

# **Calgary Immigrant Women's Association**

## **2008/2009 Annual Report**

## **Vision**

Women from diverse backgrounds are empowered to reach their goals and dreams as equal and contributing members of Canadian society

## **Mission**

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association delivers professional services that facilitate the integration and full participation of women and their families in the community

**Equality**

**Empathy**

**Integrity**

**Inclusiveness**



## **Contents**

Message from the President and Board Chair

Message from the Executive Director

Settlement and Integration

Family Services

Language Training and Employment

Childcare

Events

Success Stories

Our Volunteers

Funders

Donors and Supporters

Audited Financial Statements



## President and Board Chair Gerda R. Bloemraad

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This has been an exceptional year of accomplishment and growth for CIWA. The Board wishes to commend the Executive Director and staff for their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm to make this outstanding achievement possible.

We would like to thank our funders, partners, and other stakeholders for their generous support and extend our appreciation to all the volunteers who gave their time and expertise and supported CIWA in so many ways. We also thank the directors, who stepped down, for their dedication, time and assistance.

CIWA's Board of Directors offers a wealth of different expertise, experience, backgrounds and disciplines. This combination of knowledge and familiarity with immigration issues allows for open, honest and valuable discussions in all areas affecting CIWA's operations and assures proper due diligence. Our primary responsibility is the strategic planning, governance and supervision of CIWA's activities and we are entrusted with ensuring high standards of ethical conduct and legal compliance.

This year our committees organized Board workshops, reviewed and recommended amendments to existing policies, identified which new policies were needed, prepared a Budget Review Policy, streamlined finance and program reporting, ensured that compensation policies and processes were in place to position CIWA competitively, addressed recruitment and retention issues faced by the immigration sector, developed policies for the recruitment, interviewing and retention of Board members, held information sessions, interviewed potential candidates and discussed possible fund-raising opportunities and future networking possibilities.

As President and Chair of the Board of Directors I eagerly anticipate the upcoming year. CIWA has a healthy balance sheet, generous funders, a strong management team, dedicated staff, fantastic volunteers, keen and hard-working clients and wonderfully successful programs and projects. Together we hope to continue to make a difference in the lives of immigrant women and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gerda R. Bloemraad". The signature is stylized and cursive.

# Executive Director Beba Svigir



What an amazing year for CIWA this was!

A combination of newly acquired space and a 56% increase to our budget compared to the previous year made it possible for us to introduce innovative programs and services for our clients.

We enhanced customized, holistic services for senior immigrant women and introduced intergenerational projects engaging seniors and youth. Our bridge to work programs helped many immigrant women transition into equitable employment opportunities.

An overarching need for immigrant women is the provision of quality childcare while they attend programs. To that end, we increased our childcare area to 2,500 square feet of space that promotes educational, hygienic, social and gross motor development of children whose mothers are enrolled in our Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. Occasional childcare is also offered to women attending other CIWA programs, including our community based programs.

Our dedicated volunteers continue to support CIWA's programs and services. We provided our volunteers with an opportunity to engage in decision making by organizing and implementing CIWA's International Women's Day event. This experience helped enrich their Canadian workplace experience and showcased their talents.

On a daily basis, we are reminded how many immigrant women in Calgary depend on our capacity to provide immediate support for them and their children. This capacity is enhanced by collaborative approach to service delivery that makes CIWA a champion in community partnerships that benefit our clients.

I would like thank all those in Calgary who assist us in promoting the skills and talents of immigrant women coming to our city.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Beba Svigir".

## Who We Help

**14,274** clients served through individual and group services

**135** countries of origin

**150** languages spoken

**4,468** group sessions for clients

**Top 5 Countries of Origin:**  
China 16%, Philippines 10%,  
Columbia 9%, Mexico 7%,  
Pakistan 5%

**Top 5 Languages Spoken:**  
Spanish 22%, Mandarin 17%,  
Tagalog 9%, Arabic 6%,  
Persian 5%

# Settlement and Integration



**“CIWA helped me in my difficult situation. I am happy with the people who work at CIWA. They have kind and open hearts. ”**

- Find Me a Home client

**Intake, Settlement and Referral Services**

**Integration Program**

**New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups Program**

**Volunteer Program**

**Senior Immigrant Women take Arts and Crafts on the Road**

**Find Me a Home Project**

**Filipino Community Development Program**

**Safe Haven Project**

**Civic Engagement for Immigrant Women Project**

**Breast Health Awareness Project**

**Living Healthy: Education and Prevention of Type 2 Diabetes**

# Featuring:

**Breast Health Awareness Project** focuses on outreach and education for underserved and under-screened immigrant women in Calgary.

