

Guyana Awards Recipients

Dr. M. Jamal Deen

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dr. M. Jamal Deen holds a variety of senior academic roles within Canada, serving as the Senior Canada Research Chair in Information Technology, and Director of Micro and Nano-Systems Lab, and Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at McMaster University. His research work on high-performance photo-detectors and optical detection systems is of tremendous industrial relevance.



Professor Deen is considered a visionary leader who has attained international stature for his work in electronic device modelling and innovations in experiments. Because of his outstanding research credentials, Dr. Deen is a highly sought-after speaker, editor of several international journals, and serves on many international Editorial Boards, making him one of the most respected engineering scientists in Canada and internationally.

From humble beginnings in Guyana, Professor Deen has become one of the most recognized and honoured academics in engineering to emerge from Guyana, the Caribbean and South America. His prolific research record of more than 390 peer-reviewed articles, 7 best paper awards, 7 patents, 15 book chapters and co-editorship of 14 books and conference proceedings, has helped McMaster University and Canada become a major centre for innovative and cutting-edge research in micro-, nano- and opto-electronics.

Dr. Deen attended Queen's College, the University of Guyana, and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where he obtained his Ph.D for research sponsored and used by NASA. He has received numerous awards for academic excellence including, most recently, the prestigious Humboldt Research Award from Germany. His peers have also elected him to Fellow status in seven national academies and professional organizations, including election as Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada – the “highest academic accolade in Canada that is available to scientists and scholars.”

Professor Deen has had a significant impact in micro-electronics and opto-electronics research at collaborating institutions in many countries, and remains involved in the social development of Guyana.

Pauline Thomas – Auntie Comesee

MEDIA & CULTURE AWARD

Auntie Comesee had her formal “coming out” at a Theatre Guild Christmas party in 1968 in Georgetown. After that, Auntie Comesee appeared many times all over Guyana until 1980 when her creator, Pauline Thomas, migrated to Canada – where she continued



to perform and promote Guyanese culture throughout the diaspora.

Considering that as a teacher she would always speak formal English, Pauline's performances as Auntie Comesee would be even more striking. Her use of Creolese was born of her conviction that Guyanese should “know their folklore and respect it”, and that Creolese should be kept alive.

Pauline Thomas started her performing career when she was three years old. Her early tutelage in singing and reciting came from her mother. Formal voice, stage, piano and dance lessons followed, as did a career in teaching. An accomplished singer, Pauline Thomas won several prizes at Music Festivals in Guyana, was a member of the Woodside Choir, and regularly performed classical and semi-classical song recitals on Guyanese radio stations for over 20 years.

Sustaining the character of Auntie Comesee on stage and radio for four decades is a testimony to her dedication and love of learning. Pauline Thomas entered the University of Toronto and graduated in 1999 with a B.A. degree at the age of 78. Since then, she has continued as a student of music at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto and, at 87, sings with two choirs at the Conservatory as well as with Caribbean Chorale.

Like her creator, Auntie Comesee continues to perform and promote Guyanese culture and folklore to appreciative audiences of all ages in North America.

Rampersaud Tiwari

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Rampersaud Tiwari's extensive experience as a public servant in Guyana under numerous administrations has given him an encyclopedic knowledge of Guyanese laws and parliamentary procedures.



Mr. Tiwari joined the Guyana Civil Service in 1953 and rose steadily through the ranks to become Principal Assistant Secretary/Permanent Secretary in the Ministries of External Affairs, Education, Social Development and Culture, Communications and Transportation, and Works and Housing. In 1984, he served as Member/Deputy Chairman of the National Commission for the Revival of Standards and the Guyana Commemoration Commission, advising the Government on national and community cultural standards and heritage events.

On arrival in Canada in 1985, Mr. Tiwari joined the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and retired in 1997 as an Ambassador of the Bank. He currently works with the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada as an interpreter of the Guyana Creole dialect/language and culture.

Rampersaud Tiwari was a member of the international Election Observer group from Canada for the historic 1992 General Elections in Guyana, and an Election Observer for the Organization of American States (OAS) during the 2000 Elections in Suriname. His expertise in electoral processes led to his selection by the Guyana Elections Commission as Voter Education Consultant and Observation Facilitator for the 1997/98 overseas Election Observer groups.

As a founding member and Honorary Resource Director of the Canada Guyana Forum since 1985, Mr. Tiwari contributes to the York University Indo-Caribbean Studies Program and Social Sciences Department, assisting with research material and information on historical, cultural and heritage matters pertaining to Guyana's diverse communities.

Mr. Tiwari has maintained strong Hindu cultural and religious values, while being respectful of Guyana's rich social history and culture. He devotes himself to achieving genuine co-operation and understanding between the various ethnic groups, and promotes the highest standards of excellence in all spheres of life.

Desmond & Joan deBarros

COMMUNITY SERVICE (INDIVIDUAL) AWARD



Desmond & Joan deBarros migrated to Canada in 1963 and have never turned their backs on the people of Guyana.

