

A HISTORY OF THE ONTARIO STEELPAN ASSOCIATION

A Strange Coincidence - September 11 2001

Ontario Steelpan Association is the culmination of an initiative by avid steelpan enthusiasts to promote and preserve their musical art-form in Canada through an umbrella organization. While New York City and the rest of the world were still recoiling in horror from the shock of the Al Qaeda 9-11 attack, representatives of Toronto Steelpan Community were participating in a previously arranged meeting with Mr. Patrick Arnold, President of Pan Trinbago (Trinidad & Tobago). Mr. Arnold was on his way back to Trinidad after visits to London, England and New York from which he had arrived the previous day.

This meeting took place at the offices of the Caribbean Cultural Committee (CCC), 138 Hamilton Street, Toronto and was attended by: Patrick Arnold, Cecil Clarke (President, Pan Trinbago Canada), Cristabelle Crichlow & Tommy Crichlow (Pan Masters), Miley Duke (New Dimension), Selwyn Henry & Andrew Jackson (Panatics), Elton John (Mississauga Academy of Steelband Music), Ian Jones (Facilitator), Wendy Jones (Pan Fantasy), Heather McIvor (Jesse Ketchum Pan Vibrations), Danny Mosca (Silhouettes), Edward Peters (CCC Board member), Ivor Picou, Tom Sosa (Afropan), Earle Wong (pan tuner- Panyard Precision Steel Band Instruments), and Jamea Zuberi (Melange Steelpan Ensemble). This group continued to meet monthly until January 2002. The following is an overview of the discussions in which the representatives engaged and some of the developments that came out of the meetings:

September 11, 2001

A group of 17 representatives from the Toronto Steelpan Community meets with Mr. Patrick Arnold, President of Pan Trinbago at the offices of the CCC, 138 Hamilton Street. Discussion includes an update on the status of pan in Europe, USA and the Caribbean; plans for the 2002 Panorama and World Festival; Pan Trinbago's firm position that it did not want its name used outside of Trinidad & Tobago; and the fragmented state of the pan movement in Toronto, with some bands belonging to Pan Trinbago and Pan Alliance, and some independent.

Mr. Arnold encouraged representatives to come together in a unified body under a name that was not Pan Trinbago, but which instead identified the region that it represents. Action: Resolved that Ed Peters, a steelpan tuner and the CCC Board member responsible for steelpan matters, call a meeting of all those present to begin discussions aimed at creating one representative steelpan association in Toronto.

October 11, 2001

A group of 10 meets for a brainstorming session. It was agreed that: (i) the pan community be defined as players, arrangers, tuners, administrators and anyone who shares an interest in the instrument, and is committed to working for its development; and (ii) in order to ensure that the administrative and longer term functions are well resourced, it is important to have access to needed skills (scientists, etc.) outside of the body of players, arrangers and

tuners. Actions: Resolved that (a) Ed Peters, who will be in Trinidad in November, attend and gather all relevant information from the World Steelband Music Festival (WSMF) Planning meeting and report back to the group; (b) a Steering Committee comprising Chair - Ed Peters, Andrew Jackson, Ian Jones and Selwyn McSween be given a mandate "to outline a strategic plan for building a unified steelpan community that actively promotes the growth and development of pan in Canada"; (c) The Steering Committee add a woman to its membership.

November 15, 2001

A group of 12 meets. The Steering Committee presents a Draft Strategic Plan that includes seeking input from the pan community throughout Canada; identifying avenues for sharing resources and creating opportunities for members to showcase their talents year round; generating a list of benefits that might accrue to members of the newly constituted representative body; liaison with the US Steelbands' Association to gain insights into how they approached the formation of their newly founded body; and developing for a new organization, objectives that can be used in our application for incorporation as a non-profit corporation in Ontario. It was agreed that: (1) the group set firm timelines for establishing the unified pan association in order to ensure that we do not create the perception of another group talking, but achieving nothing; (2) Caribana™ Festival can be a useful vehicle for bringing all Steelbands together. Action: Resolved that the Steering Committee develop a questionnaire to obtain feedback from all constituents of the pan community as a means of structuring an organization with the broadest possible appeal.

December 13, 2001

A group of 7 meets. No report from Ed Peters on the meeting of the WSMF Planning Committee. The Steering Committee presents a Draft Questionnaire which was amended and finalized. It was agreed that we use the information from the completed questionnaires to go public with a much larger meeting that can be the forum for affirming our mandate to establish the new, unified steelpan body. Action: Resolved that Ian Jones prepare the amended questionnaire and distribute it to the members who have been attending the meetings so that they can have their band members complete them.

