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Welcome

First Nation to First Nation; the Ktunaxa welcome refugees to their traditional territory

By CAROLYN GRANT
 bulletin@cyberlink.bc.ca

This past Sunday was both World Refugee Day and the day before National Aboriginal Day in Canada.

And at the St. Eugene Mission on traditional Ktunaxa Nation territory, a ceremony took place wherein refugees now living in the Cranbrook / Kimberley area were officially welcomed to Ktunaxa territory by Chief Cheryl Casimir and St. Mary's Band members.

The refugees in our area come from four different ethnic groups, the Paw family, members of the Karen tribe, who came to Kimberley from a refugee camp on the Thai Myanmar border, Yulia and her six children, two of them amputees from land mines, from Colombia, newly arrived Amaren from Eritrea, who now lives in Cranbrook and Bobby, who is from Burma and has been living in Cranbrook for quite



some time.

"They were welcomed by Chief Cheryl to the traditional territory," said Shaunna Jimenez of Friends of Burma, who has been working with the refugees since their arrival. "So now they have not only been welcomed by our communities but by the Ktunaxa. It was a really lovely welcoming day."

One of the most amazing parts of it, she says, was listening to Ktunaxa story teller Joe Pierre exchange tales with Amaren.

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Shaunna Jimenez photos

Top right, the Paw family, from the Karen tribe in Myanmar with Ktunaxa elder Dorothy Alpine. Right, newly arrived Eritrean refugee Amaren, who lives in Cranbrook, with members of the Paw family and some of the children from the Colombian family, who both reside in Kimberley, along with Ktunaxa Chief Cheryl Casimir.



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