

THE NORTH AMERICAN FILIPINO STAR

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Montreal's only Filipino-Canadian newspaper

Race Against Time: Gilmore Academy Rallies Support; Launches Urgent Teacher Intake ahead of Sept. 1st

MONTREAL —August 25, 2026

A fast-moving series of high-level political interactions, sudden operational breakthroughs, and international academic developments has ignited massive momentum for the newly incorporated Gilmore Academy of Arts and Social Sciences (L'Académie Gilmore des Arts et des Sciences Sociales). Just days remain before the institution's strict regulatory deadline to submit crucial documentation to the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ). With an internal target to file its final administrative paperwork early to avoid platform bottlenecks, the Academy is operating at a breakneck pace to bypass potential portal glitches and secure its digital access to the province's ETAPE system. This rapid progression of events marks a major turning point following the successful May 29th non-profit launch screening of *Stolen Time* and the founder's July recognition award by MNA Sona Lakhoyan Olivier on July 16, 2026.

A Thorough Administrative Review: Provincial Site Visit

On Wednesday, August 19, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., Mount Royal-Outremont MNA Michelle Setlakwe arrived at the Gilmore Academy campus for an official fact-finding visit and a high-profile tour. The visit, made possible by dedicated volunteers working overnight to prepare the facility, showcased the Academy's physical and operational readiness.

Rather than issuing an immediate, generic letter of support, MNA Setlakwe engaged in a thorough administrative review of the school's historical files. She is actively looking into the provincial education permit applications from 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2021 that were historically stalled under the school's previous private, for-profit framework (Gilmore College International). To fully master the background of the file before taking official action, MNA Setlakwe specifically requested to identify the exact ministry officials who originally handled those past applications.

In strict compliance with this request, the founder compiled and forwarded a comprehensive, 19-page documentation dossier via email, receiving an immediate automated system response. During the campus walkthrough, the founder presented MNA Setlakwe with a organized, transparent folder holder containing four official letters of endorsement from



Mount Royal MNA Michelle Setlakwe visits the Gilmore Academy campus on August 19, 2026, holding a collection of three recent issues of *The North American Filipino Star* alongside the founder, Zenaïda Ferry-Kharroubi (Photo taken by Michael Davantes)

Atty. Alicia Natividad (Ottawa), human rights advocate Marvin Rotrand, MP Anthony Housefather, and Fo Niemi (Executive Director of CRARR), alongside a pre-drafted proposed letter of support for her convenience.

A powerful photograph captured MNA Setlakwe holding a collection of the last three issues of *The North American Filipino Star*, symbolizing the deep historical intersection between this 37-year-old educational institution and the community's leading news journal.

Just hours later, at 2:30 p.m., Madame Valérie Huot from the MEQ contacted Founder and Director-General Zenaïda Ferry-Kharroubi to inquire if there is a place that she plans to put the school. In response, Mrs. Ferry-Kharroubi described the 3,000 square feet office she has been renting since September 15, 2025.

A Twist of Fate and Federal Commitment

The whirlwind of political backing began following a scheduling miscommunication that turned into a major breakthrough. Mrs. Ferry-Kharroubi hand-delivered an advocacy letter to the office of Mount Royal MP Anthony Housefather, where an operations manager presumed an appointment had been finalized for 2:00 p.m. the following Tuesday as she delivered the letter Friday afternoon. Due to the misunderstanding, Mr. Housefather waited an hour and left a voicemail at 2:47 p.m. Upon retrieving the message at 6:00 p.m., Mrs. Ferry-Kharroubi immediately cleared up the mix-up. Demonstrating exceptional dedication to his constituents, MP Housefather personally called her back at 7:30 p.m. to find out exactly what systemic issues the Academy was facing regarding the projected application for a permit. Deeply moved by the urgency, he immediately committed to helping the school

secure all available support. True to his word, he tasked his team with launching an official research inquiry through the Canadian Library of Parliament to gather an institutional roadmap of federal grants and resources. This valuable research dossier was officially delivered to the Academy by staff member Sumaya Hassan on Monday, August 24, 2026, outlining the precise avenues for funding.

Concrete Legal, Civil, and Economic Backing

While the provincial inquiry proceeds, the Academy's forward-looking mission to retrain qualified newcomers and lift them out of dead-end, menial jobs has secured definitive support from prominent Canadian leaders. Official letters of endorsement have been integrated into the application file from Atty. Alicia

From Page 1 **Gilmore Academy**
Natividad (Ottawa), human rights advocate Marvin Rotrand, and Fo Niemi (Executive Director of the Center for Research-Action on Race Relations - CRARR). Operationally, the Academy is moving forward without delay. Following foundational board meetings on August 16th and August 23rd to finalize corporate governance



A legacy of diversity: Newcomers from Cambodia, Tunisia, and Venezuela master language skills at Gilmore College. This historic training grounds the new NPO Gilmore Academy.

and pass six key resolutions, the school is managing rolling admissions for its morning, evening, and weekend fast-track modules.

Building an Elite Faculty:

Behind the scenes, the Academy is moving at an unprecedented pace to build a formidable, fully licensed, and highly competent faculty to lead its specialized programs. Unlike institutions struggling with staffing shortages, Gilmore Academy's academic foundation is anchored by a core team of three exceptional, licensed teachers. This begins with the founder's extensive pedagogical credentials, holding a permanent provincial brevet d'enseignement (teaching license) specialized in Secondary English, Commerce, and Secretarial Procedures (Secrétariat). This technical and linguistic expertise is being paired with an influx of top-tier academic talent across Canada. The Academy has recently secured the comprehensive credentials and curriculum vitae of Tony San Juan, a highly respected and multi-decorated veteran educator whose distinguished career spans from elementary school to university-level instruction. Holding prestigious awards of academic distinction, his involvement signals the elite caliber of training the Academy is prepared to deliver. Simultaneously, the faculty network features Fely Rosals Carino, a veteran educator and the community news editor of The North American Filipino Star. Upon arriving from the Philippines after

being recruited, she brought extensive, highly specialized experience teaching Indigenous student populations, adding a vital dimension of cultural empathy to the school's framework. Furthermore, the founder is actively re-engaging elite licensed instructors who taught under the previous school's historical MEQ college permit from 1996 to 2001. Prominent former

French educators, including Mme Djaoida Hamdoni (University of Quebec in Montreal) and Petra Sentes, head teacher at College Marie de France—who attended the May 29th launching of the Academy with film director Hélène Klodawsky—are being recruited to either rejoin the active faculty or leverage their networks to recommend certified language specialists. The Academy is also initiating strategic outreach to connect with Professor Natalie Stake-Doucet who has been recommended by Helene Klodawsky before the screening event of Stolen Time as a prospective seminar leader.

Real Market Demand:

The operational urgency of Gilmore Academy is no longer theoretical; the local market has already responded dynamically. On July 26th, the Academy secured its very first official enrollment under the new Gilmore Academy contract. Following a comprehensive custom proposal submitted to Dr. Paul Barry, a major corporate employer stepped forward to pay the full tuition fee upfront for an intensive private French program. To fast-track this student's Permanent Residency (PR) pathway within a compressed 12-week window, the Academy designed a rigorous schedule running every single day, Monday to Friday, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (15 hours a week). This immersive structure guarantees the completion of one full 45-hour educational level every 3 weeks. To

reach the minimum provincial criterion of Level 4 required for her PR pathways, she will successfully complete this comprehensive 12-week track, beginning Wednesday, September 2, 2026.

Word of mouth is spreading rapidly; the campus has already begun receiving inquiries from new students, including a registration consultation booked for this coming Saturday following a glowing personal recommendation.

Global Talent Responds to "The Crime of Brain Waste"

The urgent necessity of our mission—and the core theme of our editorial page, "The Crime of Brain Waste and the Gilmore Legacy"—was underscored on August 24 by an extraordinary international faculty application sent to our hiring committee via Dr. Alex Gabrito. The Academy received the credentials of Dr. Ira Chloemn B. Daylo from Subic, Zambales, Philippines. Dr. Daylo's background is a masterclass in academic excellence and social impact: Doctor of Education in Educational Management (2015) and a Doctor of Humanities (Honoris Causa, 2020). 16 Years of Tertiary and Post-Graduate Teaching in the Social Sciences at Gordon College. Administrative Leadership as the long-standing Board Secretary for the Olongapo City Government Employees' Multipurpose Cooperative and former Secretary to the Gordon College Board of Trustees. International Human Rights Advocacy, having drafted five local child protection ordinances, facilitated Art Therapy for marginalized populations, and earned recognition at the Gwangju Democracy Challenge in South Korea (2021).

Dr. Daylo, who also holds a pristine 7.0 Academic IELTS score, represents the exact caliber of international talent that the Gilmore Academy seeks to integrate into our community, highlighting the global scale of the "brain waste" crisis where elite minds are left underutilized due to structural barriers.

Breaking the Vicious Cycle: From Survival Jobs to True Fluency

To accommodate the diverse shift-work requirements of Montreal's immigrant population, the Academy has launched rolling admissions across multiple flexible time slots, including Daytime, Evening, and Weekend schedules. However, Academy leadership candidly addresses a severe systemic issue within the newcomer community. For many immigrants, particularly within the Filipino diaspora, an exhausting economic trap exists: individuals juggle two or three menial, low-paying jobs to send immediate financial support to their families back home. Trapped in this survival cycle, many students have historically withdrawn from their studies after Level 1 or Level 2, exhausted by long hours and unable to find the time or energy to complete critical homework.

"It is a vicious cycle," says the

founder, Zenaïda Ferry-Kharroubi. "Newcomers need immediate money, so they take low-paying, dead-end jobs. Because the pay is low, they must work longer and harder, which leaves them with zero time to invest in the advanced language skills required to escape those very same jobs. We must break this pattern."

Stopping at baseline provincial requirements fails to provide the deep linguistic mastery needed to break into professional-grade employment. To confront this barrier head-on, the Academy is aggressively pushing students toward Advanced Levels 5 and 6, proving that long-term academic investment completely shifts a career trajectory.

A Proven Curricular Legacy

The historical efficacy of this curriculum is well-documented. Two years ago, operating under a formal registration contract with the legacy Gilmore College structure, two sisters who had spent three years in the regular public school system found themselves failing their collegiate courses at the CEGEP level. They enrolled in a targeted, intensive 45-hour Level 5 French course held strictly on weekends, utilizing Guylaine Cardinal's Langue seconde par thème. This highly organized, all-in-one method includes all exercise keys at the back of the book, making it uniquely economical and efficient. Through this specialized weekend track, both sisters entirely reversed their academic standings, mastered the advanced linguistic material, and successfully passed their CEGEP curriculum. Today, capitalizing on that rigorous linguistic foundation of them is successfully pursuing her university education to become a certified elementary school teacher—a living testament to the Academy's ultimate dream of producing the institutional builders of tomorrow.

