

# YOUTH FORUM 2023

STRONG GIRLS, STRONG LEADERS



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# YOUTH FORUM 2023

STRONG GIRLS, STRONG LEADERS

**12th Annual Celebration**  
**Calgary Immigrant Women's Association**  
**Youth Mentorship Program**

Hosted at Calgary Malborough Community Association on February 16th  
Emceed by Hijab Rana and Salma Zein

## Program

Keynote Speech – Alice Lam  
Youth Mentorship Program Presentation  
Daughters Day Awards Ceremony  
Mentor Perspective – Fatima Warraich  
Mentee Perspective – Elisa Parrish  
Community Partnership Highlights  
Raffle Draws

# STRONG GIRLS, STRONG LEADERS

The image on the cover page of this manual was designed by CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program. The participants chose the theme of "Strong Girls, Strong Leaders" because it highlights how newcomer youth in Canada need to build resilience and persevere to take on the challenges of moving to a new country as teenagers.

*"We face many challenges as immigrant girls but we will continue to be resilient, and we will use this poster to make our mark. Our journey is like our cartoon bubble, showcasing who we are, and because a bubble is round, our goals will also continue on forever until we achieve everything we want in Canada."*

- Youth Mentorship Participants

At Youth Forum, we celebrate our:

-  Achievements
-  Resiliency
-  Perseverance
-  Tenacity
-  Focus
-  Diversity

Youth Forum, a pinnacle event of CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program, is celebrating its twelfth year. Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the forum showcases the individual experiences of mentees and mentors involved in the program, and highlights many success stories of integration and engagement as experienced by young immigrants and mainstream youth captured in this publication. The theme of this year's event is "Strong Girls, Strong Leaders."

Many youth and their families attending the event access services and take advantage of excellent unique and complementary supports available for them. We want to support the integration journey of immigrant youth and, at the same time, offer opportunities for mainstream youth to engage in the learning process that enriches their understanding of the world, multiculturalism and appreciation for newcomers living in the city.

This year's Youth Forum includes CIWA's ninth annual Daughters Day Awards. Due to the generosity of our sponsors, this year we will be presenting eight awards to young women who will be recognized for their significant contributions to their communities. The accomplishments of these girls and the awards bestowed on them by their respective sponsors will be featured at our awards ceremony hosted on February 16.

I would like to thank staff at CIWA for their efforts and collaboration, program participants and their family members, community supporters and all of you attending the Youth Forum, for supporting this initiative and joining us today. I can assure you that, in line with the theme of the event, all Youth Forum 2023 participants are carving their way to empower others and become successful community leaders of the future.

*Paula Calderon*  
**Chief Executive Officer of CIWA**



## EMPOWER IMMIGRANT WOMEN. ENRICH CANADIAN SOCIETY.



Since 1982, Calgary immigrant Women's Association has provided exciting opportunities for immigrant girls and women from all backgrounds to come together and develop skills to succeed in Canadian culture.

Through innovative programming including settlement, language training, employment skills and family services, CIWA supports immigrant women and empowers them through capacity building and networking opportunities. This allows youth and their families to integrate into our diverse and great city.

- **CIWA serves 15,500+ clients through individual and group services every year**
- **CIWA engages over 230 businesses annually to support the labour market participation of immigrant women**
- **CIWA provides programs and services in over 80 community locations**



Proudly celebrating  
**40**  
years of service

- Vision** Empower immigrant women. Enrich Canadian society.
- Mission** National leader in transitioning immigrant women to success in Canada.
- Values** Equity. Excellence. Collaboration. Inclusiveness. Empowerment.

# CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program



CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program promotes intercultural understanding by providing opportunities for young immigrant women to develop support networks and friendships. It also provides program participants with leadership development skills through community presentations and interactive engagement opportunities.

Since its inception in 2011, our Youth Mentorship Program has graduated hundreds of immigrant girls between the ages of 14 - 24 years, many of whom have paved the way for generations of young female leaders on their journey towards academic excellence and community engagement.

The program is designed in such a way that throughout the academic year, mentors and mentees plan and engage in activities that support their collective personal, social, and academic growth. The ensuing guidance and friendships create a healthy environment for newcomer girls to successfully integrate in Canada.

Youth Forum is an annual capstone event that highlights the accomplishments of mentees and mentors. It seeks to showcase the beauty in diversity and cross cultural learning. The event offers youth first hand leadership experience through stage by stage implementation of vibrant ideas and display of talent.



