areas can develop more freely. The **Cultural and Racial Diversity Program** seeks to promote awareness, understanding and active utilization in Canada of the tremendous human resource potential that exists amongst Asian Canadians within Canada. Presently, the program is managed on a part-time basis (3 days a week) by a special advisor assigned to this area. With a total program budget of \$90,000 (all from core funding).

In recent years, cultural programming has changed substantially, moving from just funding existing initiatives to identifying, initiating, and administering, new programs as well. The latter emphasize culture as "active and doing" to stimulate contacts, interaction, and networking, rather than as something to be "passively enjoyed and/or consumed". For example while awareness can be heightened by sponsoring film festivals, one can go a step further by arranging for the exchange of film producers and artists between Canada and Asian countries. This fulfils not only an artistic objective, but can result in increased business for both parties in the area of film. Similarly, a program to introduce Asian Canadian business people to their main stream Canadian counterparts could result in increased business for Canada in Asia, and benefit both cooperating partners.

Two outstanding examples of Cultural Awareness programs are: "Canadian Stories" and "Canada's Hidden Advantage." "Canadian Stories" is a review produced by the Vancouver Youth Theatre based on stories written by English as a Second Language students when they first came to Canada. "Canadian Stories" gives a vivid insight into the new experiences of young immigrants on their arrival in Canada. The review toured Canada under the partial sponsorship of the APFC. Although aimed at young audiences, the impact was broadened by evening performances for adults and wide media coverage. The APFC reports that the responses to "Canadian Stories" across Canada have been unfailingly enthusiastic.

By the end of this year, "Canadian Stories" will have been seen by a total audience in Canada of 38,000 people in schools and at evening performances. In addition to funding from the APFC's budget, the program has obtained significant money sponsorships from outside corporate sources.

"Canada's Hidden Advantage" is a series of roundtables in four Canadian cities aimed at bringing together Asian Canadian business people and Canadian mainstream businesses to discuss ways they can work together, complement and assist in increasing Canada's business with Asia. The majority of funding for this APFC initiative comes from the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. "Canada's Hidden Advantage" still has to prove that it will be a continuing program but the initial reaction has been supportive and positive.

Since 1989, ninety-one projects or applications have been considered by the Foundation