An Elite, Low-Risk Business Model for Higher Education

To maintain its position as an elite alternative to overcrowded public school classrooms—which regularly squeeze 25 to 30 students into a single room—Gilmore Academy has formally capped its specialized cohorts at a maximum of 12 students. This ensures an intimate, high-engagement environment where students learn by doing, combining technical tools like AI with their inherent human emotions and extensive life experiences. This premium cap allows the institution to deploy a self-balancing, low-risk financial model.

To encourage more students to continue up to the advance levels 5 and 6, the Academy is introducing an incentive that if they enroll and complete a six-level package, without any interruption, the Academy will give a 10% cash refund of tuition fees based on the total tuition fees paid of \$8100 for six levels @1350 per level thus reducing the hourly rate of \$30 for a private course to \$27 that is way lower than what most private schools charge ranging between \$40 to \$75. (Refer to our ad on page 3 opposite)



FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

The Crime of Brain Waste and the Gilmore Legacy

Zenaida Ferry-Kharroubi

On November 1, 1989, our institution opened its doors to its very first student under a personal improvement permit from the Ministry of Education (MEQ). It was a modest but deeply intentional start, financed entirely out of my own pocket through a personal home mortgage. By 1996, we secured a college permit, offering vital Attestation of College Studies (AEC) programs in Office Systems Technology, International Trade, and Accounting and Automation. For decades, we welcomed international students, eventually evolving our curriculum to meet a desperate societal need: training healthcare workers (PAB) under the rigorous guidance of retired head nurses with over 30 years of clinical experience.

Today, our graduates are the backbone of long-term care homes like Chateau Westmount in Montreal, as well as critical facilities in Toronto and Edmonton. I did not build this institution to make a profit; I kept tuitions as low as humanly possible, absorbing the financial strain until I could no longer sustain mortgaging my house. I did it because of a profound, unresolved injustice that I have witnessed since I first arrived in Canada in 1965: the tragic, systemic phenomenon of immigrant "brain waste."

The Harsh Reality of Brain Waste in Canada

When highly educated immigrants choose Canada, they are promised a land of opportunity.

Instead, they find an iron curtain of bureaucratic red tape. A recent study by the Fraser Institute highlights that while Canada successfully attracts a massive share of university-educated and STEM-trained immigrants, we fail miserably at matching their qualifications to actual employment outcomes. Thousands of doctors, engineers, and scholars are trapped working as janitors, factory workers, and nannies. Why does this continue?

The Credential Paradox:

Professional regulatory bodies and ministries maintain slow, rigid, and expensive validation processes that disregard decades of international experience.

Institutional Deficit:

Major educational institutions focus heavily on multi-year retraining programs rather than accelerated bridging programs that recognize prior learning.

The "Canadian Experience" Catch-22:

Employers refuse to hire newcomers without local experience, while local institutions offer few direct, structured pathways to get it. The government has begun introducing measures, such as restructuring the immigration selection systems and recalibrating points, but these cosmetic policy shifts only address who gets in—they do not address what happens to them once they are here.

A New Chapter: The Gilmore Academy

We cannot afford to let this talent wither away. To secure this legacy and scale our fight against brain waste, we have officially transformed our previous private model into a newly incorporated federal non-profit organization: The Gilmore Academy of Arts and Social Sciences. Our commitment was recently validated by a personal visit from Michelle Setlakwe, Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Mont-Royal–Outremont and the Official Opposition Critic for Higher Education. MNA Setlakwe's presence at our Academy signals that our message is reaching the highest halls of governance. We are no longer a lone voice crying out in the wilderness; we are a rallying point for systemic change.

A Call to Action for Civic and Political Leaders

I retired from public high school teaching in 1997, but my duty to

education never ended. I cannot fight this battle alone, nor can I fund it single-handedly from my doorstep. The Gilmore Academy is building an innovative framework designed specifically to rapidly upskill, recognize, and transition immigrant professionals into fields where Canada suffers from critical shortages—starting with health and social sciences. To our civic leaders, corporate partners, and fellow educators: I am calling on you to join the Gilmore Academy. We urgently need your financial support, philanthropic partnerships, and specialized expertise to build robust bridging programs. Let us stop forcing university graduates into survival labor. Let us honor the courage it takes to immigrate by honoring the minds that newcomers bring with them. Support the Gilmore Academy, and let us eliminate immigrant “brain waste” together. #



The Board of Directors of the Gilmore Academy of Arts and Social Sciences gathered on Sunday, August 23, 2026 for the second board meeting. Pictured from left to right: Secretary Rocelle Ciron Grospe (former accounting student, 2003–2006), Founder, Director-General, and Publisher/Editor Zenaida Ferry-Kharroubi (seated), and Treasurer Arlene Manalo (former student in French, 2011) Behind them hangs the historic photo of the Academy's 10th-anniversary celebration at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel on Oct. 29, 1999. Regrettably, Jennifer Ellson, Director for Institutional Compliance—who memorably served as the emcee for that historic 10th-anniversary graduation alongside former Philippine Ambassador Francisco Benedicto and then-Registrar Chantal Harvey—was unable to attend due to the severe Sunday flooding on St. Jean Boulevard.



FILCAN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
The North American Filipino Star
7159, ch. de la Cote des Neiges
Montreal, QC H3R 2M2
Tel.: 514-485-7861
E-mail: filipinostar2@gmail.com

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Contributing Writers
Tony San Juan
Toronto News

Jennifer Ellson
Montreal, QC

Kimberly Gultia
Kazue Takamura
McGill University

Sam Kevin

Show Biz News & Layout Editor

Fely Rosales Cariño
Society Editor
Community News

Joy Rosales
Administrative Asst.

Bert Abiera (R.I.P.)
Nov. 16, 1934-Nov. 11, 2024
Founder-Publisher, Filipino Star
Nov.1982-Nov. 97

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Flood paralyzes Metro Manila, Luzon; affected residents ask where did billions go?



Hard rain, slow truths Heavy rains yesterday caused roads to become waterways in many areas across the metro, and the ensuing heavy traffic, such as this buildup in Manila, stranded thousands of motorists and commuters.

Unprecedented rainfall flooded and paralyzed Metro Manila, Central Luzon and a big part of Northern Luzon and the Cordilleras the past days with 27 fatalities and over five million people affected, reminding the affected residents of the billions of pesos worth of flood control projects touted by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the flood control scandal.



The widespread flooding caused by torrential rains affected thousands of barangays and displaced or disrupted the lives of more than five million Filipinos, mostly from Luzon, prompting cancellation of classes in both

private and public schools, suspension of work in government and other sectors, among others.

The Department of Agriculture (DA), meanwhile, said damage from the enhanced southwest monsoon and tropical cyclones Luis and Maymay had climbed to P1.42 billion as of Aug. 17 and affected 43,340 farmers and 34,572 hectares of farmland.

Many groups, including Sen. Panfilo Lacson, bewailed that the government had spent P1.939 trillion on flood-control projects from 2011 to 2025, but flooding remains widespread.

In a statement, Lacson also questioned the absence of a long-term master plan on flood control and other infrastructures to guide the use of billions more in public funds.

Lacson said the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) spending did not include funds allocated to other government agencies for flood-control programs.

He raised the issue following days of heavy rains and flooding that prompted class and work suspensions and caused severe traffic congestion in several areas.

The senator said flood control requires an integrated, long-term approach because projects must complement one another

rather than be implemented as isolated undertakings under successive administrations.

Lacson said the proposed 2027 national budget includes P107.4 billion for flood-control projects but warned that the money could be wasted without an overarching program.

"Are we following a flood management program? If not, we are just wasting money because we have no direction," Lacson said.

"In the proposed 2027 budget, some P107 billion is earmarked for flood-control projects. A good question to ask is, how will it be spent? Are there overall programs for this? If so, where are they?" he added.

Following the floods, Malacañang ordered the

implementation of appropriate alternative work arrangements in government offices and alternative learning modes in public and private schools in Metro Manila and 17 provinces amid continued heavy rains from the southwest monsoon ("habagat").

Executive Secretary Ralph Recto signed Memorandum Circular No. 131 on Wednesday following the recommendation of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), citing the threat of localized flooding and travel hazards due to persistent rains.

The measure covers the National Capital Region and the provinces of Abra, Benguet, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Pangasinan, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal and Occidental Mindoro.

In Benguet, about 5.8 tons of Chinese cabbage and carrots were discarded after continuous rains, congestion at trading centers and worsening road conditions left much of the produce unfit for sale.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. directed the DA-Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) to immediately assess the situation and assist vegetable farmers struggling with weather disruptions and weak market demand.

The directive followed reports that Chinese cabbage and carrots had been discarded along the Labey-Lacamen Road in Tublay, Benguet.

Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. president Danilo Fausto warned that agricultural losses could continue mounting as the country approaches the last quarter, when stronger typhoons typically hit. ■



Elisabeth Prass

DÉPUTÉE DE / MNA FOR D'ARCY MCGEE



 514-488-7028

 Elisabeth.Prass.DMG@assnat.qc.ca

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World Bank keeps slower 3.7% growth forecast for Philippines

The World Bank has kept its growth outlook for the Philippines this year.

In its Philippine Economic Update, the World Bank said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to slow down to 3.7% in 2026, from 4.4% in 2025.

This was unchanged from its forecast under the Global Economic Prospects report issued in June.

The World Bank's growth projection for the country this year falls within the government's downwardly revised 3.5% to 4.5% GDP growth goal.

The slower 3.7% economic growth projection for 2026 was "driven by two compounding shocks: policy uncertainty that has reduced fixed investment, affected private sector confidence, and reduced foreign direct investment; and a surge in global energy prices that pushed domestic inflation to an average of 4.8% in the first half of 2026, weighing on consumption and jobs," according to the World Bank.

In the same report, the World Bank cited the Philippines' graduation to upper-middle income status in 2025.

The World Bank, in its latest income assessment in July, reported that the Philippines' gross national income (GNI) per capita has reached \$4,850, exceeding the \$4,636 UMIC threshold.