January 6, 2002

A group of 7 meets. Ed Peters distributes minutes of the WSMF Planning meeting. After much discussion it was agreed that the group send to Pan Trinbago, Trinidad & Tobago, a written response articulating objections to the proposed July 2002 date of the WSMF; the decision to eliminate the Test Piece and the Calypso presentation from the Festival, and other elements of the Planning Committee's deliberations. Andrew Jackson returns 24 completed questionnaires; Miley Duke has his and Winston Frederick's questionnaires to be completed. Ed Peters asks members to support his colleagues on the Board of the CCC at the AGM

elections on January 19 2002. Action: Resolved that Ian Jones draft the response to Pan Trinbago, Trinidad & Tobago; e-mail/fax it to the members present for feedback; finalize the response and forward it to Ed Peters for delivery to Mr. Patrick Arnold, President, Pan Trinbago. Next meeting scheduled for February 28 2002.

Status Quo

The response was drafted, finalized and delivered by Ian Jones to Ed Peters who took it to Patrick Arnold at Pan Trinbago's offices in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The Toronto Steelpan Community received neither a written response nor an acknowledgement of receipt from Pan Trinbago. Ironically, the momentum for a new, unified steelpan body in Toronto which was generated at the urging of the President, Pan Trinbago (Trinidad & Tobago) was temporarily slowed down by his failure to respond to our fraternal concerns re the economic and artistic viability of attempting to produce the WSMF every two years instead of every four years.

The Steering Committee did not meet after January 6 2002.

A Renaissance Following an initial approach by Tommy Crichlow at Caribana™ 2002, Vernetta Calvin-Smith, Consul General for the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago in Toronto, met in August 2002 with Tommy & Cristabelle Crichlow, Ian Jones, Everal Lewis, Arthur Soman (Hope Lutheran Church Steelband) and Raymond Thurton (Steelpan Instructor) "to establish what assistance the Consulate could offer in the further development of steelpan in Toronto". This small group was invited by Tommy because he believed that they would be most supportive of his desire to bring all the Toronto Steelbands together and working towards mutually agreed upon goals and objectives.

This meeting was chaired by the Consul General was advised that representatives from the Toronto Steelpan Community had held a series of meetings from September 2001 to January 2002, and had completed considerable work towards

building a unified Steel Pan body, which would actively promote the growth and development of steelpan in Canada. As a result, an extended group was invited to attend a meeting at the offices of the Trinidad & Tobago Consulate, 2005 Sheppard Avenue East, Suite 303, Toronto Ontario at 6:30 p.m. on September 10 2002.

What turned out to be the inaugural meeting of the Ontario Steelpan Association was attended by: Cristabelle Crichlow (Pan Masters), Miley Duke (New Dimension), Selwyn Henry (Panatics), Albert John, Ian Jones, Earl La Pierre Jr., (Afropan), Everal Lewis, Jose Machado (New Dimension), Edward Peters (pan tuner- Steeltone Musical), Raymond Thurton, and Consulate Staff - Vernetta Calvin- Smith (Consul General), Raelene Prieto and Cherylann Ramnarine. Ken Bhagan (St.Jamestown Youth Steel Orchestra), Cecil Clarke (Pantrinbago Canada), Wendy Jones (Pan Fantasy Steelband), Arthur Soman, Tom Sosa and Earle Wong were invited but sent their regrets. From this meeting, a Volunteer Committee consisting of Selwyn Henry, Raymond Thurton and two youth representatives to be named by Afropan and New Dimension was given the task of drafting "a mandate, as well as aims

and objectives that can be used as objects for which a non-profit corporation can be incorporated”.

At the second meeting of the group on October 1 2002, Raymond Thurton presented a Draft Mission Statement and Objectives. After some very lively discussion, the group agreed that: The unified body be called Ontario Steelpan Association

The Mission Statement be “To promote excellence in all facets of steelpan in Canada, by providing open, accountable leadership in all matters related to the recognition, growth and development of the steelpan and the steelpan community; and to do so with absolute respect and trust”.

Raymond Thurton and Ian Jones draft an application for registration of a non- profit organization in Ontario by the next meeting on October 17 2002. Selwyn Henry obtain a NUANS (New Updated Automated Name Search) report on the name Ontario Steelpan Association by the next meeting on October 17 2002

Ms. Ramnarine informed the group that the NUANS report and registration would cost approximately \$235. Cristabelle Crichlow (\$100), Earle Wong (\$50) and Winston Fredericks, Selwyn Henry, Elton John, Ian Jones, Jose Machado, Edward Peters, Arthur Soman and Raymond Thurton (\$20 each) donated a total of \$310 to offset those costs.

