

Reflecting On 25 Years Of The Nepal Center Of North Carolina (NCNC)



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The dream of NCNC began long before it had a name. In the early 1980s, the Nepali presence in North Carolina was modest—, just a few dozen individuals scattered across the state. One of the earliest milestones came when Governor Jim Hunt, who had lived in Nepal in 1966 through the Ford Foundation, hosted a gathering of Nepalis and Americans with ties to Nepal. Even then, the largest such gathering numbered fewer than 100 people. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, the community remained small but close-knit, with gatherings held in borrowed spaces, on the lawns of American friends, or in cramped apartments—spaces filled with shared meals, laughter, and dreams.

By the mid-1990s, the community began to grow, spurred in part by the Diversity Visa (DV) program. It was during this time that the Nepal Center of North Carolina (NCNC) was born—a statewide organization with board members from the Triad and general members from across the state. Though NCNC’s roots are in the Triangle, vibrant Nepali communities have since flourished in the Triad and Greater Charlotte areas, each developing their own local initiatives while remaining connected to the broader vision. NCNC became a platform for cultural preservation, mutual support, and collective progress.

Now, 25 years later, we look back with pride and gratitude. What began as a simple wish at a New Year’s gathering—that one day, our community would have jobs, homes, and a true sense of belonging—has become a vibrant reality. One founding member recalls, “We didn’t have much, but we had each other. We shared food, stories, and dreams. NCNC gave us a sense of purpose and belonging.” That dream has come true—and continues to grow, rooted in the same spirit of unity and hope that brought us together all those years ago.

Empowering the Next Generation

As we celebrate the silver jubilee, one thing remains unchanged: our unwavering commitment to youth empowerment. This was evident even in the early years, as I shared in Decade of NCNC, when a young community member—while completing National Honor Society service hours—came to understand the deeper purpose of our organization.

That spirit continues today. A young member who began attending Nepali language classes at the Cary Arts Center later earned a scholarship through the Sujana Parita Education Foundation and eventually served as a mentor herself. Stories like hers reflect the long-term impact of NCNC’s mentorship and youth programs.

As new generations come of age, I hope to see even more youth-led initiatives emerge—

whether through NCNC or as independent efforts. When young people are given space to lead, they not only grow—they shape the future of our community.

A Community of Many Voices, United by Purpose

As we celebrate NCNC's proud milestone, it's heartening to see how our community has flourished—not just in numbers, but in spirit, creativity, and diversity. The Nepali diaspora in the Triangle is now vibrant and multifaceted, reflected in the emergence of interest groups such as Nepa Rhythms, Everest Volleyball Club, Soccer and Pingpong clubs, North Carolina Nepali Literary Society, Teen Council, Bhajan Groups, Ba-Ama Satsang, NRN, and many more. These groups reflect the evolving passions and needs of our community.

This growth is not a departure from NCNC's mission—it's a natural and welcome progression. From the beginning, NCNC was never intended to be the sole organizer of all community activities. Rather, it was envisioned as a foundation—a platform to support, connect, and empower. When individuals step forward to lead their own initiatives, it brings greater energy, ownership, and quality to the work. It's perfectly okay—and even encouraged—for these programs to evolve into standalone efforts, as long as they remain rooted in community values and collaboration.

Our partnership with Pashupati Buddha Mandir of NC (PBMNC) exemplifies this spirit of shared vision, as we work together toward building a permanent Mandir and Cultural Hall. Similarly, flagship events like Nepal Day, and programs such as Teej, Dashain, Tihar, blood drives, Adopt-a-Highway, and the Nepali School (now in two locations), continue to thrive—especially when they are community-driven and operate more effectively as standalone initiatives, with appropriate coordination with NCNC. These efforts deepen community engagement and ensure that our collective impact grows stronger with each passing year.

On a lighter note, it's worth remembering that Sangalo itself has evolved over time. What began as the NCNC Newsletter eventually became Sanskriti Sangalo—a playful and creative outlet that captured the spirit of our community. While that fun tradition has faded, its legacy reminds us of the joy and imagination that have always been part of our journey.

Leadership and Service with Heart

This model of shared leadership and collective energy ensures that NCNC remains vibrant, relevant, and resilient—ready to serve a growing and diverse community for generations to come. Over the years, I've witnessed NCNC's leaders give their very best, often under demanding circumstances. The scope of NCNC's work, especially when centralized, can place a heavy burden on board members—each of whom serves as a volunteer, balancing community service with personal and professional responsibilities.

Having walked that path myself, I understand the quiet sacrifices that leadership often requires. It means putting your family and your profession first—, and still finding the time and heart to serve NCNC. That's why I hold deep respect for everyone who has stepped into leadership roles, whether for one term or more. Each contribution, no matter the length or title, has helped shape the NCNC we know today. If someone is unable to fulfill their role, stepping back is not a failure—it's a recognition of priorities. The dedication shown by those who have served, despite these challenges, continues to uphold the spirit of NCNC, and for that, we are all deeply grateful. As I've often said: "Ask not what NCNC can do for you, but what you can do for NCNC—and you'll realize you're already building a stronger, more connected community." To those considering leadership positions in NCNC, know that your time and heart will be valued—and your efforts will help shape the next chapter of our shared journey.

