

service

renewal

Calgary  
Immigrant  
Women's  
Association

Annual Report  
2009 - 2010

hope

courage

passion

# *inspiration*

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association was established in 1982 as a non-profit organization to address the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women and their families.

We are the only immigrant serving agency in Calgary offering all female programs and services. CIWA's mission, vision and values guide staff and volunteers in our commitment to provide programs and services designed to empower women for the benefit of their families and our community.

## **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.

## **Values**

We value equality, empathy, inclusiveness and integrity.

*equality*

*empathy*

*inclusiveness*

*integrity*



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# direction



## President and Board Chair Gerda R. Bloemraad

I am extremely pleased to report that this year has seen yet again exceptional growth and accomplishments for CIWA. The Board of Directors wishes to congratulate the Executive Director, staff and volunteers for their efforts, dedication and enthusiasm in completing another successful year. The Board also wishes to thank our funders and partners for their generous support. Last, but not least, we wish to thank Board member, Susan Costello, who is stepping down after six years of dedicated service, for her sage advice and invaluable assistance. We will miss you, Susan.

As in previous years, the Board of Directors' chief responsibility was the strategic planning, governance and supervision of CIWA's activities. Through productive, open and honest discussions we were able to conduct our business constructively and ensure proper governance, high standards of ethical conduct and legal compliance in all aspects of CIWA's operations.

Board committees assisted in many areas, such as fundraising, networking, recruitment and educating Board members in financial and other matters. To make CIWA the agency of choice for full time staff and show our appreciation for their hard work, the Board approved additional staff benefits. As part of the Board's mandate to ensure that CIWA is capable to meet the challenges that growth and new initiatives bring, the Board reviewed CIWA's By-laws and will, at the upcoming AGM, recommend various amendments for members' consideration.

I am very proud of CIWA's last years' achievements and hope that, in the upcoming year, we can all work together again to provide the best possible services and support to our deserving clients.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerda R. Bloemraad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

### CIWA Board Members

**Vice - President and Recruitment Chair**  
Jagjit Kaur Singh

**Treasurer and Finance Chair**  
Linda Cheung

**Secretary**  
Fiana Bakshan

**Self-governance and Ad hoc Chair**  
Donna Chin-Fatt

**Fund Development Chair**  
Ana Avramovic

**Directors:**  
Susan Costello  
Tina Chahal  
Archana Sandhu  
Lindy Kennedy  
Saawan Logan  
Rose Minton  
Vivienne Momoh

**Reserve Director**  
Aamir Jamal

# renewal



## Executive Director Beba Svigir

In the last several years, CIWA has gone through a period of renewal. We have increased our visibility as a voice for immigrant women, hugely expanded the number of clients we serve and established many new programs and services. All of this could not have been achieved without the exceptional support of our funders and community partners, and streamlined strategic direction by our Board of Directors.

Looking back over this past year, I am delighted to report that CIWA has made impressive achievements related to all targets from the Strategic Plan. A major achievement was the significant organizational change required to generate a new program department. This restructuring was driven by our mandate and the fact that, ultimately, a substantive measure of success for integration of immigrants is equitable employment and financial stability. Employment Services at CIWA now offers a comprehensive range of employment specific support for immigrant women ranging from low literacy clients to highly educated professionals.

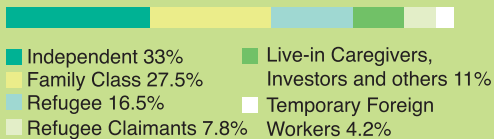
Last year, we added more than 3500 sq. feet of new space to sustain organizational growth and enhance quality of client service. Staff retention and development continues to be our focus. Our HR plan strives to offer career opportunities rather than just jobs at CIWA. Very importantly, we have also invested in, and diversified services that support the growth and development of our volunteers.

I am confident that the commitment of our staff, volunteers and Board of Directors will ensure that CIWA continues to provide exemplary leadership in creating meaningful opportunities for immigrant families in Calgary. Together, we can make our city a champion of inclusion and diversity.

