

Reaffirming Citizenship

by Kimpton Lai

THE ATMOSPHERE WAS tense as youth, parents, Scouters and guests of the 6th Richmond Hill Scout Group waited to be called into the courtroom. But this was to be a very different kind of visit. Our youth were all very excited and looking forward to meeting with the presiding judge. What kind of court was it? It was Citizenship Court.

As Judge John Koulouras mentioned in his opening welcome speech, "The Citizenship Court is a happy court where people celebrate their new lives in Canada. They have chosen to be Canadian and part of this great country."

Nearly all our youth were born in Canada. As leaders, we wondered if they had a clear understanding of what Canadian citizenship meant. How could



All sections ► enjoyed the Citizenship Reaffirmation ceremony.



Photos: Jackson Kwok, Candy Kwong

we communicate the citizenship concept to the youth in a way they could understand? Could we turn this nearly virtual idea into something our members could experience and remember? With the support of the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), group commissioner, section leaders and parents, a citizenship reaffirmation ceremony was put in place. It would celebrate the Centennial of Scouting, the 60th year anniversary of Canadian citizenship and the 10th anniversary of our group.



▲ The judges congratulated the youth for their renewed commitments to Canada.

◀ It's important to invite guests of honour that will contribute to the ceremony.

And so, on a sunny day in May, over 100 participants gathered at the CIC Scarborough office. This ceremony was a formal event where participants confirmed the oath of citizenship and expressed their commitment to Canada. After the court clerk gave a short briefing on today's agenda, presiding Judge Koulouras, accompanied by Judge Normand Allaire, Judge Philip Gaynor, RCMP Sergeant Keith Latchford, three veterans from World War II and our guest speakers, entered the courtroom. Judge Koulouras was very friendly and his speech was inspiring. Judge Allaire, who was once a Cub and Scout himself, led us to repeat the oath of citizenship in French while Judge Koulouras did the English version. Mr. Anthony Hung, honorary member of Scouts Canada, recited the Scout Promise afterward. Judge Koulouras then invited all Scouting members to stand beside him and concluded the ceremony by singing "O Canada" proudly and loudly.

Now our youth understand that we are not only Scouts but also belong to a bigger family — the Canadian family. May this memory be with our youth always. X

— Cub leader Kimpton Lai, 6th Richmond Hill Scouting Group, Ontario. Many thanks to Alice Chan, who works for Citizenship and Immigration Canada and is also a Cub leader, for coordinating this special event.

Steps in Organizing a Reaffirmation Ceremony

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

A reaffirmation ceremony is a formal event where participants repeat the oath of citizenship to express their commitment to Canada. We encourage the use of both official languages in your ceremony. Follow these steps to organize a reaffirmation ceremony for your school or group:

1. Decide who will be involved in the ceremony

Choose a master of ceremonies, guest speakers, and someone to lead the group in the oath of citizenship and in singing our national anthem, "O Canada." For a guest speaker, consider someone who will speak from the heart about citizenship. This could be a principal, a group leader or someone from the community. If there is a recipient of the Order of Canada or a citizenship judge in your community, consider inviting him or her.

2. Estimate how many people will participate

Determine how many people will be participating. You can then order or download reaffirmation certificates and other materials for the participants.

3. Plan the set-up of the room

Arrange to have the person leading the oath of citizenship in clear view of all the participants. Position a large Canadian flag where everyone can see it. You might wish to print and distribute copies of the program, including the oath, to all participants.

4. The Oath of Citizenship

When repeating the oath of citizenship, ask everyone to stand, raise their right hand and repeat the oath, line by line, as it is read to them. Ask the group to repeat the oath in either official language, or both languages, as they choose.

Program Links

Cubs: Blue Star B, #1

Scouts: Pathfinder – Citizenship, #7