Through culturally sensitive educational sessions, participants receive information about available services and breast cancer prevention techniques like self-examinations, clinical exams and mammograms. Participants are also offered individual support with booking and attending screening appointments.

Through the train-the-trainer component, volunteers from diverse backgrounds learn how to educate women in their community about breast health and community resources.

Offering educational sessions, individual support and training volunteer educators, this project aims at increasing the breast cancer screening practices of immigrant women in Calgary.

**Filipino Community Development Program** supports the integration of Filipino families whose children are enrolled in the Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District.

CIWA provides parenting support and referrals to community services. We work with families through the process of integration and reunification and ensure school readiness and success for their children.

Social isolation, anxiety, and depression related to integration and reunification often lead to challenging situations that can affect children. We work not only with schools, but also churches and the wider community to connect Filipino families with support services.

Families have reported that they are now independently accessing community services and have enhanced the ability to support their children.

**Civic Engagement for Immigrant Women Project** educates immigrant women and their families about Canada's democratic, social and political systems.

Through educational sessions, participants are encouraged and empowered to become actively engaged leaders in their communities.

Using a train-the-trainer model, immigrant women representing diverse ethnic communities are trained to educate members of their respective communities about the importance of civic engagement.

The project created a curriculum and resource manual for participants and a training manual for volunteer trainers. The culturally sensitive curriculum and manuals will be translated into 4 languages and distributed among service providers and ethnic communities.

Settlement and Integration - facilitated **784 group sessions**

# Family Services



**Family Conflict Program**

**Youth Program**

**Cross Cultural Parenting Program**

**In-Home Support Program**

**Healthy Families Program**

**Crossing the Bridge Project**

**One-on-One Counselling for Senior Immigrant Women**

**Guide to Success Program**

**Hand in Hand Parent Link Centre**

**Best Beginning Partnership**

**“Thanks for giving us this opportunity.”**

-Youth Program participant



# Featuring:

**One-on-One Counselling for Senior Immigrant Women Program** provides senior immigrant women with support related to issues such as isolation, settlement, housing, language classes, self-esteem, community support systems, employment, family conflict, parenting skills, health concerns and Canadian laws.

Our holistic approach to service delivery encourages spousal participation and open communication that creates mutual support between couples and their extended family members.

The full participation of immigrant seniors in the community is made possible by decreasing barriers to services through culturally sensitive first language support, in-home support and services in community locations.

**Family Conflict Program** provides therapeutic counselling to immigrant families experiencing domestic violence.

Counselling is offered with first language support and appreciation for the cultural values of clients.

The program offers spousal support as part of our holistic approach to service delivery. This allows the whole family to become more cohesive and harmonious, and prevents future generations from continuing the cycle of family violence.

To respond to the needs of partners and spouses, Family Conflict Program offers a male support group. Men have the opportunity to discuss family violence issues in a respectful, safe, and understanding environment.

**Cross Cultural Parenting Program** has been providing support to parents and service providers for more than 20 years.

Parents, community partners and service providers learn about the challenges and parenting issues immigrant parents face in a new country and culture.

This year we are excited about an additional resource that has been developed. Translated versions of the Cross Cultural Parenting Resource Manual have been published and include activities and valuable parenting information. The manuals were translated into Chinese, Spanish, Urdu, Arabic and Dinka. This incredible first language tool for parents and facilitators will enhance understanding and foster open communication.

Family Services - served **7149 participants** through group presentations and workshops

# Language Training and Employment



**“When I entered this program I had a dream, now I have a plan.”**

- Links to Success Participant

**Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)**

**SMILES Childcare**

**Pebbles in the Sand Program**

**Employment Skills Program**

**Links to Success Project**

**Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants**

**Advanced Training for Immigrant Women Seeking Employment as ESL Assistants**

**Canadian Pronunciation Course**

**Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women Project**

# Featuring:

**Links to Success** is a bridge to work project for young immigrant mothers aged 18-30 years who need assistance transitioning to the labor market.

The project focuses on developing employability skills and creating a career action plan that empowers young mothers to meet their life and employment goals, while responding to family needs, and supporting their children.

Participants take part in 12 week employability and life skills workshops with additional support from volunteer mentors, followed by 10 week work experience placements.

With the support of over 20 companies, 83% of participants in the first intake successfully completed the project and have gained valuable Canadian work experience.

**Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants** is an enhanced language training project that offers professional immigrant women the opportunity to gain language, employment, and workplace culture skills required to be successful in the accounting field in Canada.

The project provides 14 weeks of enhanced language and occupational training followed by a 10 week work experience placement. Project participants learn about professional designation and identify the skills required to move up in the accounting field.

Twenty five businesses and organizations support the project through special presentations, workshops and hosting practicum students. Employers that hired our clients report rewarding experiences and positive results.

**Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women Project** provides full-time ESL/vocational training and Level 1 childcare certification for immigrant women with less than 7 years of education in their home country.

Offered in partnership with Bow Valley College, the project provides immigrant and refugee women with confidence, professional qualifications, English language and life skills needed to attain employment as childcare workers in Canada.

The project includes two months of supported employment or work experience placements at daycare centers around Calgary.

The success of this project is evident since 87% of participants are already employed in childcare facilities throughout Calgary.

Language Training and Employment - provided **9642 hours** of instruction

# Childcare

**“The teachers play a very important role in my daughter’s life as she learns many things from them. She learns the alphabet and numbers, reads stories, sings rhymes and plays with other children. She is also taught everyday courtesies like saying thank you, sorry and please.”**

- Pebbles in the Sand student

**CIWA’s Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Childcare** has undergone major expansion and renovations this past year. We have secured over 2,500 square feet of space and have increased our capacity from 38 children to 56. Due to the increased capacity we were able to provide childcare for 541 children through regular program offerings and drop-in childcare services.

The new childcare boasts high ceilings, large windows, gross motor space, a kitchenette, a spacious staff room, storage space, washer and dryer, and a well-equipped children’s washroom.

Each room has been set up with the specific developmental needs of children in mind.

The area offers privacy for three different age groups we serve: babies, toddlers and preschoolers. The customized nature of the space creates a sense of ownership and belonging among the children.

We were able to equip each room with new toys and furniture that meet the highest safety standards.

The most exciting addition is over 325 square feet of gross motor space where children can run, jump and play sports. The gym is full of mats and padding to ensure that their play is engaging and safe. Each day, children line up with excitement and anticipation to use the gym and scream with delight as they use the area for games and activities.

The enjoyment and benefit of the new childcare space was apparent from the first day it opened. When it came time for the children to go home, some of the children cried because they were so excited about the new space and did not want to go home.

The space also provides privacy for parents who have questions and need support with parenting issues and practices from our experienced childcare providers.

We continuously strive to provide the best quality programming and care to enhance the learning and development of children, and are proud to offer our clients a safe and fun space to drop off their children while they attend our LINC classes.



**“I feel so happy at CIWA and my baby has a great time in the daycare. Thanks CIWA for helping mothers with little babies like me.”**

- LINC student

# Events

**“I had an amazing time planning the International Women’s Day event. I experienced first hand what it takes to pull off such a big occasion, from decorations, layout and music. This event opened my eyes to see the great things women have accomplished over the years, it made me proud to say I am a woman!”**

- CIWA volunteer

International Women’s Day is celebrated annually on March 8<sup>th</sup> to promote gender equality and to recognize the economic, political and social achievements of women throughout history.

Worldwide celebrations highlight women’s strengths, skills and accomplishments.

Unfortunately, women around the world still experience discrimination, domestic violence, and inequality in the social, political, and economic spheres regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality.

To promote women’s issues and to raise awareness of International Women’s Day in Calgary, CIWA hosted “Women of the World” celebration at the Calgary Chamber of Commerce.

Nineteen immigrant women volunteered their time to coordinate and implement this event. Sharing their unique skills and talents, they showed leadership and initiative in making this a memorable event.

In table discussions, men and women of diverse backgrounds had the opportunity to remove “immigrant” and “mainstream” labels and identify the similarity of women’s issues globally.

Cara Fullerton of Global Calgary emceed the event which was opened by Rob Ferguson from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and Gerda R. Bloemraad, CIWA’s President and Board Chair.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier spoke about the importance of International Women’s Day and government’s role in upholding women’s rights.

Judy Wark, a Canadian writer and spokesperson made an impassioned speech about the true beauty of each and every woman.

Barbara Simic of ConocoPhillips addressed issues of employment, and the important role corporate Calgary has in promoting the skills of immigrant women.

Guests provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about the event. Attendees learned about the importance of International Women’s Day and the struggles women face around the world.

Immigrant women that volunteered their time to organize this event brought women’s rights to the forefront while presenting their skills and abilities to the Calgary community.



**“Women are courageous no matter what their backgrounds.”**

- International Women's Day guest

# Success Story:

## New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups Program

**“I think it is a really great program for immigrant women that provides the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and share your story. It is an excellent environment for people who don’t speak English very well. All women, regardless of language level, do their best and open up to others.”**

- Oxana, New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups participant

Oxana came to Canada in 2007 from Russia with her husband and two children. They came to Canada for new opportunities and experiences.

Oxana is highly educated. She holds a Masters degree in education, and was a teacher in her home country. She left her career and strong support network of friends and family back in Russia.

