



Canadian Centre for
Policy Alternatives
Manitoba Office

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18 Prominent Manitobans Fail The Canada Challenge

The ancestors of 18 prominent Manitobans would all be turned away if they applied today to immigrate to Canada. That was the finding of the first Manitobans to take The Canada Challenge, a quiz that all Canadians were invited to take as they walked through Osborne Village on Canada Day 2014.

Canada Challenge organizers, Migrant Manitoba and the Migrant Worker Solidarity Network, held a media conference at which they distributed copies of the quiz and the results obtained by Manitobans who took the Challenge. All those surveyed are notable for the contributions that they have made to the culture, economy or governance of Manitoba. They include former governor-general, Ed Schreyer, Asper Foundation President, Gail Asper, and Art Miki, former president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians. (Results can be seen at the bottom of this article.)

Each participant was asked to pick one ancestor who came here as an immigrant, and to respond to the quiz based on their knowledge of their ancestor's circumstances at the time of immigration. Not one of those who took the Challenge found that his or her ancestor could have met all of the very stringent conditions currently demanded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Migrante spokesperson, Diwa Marcelino, said that the Challenge was organized to get Canadians thinking about the unfairness of current immigration structures, especially in the case of temporary workers: "Since 2012, more temporary workers have come to Canada than immigrants. Temporary workers are tied to one employer and must leave the country if they lose their job; so, in practice, they don't have the same rights guaranteed to other workers.

Photographer John Paskievitch was one of those who took the Challenge. He remembered his mother talking about her experience when she first met with Canadian immigration agents: "What the immigration agents in Europe wanted ... was strong backs, people to work as lumberjacks and in mines." Marcelino observed that "Governments and industry still want strong backs, but now the strong backs are disposable; when we no longer need the strong back, or if the worker becomes ill, we just send the worker back from where they came. If a worker is good enough to work here, why is he or she not good enough to live here and raise their family here, just like our parents and grandparents did?"

Jodi Dueck-Read, a spokesperson for the MWSN, lamented that "Today's immigration policy seems to cater

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IN LABOUR ISSUES

to the elite—allowing entry for only those who have been privileged enough to have access to financial resources, a high degree of education and years of employment in a highly skilled trade or profession.”

THE CANADA CHALLENGE: Quiz Results from a few Notable Manitobans

Gail Asper (Chair of the Asper Foundation, Denied (Grandfather)

(Trustee for the Canadian Museum of Human Rights) Denied

Shirley Brown (Owner-operator of Oscar’s Delicatessen) Denied (Grandfather)

Marianne Cerilli (former MLA, 2006 mayoralty candidate, Denied (Father)

Community Animator, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg)

Hon. Dr John Gerrard (MLA, former Manitoba Liberal Leader) Denied (Mother)

Ann Hodges (Manitoba theatre and opera director) Denied (Mother)

Most Reverend Albert Le Gatt (Roman Catholic Archbishop of St Boniface) Denied (Grandfather)

Dennis Lewycky (Executive Director, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg) Denied (Grandfather)

Hon. Pat Martin (MP for Winnipeg North Centre) Denied (Great-grandfather)

David Matas (Manitoba Immigration and Human Rights lawyer) Denied (Grandfather)

Romi Mayes (award-winning Manitoba musician singer/songwriter) Denied (Grandmother)

Art Miki (Former Citizenship Judge, Former President, National Association of Japanese Canadians) Denied (Grandfather)

William Neville (former Winnipeg city counselor) Denied (Great-grandfather)

Mike Pagtakhan (Winnipeg city counselor) Denied (Father)

John Paskievich (Documentary Film-maker and Photographer) Denied (Mother)

Kevin Rebeck (President, Manitoba Federation of Labour) Denied (Great-grandfather)

Rev. Bishop Elaine Sauer (Bishop, Manitoba/Northwest Ontario Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada) Denied (Grandfather)

Rt Hon. Edward Schreyer (former Premier of Manitoba, former Governor General of Canada) Denied (Grandfather)

Jeff Traeger (President, Local 832, United Food and Commercial Workers) Denied (Grandfather)

Melanie Whyte (Manitoba actor) Denied (Grandfather)