



## CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

505 CONSUMERS ROAD, SUITE 206, WILLOWDALE, ONTARIO M2J 4V8  
Tel: 416-494-6040 Fax: 416-494-1530 Email: [info@guyanaconsulate.com](mailto:info@guyanaconsulate.com)

For immediate release

### **Guyana Awards (Canada) 2010 Congratulations to the Nine Award Winners!**

The Guyana Awards Council (Canada) is very pleased to announce the winners of the prestigious Guyana Awards (Canada) which will be presented at the **10<sup>th</sup> Guyana Awards Gala on Saturday, May 29, 2010** at On the Park Centennial Ballroom, 1095 Leslie Street, Toronto, Ontario:

- **SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: DR. DINDIAL RAMOTAR, Professor, University of Montreal Faculty of Medicine and Scientist, Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital**
- **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: MR. CYRIL DABYDEEN, Author, Educator and Race Relations Practitioner**
- **LEADERSHIP AWARD: MR. ALBERT SWEETNAM, Executive Vice President, Nuclear New Build, Ontario Power Generation**
- **BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARD: MS. GLORIA RAJKUMAR, Founder and CEO, SIMAC (Superior Independent Medical Assessment Centres)**
- **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARD: DR. BRAM RAMJIWAN, Director of Research Innovation and Regulatory Affairs, St. Boniface Hospital Research Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba**
- **COMMUNITY SERVICE (ORGANIZATION) AWARD: BISHOPS' HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, TORONTO CHAPTER**
- **COMMUNITY SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD: MS. JENNIFER WELSHMAN, Director, St. Rose's High School Alumni Association, Toronto Chapter; Founding Member, Last Lap Lime; Chief of Staff to Ontario Minister of Health Promotion**
- **CULTURE AND MEDIA AWARD: MS. "MELANIE FIONA" HALLIM, R&B Singer/Songwriter, Grammy Award nominee, Juno Award Nominee, NAACP Image Award nominee**
- **YOUTH AWARD: MS. LISA PUNIT, MBA**



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An independent panel of eminent judges selected the 2010 Award recipients from the many nominations submitted. The panel was composed of the Honourable Justice Vibert Lampkin, retired Judge of the Ontario Court of Justice; Gale Lee, Program Manager for Asia and the Caribbean, CESO and former Acting Ambassador to Brussels; and Ken Singh, President, Atlas Cargo and member of the Advisory Council, York University.

The Guyana Awards (Canada) recognize the outstanding achievements of distinguished individuals and organizations in the Guyanese-Canadian community, and their sterling contributions toward the promotion and development of Guyana, Guyanese heritage and culture. The high calibre of this year's awardees will instill a greater sense of pride in the Guyanese-Canadian community and provide positive role models for our youth.

The premier event in the Guyanese community in Toronto, this year's **Guyana Awards Gala** commences at **6.00 p.m. on Saturday, May 29** with a Cocktail Reception, followed by dinner and presentation of the Awards and Scholarships.

The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) has been selected as the "Charity of Choice" to receive the proceeds from the 2010 Guyana Awards Gala. Located in Toronto, SickKids is a world-renowned academic health science centre and is ranked as one of the top pediatric health-care facilities in the world. SickKids has improved the lives of children for more than 130 years. As a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto, the hospital's international academic reputation is well established. SickKids has a long-standing relationship with the Guyanese-Canadian community, having collaborated with several hospitals and not-for-profit organizations in Guyana and with local community groups in Toronto. Through programs such as the Herbie Fund, SickKids has assisted over 60 children from Guyana to improve their medical outcomes, as well as delivering pediatric health care to communities in Guyana.

The Guyana Awards Council invites you to celebrate with the "Who's Who" in the Guyanese and wider Toronto communities on **Saturday, May 29<sup>th</sup>**. The Guyana Awards Gala is the official kick-off of the annual Guyana Independence Celebrations, initiating a host of events across Canada that culminates in the Guyana Festival from June 19-20.

Tickets for the Gala are available at \$100 each and may also be purchased by tables of ten. For tickets and information, contact Felicia Kwang, Guyana Consulate, 416-494-6040 X23, or Bert Bacchus at 905-770-3785.

**For further information, please contact:**

Danny Doobay, Honorary Consul General of Guyana, 416-494-6040 Ext. 29  
Felicia Kwang, Consulate Assistant, 416-494-6040, Ext. 23.

April 19, 2010

**BIOGRAPHIES OF THE 2010 GUYANA AWARDS RECIPIENTS FOLLOW:**



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### **DR. DINDIAL RAMOTAR – SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Dr. Dindial Ramotar is a world-renowned scientist whose leading edge cancer research has led to the discovery of a new drug transporter—which he patented in 2008—that allows the entry of anticancer agents into cancer cells. These findings were reported on March 25, 2010 and may change the way doctors treat cancer patients:

“We found a gateway, which is present in all humans, that allows anti-cancer agents... to enter the body so they may reach and attack leukemia cells,” says senior author Dindial Ramotar, a professor at the Université de Montréal Faculty of Medicine and a scientist at the affiliated Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital.