Desmond was the driving force behind the formation of the Guyana Christian Charities (Canada) Inc. (GCC) in the mid-1970s. He played a significant role in getting the organization incorporated and achieving its charitable status. Desmond has held several offices within GCC, including a lengthy period as President, and at 83 is still very active in the organization.

Joan – a former director and officer of GCC – has been a pillar in the GCC. She has visited Guyana to ascertain specific charities in need of assistance, in particular those serving children, the sick, the aged and the poor, regardless of political or religious affiliation. Joan also pioneered GCC's flagship fundraising event: the Annual Fall Bake Sale which raises \$20,000 annually.

Both Desmond and Joan have actively assisted in the formation of the Guyana Burn and Healthcare Charitable Foundation (GBHCF), with Desmond holding the post of Board Member and Joan contributing her considerable fundraising skills for the benefit of the "Burn Care Unit".

Desmond and Joan deBarros have dedicated their lives in Canada to helping Guyanese. Their active community service and commitment to Guyana have inspired other Guyanese-Canadians to do likewise.

Dr. Vernon Singhroy

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr. Vernon Singhroy is the Chief Scientist at the Canada Centre for Remote Sensing in Ottawa, the highest scientific level in the Government of Canada. He is also Professor of Earth Observation at the International Space University in Strasbourg, France, and Adjunct Professor in Planetary and Earth Sciences at McMaster University and the University of New Brunswick.



Born at No. 30 Village, West Coast Berbice and a graduate of Berbice High School, Dr. Singhroy pursued studies in Canada and the U.S. in the areas of earth sciences and environmental and resource engineering, ultimately achieving a PhD in Environmental and Resource Engineering. He has published four books and over 300 papers in scientific journals, proceedings and books; and was the Editor-in-Chief for the Canadian Journal of Remote Sensing for seven years; and served on the editorial boards of several prestigious international Journals in Space Sciences

Dr. Singhroy is well-known in Canada and internationally for his expertise in satellite technology for Environmental and Resource Mapping and Disaster Management. This has made him a much-sought-after expert providing advice to the Canadian and other International Space Agencies and over 30 countries (including Guyana and Venezuela) where he applied satellite technology to assist in mapping of their mineral and hydrocarbon resources. Satellite monitoring of high-risk regions of Earth for “geohazards” - volcanoes, major landslides, earthquakes - is also an important component of his recent research.

Dr. Vernon Singhroy is a worthy example of a country boy from Guyana who, through diligent study, hard work and imaginative innovation, has made it to the very top in the area of Canadian and international scientific studies and administration.

Harry Harakh

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Harry Harakh is a founding member and Managing Director of the Guyana Burn and Health Care Foundation. He was instrumental in providing the leadership that resulted in Guyana having the first Burn Care Unit in the Caribbean, having inspired a group of Guyanese-Canadians to devote energy and resources to see the project through to fruition.



The Burn Care Unit was opened at the Georgetown Public Hospital on November 10, 2002 and provided specialized care to 210 patients in its first five years. The results were a clear improvement in mortality rates and a reduction in the average length of stay in the hospital.

A successful Chartered Accountant with a busy practice, Harry Harakh is described as “compassionate, with a genuine appreciation of people”. That may explain why he has found the time to make substantial contributions of his services to numerous organizations, including:

- Secretary of the Committee overseeing the establishment of the Canadian Museum of Hindu Civilization at the Vishnu Mandir at Hwy 7 & Yonge Street in Richmond Hill, Ontario.
- Member of the Board of Trustees of York Central Hospital, and on several of its committees.
- Member of the York District Health Council Long-Term Care Redirection Committee.
- A long-time member and contributor to Guyana Christian Charities, including voluntary service as the organization’s Accountant.
- Vice-President, Finance, of The Voice of Vedas, and a Director of Bharat Shivashram Sangha Canada Inc.

Dr. Roy Rowsell, Ve'ahavta

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AWARD

Roy Rowsell was born and raised in Toronto and attended Kent Public School and Bloor Collegiate. During World War II, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy as an ordinary seaman and served with his identical twin brother, Harry, on the North Atlantic in an overage Destroyer, HMCS Columbia.



In 1943 he was promoted to Officer Category and served in motor launches in Gaspe and Newfoundland. In June 1944 he transferred to a Corvette, HMCS New Westminster, serving in convoy duty in the mid-ocean escort, Newfoundland to Britain. Following the war, he returned to Toronto and was accepted in the University of Toronto's Medical School.

After graduation and another six years of post-graduate work, Dr. Rowsell obtained his FRCP(C) in Internal Medicine and, subsequently, a consulting practice in Medicine.