# Youth Mentorship Program Highlights

AT A GLANCE

Number of Volunteering Hours  
**650**

Number of Participants  
**60** Mentees  
**33** Mentors

Top Five Countries

-  Afghanistan
-  Ukraine
-  Nigeria
-  Philippines
-  China

Top Five Languages Spoken

- Dari
- Ukrainian
- Russian
- Tagalog
- Chinese

Number of Participating Schools  
**25**

## UKRAINIAN SUMMER CAMP

The Youth Mentorship Program, in collaboration with CIWA's Youth Collaborative, hosted a customized Summer Camp to support the needs of newly arrived Ukrainian girls. The opportunity provided participants with their initial transition in Canada.

The goal of the Ukrainian Summer Camp is to provide relief for newly arrived youth through activities that foster a sense of belonging and cultivate leadership skills. CIWA focused on ensuring that participants were able to engage and get active in the community by being exposed to group mentorship activities, experiential and educational field trips, essential self-care strategies, as well as civic engagement opportunities.





Alice Lam is a child of Chinese-Vietnamese refugees who have called Canada their home since 1985. Alice learned about the importance of community service at a young age. Her passion is building a city that people feel a sense of belonging to, therefore she spends most of her free time volunteering for various causes close to her heart. Alice sits on several non-profit Boards that are making our city a better place.

Having spent the past eight years building strong teams, Alice had created a reputation as someone who “gets stuff done” with a ton of passion and heart. In 2020, Alice helped create the Calgary Community Fridge and, in 2021, the Good Neighbour Community Market. She loves seeing cool things happen and that has always been the driving force behind why Alice started [vollyapp.com](http://vollyapp.com), a website to link Calgarians to volunteer opportunities in our city. In 2022, she launched her dream project [caremyway.ca](http://caremyway.ca) to help make health literacy more accessible to immigrant families, with the idea to make it into a leading health platform globally one day.



My name is Hijab and my mentor, Salma, helped me to deal with transitions in my life. My mentor was there for me on a regular basis when I needed to deal with the stress of transitioning from middle school into high school. Having someone older than me made my adjustment to life in Canada a lot easier. I am grateful for Salma. She is a great role model for me.

One thing I really liked about the Youth Mentorship Program is how we have the chance to get active in the community together and then the mentor supports our personal growth. I got interested in this program after watching the Youth Forum from last year. I highly recommend YMP to every girl, especially if you just immigrated here and do not know much about Canada. I would like to be a mentor in the future so I can help other girls achieve their goals too.



My name is Salma. I am a mentor in the Youth Mentorship Program, and I have learned so much from mentorship myself! Newcomer girls often face many challenges when they immigrate to a new country like Canada. I feel inspired by my mentee, Hijab's, story. I am amazed at her resiliency as she finds a way to achieve her goals in Canada. Mentorship is so helpful because for me it is about encouraging my mentee to be able to face her challenges and overcome obstacles.

I really enjoyed supporting Hijab's transition from junior high to high school. I was able to see Hijab grow in confidence so that high school is a positive experience for her. I love that my mentee trusts me enough to tell me about the little things that happen to her daily. It is fun to hear about her accomplishments at school. She trusts me to confide in me about her hopes and dreams.

The Youth Mentorship Program is a fulfilling volunteer opportunity and I highly recommend joining this program if you have the time to mentor an immigrant girl. I would love to continue mentoring in the future, especially as I continue to grow with more life experience so I am able to share more life strategies with mentees. If you become a mentor, you will make a positive impact on someone's life!



## Mentee Reflections



My name is Fatma and I have a really great mentor named Esha. This program supported me mentally so that I could gather the courage to express my opinions freely. Access to CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program helped me achieve my goals to become more confident.

Now, I like to go explore the city, get to know people and learn more about Canada. The Youth Mentorship Program at CIWA made me feel less lonely and less isolated. We discussed topics like racism and how to handle it, and I learned about how to peacefully live in a liberal society.

The best part is I am able to help organize Youth Forum 2023. It means a lot to me to have developed leadership skills that are on display for everyone to see because I helped organize Youth Forum. I recommend newcomers to join this program to help them physically, morally and mentally. My mentor helped to believe in myself. Thank you, Esha, for your leadership and kindness.