Dr. Ramotar began testing his theory a full decade ago using baker's yeast, which is remarkably similar to human cells. “Our discovery went from that model system to human cells and will soon reach the bedside through translational therapy,” he explains. “We are on the brink of testing patients.”

Dindial Ramotar left Guyana in 1976 to study in Canada, obtaining a BSc from McGill University, an MSc from Concordia University, a PhD from McGill, and Postdoctoral Training at Harvard Medical School. In 1992, he was appointed Associate Professor at Laval University in Quebec. In 1996, he was recruited to the University of Montreal as an Assistant Professor and is now a full Professor in the Faculty of Medicine.

Dr. Ramotar has received several awards and served on Canadian Institute of Health, National Cancer Institute of Canada and National Institute of Health (U.S.) panels to decide on which grants get funds throughout Canada and the U.S.

Active in a number of community organizations, Dr. Ramotar was a founding member of the Centennial Cricket Sports Club and is Past Vice President of the Guyana Cultural Association in Montreal.

### **MR. CYRIL DABYDEEN – LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Berbice-born, Mr. Cyril Dabydeen is a distinguished, and the most prolific, Guyanese-born writer—poet, novelist, short story writer, literary critic—in Canada, as well as an educator and noted race relations practitioner.

Mr. Dabydeen's work has been published for over 30 years. His 20 books include two signal anthologies of Black- and Asian-Caribbean-born writers, and he has appeared in prestigious literary magazines and anthologies in a dozen countries. He has written over 100 book reviews, numerous op-ed articles and essays, and has done hundreds of public readings across Canada and worldwide.

Cyril Dabydeen was appointed official Poet Laureate of Ottawa (1984-87). His novel *Drums of My Flesh* won the Guyana Prize for Literature 2006/7, and was nominated for the



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prestigious IMPAC/Dublin Literary Prize and the City of Ottawa Book Prize. He achieved Ottawa's First Heritage Award for Writing and Publishing (2000) and the Canada Council of the Arts Award, among others.

His work is studied in universities, and scholarly papers on Cyril Dabydeen have been presented in Canada, USA, UK/Europe, Australia, India, and the Caribbean. He is the only Guyanese to have twice juried for Canada's prestigious Governor General's Award, and he also adjudicated the renowned Neustadt International Prize for Literature (U/Oklahoma).

A committed educator since in Guyana, Mr. Dabydeen has taught in Canada for about 20 years and won the 2007 Part-time Professor of the Year Award from the University of Ottawa.

From 1990-99, Cyril Dabydeen managed the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Race Relations Program, travelling to over 30 towns/cities to liaise with communities. He coordinated FCM's National Action Committee on Race Relations, and administered the City of Ottawa's Advisory Committee on Visible Minorities to City Council (1984-89), fostering racial equality.

Included in Canada's *Who's Who*, Cyril Dabydeen was recently nominated for an Order of Canada.

### **MR. ALBERT SWEETNAM – LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Albert Sweetnam is Executive Vice-President, Nuclear New Build, at Ontario Power Generation Inc. (OPG), whose principal business is the generation and sale of electricity in Ontario.

Mr. Sweetnam is responsible for the design, construction, licensing and commissioning of the Nuclear New Build project (\$20 billion), including developing the organizational capability to operate the facility, managing senior level stakeholder relations, and overseeing the completion of the Request for Proposal (RFP) process currently underway with Infrastructure Ontario. He also has responsibility for the Deep Geological Repository (\$1 billion) which, when completed, will store Ontario's Low and Intermediate nuclear waste.

Prior to OPG, he was a Senior Vice-President with SNC Lavalin, Canada's largest engineering construction company, where he was Project Director of the US\$4.1 billion Ambatovy Project in Madagascar. Prior to this, he managed SNC Lavalin's Infrastructure, Construction, Engineering, and Environment Divisions in Ontario, Manitoba, and several offshore locations. Ontario projects include Highway 407 and the Air Rail Link between Union Station and the Toronto Airport. His wide-ranging worldwide experience includes managing SNC Lavalin's engineering and construction operations in West Africa for 13 years, and executing projects in Africa, Asia, Guyana and South America.



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Albert. Sweetnam holds an honours degree from the University of Waterloo and a diploma in Business Administration from Ryerson University. He is a Fellow of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering, a member of various professional engineering organizations in Canada, the United States and Africa, and has sat on the Boards of four professional organizations. He is also recognized as a Gold Seal project and construction manager by the Canadian Construction Association, and has been consulted as a water expert by the World Bank in West Africa.