The Philippines' transition to upper-middle-income (UMIC) status is a recognition of decades of reforms to sustain growth, but programs focusing on infrastructure, human capital, and the energy sector will help the country unlock its higher growth potential, the World Bank said.

In its latest Philippine Economic Update (PEU), the World Bank said sustaining its growth momentum will require reforms that will help the country navigate current headwinds.

"Over the past 15 years, the Philippines has become one of the world's fastest-growing middle-income economies. Since 2010, GDP (gross domestic product) per capita growth

has been broadly pro-poor, averaging 3.5 percent a year, among the top quartile of middle-income countries," World Bank Division Director for Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei Zafer Mustafaoglu said during the public launch of the PEU report held at the Makati Shangri-La.

While the country has demonstrated resilience in the face of major shocks—including the pandemic, extreme weather events, and global uncertainties—Mustafaoglu said it is once again navigating economic headwinds.

The World Bank expects Philippine economic growth to slow to 3.7 percent this year mainly due to the surge in global energy prices, which accelerated inflation. The policy uncertainty also affected investments and private sector confidence.

"These are not insurmountable challenges. Good policy can address that. The Philippines has shown time and again that it has the institutions, capacity, and resources to navigate difficult moments. Our reports identify two broad areas where decisive action will make the difference," Mustafaoglu said.

According to the World Bank, the Philippines should protect the most vulnerable by expanding targeted social assistance, including broadening the 4Ps conditional cash transfer program to near-poor households.

Mustafaoglu said this also requires managing inflation, ensuring that monetary policy prioritizes keeping prices under control.

The second priority is to ensure the economy comes back to a growth and job creation path.

"That requires restoring investor confidence, resolving uncertainty around infrastructure procurement through clear, transparent and consistently enforced standards, which can help restart investment and put growth back on a higher trajectory. Equally important is lowering the cost of doing business in money, time and predictability. This would send a strong signal to Filipino

entrepreneurs and global investors alike that the Philippines is a dependable, competitive place to invest and grow," Mustafaoglu added.

According to the World Bank, economic growth will accelerate to 5.2 percent in 2027 and 5.5 percent in 2028 if the government implements the right policy responses.

While inflation is projected to remain elevated this year and will likely average 5.8 percent, World Bank Senior Country Economist Jaffar Al-Rikabi said government interventions, such as providing cash assistance, helped shield millions from poverty.

These include reforms that promote spatial convergence, help firms become more productive, ensure resources are allocated to their most productive uses, and facilitate the full implementation of free trade agreements.

Meanwhile, the government vowed it will continue to implement reforms that will help sustain growth.

"We remain committed to fiscal consolidation, ensuring our fundamentals stay robust so that we can sustain investments in education, health, critical infrastructure, and other priority sectors," Finance Secretary Frederick Go said.

Go said the government is also directing infrastructure, investment, and reform toward the regions so the gains of the upper-middle-income status are felt nationwide.

"The government must continue to be a robust enabler of growth, improving the ease of doing business, and fostering a highly competitive environment," Go said.

Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, for his part, also assured the government is ramping up efforts to ease doing business in the country.

"We are doing the best we can to speed up the reforms in

government to ensure that the ease of doing business in the country is improved tremendously," he said.

Balisacan added the government is also focusing on reforms to strengthen energy security and reduce the cost of power in the country.

To sustain its "hard-won" progress, the lender said the country must act on "three fronts."

"First, protect the most vulnerable by expanding targeted social assistance, including temporarily broadening the 4Ps conditional cash transfer program to near-poor households," the World Bank said,

The lender said this will help prevent the energy price shock from pushing approximately two million Filipinos into poverty.

"Second, keep inflation under control without stalling the recovery," the World Bank said.

"Third, restore investor confidence by resolving ambiguities in infrastructure governance and lowering the cost of doing business to reignite both public and private investment," the lender said.

The World Bank said the Philippines' achieving UMIC status caps two decades of sustained economic growth and rising living standards.

"This is a milestone the Filipino people have earned. The World Bank is proud to have been supporting the Philippines in its continuous development," said Zafer Mustafaoglu, World Bank Division Director for the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei.

"Sustaining it requires going further—prioritizing reforms that lower the cost of doing business, restore investor confidence, and create more and better jobs for Filipino families. That work continues, and so does our partnership," said Mustafaoglu. ■

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ONTARIO COMMUNITY NEWS

Tony San Juan, OCT

Mayor Chow Meets with Toronto's Filipino Canadian Community

In a special town hall meeting, City of Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow meets with leaders, advocates, sponsors, and supporters in the Filipino-Canadian community. The incumbent mayor is registered to run for reelection in the City's municipal election on October 26, 2026. As of July 26, 2026, there are 32 registered

community".

Organised by the Filipino Advisory Council (FAC) in collaboration with community organisations, socio-professional, business and advocacy groups, the 3-hour event was described as "a unique opportunity to sit down with the Mayor of Toronto and make sure the needs,

In her response, Mayor Chow thanked the town hall event organisers and community leaders for their collaborative spirit in putting on the "one-on-one" gathering. The hizzoner outlined some of the city's current major programs under her leadership, and about her plans for the "next term" related to non-profit co-op housing, community hubs, apartment rental increase protection, support workers' hiring, TTC ride discounts, and 211 communication service for mental

other concerned groups & individuals. Notably, former Toronto Medical Officer Eileen De Villa, George Brown Polytechnic Vice President & CFO Michael Herrera, PIDC President Tom Tan, and City Councillor Neethan Shan, among others, were in attendance at the rare meeting.

One of the highly applauded statements was Mayor Chow's call and challenge when she asked: "Don't you think that it's about time for the Filipino community to have a Councillor in



Mayor Olivia Chow speaks to the Filipino-Canadian community.

candidates for mayor as published by the City Clerk. Toronto voters will elect 25 city councillors and twelve school trustees for the public, catholic, and French school boards.

Dubbed as "Filipino Community Town Hall" and with the theme: "Ating Lungsod, Ating Boses" (Our City, Our Voice), the 2-hour community gathering was held on July 28, 2026, at the Earl Bales Park

ideas, and voices of the Filipino community are heard directly. Whether you want to ask a question, share your vision for the city, or simply show up to support your neighbours, your presence matters."

Several vital issues and concerns were determined by the attendees after a 45-minute workshop-style discussion among resident-



Community Centre, 4169 Bathurst Street, North York, Toronto, with over 150 people in attendance. Some guests characterised the early evening occasion as a desirable meeting of "the young and the old in the invisible

participants from East York, Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, and downtown Toronto. Among the prioritised public issues presented to the Mayor were housing, mental health, transit, safety, seniors' welfare, and community spaces.



Tony San Juan posing for a souvenir photo with his friends

health.

Among the community partners and sponsors of the occasion were Gender Inclusive, Leadership, Involvement, Wellness (GILIW), Rise Tribe, Philippine Independence Day Council (PIDC), Society of Professional Artists, Recreation & Community (SPARC), Filipino Student Association of Canada (FSAC), and

Toronto"? Many agreed that the Toronto municipal board needs to have a first "Filipino city councillor" to follow the historic achievements of Markham's Alex Chiu, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Max Viola, Brampton's Rowena Santos and Ajax's Lisa Bower. Mabuhay PHOTOS Courtesy of Leny Rose Simbre.



TORONTO CITY COUNCIL OKAYS DEDICATED FILIPINO COMMUNITY CENTRE PATHWAY

By: Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

In a 24 to 0 vote, members of the Toronto City Council approved Motion MM43.8 during its meeting on July 30, 2026. The unanimous vote gave the Council's nod to the motion presented by Councillor Neethan Shan and duly seconded by Mayor Olivia Chow for a "dedicated Filipino community centre". The legislative measure is, indeed, a welcome development for the Filipino-Canadian community in Canada's popular multicultural city

One would recall that Councillor Shan, a friend of the Filipino community, is the same municipal legislator who nine years ago, in November 2017, moved to approve a motion to proclaim "June Heritage Month" in Canada's largest city. The official declaration marked the first time Filipino Heritage Month, which began in June 2018, was recognised "by any level of government in Canada". Additionally, as part of his motion, Councillor Shan called on Toronto City Council to formally ask the Federal and

business organisations were in attendance at the Council's Chamber Bayanihan Spirit Inc., the prime mover of the successful proposal, acknowledged the support of several community leaders and advocates "to build a lasting home for Filipino communities across Toronto" and by "taking an important step toward creating a space that honours our history, celebrates our culture, and supports future generations." Community leaders Tom Tan, Dr Eileen De Vila, and Michael Herrera are reported to have had past and present conversations with political personalities and social advocates concerning the need for a permanent Filipino community cultural space. Observers cited, however, that

the worthwhile endeavour would require resolve and pathways to pursue relevant partnerships and collaborative actions, including but not limited to development research, organisational planning, funding proposals, feasibility studies, and further community engagements. The Bayanihan Spirit Inc. leaders and other community advocates are hopeful of having continuing consultation with community stakeholders, including city staff, housing proponents, and government & project grantors, on opportunities and options for realising a "cultural centre-housing-business units mix for the oftentimes labelled "quiet and invisible community".



Toronto City Councillor Neethan Shan, proponent of a motion creating a Fil-Can Community Cultural Centre.

MM43.8 is described as a proposal to "Support Exploring Partnerships for a New Filipino Community Centre in Toronto". Put forward by Councillor for Rouge Park-Ward 25 Neethan Shan, the motion calls on the City of Toronto to work directly with local Filipino community representatives to explore partnerships for a new community hub. Moreover, the approved motion requires the City to consider areas in the City including Scarborough and North York as potential sites "to ensure the centre can best serve Filipino communities across the City, while building on the work of grassroots organisations that have long created spaces for the community."

Provincial governments to make the same milestone declaration. Pointing out that more than 270,000 Filipinos call Toronto home, the "community deserves a permanent space to gather, celebrate our culture, access programs, and strengthen community connections." And one meaningful way is to "create a dedicated community and cultural centre" in the city. A large number of Filipino city residents showed their utmost support by signing petitions, writing letters of support, and sharing and voicing interest in the proposal. A delegation of community leaders and officers of social, professional and



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Alex Eala in New York for US Open, officially climbs to no. 18 in WTA ranking



It's official: Filipino tennis star Alexandra "Alex" Eala has reached a new career-high world ranking of No. 18.

This as Eala set another milestone as the highest-seeded Filipino player in Grand Slam singles in the 2026 US Open in Flushing Meadows, New York on Aug. 30 to Sept. 13.

