

Celebrating
30
Years

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
Annual Report 2011-2012



“Each of us has the right and the responsibility to assess the roads which lie ahead, and those over which we have traveled, and if the future road looms ominous or unpromising, and the roads back uninviting, then we need to gather our resolve and, carrying only the necessary baggage, step off that road into another direction.”

- Maya Angelou

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A Message from the President and Board Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerda R. Bloemraad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'G'.

Gerda R. Bloemraad

In the past year, CIWA adjusted to changing immigration trends and added programs to reflect the different needs of its clients. An influx of women and their families needed assistance in finding employment and integrating in Canadian society, and we responded.

Highlights of the Board's past year's efforts were the finalization of the new 5 year Strategic Plan; the rebranding of the organization, including the unveiling of the new logo and the enhanced website; the Adopt-A-Family fundraising effort, in which three families were given donations at Christmas and the Board's continued effort to be educated, to preserve good governance and supervise CIWA's financial and operational activities in accordance with CIWA's new mandate, vision and values.

The Board's Committees - Finance, Self-Governance, Recruitment, Human Resources and Fund Development - played a key role in the Board's accomplishments. To all who participated and gave up so much of their free time goes a heartfelt thank you. A new ad-hoc committee was established to assist in the organization of CIWA's 30th Anniversary Gala, which event will take place on October 3, 2012 in the Westin Hotel, Calgary.

Unfortunately, we will have to say farewell to Board member, Jagjit Kaur Singh, at the upcoming Annual General Meeting. Jagjit served a total of six years on the Board and thus, in accordance with CIWA's By-laws, must now leave us. Jagjit's contribution in expertise, dedication and time has been invaluable. We wish you well, Jagjit, in any future endeavors you chose to participate in.

Without the dedication and teamwork of the Executive Director and her staff, the enthusiasm of our volunteers and the incredible hard work and will to succeed of our clients, it would not have been possible for CIWA to have had such a successful year. A sincere and warm thank-you goes to all, who contributed to this great achievement.

However, without the generous contributions and endorsements of our programs and projects by CIWA's Funders, corporate organizations and partners, CIWA's continued success would not be possible. The Board is thankful that these organizations and individuals continue to provide CIWA with the means to assist its clients and their families and wishes to thank them for their generous funding, be it in monetary form or in kind.

The Board recognizes the need to be vigilant in assessing the needs of CIWA's clients on a regular basis and adapt to any new immigration rules and economic circumstances. As an organization we must keep working together enthusiastically and committed to provide the best possible services and support to our clients, who deserve our best efforts. Knowing the dedication and hard work of all involved I look towards the future with optimism and confidence.

A Message from the Executive Director



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beba Svigir". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beba Svigir

CIWA is marking a proud milestone this year - celebrating 30 years of service to the community. From its humble beginnings in 1982, CIWA has grown and expanded into an organization that serves thousands of clients annually. We make a positive difference in our clients' lives and in the Calgary community through the dedication of 140 staff and more than 700 volunteers.

We have just completed our 2007 - 2012 strategic goals, and we are happy to report that we achieved the outcomes we set for ourselves five years ago. CIWA started 30 new programs in the last five years and increased agency funding by 430%. We added lots of new space in our downtown office, as well as championed community based service delivery in partnership with other service providers.

A major focus of our work in the last few years has been developing meaningful bridging to employment programs that support labour market integration of our clients, and by extension, their ability to secure meaningful outcomes for their children and set them up for success in school. All our services are offered with complimentary childcare support to ensure holistic approach to serving the whole family.

Employment partners we work with are very helpful in securing equitable jobs for our well educated clients. In the last year, we also worked on promoting collaborative efforts to support low literacy immigrant women we serve. We started customized programs and received corporate support for job placements and permanent employment for this client group. Funding and corporate partners truly impressed us by their support for this endeavour.

In line with our gender focused mandate, we successfully connected with other women's organizations from the mainstream and Aboriginal spheres to bring forward common issues women in our community face. A collaborative, community approach to gender equality is essential for creating an inclusive, responsive and strong community.

As we look back on the past 30 years, we should never forget those that served CIWA and our community before us, and contributed to the successes we are boasting about. To hundreds of former CIWA employees, leaders and volunteers, we owe a huge debt of gratitude for their contributions to this agency. Tens of thousands of clients that came through our doors over the last 30 years are now well integrated, fully functioning and contributing members of our community.