An active member of his community, Mr. Sweetnam is involved in fund-raising for cancer and is on the board of the Community Share Food Bank. He is recognized as an international sailor, having held a national title for three consecutive years.

### **MS. GLORIA RAJKUMAR – BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARD**

Gloria Rajkumar is CEO of SIMAC—Superior Independent Medical Assessment Centres—a firm which she founded in 2001.

For 18 years, she had worked her way through a variety of positions in the insurance industry, continually upgrading her skills through credit courses and on-the-job learning. As her industry knowledge and expertise grew, she recognized a need for improvements in the way the industry's medical assessment needs were being met. It was at this point, in 2001, that she made the bold move to leave her successful sales position, risk her life savings, and start her own company—SIMAC.

Today, SIMAC is an industry leader with three locations, 22 full-time staff, and affiliations with more than 250 respected medical professionals who share her vision for service excellence.

Ms. Rajkumar has embraced a high level of commitment to social and community responsibilities. She is a champion of environmental preservation and is fiercely committed to proactive actions that support "green" initiatives. A civic-minded and philanthropic individual, she supports many charitable causes and community fund-raising initiatives.

Recognized and respected by her colleagues for her dedication to quality service, ethical standards and contributions to the community, she was the proud recipient of the 2010 Business Achievement Award from the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce.

The seventh of eight children, Mahaica-born Gloria Rajkumar's entrepreneurial success is a testament to the fact that humble beginnings do not have to lead to mediocrity in life. It is her belief that it is a "content of character to want to be something better" and that with drive and determination, anyone can accomplish their goals.



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### **DR. BRAM RAMJIAWAN – ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARD**

Dr. Bram Ramjiawan is Director of Research, Innovation and Regulatory Affairs at St. Boniface General Hospital and Research Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He is also an Adjunct Professor of the Faculty of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at the University of Manitoba. Prior to joining St. Boniface General Hospital, he was with the Government of Canada (National Research Council) as a scientist as well as an advisor who specialized in Life Sciences and Biomedical Technologies.

A seasoned biomedical scientist, having spent 15 years in various positions before joining St. Boniface Hospital, Dr. Ramjiawan has published more than 20 peer reviewed articles and is the author of two books and an encyclopedia chapter. He has been an invited speaker to numerous events around the world and has served on many national and international organizations who seek out his expertise.

At the national level, Dr. Ramjiawan is on the steering committee of the Canadian Standards Association on Medical Technology and Health Care, and the National Research Council Ethics Board. At the international level, he has been a reviewer for the United States National Institute of Health and is a current member and chair of the European Union Commission on Health Science and Ethics. He sits on the editorial board of an international journal in London, England—*Journal of Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research*, and has received numerous national and international awards.

Dr. Ramjiawan is a graduate of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Manitoba in Pharmacology and Therapeutics. Prior to earning his doctoral degree, he completed a Master of Science degree at the University of Manitoba with a focus on Cardiovascular Sciences, and a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Winnipeg.

An immigrant to Canada from Guyana at the age of 14, Dr. Bram Ramjiawan has had the benefit of having been surrounded by many great teachers and mentors.

### **BISHOPS' HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, TORONTO CHAPTER – COMMUNITY SERVICE (ORGANIZATION) AWARD**

Bishops' High School Alumni Association, Toronto Chapter was formed on July 28, 1985 with the primary objective of raising funds to assist the school in Georgetown.

Over the last 25 years BHSAA Toronto has contributed almost half-a-million dollars in financial and non-financial aid to its alma mater. The largest project undertaken has been the establishment, maintenance and support of a fully networked Computer Lab with current software, at a cost of CAD\$275,000. Other aid has ranged from infrastructure and curriculum support to annual bursaries for students and miscellaneous school-based and library resources.



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BHSAA Toronto has successfully conceptualized and organized events which evoke and transmit strong elements of Guyanese culture and heritage—two major theatrical productions; a variety concert with renowned Guyanese and Canadian artistes; an Art Exhibition of Guyanese Women Artists; annual literary evenings; book launches; brunches and dances. In addition, the BHS Singers was established to perform Guyanese folk/national songs at numerous community events.

From its inception, BHSAA Toronto has been recognized as a leader, sharing some of its pioneering efforts—such as developing a Constitution and initiating a Bursary Awards program—with new and emerging associations in the community. In collaboration with four other alumni associations, BHSAA co-developed the highly successful *Last Lap Lime* community festival. Partnership with Queen's College Alumni Association led to the highly acclaimed production of *The Last of the Redmen*, as well as the popular annual Twelfth Night Dance.

BHSAA Toronto established an Interactive Volunteer Program whereby “volunteers” return to the school to use their diasporic experiences/qualifications to mentor and inspire current students. The association also created a Circle of Support Program for alumni and Guyanese Seniors, and has always been a strong supporter of Guyana Consulate initiatives.