The 21-year-old Eala's highest-ever ranking came on the heels of her breakthrough WTA Tour title in Washington DC.

Eala arrived in New York and shared photos of her US Open outfit, a blue dress inspired by a basketball jersey, complete with netted cuts on the sides, Dyan Castillejo of ABS-CBN reported.



Nike also released a black shirt for Eala featuring gray floral graphics, the iconic "Just Do It" motto, and "Alex Eala" written across the back.

The Nike Eala kit features the phrases "Kung may itinanim, may aanihin" (As you sow, so shall you reap) and "Kapag lumago, hindi na hihinto" (Never stop flourishing).

Eala climbed to No. 18 with 2,221 points in the WTA live rankings after reaching the third round of the Cincinnati Open, where she pushed No. 10 Amanda Anisimova to the limit before losing steam, 6-4, 4-6, 2-6.

The new official WTA ranking showed Aryna Sabalenka, Elena Rybakina, Jessica Pegula, and Coco Gauff occupied the top four in the new rankings. Mirra Andreeva rose one place to round out the top five.

Eala will return to action in the US Open, starting in the mixed doubles where she will team up with

The 21-year-old tennis sensation made history at the All England Club as the first Filipino to be seeded in a major singles tourney.

She went on to make a breakthrough run at Wimbledon, stunning defending champion Iga Swiatek en route to becoming the maiden Filipino to reach the fourth round of the prestigious tilt.

At the WTA DC Open in Washington, she stunned Paris Olympics gold medalist Quinweng Zheng of China and defending champion Leylah Fernandez of Canada to reach the quarterfinals.

Eala eventually captured her first WTA 500 title at the Mubadala DC Open in Washington DC two weeks ago by

defeating world No. 3 Jessica Pegula of the United States, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

Eala is set to make her second straight appearance in the US Open main draw, which will run from August 30 to September 13 at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows, New York.

Meanwhile, Eala and men's world No. 4 Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada headline the wildcard entries for the US Open mixed doubles

competition scheduled for August 24 to 26.

Eala will make her professional mixed doubles debut alongside the 25-year-old Auger-Aliassime, who won a bronze medal with Gabriela Dabrowski in the mixed doubles event in the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Leading the 16-team field are WTA No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka and ATP No. 5 Novak Djokovic, who have the highest combined singles ranking. They are followed by Elena Rybakina and Taylor Fritz, Diana Shnaider and Daniil Medvedev, last year's runners-up Iga Swiatek and Casper Ruud, Belinda Bencic and Flavio Cobolli, and Anisimova and Learner Tien.

Joining Eala and Auger-Aliassime as wildcards are defending champions Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori, Leylah Fernandez and Frances Tiafoe, Taylor Townsend and Alexander Zverev, and Elina Svitolina and Gael Monfils. Three more wildcard pairs are still set to be announced.

Two additional teams will earn spots in the main draw through the qualifying tournament.. ■

Canada, Philippines sign tourism pact to boost travel, economic ties

Canada and the Philippines have signed a new agreement aimed at strengthening tourism cooperation, marking another step in expanding ties between the two countries.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU), signed in Vancouver on July 3, establishes a framework for the two countries to collaborate on tourism by sharing information, data and best practices to support growth in the sector.

The agreement was signed by Canada's Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Rechie Valdez, and the Philippines' Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro.

"This agreement with the Philippines builds on the strong ties our countries already share and creates a foundation for even greater tourism, investment and economic growth," said Minister Valdez in a press release.

"For our many kababayans with family and deep roots in the Philippines, it also creates more opportunities to reconnect with loved ones and celebrate the ties that unite our communities. As we build the strongest economy in the G7, partnerships like this help Canadian businesses reach more people, welcome more visitors and create prosperity that is felt in communities across the country.

According to the federal government, the partnership is designed to reinforce tourism's role as an economic driver, helping create jobs, support small businesses and generate new opportunities for workers and communities in both countries.

The tourism agreement also complements broader efforts to deepen economic cooperation, including ongoing negotiations toward an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Canada free trade agreement and a separate bilateral free trade agreement between Canada and the Philippines.

The two countries already share strong tourism links, driven by cultural connections, education-related travel and a significant visiting-friends-and-relatives market.

Nearly one million Canadians of Filipino origin now call Canada home, while many Canadians travel to the Philippines for work, leisure and extended stays, says the government.

In 2025, Canada welcomed approximately 115,800 Filipino tourists, the government says.

Officials say strengthening international tourism partnerships will also support local businesses across Canada, with visitor spending benefiting hotels, restaurants, attractions and other tourism operators.. ■

Voices of the Filipino Community in Quebec: REMEMBERING THE PAST, BUILDING THE FUTURE

By Alfonso Abdon

3rd article in the series edited by
Kimberly Gultia and Kazue Takamura

This essay is adapted from a presentation delivered at "Voices of the Filipino Community in Quebec: Memorializing the Past, Building the Future" (April 10–11, 2026). It has been prepared for publication with a brief introduction and light editing. Remembering the Past, Building the Future is a monthly series dedicated to preserving Filipino voices through autobiographical essays. Together, these first-person narratives create an enduring record of the people, journeys, and experiences that have shaped our shared history, connecting memories of the past with the lives and aspirations of the present.

This month, we feature Alfonso Abdon, known to many simply as Al Abdon. Through the story of his journey—from newcomer to newspaper photographer to community leader—he offers a firsthand account of the development of Filipino community life in the greater Montreal area, introducing us to many of the individuals and organizations whose dedication helped build and sustain community life in Quebec, including the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal, where he now serves as Chairman.

I arrived in Canada in the mid-1970s through the fiancée visa process. My wife, Cora, had spent two years in Montreal working hard to establish herself before sponsoring me so we could begin a new life together in a country long described as a land of opportunity — strong, free, and full of promise. My arrival coincided with a remarkable moment in Montréal's history. The 1976 Summer Olympics filled the city with international pride, even as Quebec underwent a profound political shift with the election of the Parti Québécois. It was a striking contrast: Montréal shining on the world stage as a symbol of Canadian unity while simultaneously becoming the center of a rising movement that questioned that very unity.

Amid these tensions, I found my anchor in the Filipino community. The familiar faces, shared language, and small cultural establishments scattered across the city stirred deep nostalgia for the homeland I had left behind. In gatherings filled with food, laughter, and stories, I found belonging. By focusing on community rather than politics, I built a life rooted in culture, friendship, and the shared journey of immigrants forging a future in Canada.

As I settled into Montreal, I grew curious about the pioneers who came before me through early Filipino periodicals such as *Bulalakaw*, *The Filipino Forum*. Our community's deep roots are further shown by the fact that the Philippines was proudly represented at Expo 67. Although there was no official pavilion, the local Filipino community participated in events showcasing folk dance, music, and cultural artistry. Among those early

leaders was Pastor Orlan Racacho, whose more than 65 years of service continue to inspire us.

My involvement deepened as I attended cultural events across Montreal. During this period, I met Fred Magallanes, publisher of *The Filipino Forum*. Recognizing my passion for photography and community life, he appointed me the newspaper's Roving



A striking snapshot of my youth. There I am in 1968, lean and proud, standing beside my massive Kodak camera setup. Decades before the senior years would reshape my silhouette, this moment captured me at the very beginning of my journey."

Photographer. Through my lens, I witnessed the unfolding story of Filipino Montreal — elections, celebrations, debates, and the birth of organizations that would shape our identity.

The first association I covered was the Filipino Association of Montreal and Suburbs (FAMAS) in 1979, when Dr. Ed Pelausa won the election at Beaver Lake. FAMAS traces its origins to 1964, when the community's earliest formal organization was established under Emil Assitores's leadership as the Philippine Association of Montreal (PAM). By 1967, PAM faced a major internal crisis that reshaped local



My mobile studio: A souvenir from my days on the move as a roving photographer.

community organizing. Out of that controversy, a new group — the Filipino Association of the Province of Quebec (FAPQ) — emerged with Orlan Racacho as its first president. PAM continued to operate independently under John Alvarado, creating ongoing challenges for unified representation. In 1969,

through the mediation of the Philippine Consul to Canada, the dual-association situation was resolved, leading to the historic consolidation that formed FAMAS.

By 1976, the Filipino population in Montreal continued to grow, particularly in the West Island. Recognizing the needs of this expanding demographic, former

dynamism of younger leaders.

Organizational growth continued across the region. On August 11, 1979, the Filipino Golden Ages Association of Montreal (FILGA) held its first officer induction under Atty. Aurelio Briones. A year later, on October 18, 1980, Atty. Briones also founded the Federation of Filipino Canadian Associations of Quebec (FFCAQ), which later gave rise to the Council of Canadian Filipino Associations of Quebec (CCFAQ). Today, FFCAQ is led by current president Luzviminda Ogerio Mazzone and organizes events like the Pinoy Food Drive, Easter Fun Day, and the Tapestry fashion show, while CCFAQ, currently led by president Sir Dario L. Boco, KGCR, hosts the annual Philippine Independence Day parade in June. Beyond civic and senior groups, sports associations solidified community bonds. The Philippine Basketball Association of Montreal (PBAM), a cornerstone sports league established in 1971 by founders Jake Maguigad and Robert De Guzman, served as a vital cultural anchor for newly arriving immigrants in Côte-des-Neiges. Guided through decades of growth by dedicated executives and organizers, the league expanded into a massive multigenerational network with dozens of divisions, recently celebrating its historic 50th anniversary milestone with a gala at Hôtel Ruby Foo's. Today, the league is led by current president Cholo Maguigad. Additional senior groups emerged over time; among these, the United Pilipino Seniors (UPS) of Quebec—originally founded under Pete Vergara—is today actively headed by president Sir Gerry Danzil, while pioneer-era groups like the Alliance of Filipino Seniors of Quebec and People Helping People are no longer active.

By 2006, after retiring from academic life and the Canadian Forces, my role shifted from photographer to community leader. Elected as a FAMAS director, I became involved in guiding cultural initiatives and public advocacy. FAMAS underwent its own political transitions, including the contested 2013 election between Aurora Osdon and Cesar Manuel, followed by leadership shifts across Team Mabuhay, Samahang Makabayan, Team Malaya, and Samahan ng Makamasang Pilipino.

A major milestone came in 2018 with the establishment of the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM) — where I have had the honor of serving as Chairman since its founding — sparked by Councillor Marvin Rotrand's motion declaring June as Filipino Heritage Month in CDN-NDG. The movement gained national scope when MP Salma Zahid sponsored the federal motion recognizing June as Filipino Heritage Month across Canada.

