

Students wrap themselves in Pickering College UN Flag Day



By Wallace Pidgeon

Pickering College's colourful United Nations Flag Parade embraces the nations where the students are born, but it is the students themselves that capture the true essence of the experience and the event on campus.

"This is a really amazing experience and it is really awesome to see all the different countries together and all the different students who come from around the world to study here," explained Guatemalan-born Michela Prefontaine. "I think it helps us get an understanding of what other countries are like around the world because we get to interact with all of the different students here."

And it is UN Day that brings out this international community and spirit for the entire school to see. This year, 29 countries were represented in the Pickering College UN Day celebrations.

"The number of students that we have from the different countries, usually we don't realize where everyone comes from until we get together on UN Day to celebrate," she added.

This sentiment was echoed by many students, including Belindalucy Nyamrunba, from Tanzania.

"I just love it here. I am someone who loves to get to know people. I love learning about different cultures, I have traveled, so when I came to PC [Pickering College] my first goal was to get myself to reach my academic goals, but when I'm here, it's not about the academic or career oriented relationships, it's also about the culture and social relationships, it's amazing for me."

And ironically on a day that celebrates the international make-up of Pickering College to the East African student there is a defined Canadian culture.

"I'm getting to learn new things and experiencing a real Canadian culture here in a society where people are treated equally and people treat you as your friend," explained Belinda. "Canadians are really warm and friendly, and especially for us who live in the residence who take numerous flights to get here and crazy weather pattern changes, so for us, it is the warmth of a home and just to feel like family and feel the love of a society."

This greater sense of community is emotionally moving to many students who have traveled to study at Pickering College.

"It is a really powerful event, I love it, I like the whole image of all the flags," said Fernando Casanova who comes from Emiliano-Zapata in southern Mexico.

Fernando has been involved with the Flag Parade his entire time at Pickering College from student observer, to Mexican flag bearer

to this year giving the UN Address before the entire community.

?I think it is a most amazing day,? he continued. ?The reason it is such a powerful event is that sometimes we forget that we all come from different nations and we all come together and we all interact with one another throughout the day.?

To him, the one thing that stands out is how all the students come together during United Nations Day in Canada.

?It's about the pride that each person has for their own nation, that fact that you are able to share that pride, although at the same time you feel this sense of nationalism,? he added. ?At the same time you share this equal emotion we are proud to be here and we are proud to represent our countries at PC [Pickering College].?

From a suggestion of a visiting parent eight years ago, Pickering College's United Nations Day has grown to be a must attend event on the school's calendar bringing the entire local and global community together.