

Media advisory / Photo Opportunity

Vancouver Art Gallery welcomes Syrian newcomer families and new citizens with two unique cultural events this week

Vancouver, BC, July 25, 2016 – The Vancouver Art Gallery is pleased to welcome Syrian newcomers and new Canadian citizens through two special events at the Gallery this week in partnership with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC). On Monday, July 25, 38 Syrian newcomers and 7 Canadian volunteers will be connected through the Ahlan (Arabic for “Welcome”) program; and on Wednesday, July 27, an enhanced citizenship ceremony will take place at the Gallery, featuring roundtable discussions between community members and 30 new Canadians.

WHAT: The ICC’s Ahlan (“Welcome”) Tour, connecting Syrian newcomers to Canada

WHEN: Monday, July 25, 2016

- 12:30pm – Arrive at Vancouver Art Gallery. Welcome message from ICC staff and Vancouver Art Gallery representative followed by lunch.
- 1:30pm – Facilitated tour of *I Had an Interesting French Artist to See Me This Summer: Emily Carr and Wolfgang Paalen in British Columbia*.

WHERE: The Vancouver Art Gallery, 750 Hornby St, Vancouver, BC V6Z 2H7

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), in conjunction with its national partners through the Cultural Access Pass (CAP), has developed the Ahlan program: family-friendly tours at Canadian cultural attractions to welcome newcomers and help them build relationships and connect to our shared culture, history, and heritage.

The participants will receive a tour of the Vancouver Art Gallery, and visit a new exhibition *I Had an Interesting French Artist to See Me This Summer* which features 60 exceptional works by iconic Canadian painter Emily Carr and Austrian surrealist Wolfgang Paalen. Arabic-speaking volunteers, many of whom recently obtained their Canadian citizenship, will join program participants throughout the day and assist with translating the experience.

The event is organized by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) and the Vancouver Art Gallery. The Vancouver Art Gallery participates in the ICC’s Cultural Access Pass program, which gives new Canadian citizens the opportunity to experience more than 1,200 of Canada’s premier cultural attractions for free during their first year of citizenship.

WHAT: Enhanced Canadian citizenship ceremony featuring roundtable discussions

WHEN: Wednesday, July 27, 2016

- 10:00am – Roundtable discussions in 4th floor pavilion. Private event.
(NOTE: media are welcome to shoot video and still photos, but interviews and audio recording are not permitted during this session. Please contact Debra Zhou at the Vancouver Art Gallery if you plan to attend.)

- 11:15am – Citizenship ceremony in 4th floor pavilion. Free public event.

WHERE: The Vancouver Art Gallery, 750 Hornby St, Vancouver, BC V6Z 2H7

ICC enhanced citizenship ceremonies bring citizenship candidates together with members of their communities to participate in roundtable discussions about the value and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship, and to celebrate the special day. The participants include citizenship candidates – those who will receive their citizenship on that day – and their family and friends.

Deborah Grey, Officer of the Order of Canada, will preside over the ceremony. The event, organized by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada in partnership with the ICC and the Vancouver Art Gallery, includes the opportunity for new citizens, guests and community members to share stories of their journeys and their hopes for Canada.

About Ahlan

[Ahlan](#) is part of the ICC's Cultural Access Pass program (CAP). CAP gives new Canadian citizens the opportunity to experience more than 1,200 of Canada's premier cultural attractions for free during their first year of citizenship. Ahlan events have already taken place at the Royal Ontario Museum, Art Gallery of Ontario, Canadian Museum of History, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, and Black Creek Pioneer Village with more planned at CAP attractions across Canada. The Ahlan program is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The ICC's Cultural Access Pass (CAP) program is the only program of its kind in the world. More than 200,000 new Canadian citizens have participated in CAP. For more information, visit culturalaccesspass.com

About the Institute for Canadian Citizenship

The [Institute for Canadian Citizenship](#) (ICC) inspires Canadians to be inclusive, embrace fresh thinking, practice active citizenship, and own our collective culture and spaces. The ICC's Building Citizenship program co-hosts more than 70 Canadian citizenship ceremonies annually with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and volunteers and partners across the country. For more information, visit icc-icc.ca.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of the most respected and innovative visual arts institutions in Canada and is committed to strengthening ties between artists and diverse communities throughout the city, province, and beyond. As the largest public art museum in Western Canada, the Gallery features contemporary and historical exhibitions all year round, and provides a global platform for British Columbia's dynamic artistic community, including the work of First Nation as well as art of the Asian Pacific artists. Its growing collection of over 12,000 artworks represents the most comprehensive resource for art in British Columbia and is the principal repository for visual art produced in the region, as well as related works by other notable Canadian and international artists.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

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