### Statistical Overview

**13,000+ clients**  
(individual and group services)

#### Immigration categories of clients



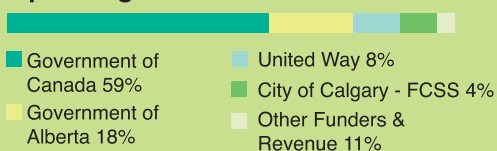
#### 140 countries

**Top 5 countries:**  
China 15.5%  
Philippines 10.2%  
Colombia 7.7%  
Mexico 6.5%  
Pakistan 5.5%

#### 185 languages

**Top 5 languages:**  
Spanish 14%  
Mandarin/Cantonese 12.5%  
Tagalog/Ilocano/Filipino 11%  
Hindi/Punjabi 7%  
Arabic 6%

#### Operating Revenue Sources



# service

## Settlement and Integration

Intake, Settlement and Referral Services

Integration Program

New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups

Volunteer Program

Find Me a Home Project

Filipino Community Development Program

Safe Haven Project

Civic Engagement Program

Collaborative Breast Health Initiative

## 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

Grandma's Kitchen Project

Best Beginning Partnership



## **Employment Services**

Employment Skills Program

Links to Success: Skills Enhancement & Internships for Young Immigrant Mothers

Health Literacy Curriculum for Low Literacy Immigrant Women Project

Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants Project

Essential Skills Curriculum for Immigrant Women Working in the Service Industry Project

Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women Project

## **Language Training and Childcare**

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program

Small Multicultural Immigrants Learning Early Strategies (SMILES) Childcare

Pebbles in the Sand Program

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY) Canada Program

Canadian Pronunciation Course

# courage



*"I have found a family at CIWA, where I feel comfortable, safe and confident." - Gloria*

Country Canada, NeighbourLink Calgary and Women In Need Society, Gloria was able to furnish her new home. The family also received boxes of toys, books, food and household items through ConocoPhillips' Christmas initiative.

Currently, Gloria and her children are living in a safe and stable home and have support systems in place. Gloria is attending English classes at the YWCA while her children are in school. Her hopes of building a future for herself and her children have been renewed. Gloria's goal is to become a nurse and see her children graduate from university.

Gloria and her three children came from El Salvador to Canada in 2008 to join her husband. After living in Toronto for just over a year, the family moved to Calgary. Due to family circumstances, Gloria and her children found themselves living at Calgary's YWCA Sheriff King Home. Suddenly, the excitement of moving to Canada was shadowed by fear and loneliness.

In July 2009, Gloria was referred to CIWA's Settlement Services. Gloria needed assistance filing her taxes. It was apparent to Melanie Anne Bonnar, the Settlement Team Leader assigned to her case, that Gloria was in need of additional services. Melanie made it a priority to assess all of Gloria's needs and give her general information about community resources and access to food services. Gloria was also referred to other CIWA programs, including Cross-Cultural Parenting Program and Find Me a Home Project.

The Find Me a Home Project helps immigrant women, who are at risk of becoming homeless, secure affordable housing. Gloria was able to find a home for herself and her children thanks to monetary support from CIWA. Gloria and her children moved out of the YWCA and into a new home in December 2009. With help from Calgary's Interfaith Furniture Store, Sleep

Melanie Anne Bonnar  
Settlement Team Leader

*"It is the actual change that you see people go through that makes my job very real, tangible and rewarding. I am happy to see Gloria doing well; she has come a long way."*





# hope



*“People can make a difference.” - Tariq*

Tariq and his family came to Canada from Pakistan in search of a better future. A year ago, Tariq noticed a negative change in his son’s behaviour and physical appearance. He was losing weight, not sleeping, and demonstrating aggressive behaviour. A doctor determined that the medication Tariq’s son used for his ADHD was causing adverse effects on his health. The doctor prescribed new medication, but Tariq was unable to afford it because it was extremely expensive and not covered by Alberta Health Care.

As a result, Tariq’s son went untreated for five months. The son’s condition deteriorated. His behaviour in school became disruptive and difficult to manage. The school was very concerned for him.

Desperate to obtain the medication, Tariq sought assistance from the school and other community agencies, but no one was able to help. Because of the stress associated with his situation, Tariq missed a scheduled doctor’s appointment for his son. Tariq could not pay the cancellation fee and was denied further access to medical treatment.

