

The Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union (SGEU) presented the 2017 Multicultural Youth Leadership Award in partnership. SGEU also generously donated a \$500 reward to the recipient.

This award looks at a nominee's activities in all five streams of multicultural work: cultural continuity, celebration of diversity, anti-racism, intercultural connections and integration. The recipient of the 2017 Multicultural Youth Leadership Award is Bwe Doh Soe.

Bwe arrived in Saskatoon in 2007 and has since worked to keep the Karen culture alive. He is active in all five streams of multicultural work and has become a leader and role model among the younger generation of the Karen community.

Bwe places great importance on the stream of Cultural Continuity by organizing and facilitating a Karen Community Culture and Language Camp for Karen youth every summer. He has done so for the past 5 years, taking two weeks unpaid leave from work. The camp ensures cultural continuity as children learn the Karen language (S'Gaw), culture and history of the Karen people. As another way of preserving the Karen culture, Bwe also sings and records songs in his first language, S'gaw. He has shared his skills at different Karen celebrations around Canada. He also recorded a song in English telling his life story.

Bwe maintains connections to the Karen community and facilitates meetings of Karen community leaders and elders in order to develop events and programming to maintain the Karen language and culture. He believes that, as victims of ethnic cleansing in Burma, it is important for the Karen people in Canada to feel empowered and encouraged to share their experiences, culture, language, history and traditions.

In the stream of Celebration of Diversity, Bwe fosters connections with other immigrant groups and the Indigenous community in order to learn about and celebrate one another's cultures. More recently, Bwe has invited different cultural groups to share their knowledge and discuss their similarities and differences with the Karen community of Saskatoon.

Reconciliation is the theme for Bwe in the stream of Anti-racism work. He has gained a better understanding of the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the similarities to the Karen community's experience. He recognizes the importance of engaging with the Indigenous community and fostering reconciliation by focusing on action rather than just discussion. Bwe is working to bring lessons, presentations and workshops from First Nations and Métis communities to the Karen Culture Camp. He has developed a

Karen Youth leadership group that has engaged in learning about the history of Canada's Indigenous peoples as well as the cultural practices and protocols of local Indigenous groups.

Bwe also regularly shares about his lived experience with power and privilege. He talks about ethnic cleansing with the Burmese army setting fire to his villages. He talks about life in a refugee camp surrounded by army guards and the disparity of growing up in a refugee camp compared to growing up in Saskatoon. Bwe highlights privilege in terms of language; culture and being able to share your culture; citizenship and getting it for the first time; formal education; universal healthcare and having a safe and secure home to live in with your family.

In the stream of intercultural connections, Bwe has been engaged with the Saskatoon community, creating and maintaining connections with different cultural groups. He has been invited to events, such as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace event, to speak about his experience as a Karen refugee. In 2016, Bwe was showcased in an article at Global News, providing advice for Syrian refugees.

Bwe has become a representative for his community in the stream of integration. As with any refugees, he has faced many barriers to integrating into our society and culture. However, Bwe has reached out to the community in Saskatoon in order to identify leaders in the community who are willing to mentor him and provide connections between the Karen and wider Saskatoon communities. Bwe shares his story at community events and with community leaders in order to build greater understanding of the Karen experience. This has also contributed to Bwe's own development as a leader.

Many Karen community members still do not feel comfortable accessing community services and resources in Saskatoon. Bwe noticed this and has become a liaison person for the Karen Community, connecting them to services, healthcare, language classes and groceries.

Bwe has demonstrated incredible leadership within and beyond his ethnocultural community. In 2015, he got involved with a Saskatoon project called Moving Stories and shared his personal experience as a Karen refugee. In March 2017, Bwe was recognized by the City of Saskatoon Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Committee with the Living in Harmony Recognition Award recognizing his efforts in promoting intercultural harmony.