Consul General, Vernetta Calvin- Smith who chaired the meetings provided outstanding leadership to the group. She set a tone that encouraged respect for all ideas from participating members, as well as a spirit of fraternal welcome for new individuals who joined the group at every meeting. The support staff from her

office attended the meetings, prepared and mailed out the minutes, and also ensured that there was light refreshment for every meeting.

Application for Registration as a Non-profit Corporation On October 17 2002, Selwyn Henry reported that the Search Company, National Corporate Name Clearance Corporation, confirmed the name Ontario Steelpan Association as being available for our use, and he was reimbursed \$64.20 for the cost of the search. Raymond Thurton and Ian Jones distributed the draft registration document that was debated and finalized with the following decisions taken: The Head office of Ontario Steelpan Association (OSA) will be 2005 Sheppard Avenue East, Suite 303 Toronto ON M2J 5B4 The applicants who are to be the first Directors of OSA are 6 of the 10 people who made contributions at the October 1 2002 meeting. Four were eliminated because they were not present at the meeting to confirm their acceptance and the group wanted to file the application immediately. The objects of incorporation would be: (a) promoting interest in the growth, recognition, research & development, study and practice of the steelpan art-form; (b) promoting lectures, concerts, classes, seminars and workshops in steelpan and steelpan related activities; (c) arranging and sanctioning competitions and performances, and establishing and granting prizes, awards and distinctions, and (d) such other complementary purposes not inconsistent with these objects.

The next steps were for Ian Jones to complete and file the application for incorporation; Everald Lewis (donated \$20 at this meeting) and Arthur Soman to complete a draft of Operating Guidelines including membership eligibility and organizational structure; and Selwyn Henry and Raymond Thurton to take the lead in drafting Aims and Objectives of OSA, including short term and long term goals.

On November 7 2002, Ian Jones filed the application for incorporation of the Ontario Steelpan Association, Ontario Corporation Number 1547515, listing as first Directors – Winston Frederick, Selwyn Henry, Ian Jones, Jose Machado and Earle Wong. Rather than spend an additional \$100 to receive the Letters Patent in 7 days, the group opted to receive it in 6 weeks at a total cost of \$155.

Towards the Official Launch of Ontario Steelpan Association by our next meeting on November 7 2002, there was increased interest in the Ontario Steelpan Association. The 9 steelpan representatives who attended the first group meeting in September had now grown to 25. The meetings continued to be chaired by the Consul General, Vernetta Calvin- Smith and in her absence, Deputy Consul General, Laura –Marie West and the movement was gaining

momentum. At this meeting, the group made some critical decisions:

To formally launch Ontario Steelpan Association at a high profile public event in the spring of 2003. The Launch Committee consisted of Rev. Donald Butler (Church of the Nativity Steel Angels), Wendy Jones (Chair), Randolph Karamath and Cherylann Ramnarine (Consulate). To begin assuming some of the administrative responsibilities and to seek another meeting place. The Consul General generously consented to our utilizing the Consulate as a meeting place until after the formal launch. Raymond Thurton was acclaimed as Interim Chair, Ian Jones volunteered to perform the Secretarial function and Earle Wong was persuaded to manage the Treasurer's portfolio. These three were to form the Interim Executive of OSA. To have a Committee of Winston Frederick, Selwyn Henry (Chair), Albert John and Ian Jones draft Aims and Objectives and report back to the next meeting. To have Cristabelle Crichlow and Arthur Soman research funding options and report back to the next meeting. (Earle Wong donated a tenor pan with pan stand and carrying case for a fundraising raffle. We subsequently found out that OSA could not legally run a raffle because it was in existence for less than a year, so we sold the merchandise).

Unfortunately in January 2003, additional work responsibilities forced Raymond Thurton to give up his position as Interim Chair, and he was replaced by Arthur Soman who maintained the momentum. Over the next three months OSA continued to meet monthly. All the interim committees – Executive, Fundraising, Goals & Objectives, Launch and Operating Guidelines worked diligently to get the organization ready for its official launch at 6:00p.m. on May 13 2003 at Scarborough Civic Centre. Earle Wong and Randolph Karamath submitted designs to the OSA Logo Competition and on March 20 2003, exhibit #22 by Randolph was selected by the members as the OSA logo.