From the pioneers of the 1960s to today's cultural advocates, our community's story continues — rooted in the past, growing toward the future. #



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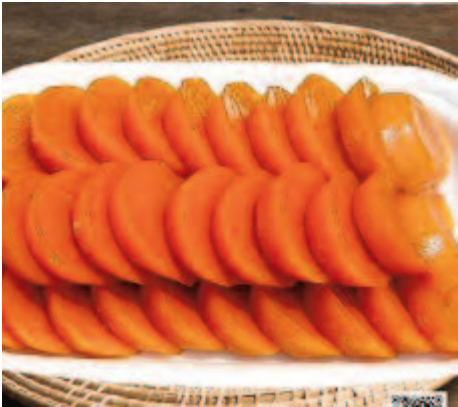
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Popular Pinoy Recipes



Kutsinta

Ingredients
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup cassava flour (or tapioca starch)
1 cup brown sugar
3 cups water
1 tsp lye water (lihiya)
1 to 2 tsp annatto powder (atsute) or annatto seeds soaked in hot water (for the signature orange-brown color)
Freshly grated coconut (for serving)

Instructions
•Prepare the steamer: Bring water to a boil in your steamer. Lightly brush your small molds or puto molds with oil if they are not silicone.
•Mix dry ingredients: In a large bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, cassava flour, and brown sugar. Add liquids: Gradually pour in the water while stirring until completely smooth and lump-free. Mix in the annatto water/powder for color, then add the lye water and stir well.
•Strain: Strain the batter through a fine-mesh sieve to remove any remaining tiny lumps.
•Pour and steam: Fill your greased molds about ¾ full. Cover the steamer lid with a cloth (to stop water drops from falling on the cakes) and steam over medium heat for 30 to 45 minutes until set and firm.
•Cool and serve: Let them cool completely so they firm up into their chewy texture, remove from molds, and top with freshly grated coconut.

Cassava Cake

Ingredients
Cake Base
2 packages (16 oz / 454g each) grated cassava (thawed if frozen, squeezed of excess moisture)
1 can (14 oz / 400ml) coconut milk
1 can (14 oz / 396g) sweetened condensed milk (reserve ½ cup for



the topping)
1 can (12 oz / 354ml) evaporated milk
2 large eggs
¼ cup butter, melted
½ cup grated cheddar cheese (optional, for a sweet & savory balance)

Custard Topping
⅓ cup reserved sweetened condensed milk
1 egg yolk
¼ cup coconut milk
½ cup grated cheddar cheese (for topping)

Instructions
•Prep the oven and pan: Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease a 9x13 inch baking pan with butter or cooking spray.
•Mix the cake base: In a large mixing bowl, combine the grated cassava, coconut milk, sweetened condensed milk (minus the reserved ⅓ cup), evaporated milk, eggs, melted butter, and cheese (if using). Stir well until completely combined.
•Bake the base: Pour the mixture into the prepared pan. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, or until the center is relatively firm and set.
•Make the topping: While the cake bakes, whisk together the reserved condensed milk, egg yolk, and coconut milk in a small bowl until smooth.
•Add topping and broil: Pour the custard topping evenly over the baked cassava cake. Sprinkle the grated cheddar cheese generously over the top.
•Brown the top: Return the pan to the oven and bake for another 15 minutes. Then, switch the oven to broil for 2 to 3 minutes until the cheese and custard turn a beautiful golden brown.
•Watch it closely so it does not burn!
•Cool completely: Let the cake cool completely at room temperature before slicing. It needs this time to firm up into its signature dense, chewy texture.

Ingredients
Yeast



Steamed Rice Cake

Starter:
4 g active dry yeast
2 g white sugar
15 ml room-temperature water

Rice Batter & Syrup: 150 g plain rice flour (Note: Do not use glutinous rice flour for this version)
150 ml room-temperature water
80 g white sugar
150 ml boiling water
1 tsp vegetable oil (plus extra for greasing the pan)

Step-by-Step Instructions
•Activate the Yeast: In a small bowl, combine the active dry yeast, 2 g of sugar, and 15 ml of room-temperature water. Stir gently and let it sit for 10 minutes until it becomes foamy.
•Make the Sugar Syrup: In a heatproof bowl, dissolve 80 g of white sugar into 150 ml of boiling water. Stir thoroughly until completely clear, then let it cool down completely to room temperature.
•Mix the Batter: Place the 150 g of rice flour into a large mixing bowl. Whisk in 150 ml of room-temperature water and the cooled sugar syrup until you have a smooth, thin batter with absolutely no lumps.
•Ferment: Pour the foamy yeast mixture into the rice batter and stir well. Cover the bowl tightly with cling wrap. Let it proof at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours. When ready, the surface will be covered in small, active bubbles.
•Prepare for Steaming: Stir the batter one last time to release large air pockets, then mix in 1 tsp of vegetable oil. Lightly grease an 8-inch cake pan with vegetable oil and pour the batter inside.
•Steam: Bring the water in your steamer to a rolling boil over high heat. Set the pan inside. Wrap your steamer lid with a clean kitchen towel—this prevents water droplets from dripping onto the cake surface.
•Steam on high heat for 15 to 20 minutes.
•Cool and Serve: Remove the cake from the steamer and let it cool completely before slicing.
•Use a lightly oiled knife to cut the Bibingka is famous for its soft, spongy texture, slightly charred top, and rich, salty-sweet toppings. While



Traditional Bibingka (Baked Rice Cake)

traditionally baked in clay pots lined with banana leaves over hot coals, this recipe adapted for home ovens delivers that same authentic bakery aroma cake into clean diamonds or wedges.

Ingredients
200 g rice flour (regular rice flour, not glutinous)
100 g white sugar
1 tbsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
3 large eggs (beaten)
240 ml coconut milk
30 g unsalted butter (melted)
1 piece banana leaf (softened over an open flame to line the pan)
Toppings: 1 salted egg (sliced into wedges)
50 g grated cheddar cheese or queso de bola
Extra melted butter for brushing
Grated fresh coconut (for serving)

Instructions
•Prep the Oven and Pan: Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
•Line an 8-inch cake pan or pie dish with the softened banana leaf, letting the edges hang over slightly.
•Mix Dry Ingredients: In a large bowl, whisk together the rice flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
•Combine Wet Ingredients: Whisk the beaten eggs, coconut milk, and melted butter into the dry ingredients until a completely smooth batter forms.
•Assemble: Pour the batter into the lined pan. Arrange the salted egg slices symmetrically on top of the batter.
•Bake: Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the center is set. Broil and
•Garnish: Sprinkle the cheese over the top. Turn the oven to broil for 2 to 3 minutes until the cheese melts and the top develops beautiful, dark charred spots.
•Serve: Brush with extra melted butter and sprinkle generously with fresh grated coconut while hot.





Social Tidbits Montreal Community News Fely Rosales Cariño

Greetings to my faithful Tidbits readers! Yes, summer is still in full swing as I write. This season has especially been hot, but there are no complaints here. Isn't a joy to leave house in shorts and flip flops, or any of your preferred attire. I hope you have been enjoying your summer basking in the sunlight, indulging in your favorite ice cream, or frolicking in the pool. Or maybe you have been partying with our kababayans (compatriots). We, Filipinos are partygoers; we just love a good time. Well, let's see if you've attended any of the social happenings around town.

Summer Disco

There's nothing like a disco that will get you out of the house. How intuitive of the Cpouncil of Canadian Filipino Association of Quebec (CCFAQ) who held their Summer Disco Night on July 11, 2026 at 6767 Côte-des-Neiges, Montreal. Guests started appearing early as the bright sun still held its presence. The playing of the national anthems Lupang Hinirang and O Canada, signaled the start of the party. Flag bearers Sir Cristos Sideris (Canada), Sir Gerry Osis (Quebec), and Sir Francis Bernabe (Philippine) stood at attention and CCFAQ Secretary Alona Amano led the Invocation. CCFAQ President Sir Dario Boco took hold of the microphone and delivered his welcome address. Dancing then began in earnest.

As supper was going on, there was no difficulty filling up the entertainment lists. For intermission, we were treated to the performances of 2 dance groups: D'Easy Dance Group and Momshies. The first one on the floor was led by Cherry Palmos who danced with Annie, Perlita, Estelle Mayee, Brigitte, Grace, and Racquel.

After the 2 groups completed their shows, CCFAQ VP Sir Gerry Danzil gave the closing remarks. But wait, the show wasn't over yet. To the delight of the crowd, singers emerged to give their solo renditions: Sir Al Abdon (his New York, New York was the surprise of the evening!), Sir Gerry Danzil (Paint My Love), Sir Dario Boco, Sir Cipriano Galang, Jonathan Santander (medley of sweet notes and Neil Sedaka's songs), Jerry Osis (I'd Love You to Want Me), and Edgar Genero (Baby Blue). It was near midnight, but guests remained dancing, not willing for the evening to come to an end. Seen enjoying were dance pairs Al & Cora Abdon, Mr. & Mrs. Omectin, Christos & Lolita Sideris and many others. First Ladies Claire Boco (CCFAQ) and Linda Danzil (UPS)

manned the Food Committee while Doris Tabo-oy took care of the tickets. All is well that started well. Thank you, President Boco and your team, for an enjoyable evening!

HERITAGE MONTH

The Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal (FHSM), under the solid leadership of its Chairman Al Abdon, met at Kam Shing Restaurant at 6730 Côte-des-Neiges on July 15, 2026. The intimate group gathered to close the Heritage month celebration. Chairman Al credited the members who stood by FHSM to keep the Filipino culture alive, thus affirming what a true Filipino means: matatag, maalaga, at may malasakit. A thoughtful Chairman Al expressed his deep gratitude to the group for their unwavering faith, loyalty, and love for the Filipino heritage. And like a tireless school master, he diligently took attendance at meetings, events, and activities. He devised a system where attendance merits points. In his tally, he recognized 3 individuals who earned the most points. First is Kimberly Gultia who finds time to serve FHSM while going through the demands of completing a thesis. Her work with the BANQ (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec) and active involvement in our Kapwa events secured those important points. Second to be recognized was Elma Bulatao, whose consistent attendance (she held the best attendance record in 2025) and participation continue to impress. Elma serves with her heart. And finally to be honored was Rebecca Aguilar who achieved an impossible feat – an almost perfect attendance (how does she do it?). She snagged the top scorer and is the declared overall winner for the first half of 2026. To the recipients' delight, each received gifts of appreciation!

