

Royal wedding in Halifax

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Halifax - Guests of the Shambhala Buddhist Royal wedding ceremony couldn't help but feel the engaging magnetism Sakyong Jamgon Mipham and his Princess bride Tseyang Palmo transcended during their wedding ceremony yesterday afternoon.

The Buddhist couple were married at Pier 23 **Cunard** Centre in Halifax.

Sakyong is the spiritual leader of more than 10,000 Shambhala Buddhists around the world. He met Tibetan Princess Tseyang Palmo at an Indian monastery in February 2005.

The blissful couple were not the only ones enjoying the day.

More than 1,000 guests came from around the world to attend the elegant and colourful ceremony.

Juniper smoke enveloped the guests for purification while they happily mingled among old and new friends of the Buddhist community before the ceremony.

Organizers had three hours to transform the usually barren and dismal building into a lavish yet sacred ceremony deemed, "Blossoming of the Sun."

Helen Bonzi, one of the organizers, described the "armies" of people helping to iron and hang all the banners and chevrons that lined the room.

"It all came together beautifully," said Bonzi, who lives in Halifax.

Red, white, blue and orange colours representing the four dignitaries surrounded the stage and main shrine where the couple sat before their guests.

'Heart of unfiltered goodness'

The princess, described in the ceremony as having "a heart of unfiltered goodness," wore a red and green traditional dress.

The ceremony often drew moments of laughter for the unexpected delays and humorous reactions the couple made towards the audience. But serious moments like the exchange of vows left some men and women teary-eyed.

Buddhist practitioner and comedian Cathy Jones from *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, said the wedding was really touching.

"It's an official kind of way to inspire people because they represent dignity and compassion," said Jones.

The ceremony included the opportunity for guests to offer a blessing to the couple by walking on stage with a white silk scarf called khatas.

"We are so happy because this is such an auspicious time for us," said Elizabeth Congo, a Buddhist practitioner who traveled with her family from California just to be able to meet the couple.

Halifax hosted the three-day wedding festival which included a traditional juniper-smoke purification ceremony on Citadel Hill and many other festivities.

The couple will reside in Halifax.

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