Responding with Compassion, Acting with Purpose

This spirit of service extends beyond internal leadership;— it shines brightest in times of crisis. NCNC has consistently demonstrated its commitment to humanitarian values, —responding swiftly and compassionately to crises both near and far. Following the devastating earthquake of 2015 with an epicenter in Gorkha Earthquake, the community mobilized to raise funds and send aid to Nepal. This spirit of solidarity has extended globally, with NCNC contributing to relief efforts after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the 2005 Sri Lanka tsunami, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NCNC adapted quickly—, shifting to virtual platforms, sharing critical health information, and organizing support for affected families. These efforts reflected not only just logistical agility but also a deep-rooted sense of responsibility to community welfare.

Beyond emergency responses, NCNC has supported visionary leaders like Dr. Sanduk Ruit and Dr. Mahabir Pun, whose work in eye care and rural innovation has transformed lives across Nepal. Their missions align with NCNC’s broader commitment to service, innovation, and global citizenship.

Looking ahead, NCNC remains dedicated to uplifting underserved communities—wherever compassion and collaboration are needed most.

Building Bridges with Institutions

Over the years, NCNC has cultivated strong collaborations with local governments, universities, and community organizations—partnerships that have helped bring the Nepali-American community into the mainstream. These relationships have enabled NCNC to take on public roles, participate in civic initiatives, and represent our community in broader conversations about diversity, inclusion, and shared progress.

This integration is not just symbolic—it’s deeply functional. By offering educational programs, cultural events, and community services, NCNC is not merely supporting the broader mission of social welfare and responsible citizenship—it is actively carrying it out. In many ways, the work traditionally expected of public institutions is being fulfilled by our own community, through grassroots leadership and collective effort. We are not just partners in progress—we are practitioners of it.

Expanding Programs to Meet Evolving Needs

As our community grows, I’ve observed a rising need for practical, inclusive programs that support both personal development and community connection. I hope NCNC—or other interest groups—will consider launching initiatives like ESL classes, financial literacy workshops, and digital skills training to help members navigate life with greater confidence.

Equally important are activities that promote wellness and togetherness. While organized events like a biannual “Run for Fun” can bring people together, individuals and families are also encouraged to take advantage of North Carolina’s abundant public trails, parks, and camping opportunities on their own. In fact, the state itself recognizes the emotional and physical benefits of nature—North Carolina’s wellness policies even support staff participation in outdoor activities as a means of managing stress and improving well-being. Whether it’s a weekend hike or a night under the stars, these personal adventures can deepen our connection to nature and to each other. Alongside cherished traditions like the annual picnic, such experiences help strengthen bonds across generations and foster a

lasting sense of belonging.

Looking Ahead with Gratitude and Purpose

As NCNC enters its next chapter, our focus remains on inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainability. We are actively exploring ways to engage youth, support seniors, and foster intergenerational dialogue. Plans for a permanent community center and Mandir are gaining momentum, backed by widespread support.

NCNC's journey is a testament to the power of collective action. What began as a dream on borrowed lawns has become a lasting legacy—rooted in unity, growing with purpose. Our story is not just about one community; it reflects how diaspora groups everywhere can thrive through service, connection, and shared vision. May our journey continue to inspire others to build bridges, preserve culture, and uplift one another.

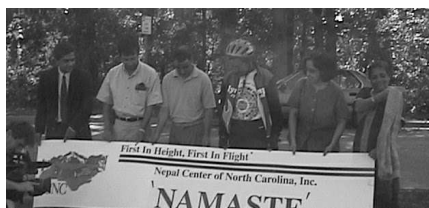
A Final Note:

As I reflect on this journey, I know that many stories, contributions, and milestones could not be captured in a single article. Some may have been even more impactful than those mentioned here. To all whose efforts have shaped NCNC in ways big and small—please accept my heartfelt gratitude. This reflection is just one thread in the rich tapestry we've we have woven together.

Editor's Note: The author, Ishwar Devkota, is the Founding President of the Nepal Center of North Carolina, Inc. (NCNC).



After 9/11, as the world searched for healing, NCNC joined the 2001 International Festival in Raleigh—answering a call from International Focus and the City. Though it was a financial stretch, we stood for unity, resilience, and the spirit of moving forward together



Bishwa Cycke Yatri Puskar Shah in Raleigh 2001



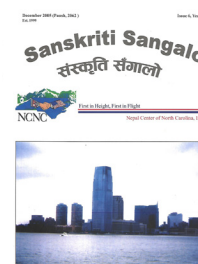
Getting our Panchakanyas ready for joint convention in 2001



NCNC - Pakhes: the soccer team in 2000



NCNC President Ishwar Devkota with cyclist Puskar Shah in Raleigh 2001



Sanskriti Sangalo