



'Indian community is becoming more Canadian'

AJIT JAIN

Conservative Senator Con Di Nino, a regular at Indo-Canadian events, was present at the North Indian Medical & Dental Association of Canada's fundraising dinner September 27 at the Mississauga Convention Center in suburban Brampton.

The event was organized to raise funds for the Heart and Stroke Foundation as more South Asians suffer from heart attacks and strokes than any other ethnic group.

"I am glad that such [fundraising Indo-Canadian] events are multiplying," he told *India Abroad*. "They should be multiplying. It isn't difficult for the vast majority of people to help the few who need the money, who need the service. It is wonderful to see the generosity of our people."

The trend of the South Asian community supporting mainstream causes, he noted "is happening during the last 10 to 15 years, and it is increasing. As it increases, it tells me two things: One, that the Indian community is becoming more Canadian, more mainstream without losing values of their heritage, without their

losing the Indian fact. That is how it is going to be for those who are smart, because if you don't know where you came from you will never know where you go. Secondly, it also tells me that the Indian community is achieving greater success, and as I expect from my Indian friends, they are sharing it with the larger community — which is the way it should be."

There is a sentiment that the Indian community is insular, that it only participates in causes that pertain to their country of origin.

"That's nonsense," said Di Nino. "I am associated with the community for such a long time. I have seen how they are increasingly engaged in mainstream activities. [NIMDAC founding president Dr] Asha [Seth] is one of my favorite people in the community because she is one of the most generous and caring people that I have seen. She is tough, she hustles, she always says 'I need more money, and more money' and I love her more every time she says that. It is good community spirit."

About 400 attended the fundraiser and Seth said the organization raised around \$100,000.



Conservative Senator Con Di Nino, right, Dr Arun Seth and Dr Asha Seth at the NIMDAC fundraiser

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The fundraising champion



Heart and Stroke Foundation President David Sculthorpe, left, Dr Milan Gupta, Senator Con Di Nino and Dr Asha Seth

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The North Indian Medical and Dental Association of Canada Foundation's fundraiser September 27 was another feather in the cap for Dr Asha Seth.

The event raised a whopping \$100,000, with the lion's share of the money going to the Ontario-based Heart and Stroke Foundation.

A novel thing about the NIMDAC fundraiser was that the invites were free; the money was raised through sponsorships and auctions of donated items.

"We had banks, pharmaceutical companies, etc, as sponsors of our event," Seth said. "And silent and live auctions helped us raise funds. We sold everything. People were generous as many of them who

didn't come for the dinner, still sent us their donations."

Kash Sood of Ranka Enterprises donated garments and ties. "We raised \$6,000," he told *India Abroad*.

Though it was a fund raiser, it served as an educational event, with experts highlighting how and why South Asians are more at risk from cardiovascular complications than other ethnic groups.

"Our guests went home learning so much about heart disease, strokes, diabetes, blood pressure, obesity, etc," Seth said. "They learnt about the metabolic syndrome, high cholesterol levels, diabetes, leading to heart attack. This was the biggest achievement. On top, we raised funds for research so that we opt for healthy heart lifestyle"

'Our biggest challenge is to bring all the groups under one umbrella'

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Dental Association of Canada's Foundation, says they can't join CAPIH for various reasons.

But we don't want to interfere in their ongoing activities. We are not asking them to do this or that. If we have a large number of members, we all will have strength and we will be able to undertake so many activities more effectively.

Do you interact closely with the provincial and federal health authorities?

I closely interact with the Saskatchewan College of Medicine, Health Region. That's what we are now going to do. We will provide help to aboriginal people with the help of the Health Region. With the College of Medicine we will provide one scholarship to medical students every year. We are raising money through our members. We give his money to the College for the scholarship. The College selects a student who's given the scholarship. There's no bar to the ethnicity of scholarship recipient. S/he could be of any background. The selection is left to the College of Medicine. Our only criterion is the person should be interested in pursuing international medicine. We are giving \$1,000 but our intention is to soon increase it to two to three such scholarships a year.

Is CAPIH considering sending volunteers to help the flood-affected in South India?

That's exactly we are planning. If there's such an eventuality [natural disaster], and we come together to see if we can collaborate with the local organizations, say in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, to plan help measures. We can only work with the local organizations. We can't work independently sitting in Canada. Some of our members are going to remote areas in India, remote areas in Canada, to help those who need help.