To close the gathering, Jeannette Pérignon gave a wonderful announcement to highlight the efforts of the Golden Maidens, the FHSM dance group under her creative management. They belatedly received a Certificate of Recognition (from two years ago) from the office of the PMO in Ottawa, signed by Recchi Valdez. Those who received the certificates were Jeannette Pérignon, Dolores Belandres, Elma Bulatao, and Evangeline Ruance. Also acknowledged were Edith Fedalizo, Paul Imperial, and Minda Mazzone (FHSM Treasurer and Director of Culture & Arts). Well, friends, look at your calendar and be absent no more. Come to the FHSM socials! You will

surely be treated to a good dining experience like this year's feast: wonton soup, kalamare, chicken Tao, bbq chicken, beef and broccoli, shrimp lobster sauce, chow mein and more. Sign up now!

PISTA SA NAYON

FAMAS President Josemari "Jojo" Laud must be sleeping well these days as Pista sa Nayon ended with flying colors. This event occurred on July 19, 2026 at Martin Luther King Park on 3533 Kent Avenue, Montreal. Set up were tents that formed an enclosure where the crowds can avail themselves of free offerings of food by different associations in their tents. There were also mini restaurants behind the stage. A special trio of emcees Svetlana Suarez, Jane Cayan and Ed Valdez ensured a fun-filled and well-organized stream of activities. Kudos to this team for their hard work and they even made it look easy! They made sure to remind the crowd to visit the different booths and just enjoy the day.

Dignitaries present were Stephanie Valenzuela (Mayor, CDN-NDG), Anthony Housefather (MP, Mount Royal), and Marvin Rotrand (Director General, United Against Hate Canada). As well, the dedicated Sonny Moroz (Councilor, Snowdon) and Milany Thiagarajah (Councilor, Darlington) lent their warm presence to the festivities. They all gave their well wishes to the gathered Filipinos with their families, friends, and guests. Those at the park easily experienced a Filipino fiesta atmosphere as they listened to enthusiastic singers, watched an array of folk dancers, and browsed through the tents filled with Philippine foods, clothing, and various artifacts for people to see or buy. The most irresistible was being assailed by the pleasant whiff of Filipino flavors floating from the various restaurant tents.

This isn't just a Filipino event, folks. The surrounding neighborhood and passersby sometimes take part in the activities. And to the delight of everyone, this year included a bonus - the appearance of the King of Zumba, Ron Antonio; this would be hard to beat for next year! He was really good; he did not disappoint. Eager fans stayed at the front of the stage asking for more; that's why he's king!

The Pista Sa Nayon is an annual show undertaken by the Filipino Association of Montreal and Suburbs (FAMAS). This year's event is the brainchild of the FAMAS directors led by President Jojo, whose unflagging effort made this tantalizing event

possible, with the unwavering support of the members. See you next year!

LUZVIMINDA

A new association just said hello to the Filipino Community. Welcome to the Luzviminda Association of Montreal (LAM). It debuted on July 25, 2026 at 6767 Côte-des-Neiges, Montreal. Conversations among Filipino leaders led by FAMAS President Jojo Laud gradually gave way to its formation. This evening, the program began when Raymund Lastra, Nestor Beladia, and Francis Bernabe held the three flags (Philippine, Quebec, Canada) as the anthems were played. Invocation was given by FAMAS Secretary Alona Amano, opening remarks by Erlinda Armelon, and inspirational talk by Luzviminda President Marifel Buendia. Dinner time followed. Master of Ceremonies Svetlana Suarez introduced the performers that entertained the crowd: Adiva Estinoso sang two ballads, the Momshies Dance Grooves showed their talents, and the Sampaguita Dancers of Montreal displayed their flair. The sampaguitas were Lolita & Chris Sideris, Raquel Trinidad, Rosie San Juan, Ethel Joy Lasaten, Lucy Reyes, Siony, Mary Jane Munoz, and Luz Maglaya.

Luzviminda Treasurer Aubrey Borromeo introduced the guest speaker of the evening, Stephanie Valenzuela, borough Mayor of Montréal's Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (CDN-NDG). Filipinos are just excited (and always proud) to be in the presence of Stephanie, a 1st generation Filipino-Canadian and first Filipino to be elected to the Montreal local government. Next up the plate to give inspirational messages were Sonny Moroz, (city councillor of Montréal's CDN-NDG) and Jojo Laud (Luzviminda Adviser). More dances ensued by high energy groups Pink Black and Richel Zumba Team. Luviminda Secretary Eva Tamayo gave the closing remarks. Let it be said that the crowd also participated with gusto as DJ Dennis Mayuga, with his usual magic, drew people to the dance floor with his irresistible tunes.

Well, let's get to know the new officers and advisers of Luzviminda 2026. Leading the group is President Marifel Buendia, then Vice President Mary Guendoline Collado, Secretary Eva Tamayo, Treasurer Aubrey Borromeo, Auditors Norlando De Leon and Erlinda Hora Amelon, PRO officers Pablo Cambay and Dess Bulusan. The Advisors are Romeo Valenzuela, Eduardo Bueno, Dindo Alegre, Lito

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SocialTidbits

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FILIPINO STAR

SHOWBIZ GOSSIP

Alexa Ilacad admits she once thought of quitting showbiz: 'Maybe now I'm really ready'



Alexa Ilacad

Alexa Ilacad is having one of the busiest runs of her career, but the actress-singer admitted that there was a time when she seriously thought about walking away from it all.

From her hosting duties on Pinoy Big Brother to her stint on Your Face Sounds Familiar and her latest project Miss Behave, Alexa has been enjoying one project after another – a stretch she waited a long time for.

In an exclusive interview with PUSH ABS-CBN on the sidelines of the finale premiere of Miss Behave, Alexa looked back on the long road she took to get here.

She compared her path to those of pop stars Sabrina Carpenter and Zara Larsson, both of whom were far from overnight successes.

"My journey sort of reminds me of Sabrina Carpenter or Zara Larsson's journey. Parang there was an article released about Sabrina Carpenter, and the headline was something along the lines of 'It took her 10 years to become [successful]. Mine, more pa,'" she said.

"I think I've been doing this for more than 16 years, if I'm not mistaken. It's been a long time coming talaga. But I love what I'm doing so much, that's why I held on. And now I feel like, finally, things are slowly coming together."

Looking back, Alexa believes the wait had a purpose. She said the opportunities came at a time when

she was finally strong enough to handle them.

"I feel like maybe ito kasi 'yung panahon na baka handa na ako, or I'm ready to deal with everything thrown at me. Sabi nga, parang 'God wouldn't put a dream so big in your heart if you weren't capable of making it happen,'" she said.



"So maybe in my case, it's like delayed gratification – maybe it just had to take some time. Maybe if I experienced it any earlier, maybe I wouldn't be prepared. Maybe I wouldn't be equipped to deal with it, unlike now. Maybe now I'm really

ready to receive all of the blessings that are being given to me," she added.

Alexa said she has made peace with where she is now, even if some people still see her as a starlet after all these years in the business.

"Because most people would argue, 'You've been here for so long, you're still a starlet. You've been here for so long, you're still like that.' But I'm like, I'm content. I'm content with my career, I've never lost. I'm not a superstar, I've always had shows," she said.

What matters to her, she said, is that she has stayed visible and has managed to keep reinventing herself over the years.

"Somehow, I'm not missing from people's radar. I'm still able to reinvent myself or make myself relevant time and time again. So 'ayun, I'm just very happy that I feel like now it's slowly becoming my time," she shared.

Still, Alexa was honest about the harder years. She admitted there were moments when she doubted her path and came close to giving up.

Having started as a child star, she said the wait was especially difficult to watch when others seemed to get their break so much faster.

"Well, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't bored. I'd be lying if I said I never thought about quitting – or that maybe it wasn't for me. I would think

about that all the time. Because it's been a while. It really has been a while," she said.

"While some people get it so quickly. Some people, in just the first year, they get everything they've ever dreamed of. So sometimes I think, 'Ah, maybe this isn't for me. Maybe this is God's sign that I should start doing something else with my life,'" she said.

Every time those thoughts crept in, she said, she would go back to the reason she started in the first place.

"But then I always come back to why. Why did I start this in the first place? First of all, it's my passion. And I know in my heart that this is something you can't take away from me. Even if I remove myself from acting, from singing, I will keep coming back because this is what I love to do," she said.

Alexa also recalled the questions she kept asking herself during those low moments – why her career, steady as it was, never seemed to take off the way she hoped.

"So it seems like there was a time when I was bored. I said, 'Am I wrong? Is there a problem with me? What do I lack? Why is it that although it's steady, it's not improving?' The one who doesn't move?" she said.

Eventually, she said, she learned to make peace with the pace of her career.

"Tapos parang may time na sabi ko sa sarili ko, 'You know what, maybe I wasn't meant for great things. Maybe I was just meant for good things. And that's not bad. Good is good.' And looking back, I've been happy. Happy naman ako," she said.

She also counts herself lucky for never running out of work, and for skipping the difficult in-between years that many former child stars go through.

"I'm not missing a project. I'm not going through the awkward stage that usually happens when you transition from being a child star to a teen star to a woman," she said.

"You will definitely go through that awkward stage. I never went through that. So I still consider myself so lucky and so blessed," she added.

For Alexa, being able to keep doing what she loves – steadily, and on her own terms – is enough.

"And that's what I'm saying, steady isn't bad. Steady paycheck isn't bad. Doing what I love. And that's what I've really come to terms with the fact that this is really what I want, this is really what I love to do," she said.

"If he doesn't love me, we'll force him. I love this. This is what I want to do. That's why I said, I'm doing it for the passion and for the love really," she added. ■

'Chika boss' Kris Aquino back onscreen to 'analyze' local shows



Kris Aquino as Netflix Philippines' fictional Chief Head of Insights and Kontent Analysis

It may just be for promotional purposes, but fans are glad to see the "Queen of All Media" Kris Aquino back onscreen giving her input on the local pop culture scene.

The Philippine arm of streaming platform Netflix launched a new campaign with Kris as its "Chief Head of Insights and Kontent Analysis" or C.H.I.K.A. for short.

A video by the streamer sees an energetic Kris rallying up the team — in reality just one editor — to review scenes from local titles, offering her signature critique on how they can be improved.

The shows Kris "reviews" are "A Secret in Prague," "The Master Cutter," and the recently concluded

"Blood vs Duty," each them off receiving a unique dish of the host-actress' thoughts and opinions.