Oxana felt lost and isolated. Having few friends and no extended family in a new country and culture was challenging for her.

She was taking a Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) class at Bow Valley College when she first learned about CIWA. A classmate referred her to CIWA to learn how she could become more

involved in the community and meet new people.

Oxana was referred to CIWA’s New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups Program. She began attending the weekly meetings and quickly became very involved by joining two different groups.

The safe and comfortable group environment helped her connect with other participants in the program. She felt the excitement of a young girl learning about the world for the first time.

In a very short period of time, Oxana enhanced her English language skills and became a volunteer co-facilitator with the program. In this role she leads discussions and supports the integration of other immigrant women.

To further practice her English and learn new skills, Oxana also volunteers as a receptionist at CIWA’s main office. She is exploring new career possibilities and has signed up for CIWA’s Receptionist Training program.

Participating in New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups has positively impacted Oxana’s life. She has gained confidence and improved her self-esteem. She is enthusiastic about learning new skills and starting her new life.

Oxana is a valued member of the CIWA family. Her dedication and contribution has truly made her a role model in the community.





**“New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups has improved all parts of myself—my self-esteem, my self-confidence and my self-perception.”**

- Oxana, New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups participant

# Success Story:

## Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women

**“She is a wonderful lady and a symbol of courage and motivation for me. She wants to learn more and more and never feels tired or disappointed.”**

- Sabiha's classmate

Sabiha came to Canada from Pakistan in February 2009. She is a 59 year old mother of 4 grown children and many grandchildren. Sabiha had only seven years of education in her home country and when she arrived in Calgary she had no English language skills. She enrolled in Level 1 of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and worked part-time at Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Still, Sabiha continued to encounter multiple barriers to integration. She was persistent in looking for opportunities and realized she needed to pursue viable career options.

When she heard about Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women, she took a courageous step in joining the intensive full-time program while continuing to work in the evenings and on weekends.

During the project, Sabiha volunteered as a childcare worker with CIWA's Cross Cultural Parenting Program.

Sabiha was a dedicated, committed and reliable student who came to class early each day to take advantage of extra support that was offered. She was one of the lower level students in the class in terms of her language level, and she experienced a huge learning curve. Her hard-work combined with a positive attitude, natural passion and resilience helped her work towards her goal.

Sabiha completed an introduction to computers course during the project. This was challenging for her as she had no previous experience working with computers.

The computer training inspired her to buy a laptop to continue practicing her computer skills, use the internet for ideas about childcare activities, and improve her English through an on-line program.

After completing the project, Sabiha left her job at KFC to become a full-time childcare worker at a day-care centre in Calgary. In the evenings she continues her education through part-time LINC classes.

Sabiha has motivated and inspired her fellow students with her personal work ethic and accomplishments. The students realize that with hard work and determination almost any goal is possible and one is never too old to change his/her life for the better.



**“When I first came to Canada I had no English at all. CIWA helped me. I am so grateful to CIWA and my teachers for all of the help and support they gave me.”**

- Sabiha, Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women participant

# Our Volunteers



Our volunteers are involved in every aspect of our agency. Every year, their tireless effort and unique skills provide thousands of hours of support for immigrant women and their families in Calgary. Without their support and contribution, CIWA would not be able to run the day to day activities of the organization.

CIWA's volunteers generously give their time by serving on our Board of Directors, assisting with program delivery, helping with fundraising activities and special

events, acting as mentors, offering interpretation, supporting the legal clinic, sharing their expertise as guest speakers, and providing administrative support.

To recognize the valuable support our volunteers provide, we celebrate their contributions and recognize their commitment. We sincerely appreciate each and every one of our dedicated volunteers.

**397 volunteers** contributed **20,527 hours**

# Our Funders

## Canada

Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
Service Canada  
Status of Women Canada  
New Horizons for Seniors Program  
Public Health Agency of Canada

## Alberta

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA  
Alberta Employment and Immigration  
Alberta Children and Youth Services  
Region 3 – Calgary and Area Child and Family Services  
Alberta Advanced Education and Technology  
Alberta Culture and Community Spirit  
Wild Rose Foundation



Family and Community Support Services



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Lead Design: Stephanie Banszky

Advisory and Logistics: Jennifer McColl  
Jade Robertson

Statistics: Ela Kostanecka

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Editors: Beba Svirg  
Amber Hyde

Photography: Lindsey Baker  
CIWA Staff

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**Calgary Immigrant Women's Association**

#200, 138 - 4th Avenue SE Calgary, Alberta T2G 4Z6

Phone: (403) 263-4414 Fax: (403) 264-3914

Email: [reception@ciwa-online.com](mailto:reception@ciwa-online.com) Website: [www.ciwa-online.com](http://www.ciwa-online.com)