"Dr. Roy" began his medical trips to Guyana in 1970 with his wife, Blaikie and a group of church volunteers, transporting medical supplies and equipment, and sharing medical knowledge in rural areas. After partnering with the Lions Club in Guyana, the group was able to increase its efforts. Since 1997, through a partnership with Ve'ahavta, Dr. Roy –together with a group of dedicated health and medical professionals – has introduced mobile clinics to test and treat thousands of patients; set up immunization, multivitamin and mosquito net programs; and has conducted numerous professional workshops. He is also heavily involved in Canadian fundraising for medications and equipment to carry out these missions.

Dr. Roy's great love and respect for the people of Guyana is exemplified by his many years of commitment and volunteerism in the country. As a result, thousands of Guyanese have benefited from basic medical prevention and intervention. Hundreds of Canadian and Guyanese healthcare workers have also been inspired by his leadership and his gentle, caring and always deeply compassionate approach to those in need.

Vanessa Rambihar

YOUTH AWARD

"Vanessa Rambihar is one of the most exceptional young women I have met and, given the population of our school, this claim is of the highest order." Those are the words of the Principal of Havergal College, Toronto, one of Canada's premiere high schools.



Vanessa was Head Prefect at Havergal, winning many awards, including the Academic Admission Scholarship and the Herbert Mason Medal for Leadership and Character on graduation. She has developed a passion for volunteerism, in health promotion, at hospitals, nursing homes and clinics, abroad in Ecuador and Sri Lanka, and visited Guyana as an observer with the Burn Care Unit team. She received a Province of Ontario Tsunami Spirit Award, and was a semi-finalist for the Flare Magazine 10th Anniversary National Volunteer Award.

Vanessa continued her broad interests while completing an Honours Double Major in Medical and Health Sciences from the University of Western Ontario this year. She created an inter-generational Seniors in IT program, inspiring fellow students to teach computer skills to seniors; was a student member of a National Board on IT for Girls and Vice-President of UNICEF Western; and was a fundraiser for many organizations. She runs half-marathons, represented her school in soccer, was on dance teams, plays the piano and violin and has achieved a Black Belt in Karate.

Vanessa is an exemplary role model for youth as an accomplished young woman who truly exemplifies her high school's motto: "to prepare young women to make a difference".

Dwarka Persaud

BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARD

Dwarka Persaud is a well-known and respected business leader in Ontario, who co-owns and operates a number of industrial plastic recycling factories in Canada and the United States. He is a philanthropist, humanitarian, and religious and community leader. He is also a pioneer in the area of Agro-Energy in Guyana - a fledgling sector which has been identified by the Government of Guyana as an area of strategic importance for growth and investment.



Dwarka Persaud and his partners made history in Guyana in June 2006 by being the first commercial interest to enter into a venture producing Biodiesel for commercial distribution in the country, through Agri-Solutions Technologies Inc. (AST). Two years ago, he promptly took up the challenge of sustainable community development when he invested in the Wauna Oil Palm Estate, which faced imminent closure due to changing market conditions for palm oil. His investment prevented the loss of 66 jobs and potential destitution within the local Amerindian community. Under Mr. Persaud's stewardship, the Wauna Oil Palm Estate has been resuscitated, even though it is located in a remote region of Guyana and presents significant challenges in terms of logistics, distribution, and access to skilled labour. Plans are currently underway for significant expansion of the estate. The number of employees has been increased to 76, with an additional 25 seasonal employees; wages and working conditions have improved greatly; and the workers are offered free daily meals.

AST has successfully supplied Biodiesel to the local Administration for use in its electrical generators for the last year, and many vehicles in the region are running on 100% biodiesel.

In addition to his business ventures, Dwarka Persaud is actively involved in many charitable and religious organizations throughout Canada.

**St. Stanislaus College
Alumni Association Toronto**

**COMMUNITY SERVICE (ORGANIZATION)
AWARD**

The St. Stanislaus College Alumni Association Toronto (SSCAAT)

was formed in 1993 following a request to several alumni in Toronto for help in defraying the cost of termite eradication at the



college. The Association has since grown through the support of many past students, and has contributed over half-a-million Canadian dollars in monetary and non-monetary contributions to the school.

Assistance by SSCAAT has included the provision of a variety of equipment and supplies for the Science and Computer Labs, the Industrial Technology Department, the Library, the Home Economics and Art Departments, the Scout Troop, and the Staff Room. Funding has been provided and is ongoing for major repair and refurbishment of the aging school building. Various programmes have been set up, such as the upgrading of the skills of the Teaching staff, scholarships for students and teachers, and a host of other innovations.

SSCAAT's biggest fund-raising project to date has been the "Wall of Fame" which raised over CAD\$45,000 to construct a secure concrete/chain link fence around the perimeter of the college grounds.

The Association was instrumental in the creation of the "Last Lap Lime" in Toronto - a highly successful annual event held jointly by five non-profit Guyanese Alumni Associations resident in Toronto.

SSCAAT continues to work tirelessly in support of St. Stanislaus College so as to return its *alma mater* to its former glory.