The significant and invaluable contributions that the Toronto Chapter continues to make to the school create a ripple effect throughout the Guyanese diaspora. A BHS education effectively prepares students for both nationhood and world citizenship, and the Toronto Chapter's efforts are instrumental in achieving these outcomes.

### **JENNIFER WELSHMAN – COMMUNITY SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD**

Jennifer Welshman is a prominent, well-respected and very active member of the Guyanese-Canadian community in Toronto. However, her commitment and dedication to excellence in management, community and individual development transcends the Guyanese community and extends to the Province of Ontario and beyond.

A founding member and current Director of St. Roses' High School Alumni Association, Toronto Chapter, Ms. Welshman has held a number of executive positions throughout the years and is a Past President.

She was also a founding member of the highly successful Last Lap Lime, volunteering her time as an executive member to foster the mission of the organization, which has grown at a rapid pace throughout the past 15 years.

In 2008, she was recruited as Executive Assistant and Office Manager to then newly-elected Member of Provincial Parliament for Scarborough-Guildwood, Hon. Margaret Best. In 2009, Jennifer Welshman was promoted to Chief of Staff to Ontario's Minister of Health Promotion, Hon. Margaret Best, MPP. Her commitment, high standards of



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excellence, and willingness to develop innovative strategies and management practices is helping the Province of Ontario to become a leader in health promotion within Canada and internationally.

Throughout the years, Ms. Welshman has given countless hours to numerous community projects, and her passion for helping and interacting with people has grown deeply.

### **MELANIE FIONA HALLIM – MEDIA & CULTURE AWARD**

It hasn't even been a year since R&B Singer/Songwriter Melanie Fiona released her debut album, "The Bridge", but she has already been nominated for a Grammy, a Juno, an NAACP Image Award, and toured with two of the biggest musicians: Kanye West and Alicia Keyes.

Raised in Toronto, Melanie Fiona was always interested in music. She would watch her father play guitar and listen to her mother's music collection, and soon developed an amazing singing voice.

In February of 2009, Melanie Fiona's first single, "*Give It to Me Right*", was released. It peaked at #20 on Billboard's Canadian Hot 100 and #41 on the UK Singles Chart.

Her debut album, "*The Bridge*", was released in autumn 2009. It peaked at #4 on Billboard's R&B Chart, has remained on the Chart for 22 weeks, and secured an NAACP Image Award nomination for Outstanding New Artist.

But it is Melanie Fiona's second single, "*It Kills Me*", that has earned her international critical acclaim. The song soared to #1 on Billboard's R&B Chart, stayed there for over five weeks, remained on the Chart for 34 weeks – and earned Melanie Fiona a 2010 Grammy Award nomination for Best Female R&B Vocal Performance.

Melanie Fiona's star continues to rise:

- The single "*Monday Morning*" stood at #1 on the Swiss charts for over 6 weeks.
- Another single "*Bang Bang*" has been featured on episodes of TV shows *Ugly Betty* and *Grey's Anatomy*.
- She was invited to participate in the remake of "*We Are the World*" to benefit Haiti after the earthquake.
- She has made guest appearances on the Ellen DeGeneres Show (March 22), Carson Daly Show, Mo'Nique Show, Jimmy Kimmel Live, and was featured on BET's Rising Icon segment.

Currently on tour with Alicia Keyes in Europe/U.K. with upcoming concerts in the U.S. and Canada, Melanie Fiona is on her way to becoming a star of mega proportions.



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### **LISA PUNIT, MBA – YOUTH AWARD**

At the age of 24, Lisa Punit completed her Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Queen's University while gaining valuable work experience. She was the youngest graduate in her year and, subsequent to completing the program, was appointed by her peers to become a senior member of the Board of Representatives for the class of 2009. She also holds an Honours BCom degree, with a concentration in International Management, from the Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa .

Ms. Punit is currently employed with the Federal Government and was a senior member of the Vancouver Olympics team for her employer. The budget for this file was in excess of \$1 billion. She played an integral role in developing a student internship program between her employer and the University of Ottawa.

Giving back and helping others is important to Lisa Punit. She is Director of Finance for Global Partnership for Literacy: SchoolNet Guyana—an organization dedicated to bridging the digital divide between developing and developed nations. A regular volunteer for the Guyana Independence Festival during her teenage years, she was also a recipient of the I.O.D.E Award for outstanding contributions to the community. Throughout University she was involved in creating a number of clubs dedicated to helping others, such as the University of Ottawa Public Speaking Development Club, and was a volunteer manager for the 2009 World Junior Hockey Championships in Ottawa.

Lisa Punit strongly believes that “there are many opportunities to achieve great things if I work hard and set achievable goals for myself.”