In April 2003 OSA made a decision to postpone the formal launch for one month because SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) had created many doubts about people getting

together, and the Consulate staff needed to coordinate the “Celebration of Life” for the late Mr. Cyril Blanchfield, former Consul General, an avid supporter of pan and the Toronto Steelpan Community, who had passed away in Trinidad on April 7.

The Official Launch of Ontario Steelpan Association – Thursday June 26 2003 The postponement of the launch from May to June brought with it a totally unexpected bonus. Pernelle Beckles, Minister of Culture and Tourism, Trinidad & Tobago was unable to attend because she was heavily involved in their July 14 Local Government Elections, but through the Consul General, Vernetta Calvin-Smith, OSA was able to contact and finalize arrangements with Dr. Ellie Mannette

to be the Guest of Honour. OSA had always conceived its formal launch as a high profile event, but this development was simply phenomenal. The Launch Evening now became the Launch Weekend as OSA decided to add a Concert at Monarch Park Collegiate Auditorium on Friday June 27 and a workshop at York University on Saturday June 28. Roger McTair was retained as the publicist.

June 26 2003 was a beautiful summer day. The Launch Committee had worked very diligently to ensure that everything was in place for the historic event. Randolph Karamath had made available much of his steelpan paraphernalia and artifacts to create a “real panyard environment” in the Rotunda of the Scarborough Civic Centre. A wide cross section of the Caribbean and wider communities was present to share in the memorable event. It was 9 months since the meetings began at the Trinidad & Tobago Consulate and it was now time to formally deliver the Ontario Steelpan Association. In accepting her special presentation, the Consul General did comment that “we at the Consulate feel that we are giving birth to OSA after nine months”.

When Master of Ceremonies, Selwyn Joseph welcomed female pannist, 12 year old Tracey Soman, to play the Canadian Anthem at 7:30 p.m., everyone in attendance stood proudly. There were opening remarks by the Interim Chair, Arthur Soman; greetings from Consul General, Vernetta Calvin-Smith; Councillor Joe Mihevc (The Mayor’s Office); Keith Byer, Vice President, Pan Trinbago – Trinidad & Tobago; and Monica Pollard, Caribbean Cultural Committee before Selwyn Henry introduced the Keynote Speaker, Dr. David Trotman, Professor of Caribbean Studies at York University.

Dr. Trotman, who has had a lifelong relationship with Casablanca Steelband in Trinidad, reflected on the early history of the steelpan and the important part that it occupies in the social history of Trinidad and Tobago –the triumph of mainly untrained musical talent, creativity and grassroots dedication over the oppression of the privileged class. He affirmed that after a long, hard struggle, pan is now much bigger than Trinidad and Tobago.

Then it was time for Ian Jones to present a plaque with the following inscription:

TO DR. ELLIE MANNETTE, THE WORLD’S MOST RENOWNED STEELPAN INNOVATOR
For the dedication, perseverance, and conviction, that led you to achieve greatness even in the minds of those who were most prejudiced against you when you first entered into the

world of steelpan. If music is indeed the speech of angels, you have given to the world, instruments of love, peace and harmony.

ONTARIO STEELPAN ASSOCIATION Toronto, Ontario

June 26 2003

Tom Sosa made a special presentation to Consul General, Vernetta Calvin-Smith, for her inspiration, commitment and visionary leadership; and Arthur Soman made special presentations for T&T Consulate staff, Ms. Raelene Prieto and Cherylann Ramnarine for their patience, professionalism and support in making Ontario Steelpan Organization a reality. Solo performances by pannists Hameed "Pan Piper" Shaqq and Winston "Pappy" Frederick and a pan jam session featuring "Panman Pat" McNeilly and Tommy Crichlow brought down the curtain on a memorable event.

The Friday night concert – "The Man, The Music, The Magic" afforded some of Toronto's best young pannists the opportunity to share the spotlight with the Master Innovator who unveiled and played a beautifully manufactured and tuned triple guitar pan. Madelaine De Leon played the Canadian Anthem "a capella", while Aaron Seunarine, Gareth Burgess, Talib Reid-Robinson and Mark Mosca were backed by the Bruce Skerritt trio. Afropan Steelband rounded out the evening's program that was emceed by J.C. McDonald with Delano Thomas, Stage Manager.

The workshop on Saturday was attended by 30 people with whom Ellie shared some highlights of his 64 years in pan, and to whom he demonstrated his unique pan tuning skills. This was a fitting climax to the Launch Weekend. The attendees got as close to genius as most people ever get, and the 76 year old genius got a chance to share what he does best – create finely tuned steelpan.