Didem Erman, CIWA’s Youth Program Coordinator, became aware of Tariq’s case through his son’s school. She phoned Tariq to offer her assistance. Although Tariq found Didem to be kind hearted, hopeful, patient and persistent, he was reluctant to share his troubles with her. Didem continued to reach out to Tariq and eventually he confided in her. With Tariq’s permission, she contacted the doctor and advocated on his behalf. A few days later, Tariq received the good news: the doctor had agreed to waive the cancellation fee, treat his son and provide the much needed medication at no cost.

Shortly after, Tariq came to CIWA to thank Didem for her support. She helped him at a time when he had nowhere else to turn and he believed that the service he received from CIWA was a miracle.

Didem Erman  
Youth Program Coordinator

*“When we are in a position to help someone, sometimes it is the simple steps you can take that can have the biggest impact on the client.”*



# confidence



*"We have been given a chance to build a better future." - Li Ming*

In 2006, Li Ming and her husband decided to come to Canada to give their children the opportunity to receive a good education. Although Li Ming was an accountant in China, she was unable to work in Canada, due to a lack of English language skills. She spent her days at home caring for her children.

Li Ming was afraid to go out and explore her new neighbourhood. She and her son Derrick felt lonely and isolated. In 2008, Li Ming enrolled in CIWA's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program and registered Derrick in LINC Childcare. LINC Childcare is a free service provided for mothers registered in LINC classes.

At first, Derrick did not want to attend. He was not used to being away from his mother, interacting with other children from different cultures, and communicating in English. Although Derrick was born in Canada, he had never engaged in the mainstream community. With the consistent love and support of Myrtle Gomez, the Childcare Team Leader, and other childcare staff, Derrick slowly began to open up and explore his new environment.

Derrick has adjusted well and looks forward to coming to CIWA every day. His favorite activities are puzzles, drawing pictures and talking with his friends. Derrick's happiness in the program allows Li Ming to focus on her learning in the LINC classes and participate in other CIWA programs. Since coming to CIWA, Li Ming and Derrick's English have greatly improved. Both mother and son now have the confidence to communicate with others in English. They have opportunities to make new friends and no longer feel isolated or lonely. Li Ming enjoys watching Derrick and his older sister have conversations in English. She is now confident that Derrick will thrive in a Canadian school setting.

Myrtle Gomez  
LINC Childcare Team Leader

*"I came to Calgary in 2004 at the age of 65. When I first arrived here, I enrolled in a childcare course because I love working with children. I like working at CIWA because I enjoy the family atmosphere and I feel appreciated. CIWA will be my final place of work."*



# ambition



Elena is from Russia. She has a Bachelor's degree in Finance. Prior to coming to Canada, she worked as a chief accountant. Still, she was unable to find employment in her field here in Calgary. In April 2009, Elena was referred to CIWA's Links to Success project by BGS Youth Ventures. Links to Success is a 24 week project designed to help young immigrant and refugee mothers attain meaningful employment and viable career prospects within their chosen field. The project provides the direction, skills and support needed to transition to the Canadian work force.

While waiting for classes to begin, Elena volunteered at CIWA. This was a valuable experience for her. She had a chance to see the challenges other immigrant and refugee women were facing and realized that she was not alone.

Although accounting was her previous profession, working with children was her true passion. In Russia, she had the opportunity to open a community development centre for children and their parents.

With the help of Noreen Seib, the Links to Success Coordinator and other CIWA staff, Elena was able to identify her career goals. She also participated in a ten week practicum with Advanced Rehabilitation

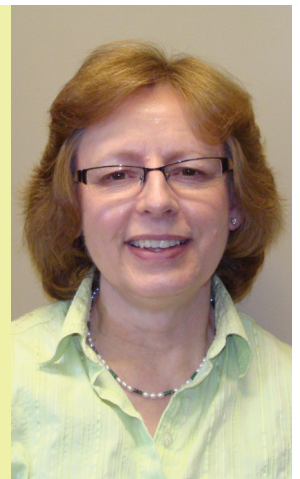
*"The support I have received at CIWA has motivated me to continue my education." - Elena*

Community Services where she had the opportunity to work with special needs individuals. This reawakened her desire to help others.