Kris has been planting the seeds for a showbiz comeback as she continues to recover from several autoimmune diseases, illnesses that have seen her temporarily live abroad and away from loved ones.

The host-actress has not participated in a long-term project since the pandemic, her last movies being "I Love You, Hater" and a cameo in "Crazy Rich Asians," both in 2018.

Aside from brief guest appearances on variety shows, Kris' last stint on television was her short-lived 2017 travel lifestyle show "Trip ni Kris." ■

Ara Mina breaks silence on past Manny Pacquiao rumor



Ara Mina (left) & Manny Pacquiao

Actress Ara Mina has finally addressed the rumor that linked her to boxing legend Manny Pacquiao.

In her interview with "Kay Susan Tayo! Vlogs," Ara said she was only linked to Pacquiao because they worked together on a movie.

"Na-link lang. Because of the movie we made together," the actress said referring to 2008 movie "Anak ng

Kumander."

Ara recalled that Pacquiao had told her that he already had a crush on her even before he became a well-known boxer.

"Sabi niya, nu'ng araw daw, 'di pa siya sikat na boksingero, may poster ako ng Tanduay. Sabi niya, 'Kailan ko kaya makakasama 'to?' Parang gano'n," she recalled.

She was also asked if the boxer made a move on her.

"Ligaw ba 'yun? Parang normal na, I don't think ligaw 'yung ginawa niya sa'kin," she said.

Ara made it clear that despite the rumors, she and Pacquiao never had a romantic relationship.

Today, Ara is married to businessman Dave Almarinez, whom she first met at a basketball event in Laguna.. ■

Lea Salonga to receive her Hollywood Walk of Fame star in September



Lea Salonga

Lea Salonga will officially receive her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on September 4, becoming the first Filipina to be honored with the prestigious recognition.

Salonga will get the 2,855th star in the Live Performance category during a ceremony at 11:30 a.m. PT on Hollywood Boulevard, in front of the Pantages Theatre.

Actress and fellow Walk of Fame honoree Ming-Na Wen, who voiced the title character in Disney's "Mulan" alongside Salonga's singing voice for the character, will be among the guest speakers. Emmy Award-winning sports and entertainment journalist Sibley Scoles will serve as emcee.

The ceremony will be streamed live on the Hollywood Walk of Fame's official website around 2:30 a.m. (Philippine Time) on September 5.

"Lea Salonga is a true trailblazer whose extraordinary talent and decades-long career have inspired audiences around the world," Ana Martinez, producer of the Walk of Fame, said in a statement.

"Her achievement is a milestone, not only for Lea, but for the Filipino community and for generations of artists who will follow in her footsteps," it continued.

Salonga is best known for her Tony Award-winning performance as Kim in the musical "Miss Saigon." She became the first Asian actress to play Éponine in the Broadway production of "Les Misérables" and later returned to the musical as Fantine in its 2006 Broadway revival. In January 2026, she took on the role of Madame Thénardier in "Les Misérables: The World Tour Spectacular."

Her other Broadway credits include "Once on This Island," "Here Lies Love," "Allegiance" and "Flower Drum Song," as well as the recent production of "Old Friends," in which she starred alongside Bernadette Peters.

Beyond theater, Salonga is widely recognized as the singing voice of Princess Jasmine in "Aladdin" and Fa Mulan in "Mulan" and "Mulan II." In 2011, Disney named her a Disney Legend for her contributions to the company.

The Filipina actress-singer also appeared in the TV series "Pretty Little Liars: Original Sin." She lends her voice to the Netflix animated film "KPop Demon Hunters," as well as the animated series "Centaurworld" and "Little Demon."

Salonga is set to star next as the lead villain in DreamWorks Animation's upcoming fantasy film "Forgotten Island," which is scheduled to premiere on September 23 in Philippine cinemas.

Following the Walk of Fame ceremony, Salonga will also be honored with the Icon Award at the third annual Manila International Film Festival's Closing Night Awards Gala on September 6 at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills.

The Manila International Film Festival, a member of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, nominated Salonga for consideration by the Hollywood Walk of Fame committee.

The Walk of Fame honor caps a 45-year career for Salonga, who has performed around the world and for Philippine and American presidents, as well as members of the British royal family. ■

Showbiz Gossip *Continued from p.15*

Rochelle Pangilinan fulfills Broadway dream in New York



Rochelle Pangilinan

Actress and SexBomb Girls leader Rochelle Pangilinan is celebrating a longtime dream after finally watching a Broadway show in New York City.

Rochelle share her excitement to her Instagram followers after seeing the hit musical "Aladdin" at the New Amsterdam Theatre.

"Dream Come True! Dream come true na makapanood sa Broadway!" Rochelle said in her post.

Adding a touch of humor, she quipped, "Hindi Broadway Centrum

this time, ha!"

Rochelle was clearly impressed by the production, particularly its elaborate stage design, powerful performances, singing, and dancing.

"Grabe ang stage, actingan, kantahan at sayawan... MALALA!!!" she said.

"Mapapa-'WOW!' ka na lang talaga! Woowooo! Thank you God talaga!" she added. ■

Bea Alonzo radiates elegance in latest magazine feature



Bea Alonzo

Calling Bea Alonzo glowing would be an understatement, as the multi-awarded actress and entrepreneur exudes confidence, elegance, and beauty in her latest magazine cover.

Last month, Bea Alonzo surprised the public with low-key civil wedding with business tycoon Vincent Co at the Makati City Hall on July 13.

The Whispers from Heaven actress told 24 Oras in an interview

some details of her nuptials.

She explained to Nelson Canlas, "It wasn't supposed to be a surprise. I wasn't supposed to be like that. It was just, it felt like it was the right thing to do."

"Honestly, I didn't think that it's something I really needed to share. Hindi naman sa pinagdadamot. But at that point, parang I felt like I just wanted it to be mine and his. I wanted it to be about us and no one else."

Anne Curtis emphasizes importance of prioritizing health and wellness



Anne Curtis

Anne Curtis is encouraging everyone to take their health seriously and, more importantly, not wait for a major health scare before taking action.

During her contract signing as the newest endorser of Zion's Zleep AI and Zylo AI on August 15, the actress opened up about the importance of wellness and making health a priority, especially as she enters a new chapter in her life.

For Anne, staying healthy goes beyond simply feeling okay. She believes regular checkups and paying attention to what the body is saying can make a big difference in maintaining overall wellness.

"I think it's very, very important that you listen to your body," Anne said.

The actress also shared that she regularly undergoes medical checkups and began

taking executive health checkups seriously even before turning 40.

She further highlighted how health technology that can be used at home may help people become more mindful of their wellness as part of their everyday routine.

Anne also addressed concerns from fans who noticed a lump on her neck. While she chose to keep the details of her condition private, she reassured everyone who has been worried about her that she is doing okay.

"For anyone who has any concern about me, just know that I'm okay," she said.

With her message, Anne hopes to remind the public that prioritizing health should never be postponed. Her advice is simple but powerful: listen to your body, schedule regular checkups, and make wellness part of everyday life. ■

Michael Sager reflects on humble beginnings in Canada; credits family for success



Michael Sager

Michael Sager has opened up about his humble beginnings in Canada.

The Kapuso star recalled the struggles his family endured before achieving stability.

"Hindi komportable ang buhay pag lumilipat abroad. I mean, as much as we say na nasa ibang bansa kami. Just like them, and like me, we started from scratch," Michael shared.

"Talagang walang-wala. So

kailangan maghanap ng trabaho, gumawa ka ng community, family, and stuff like that," he added.

He credited his parents as his primary inspiration, recalling how his father worked two jobs while his mother also took on various side hustles to sustain their daily needs.

"My parents were the reason, they're my role models, kung bakit ako ganito ka-determined, kung bakit I'm so hungry for goals. At the age of four, si Papa, he works two jobs, so does my mom," Michael said.

"Until I was a teenager, they were finding so many side hustles, para lang ma-sustain 'yung buhay, para maging komportable kami."

Driven by a desire to help ease his parents' burden, Michael began working at a young age, auditioning for small roles and scooping ice cream.

"At the age of 12, I auditioned to be an extra kasi I wanted to have my own allowance na for myself so I don't have to rely on my parents. I got my first job at 16 and I told myself 'oh ma 'pag school ko na ako na bahala sa pamasaha ko, baon,'" he shared.

Because of his hard work as an ice cream scooper, Michael was able to buy his first car. He also

worked in a retail store selling shoes.

"Because of that, I really worked during school and then during summer, nakapag-apon po ako noon to buy my first car at the age of 17. And then after that, I worked in the retail store selling shoes."

Though he acknowledged that his experience may not be typical for someone in their early 20s, he shared that he has come to fully accept the path laid out for him, believing it to be part of God's plan.

"Sabi ko, siguro binigay na sa akin 'to ng Lord itong mahirap na challenge na ito para mas masimulan ko na agad. The time came na nabigyan ng opportunities, nabigyan ng projects. Sabi ko, hindi ko ito sasayangin. I mean, they might say it's luck, but I really believe it's all hard work," he said.

Now, the former "PBB Celebrity Collab 1.0" housemate's showbiz career is steadily rising, with the actor previously achieving a major milestone after buying his own house, which his family was able to experience.

"When I got evicted from 'Pinoy Big Brother,' sakto, that was the day that they landed in the Philippines. I had no idea. I had no idea when they

were coming. A week later, I was able to move into my house, and I'm so thankful for that," Michael shared.

"They were able to see it. And they were able to live in it. We were able to build it together. Kumbaga, 'yung loob kasi empty 'yun eh," he added.

Despite initially having no furniture, Michael described their first night in his house as a meaningful experience.

"Nakatulog kami sa sahig. Wala talaga as in walang-wala. Puno na 'yung bahay for me kasi nandun lahat 'yung family ko," he said.

As he took on the role of Nate Lim in "Born to Shine," Michael said that his personal journey and sacrifices are reflected in his character.

He dedicates the project to his family, who supported him through both struggles and successes in pursuit of his dreams.

"I'm thankful that you're always here for me. I love you. I'm so, so thankful na despite everything, you guys chose to support me in such a wild dream of entering showbiz."

Michael stars with Zephaniah in the Kapuso afternoon series "Born to Shine."

In support of the community causes that Marvin Rotrand regularly sends to the North American Filipino Star, and in recognition past favors we have received, we took the initiative of publishing these community events and hope that our readers will support them and participate actively for good neighborly relations.

