



Illuminating Intercultural Arts: Update

VICTORIA, BC, CANADA (March 21, 2011)

As summer festival organizers gear up for the coming season, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) is announcing that the Luminara Festival will not be held this year. After 11 years of producing the popular downtown lantern festival, along with 34 years presenting the ten-day multicultural arts festival, FolkFest, ICA is heading in a new and more sustainable direction. The essence of the Luminara tradition - gathering and sharing the light from all parts of the world to illuminate the commonality and diversity among cultures - continues to guide and inspire our approach to creative community celebration.

Over the last five years, ICA has seen huge changes in its arts programming, from the end of FolkFest in 2006, to the much reduced version of Luminara in 2010 as a result of profound funding cuts. The vision that guided our new direction for Luminara continues to evolve, with a focus on encouraging and sustaining relationships between diverse community groups and creating a welcoming and vibrant city. We have been meeting with a community arts advisory committee over the last few months to help determine the most beneficial creative direction and set a new course for our arts programming.

As ICA approaches its 40th anniversary this December, we look back to our beginnings as a community cultural festival, FolkFest. The first FolkFest took place in the Crystal Garden in 1971, organized by local ethnic groups in Victoria to promote understanding and tolerance through the sharing of culture. As ICA took on the role of immigrant and refugee service provider in the late seventies, our arts festivals continued to be an important element of our role in the community. FolkFest continued to grow and respond to increased audiences and expectations which ultimately became too much for the organization to sustain.

It has been very difficult for us to let go of our large public festivals. We know that many people in Victoria feel this loss as much as we do, and we hope that the community will help us build new forms of sustainable community celebration. While Luminara 2010 was a step in a new direction, with smaller neighbourhood celebrations and artistic residencies, even the reduced scale of the celebration was financially unsustainable. We are excited about the potential of artist in residence programs and partnership opportunities that are opening up with this change in direction.

At ICA, we see our creative role as a cultural connector, collaborating with and linking diverse professional and community arts groups and individuals in Greater Victoria. We are committed to finding new voices and supporting cultural exchange through workshops, celebrations and community development. Our continuing commitment to Victoria is to encourage community-focused artistic innovation and collaboration among diverse cultures to enrich the international spectrum of artistic expression in Greater Victoria.



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About the Inter-Cultural Association

The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) produced the Luminara Lantern Festival from 2000–2010 and the ten-day multicultural arts festival FolkFest from 1971-2006.

Since 1971, ICA has been serving the multicultural and immigrant community in Greater Victoria. ICA's arts programs illuminate cultural connections and are a vital part of creating a welcoming community that accepts and appreciates cultural diversity. At its Immigrant Welcome Centre, ICA offers ESL classes and settlement services for newcomers, as well as community workshops on diversity and cross-cultural awareness.