In August 2009, Elena was hired as a Home Visitor for the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI) Program. She was excited about the chance to work with immigrant families and their children. Elena views this position as an opportunity to help others the way CIWA has helped her. In the past year, she has also completed a Business Writing Course at Mount Royal University. Additionally, Elena was recently accepted into the Master of Social Work program at the University of Calgary. She begins her MSW in September 2010.

Noreen Seib  
Links to Success  
Coordinator

*"I find working at CIWA fulfilling and energizing. The clients I work with are motivated and appreciative. All they need is a little guidance and encouragement."*



# encouragement



Zaigul is originally from Afghanistan. She was sponsored by her husband in 2003 to come to Calgary. Before coming to Canada, she had worked as a beautician and had only six years of formal education.

Zaigul was referred to CIWA's Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program in November 2009. She needed support because she was very isolated from the community. She spent her days at home caring for her four children and mother in law, who was very ill. The HIPPY Program enhances the literacy skills of preschool aged children and supports the literacy development of their parents.

Although Zaigul was eager to find employment in Canada, the cost of daycare for her four children would have taken up her entire salary. Zaigul felt helpless and depressed. She was tired all the time and had difficulty finding the motivation to get out of bed. Through the HIPPY Program, Zaigul learned different activities she could do with her children to prepare them for school. Furthermore, HIPPY provided her with the opportunity to meet other immigrant families and connect with the community.

*"CIWA has made a big difference in my life." - Zaigul*

Since coming to CIWA, Zaigul has gone through an enormous transformation, from her physical appearance to her outlook on life. She no longer feels isolated. With encouragement from Yulia Minakova, the HIPPY Program Coordinator and her co-workers, Zaigul now has the motivation to engage in the community. She is currently participating in the Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women program, which has provided her with the opportunity to practice her English skills and gain the skills and accreditation needed to work as a childcare provider. Having access to free childcare at CIWA has helped her enroll in our programs. She is no longer hindered by the stress related to finding affordable childcare. Zaigul looks forward to completing her training and plans to begin working once her children start school.

Yulia Minakova  
HIPPY Program  
Coordinator

*"I like working with people. I understand the difficulties and challenges clients face because I have also gone through similar experiences."*



# passion

Last year, 588 CIWA volunteers tirelessly provided 26,835 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 recognizes the hard work and outstanding efforts of our volunteers through the **Volunteer of the Month Initiative**.

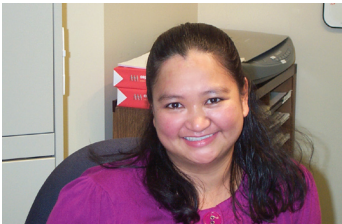
## Exemplary Volunteers from 2009-2010



Diana Barrientos



Cynthia Masemola



Gloria Canonigo



Lily Rabinovitch



Fatima Custodinho



Afra Rawanshid Shirazi



Oxana Franchuk



Louise Smith

# achievement



Linda Faulkner was recently awarded Calgary Learns' Life of Learning Award (LOLA) for her exceptional skill, creativity and understanding as a Pebbles in the Sand facilitator. The Pebbles in the Sand Program serves women with multiple barriers to traditional learning. They are typically refugees who have less than seven years of formal education.

Linda is an engaging and energetic instructor who, for the past seven years, has encouraged multi-barriered refugee and immigrant women to become decision-makers in their own educational process. She constantly looks for innovative methods and materials to enhance the learning in her classrooms. She has been known to combine crafts, music, dance, and everyday activities such as cooking into her lessons. She believes in creating learning opportunities based on participants' interests and needs. Students are empowered to choose topics and themes. These are the successful ways Linda engages her students.