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Showbiz Gossip

H.E.R., Liza Soberano celebrate Filipino roots in 'Forgotten Island' fan meet



H.E.R. and Liza Soberano at a fan meet for "Forgotten Island," August 25, 2026 at Mall of Asia, Pasay City.

Filipino-American stars H.E.R. and Liza Soberano expressed their pride in their Filipino heritage as they met with fans during the "Forgotten Island" fan meet, Tuesday at a mall in Pasay City.

The event gave Filipino fans a chance to see the stars of the film ahead of its release, with both H.E.R. and Soberano describing the project as a celebration of Filipino identity, culture and community.

For Grammy and Academy Award-winning artist H.E.R., being part of "Forgotten Island" allowed her to proudly showcase her Filipino roots on the big screen.

"I hope that when you watch 'Forgotten Island,' you guys feel the fun and the joy and what it truly means to be Filipino because I'm so proud to be Pinay," H.E.R. told fans.

"I finally got to show that and express that in a movie, and I'm so excited for us as Filipinos," she said.

H.E.R. also shared her excitement for audiences to meet her character, describing Jo as "an amazing friend and an amazing character."

"So very proud. Very, very proud," she added.

Soberano, meanwhile, said

she was thrilled to finally bring the film to Filipino audiences.

"I'm super excited to be sharing this film with the Philippines finally because, as Joel and Januel have always put it, this is our love letter to the Philippines, our motherland," Soberano said.

"We're so, so proud of this film, and we hope that you guys will support it and feel proud to be Filipino as well," she added.

The actress also revealed that "Forgotten Island" holds a particularly sentimental place in her heart because she auditioned for the project at a pivotal point in her life and career.

Soberano recalled that she was in the middle of moving from Manila to Los Angeles when she first auditioned for the role, a major transition that required her to leave behind what was familiar and take a chance on a new chapter.

"That took obviously a lot of courage and bravery for me to step outside of my comfort zone," she said.

Her involvement in the film comes as Soberano continues to pursue opportunities internationally while maintaining her connection to the Philippines. ■

From Page 13 Social Tidbits

Posadas, Rex Rodrigo, Irene Domingo (Luzon Rep), Raquel Trinidad (Visaya Rep), Romy Meneses (Mindanao Rep), and finally, Jojo Laud.

Among those in attendance were Gerry Danzil (UPS President), Boy Galang (dance guru), Al Abdon (FHSM Chairman) with lovely wife Cora, and many others. Luzviminda, welcome to the Filipino associations!

In closing, as we enjoy the beautiful weather (yes, rain showers are beautiful too), let us give thanks to God who created it. When you look at

the blooming flowers, the waves of the sea, and at the clear, blue sky above, do you ever think how He did it? Psalm 19:1 says that 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaim His handiwork.' It's so easy to overlook the Creator over the creation. Let's give praise to God for all He has done as Revelation 4:11 states, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Until next issue and God Bless!#

Continued from Page 17

Pops Fernandez marks 60th birthday, 40 years in showbiz with milestone concert



Pops Fernandez

Concert Queen Pops Fernandez is set to celebrate two major milestones in her life and career with a special concert on November 26 at the Newport Performing Arts Theater.

Dubbed as a celebration of her journey, the concert will honor Pops' 60 years of life and four decades in the Philippine entertainment industry.

More than a showcase of her well-loved songs, the milestone event promises to take audiences through the different chapters of Pops' career — from her early years in show business to her emergence as one of the country's most enduring performers.

The upcoming concert will bring together music, memories, stories and special guests as Pops looks back on the experiences that shaped her career while also embracing the next chapter of her journey as an artist.

Music director Homer Flores will oversee the musical

arrangements, while concert director Calvin Neria will lead the show's overall creative direction and stage presentation.

The concert is produced through the collaboration of DSL, EchoJham and Nexus Collaboration.

For many of her followers, the event is expected to be more than a night of entertainment. It will be an opportunity to revisit the songs and memories that have become part of their lives while celebrating an artist whose career has spanned generations.

Rather than simply looking back, Pops is also using the milestone to embrace the present and look toward the future.

After four decades of entertaining audiences and creating memorable moments onstage, the Concert Queen is inviting fans to celebrate with her as she marks six decades of life and a career that continues to evolve. ■

From Page 9 Voices of the Filipino

By Alfonso Abdon

3rd article in the series edited by Kimberly Gultia and Kazue Takamura

This essay is adapted from a presentation delivered at "Voices of the Filipino Community in Quebec: Memorializing the Past, Building the Future" (April 10–11, 2026). It has been prepared for publication with a brief introduction and light editing. Remembering the Past, Building the Future is a monthly series dedicated to preserving Filipino voices through autobiographical essays. Together, these first-person narratives create an enduring record of the people, journeys, and experiences that have shaped our shared history, connecting memories of the past with the lives and

aspirations of the present. This month, we feature Alfonso Abdon, known to many simply as Al Abdon. Through the story of his journey—from newcomer to newspaper photographer to community leader—he offers a firsthand account of the development of Filipino community life in the greater Montreal area, introducing us to many of the individuals and organizations whose dedication helped build and sustain community life in Quebec, including the Filipino Heritage Society of Montreal, where he now serves as Chairman

I arrived in Canada in the mid-1970s through the fiancée visa process. My wife, Cora, had spent two years in Montreal working hard to establish herself before sponsoring me

Catriona Gray From Miss Universe to a Global Voice for Purpose, Creativity, and Women's Empowerment



Catriona Gray

True success begins when recognition becomes responsibility.

Catriona Grey is one of the Philippines' most internationally recognised women, but her story extends far beyond a beauty pageant crown. A model, singer, actress, television host, creative advocate, and philanthropist, she has transformed international recognition into a platform for culture, education, women's empowerment, and social impact.

In 2018, Catriona made history as the fourth Filipina to win the Miss Universe crown. The achievement established her as a global Filipino icon, but the years that followed demonstrated that her ambition was never limited to pageantry.

In 2026, she continues to expand her influence. She has maintained her role as an ambassador for the Philippines' National Commission for Culture and the Arts, advocated for access to clean water, and made her acting debut in *The Loved One*.

At Zyvera, we celebrate women whose achievements become bigger than themselves. Catriona's journey represents confidence, creativity, purpose, and the ability to turn a moment of international recognition into a lasting career.

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Every remarkable career begins with discovering what makes you different.

Born in Cairns, Australia, Catriona developed an early interest in music, performance, and the arts. She later moved to the Philippines at 18, where she pursued opportunities in modelling and entertainment while

developing a deeper connection with Filipino culture.

Her creative background gave her more than stage presence.

It helped her understand

ambitions extended well beyond the world of pageantry.

Her early journey offers an important lesson for ambitious women:



music, communication, performance, fashion, and storytelling—skills that would eventually become important parts of her professional identity.

She also studied music and developed experience as a singer and songwriter, demonstrating that her

Do not limit yourself to one talent when you have the potential to develop many.

The Journey to Miss Universe

Catriona's rise in pageantry was built through preparation rather than

chance.

She represented the Philippines at Miss World 2016, where she reached the Top 5, before returning to pageantry and winning the national title that sent her to Miss Universe 2018.

At the Miss Universe competition, she captured global attention through her confidence, communication skills, stage presence, and now-iconic walk.

When she won the crown, she became the fourth Filipina to achieve the Miss Universe title.

But the significance of her victory went beyond the crown itself.

It demonstrated how preparation, presentation, discipline, and a clear sense of purpose can transform an individual into a global representative of her country.

Turning a Crown into a Career Winning an international title can create visibility.

Maintaining that relevance requires much more.

After her Miss Universe reign, Catriona successfully expanded into television, music, fashion, public speaking, advocacy, and entertainment. She has worked as a host, singer, ambassador, and creative personality while continuing to develop her public identity.

In 2026, she added another major chapter by making her acting debut in Irene Villamor's *The Loved One*, alongside Anne Curtis and Jericho Rosales.

This evolution is one of the strongest aspects of her story.

Instead of allowing the Miss Universe title to become the conclusion of her career, she treated it as a foundation for new opportunities.

That is a powerful lesson in professional reinvention.

Advocacy with Purpose

Catriona's public platform has also been connected with causes including HIV awareness, access to quality education, women's rights, indigenous handicrafts, and other community initiatives.

In 2026, she continued strengthening her advocacy around access to clean water, demonstrating that her commitment to social causes remains active years after her Miss Universe reign.

This is an important distinction between fame and influence.

Fame attracts attention.

Influence uses attention to create change.

Catriona's career demonstrates how a public platform can become a vehicle for conversations that matter.

Building a Personal Brand Beyond Beauty

Catriona Grey's strongest professional achievement may be the transformation of her personal brand.

She is no longer defined simply as a beauty queen.. ■

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On the night of Aug. 27-28, the full Sturgeon Moon will pass almost entirely through Earth's darkest shadow, creating a spectacular 96% partial lunar eclipse visible across North America, South America, Europe and Africa. **getty**
A CELESTIAL SHOW OVER MONTREAL: The night sky turns a coppery red during a deep partial lunar eclipse peaking overnight on August 27.**VIEW FROM THE HILLS:** Skywatchers gathered at the Mount Royal lookout and local parks in Plateau-Mont-Royal to catch the rare 93% to 96% cosmic obscuration.**A COST-FREE SPECTACLE:** Unlike solar eclipses, local families across the city safely enjoyed the summer display without the need for specialized protective eyewear.



GROUND ZERO FOR TERMINAL EXPANSION: Cargo containers stack up at the Port of Montreal, which just launched its massive \$2.3-billion Contrecoeur expansion project.**TRADE WAR CONTEXT:** The local shipping hub sits at the epicenter of a major dispute after Canada enacted retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports this week.**SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION:** Prime Minister Mark Carney's dollar-for-dollar response to Washington leaves local logistics operators bracing for delays on consumer goods.(Photo: Getty Images)



Quebec Liberal Party sign in Montreal as provincial election campaign kicks off on Aug. 27, 2026 (Martin Daigle, CityNews)



Campaign signs will soon dot every street in the province as the Quebec elections began on Aug. 27, 2026. (Scott Prouse/CTV News)



LaSalle College student Maynard McKinnon at a protest demanding Quebec Premier Fréchet's intervention as the college delays classes, in Montreal on Aug. 27, 2026 (Arthur Henault, CityNews)



LaSalle College students, staff and supporters take part in a protest in Montreal on Thursday, Aug. 27, 2026. Students are calling for the government to intervene and save the school. (Evan Buhler / Montreal Gazette)