My name is Aarzo. As a mentor in the Youth Mentorship Program for CIWA, I learned a lot about becoming a better leader. I helped my mentee, Benazir, figure out the best path forward for her life goals in Canada. Through this experience, I had to step outside my normal circle of friends and gain an intimate understanding of how the world looks through someone else's eyes. Mentorship is important for new immigrant women who face certain barriers such as language and access to resources.

I am from Calgary, and I did not have to face the same struggle my immigrant parents had when first coming to Canada. I want to give back to the community and use my skills to make a difference in another person's life. Being a mentor to Benazir also helped me develop stronger leadership skills, made me feel more accountable to follow my own advice. I would love to continue being a mentor and recommend Youth Mentorship Program to everyone.



# Youth Mentorship Program Participants



"YMP helped me discover great opportunities in Calgary for newcomer girls like me. I am forever grateful for CIWA's support."





# Youth Mentorship Program Participants

*Anti-Racism Workshop*



"My mentor provided resources that helped me discover something new about myself, my interests, and available career opportunities in the city. Every mentorship session is a learning experience and I am so excited that my mentor will be helping me to apply to university!"



*Calgary Zoo Field trip*

"I learned a lot from my mentor and she is the best for me! She is a friend to me and we can talk and share about our perspectives on any topics."



*Chinatown Scavenger hunt*

"YMP is where you could find genuine and dedicated people that will support you in your immigration journey."

# Youth Mentorship Program Participants





*Daughters Day Awards 2022 Recipients*

Daughters Day Awards celebrate the lives, contributions and achievements of daughters based on an appreciation of gender equity in our society. The annual event was created in Edmonton and raises awareness about gender discrimination as well as recognizes exceptional daughters who are making significant contribution to their communities.

Since the inaugural CIWA Daughters Day Awards in 2015, this one-of-a-kind award accompanied by \$500 in prize money has been presented to 35 young women. Without exception, all of the award recipients have gone on to accomplish amazing things and forge ahead on their journey of success.

Over the years, this initiative received excellent response from the community and more sponsors committed to supporting young immigrant women in their pursuit of excellence. This year, a panel of 3 jury members selected eight youth from 24 applications received to be presented as part of Youth Forum 2023. We thank the following CIWA Fund Development Committee members who adjudicated over and selected the award recipients: Jeni Piepgrass, Saskia Knight, and Mariana Ozarkiv.



### **Gerda R. Bloemraad, former CIWA Board Chair**

Gerda Bloemraad came to Canada with her husband and two small children. After a successful career as in-house counsel for a mining company, Gerda has retired and continues to be fully engaged in volunteer work. Gerda has always found that educating oneself and maintaining a healthy dose of curiosity are the means to achieving one's goals and ambitions and living a meaningful life.



### **Shirley Turnbull, VP Community Relations, Twyford Investments Ltd.**

Shirley Turnbull's motivation to support CIWA began with compelling stories of resilience of immigrant women who capture human imagination and inspire hope in other people, despite the major hazards they have encountered. She believes that resilience grows from the magic of opportunities that CIWA provides young women, who are best positioned to act as role models for other youth.



### **Jivanya Reddy, Associate, Richmond Tymchuk Family Law**

Jivanya Reddy, originally from South Africa, is an Associate Lawyer at Richmond Tymchuk Family Law LLP. Jivanya hails from a family of strong and resilient women and her generosity of spirit comes from her mother, grandmother and her great grandmother who taught her that education and hard work are the keys to success.





### **Lise Poirier, Retired Nurse**

Lise Poirier worked her entire career in the health care sector, as an operating room nurse, IT specialist in the clinical department, regional manager for all clinical areas and project manager for multimillion-dollar projects. She recently moved to Calgary from BC to be closer to her two sons. She loves to give back to her community by volunteering her time at the school and the local library.



### **Elena Esina and Friends**

Elena Esina is an Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary where she manages an initiative called Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence. In 2022, with Gayathri Shukla, Elena co-authored and co-led the production of the bestselling book Landed: Transformative Stories of Immigrant Women in Canada that celebrates 37 stories of remarkable immigrant women in Calgary.



### **The Calgary Bridge Foundation for the Youth**

CBFY supports immigrant and refugee youth with knowledge and information about the Canadian culture and schooling system, building their sense of belonging and confidence. In adherence to this vision, CBFY is honored to support and empower immigrant youth in Calgary so they can thrive and have fulfilling lives.



# YOUTH FORUM PLANNING COMMITTEE



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# STRONG GIRLS, STRONG LEADERS



Proudly  
celebrating  
**40**  
years of service

## Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

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