Linda is a natural leader and an exemplary employee. She has mentored all other Pebbles in the Sand facilitators who rely on her experience, passion and expertise. Linda successfully unlocks the potential of foundational learners and has made significant

contributions to adult and lifelong learning. Her dedication to the well being of immigrant women truly makes our city a better place to live and learn. "What do I love about my job?" Linda muses, "The courage and determination of the women who come to class even when they don't feel well or can barely afford a bus ticket. They seek sisterhood and the opportunity to hold a pencil and write the alphabet or draw a picture of themselves in a project called My Dream Job. We share food, laughter and trust. We dance, we sing, we look at one another's family pictures. We endure and encourage. It's life and I get to be a participant every day."

In 2009-2010, CIWA was honoured for contributions to the community through the following awards:

Calgary Board of Education  
Lighthouse Award

Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter  
Tulip Award

Calgary Learns  
Life of Learning Award (LOLA)  
Linda Faulkner

ConocoPhillips  
Youth of Distinction Volunteerism Award  
Jennifer Bhatla

YWCA and Global TV  
Women of Vision Award  
Beba Svigir

# longevity



Shokoofeh Moussavi's passion for her work and dedication to her clients has affected countless lives and shaped both CIWA and the settlement sector of Calgary for over 20 years. She has been an employee of CIWA since 1990 when she took on coordination of the New Friends and Neighbourhood Groups (NFNG). Over the years, this program has assisted thousands of clients and it is the longest running program at CIWA.

In 1999, Shokoofeh transitioned into a management position and has been expanding her professional repertoire since then. She conceptualized and developed the Legal Clinic at CIWA - a free weekly legal service for low income immigrant families.

Shokoofeh was instrumental in creating partnerships with NeighbourLink Calgary and Care Connect to expand our referral sources and enable disadvantaged and vulnerable clients to access furniture and food for their families. Her work with the Sudanese and Somali communities provided customized, first language in-home support for many immigrant families desperate for integration support.

Outside of her countless professional accomplishments, the characteristic that is most striking about Shokoofeh is her tremendous heart. She is understand-

ing, supportive and passionate about the work she does and the clients she serves.

Shokoofeh's story is a gentle reminder to us all of the humble beginnings of this agency - when people like her helped create a foundation for the strong and diverse organization that CIWA is now.

## Comments from CIWA staff:

*"It is great to see her succeeding in her managerial career. She is a logical thinker who provides sound advice and is client focused. She is perseverant and reliable. Under her leadership, our department has grown to better serve CIWA's clientele." – Janeth Alonso*

*"She is dedicated to CIWA and has great insight into many things." – Hamda Umar*

*"Shokoofeh has a great sense of humor and a strong work ethic. She is motivated by a desire to help others." – Ela Kostanecka*

*"Shokoofeh demonstrates her loyalty to the organization by putting its needs first." – Silvia Vidal B.*

*"Shokoofeh is the key to our Settlement and Integration Department's success because she consistently looks for ways to improve client services. She is a great listener, highly productive, and treats her colleagues with great respect and fairness." – Slobodanka Peric*

# support

## Funders:

# Canada

Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
Service Canada  
Status of Women Canada  
New Horizons for Seniors Program  
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

# Alberta

Alberta Employment and Immigration  
Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority  
Alberta Children and Youth Services  
Alberta Advanced Education and Technology  
Alberta Culture and Community Spirit  
Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation



RBC Foundation®



## Donors and Supporters:

Alberta Justice-Alternative Measures Program • Alberta Theatre Projects • AUMA (Alberta Urban Municipalities Association) • Avison Young • Blake, Cassels and Graydon LLP • Burns Memorial Fund • Calgary Women's Show • Calgary Zoo • Canada Helps • Canada Safeway • Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities • ConocoPhillips • Devon Canada • Encana Cares Foundation • Enermark Inc. • First Calgary Savings and Credit Union • First Energy • Glasswaters Foundation • Heritage Park • Knox United Church • Laricina Energy • Liquid Capital Rockyview • Lorman Education Services • Marvel College • Metropolis (University of Alberta) • Rising Women Magazine • Source Furniture • Stikeman Elliott LLP • Sushi Kai Restaurant • TELUS Calgary Community Board • University of Calgary • Vintage Roots Lifestyle • William Aberhart High School • Individual Donors • Anonymous Donors

**Thank You**



*... support a woman, strengthen a community...*

*equality*

*empathy*

*inclusiveness*

*integrity*

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