Organizational Evolution following the Official Launch

At a Special Meeting called on March 23 2004 at Scarborough Civic Centre Committee Room 1, the members of OSA voted to ratify By-Laws 1 & 2 as the operating guidelines of the organization and to convene the first Annual General Meeting on Thursday April 22 2004 at the same location. At this meeting 22 members elected the first Board of Directors of Ontario Steelpan Association for a two year term: Charles Henery, Ian Jones, Randolph Karamath, Jose Machado, Ronald Nurse, Edward Peters, Ralph Ryce, Preston Shepherd and Arthur Soman. The Returning Officer was Brommy Wharton and Scrutineers were Cecil Louis and Nigel Waithe.

At the first meeting of the Board of Directors, April 29 2004, the following officers were elected:

Chair - Arthur Soman

Vice-Chair Edward Peters

Treasurer - Ronald Nurse

Secretary - Ian Jones

Registrar - Jose Machado

Now approaching its 4th anniversary, OSA and its organizational structure is a work in progress. At the 2006 Annual General Meeting, members voted to extend a Director's term from two to three years and to allow both the Treasurer and Corporate Secretary to be appointed as a means of ensuring that it has the best available volunteer skills in those two critical offices.

OSA and the Caribana™ Festival / Toronto Caribbean Carnival
While the interim committees were focused on preparing OSA for its official launch, an Ad hoc Committee of Selwyn Henry, Wendy Jones and Jose Machado had several meetings with the CCC to establish OSA as the umbrella representative of steelbands in Ontario and to negotiate its involvement in the annual Caribana™ Festival including a possible Jour Ouvert. As one of the three key stakeholders (the others are Mas' and Calypso) of the Caribana™ Festival, the Toronto Steelpan Community has had with the CCC a long relationship that, presented occasional challenges for both groups.

The CCC accepted ten steelbands into the annual Caribana™ Parade at that time and these steelbands received a share of the Seed Money provided by the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario to support the participation of the Festival's three key stakeholders. The Steelpan Community sought to manage its share of the Seed Money directly. By May 2003, OSA was recognized by the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario as the umbrella organization to whom they entrusted the disbursement of Seed Money to all steelbands participating in the Caribana Parade. OSA handled this responsibility well and has continued to be entrusted with this function.

The Festival Management Committee (FMC) replaced the CCC as coordinators of the 2006 Caribana™ Festival. The then current Chair, Edward Peters, has represented OSA on this Committee to ensure that the best interests of the Steelpan Community are respected and preserved. In 2010, the festival was rebranded the Scotiabank Toronto Caribbean Carnival managed by FMC.

OSA and Pan Alive

Pan Alive has developed as the flagship event of Ontario Steelpan Association. It was first started in 1997 as a non-competitive steelpan event jointly produced by the Toronto Steelpan Community, the Caribbean Cultural Committee and the

Office of the Consul General for the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago in Toronto headed by Mr. Cyril Blanchfield. The first Pan Alive show was held at Ontario Place Island Club on Sunday July 27 1997. Ten Steelbands, including one from Hamilton and one from London, Ontario performed for 20 minutes each and the admission fee was \$10. Since that first collaboration, Pan Alive had become a CCC sponsored event in which Steelbands participated.

With the launching of OSA in 2003, Pan Alive again became a joint Steelpan Community/CCC production held on Caribana Friday Night August 1 for the first time at Old Fort York. The event was a success and in 2004, OSA independently produced Pan Alive for the first time at the same venue.

OSA relocated Pan Alive to Lamport Stadium in 2005 because it offered more of the infrastructure (physical space, lighting, washroom facilities, seating and easy access by public transport) that facilitates the audience enjoyment of the event. That year, Neal & Massy Trinidad All Stars Steelband who were on a tour of Ottawa and Toronto, performed as guest artistes much to the delight of the crowd. Pan Alive has now become a firmly established Carnival Friday Night event.

Supporting the Toronto District School Board

In April 2004, OSA partnered with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Tourism & Industry Development Company of Trinidad & Tobago to produce Pan Fest, a non-competitive steelpan event in which 23 elementary and high schools participated at Bickford Centre. The TDSB had produced this event on its own since 1990. However, the financial and human resources provided by OSA ensured that Pan Fest 2004 was staged, and helped the organization to demonstrate its commitment to reach out to the younger generation, especially those who are currently in the education system.