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In memoriam: Paulina behind Filipino Heritage



and steadfast belief in the worth of the Filipino people," Santiago wrote.

Here are some excerpts from a memorial website courtesy of www.dignitymemorial.com.

"Paulina Jocelyn Toribio Balisi Corpuz passed away at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital on November 6, 2022. She is survived by her husband, Ben,

and her children Belinda, Isabella and Benson. She is also survived by her many beloved siblings.

Paulina obtained a Psychology degree from the University of the Philippines and worked in various non-profit organizations. Hailing from Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines, she came to Canada to unite with her husband in 1993.

Paulina is known for championing and advancing community causes – from arts and culture, education, workers' rights and politics:

Her first job was being a pioneer and coordinator in the workers' cooperative union of San Miguel Corporation in the Philippines. She helped form the team from a small capitalization to a thriving system, helping hundreds of workers and their families.

Paulina then became a project evaluator for the Luzon Social Action Centre, an institution founded by the CBCP (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines), whose main function was to help the livelihood of the poor and provide aid during calamities. With this organization, she worked on the ground during the Mt. Pinatubo eruption and the 1990 earthquake in Luzon.

Paulina's passion to serve the community continued even after immigrating to Canada. Her love for non-profit and community-based service led

In 2018, a landmark motion designating June of every year as Filipino Heritage Month in Canada was unanimously approved by the House of Commons.

Filipinos in Canada have Paulina Corpuz to thank for this recognition of the community.

Sadly, Corpuz passed away on November 16, 2022, leaving the community with one less fearless advocate. She was 59.

Erie Maestro, a community advocate based in Vancouver, has known Corpuz and her work in Canada.

"Her stories will be well remembered, her work with the overseas Filipinos, in arts and culture will be continued, her poems will be read and read again, her work with the children in the Philippines will inspire others, and her service to the Filipino people will be remembered in the history of organizing in Canada," Maestro wrote in tribute.

Burnaby city councillor Maita Santiago also praised Corpuz.

"She genuinely lived her life in service of the people and did so much to uplift and empower our Filipino community in Canada. Her successful work towards establishing a Filipino Heritage month in Toronto resulted in the subsequent declaration of June as Filipino Heritage Month across Canada – and for this, we are forever grateful for her vision, perseverance



Paulina Corpuz, visionary pioneers Heritage Month in Canada

her to join the Canadian Cancer Society, starting as a volunteer, and eventually working as an Administrative Assistant. Through her 16 years of hard work and resourcefulness, she was promoted to Systems Project Coordinator, helping build their long legacy of uniting and inspiring Canadians affected by cancer.

Paulina is President and co-founder of Philippine Advancement Through Arts and Culture (PATAC) that funded cultural initiatives benefiting Filipinos, particularly the youth in both Canada and the Philippines. She also co-hosted TV Migrante Canada, a program that focused on local and Philippine national issues that is accessible to viewers across Canada and beyond.

Her community advocacy includes her work with the Filipinos Workers Network, supporting the Children's Rehabilitation Centre (Philippines). She was a member of the PIDC (Philippine Independence Day Council) council of leaders, acting as a Press Relations Officer and Women's Diversity in the CMC (Canadian Multicultural Centre of Asians in Ontario), and the President of the Filipino Canadian Parents Association in Catholic Education (FCPACE).

Paulina was best known for her advocacy to have the City of Toronto declare the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month, which paved the way for the federal and provincial government to follow suit. Her journey started in November 2016 when she first raised this idea with Ontario New Democratic Party Members of Provincial Parliament, and gathered signatures at various community events from June 2016 until August 2017.

After gathering endorsements from 50 individuals and organizations, Paulina and Councillor Neethan Shan introduced the Filipino Heritage Month motion in November 2017, and the City Council passed the motion unanimously.

Paulina's work in the

community is well known and acknowledged, and she was honoured with numerous awards and recognitions. Her many awards include the Canadian Multicultural Council – Asians in Ontario, the University of the Philippines Alumni Association in Toronto for her more than 30 years of community service and her work in the declaration of June as Filipino Heritage Month, the 2018 Golden Balangay Award, and the Quincentennial Award from Sentro Rizal of the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto.

Paulina was fond of poetry. Poems helped Paulina through the challenges she faced, but she never considered herself a poet.

Her love for writing and prose is evident in her published poetry, providing you a taste of her gift as a writer. Together with her loving husband, Ben, she published a book of poems called Pagsinta, which celebrates their 30th wedding anniversary. The book speaks about their feelings, views, and perspectives. Her poetry is also published in AKDAAN 2, and AKDAAN 3."



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