

Gimli declared 'Fair Trade Town'

Posted 26 days ago

Gimli became the sixth community in Canada to be designated a Fair Trade Town.

The official announcement was made at the New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli July 2.

TransFair Canada, the national organization that oversees certification of Fair Trade Towns and producer partners around the world, gave Gimli its designation after the community met a number of criteria. To become a Fair Trade Town a community must attain a list of six goals. These goals encourage access to Fair Trade Certified products in the community as well as increasing education and public awareness on the issue of fair trade.

In order to be designated a Fair Trade Town the concept must be endorsed by the local municipal council and products must be available in shops, stores and cafés.

The concept, born in England, is simple.

Producers in Third World countries that adopt fair trade practices — that include working conditions of the labour force, environmental sustainability and quality control — are given the stamp of approval by TransFair Canada. Through a licensing process products such as tea, sugar, chocolate and coffee are given the designation "Fair Trade Product."

Under the direction of Zack Gross, a Sandy Hook resident and Fair Trade Outreach Coordinator for Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC), Gimli's Fair Trade committee was formed.

Local retailers were encouraged to promote fair trade products and Gimli Youth Community Partnership took up the task of spreading the word on fair trade practices.

The RM of Gimli, Evergreen School Division and East Interlake Community Futures endorsed Fair Trade Manitoba's goals and supported the efforts of community and business organizations to be included in the Fair Trade initiative.

Janice Hamilton, executive director of MCIC, Gimli MLA Peter Bjornson and Gimli Coun. Ross Bailey were on-hand at the New Iceland Heritage Museum for the official announcement.

"Hopefully there'll be other communities that follow Gimli's lead," Hamilton said.

Referring to the current meltdown in the global economy Bjornson told the gathering that Fair Trade is a positive step. "The world is ready for change," he said.

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