

Peer Biography

14

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Teacher recognized

By JULIE SLACK
Staff

Peter Jailall chuckles when he sees travellers at the airport using laptop computers to take care of last-minute business.

The wax crayons, markers and pencils he carries in his own carry-on bags aren't quite as technical. Still, they're vital resources many children in the Amazon Rainforest in Guyana likely wouldn't have if not for the Mississauga man, a retired elementary school teacher, and Canadian United Service Overseas (CUSO) International, an Ottawa-based international development non-profit of which he's a member.

Jailall, 68, who's made the trip to his native Guyana every year since 1985, is one of seven people from across Canada to receive the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

He spoke about his efforts with Gov. Gen. David Johnston on Dec. 2 at a ceremony in Rideau Hall. The visit to Ottawa was also organized to mark CUSO's 50th anniversary.

Jailall, who recently returned from

the developing South American nation, where he also helps out as a teacher-trainer, was invited to share his experience, knowledge and ideas.

"I go (to Guyana) to give back skills in education and HIV/AIDS (prevention) to help them sustain the economy and eradicate poverty," he said.

Jailall also delivered some key points to Johnston, among them that new Canadians have a moral obligation to help out in their countries of origin.

"It's not enough for them to be just living the good life in Canada," said Jailall. "They need to be world citizens, reaching out to help.

"It's not all about the money, either," he continued. "It's about empowering, helping to build their communities."

In addition, Jailall said, the government has an obligation to give back to countries where "they've scooped up their skilled people ... brain draining, it's called.

Jailall also called on corporations that mine gold and diamonds, and drill for oil, to give back and help build communities.

"I'm asking them to be good corporate citizens," he said.