2011/2012 Statistical Overview

15,850 Clients Served [individual and group services]

Immigration Categories:

Independent [26.61%]	Temporary Foreign Workers [4.59%]
Citizen [21.05%]	Family class [20.27%]
Refugee claimant [3.47%]	Refugee [14.45%]
Live-in Caregivers, Investors and Others [9.56%]	

143 Countries

Top Five Countries:

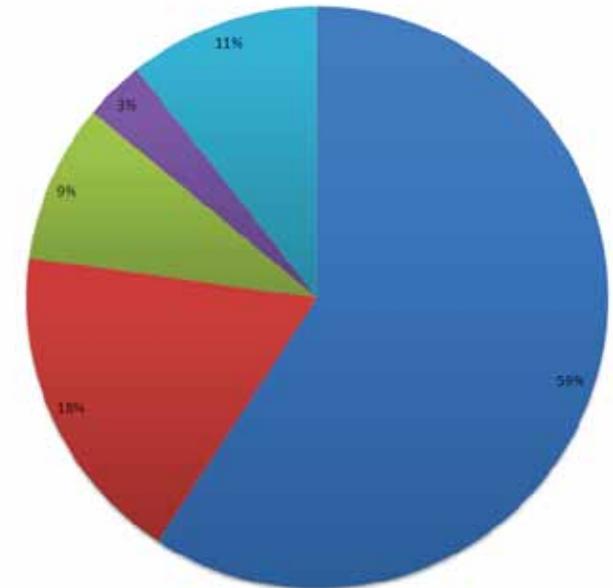
Phillippines [14.5%]	Sudan [4.78%]
China [13.45%]	Colombia [4.46%]
India [5.55%]	

128 Languages

Top Five Languages:

Tagalog/Ilocano/Filipino/Cebuano [14.62%]	
Mandarin/Cantonese [14.28%]	
Spanish [13.29%]	Arabic [8.58%]
Hindi/Punjabi [4.59%]	

Operating Revenue Sources



- Government of Canada
- Government of Alberta
- United Way
- City of Calgary - FCSS
- Other Funders



Celebrating 30 Years of Service

This year, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) is proudly celebrating 30 years of service to the Calgary community. Over the years, we made the transition to Canada a more comfortable, pleasant and successful one for more than 60,000 immigrant women. We expanded our services to clients, enhanced agency capacity and became a leading provider of services for newcomers coming to our city.

CIWA continues to focus on the unique concerns and needs of immigrant women and their families. Our client oriented holistic approach supports not only immigrant women, but the immigrant family as a whole. We provide first language support to ensure gradual transition to the new environment for our clients. Our client empowerment concept encourages independence and access to services in the community. CIWA's inclusion initiative offers clients the opportunity to become community volunteers, CIWA trainers and to achieve a meaningful level of community engagement.

VISION: Empower Immigrant Women.
Enrich Canadian Society.

MISSION: To engage and integrate immigrant women and their families in the community.

VALUES: Equality. Innovation. Empathy. Collaboration.



Family Services

- Family Conflict Program
- Youth Program
- Cross Cultural Parenting Program
- Civic Engagement for Immigrant Women
- In-Home Support Program
- Healthy Families Program
- One-on-One Counselling for Immigrant Women
- Hand in Hand Parent Link Centre
- Grandma's Kitchen Project
- Victim Supports Outreach Project
- Immigrant Girls Against Gender Violence

Family Services Department provides culturally sensitive services to immigrant women and their families as they face the challenges associated with immigrating to Canada. From the Family Conflict Program, where crisis and intervention services are provided, to Grandma's Kitchen, where elderly immigrant women come together to share stories and food, this department is central to CIWA's mandate. CIWA believes that immigrant women are pillars of their families. By empowering them, we empower everyone around them.

This year, CIWA supported the civic engagement of 3,289 newcomers to Canada.



Client Journey: Selma

Selma met her husband for the first time one week before they were married. Their parents met at a family wedding in India, where Selma lived, and decided the pair would be a good match. Selma's husband was from India as well, but moved to Canada for work in 1995, so he sponsored her to come to Canada as his wife. In 2001, Selma met her husband, left her city, her school (where she was in the middle of receiving a degree in commerce) and her large family, to come to Canada where her new husband was the only person she knew.

Selma experienced a great culture shock and for the first time in her life, felt really alone. *"I was scared to tell my husband that I was depressed,"* she said. *"In India, it was in my nature to communicate, but in Canada I did not feel comfortable. I felt scared."* After receiving advice from a community agency, she found the courage to reach out to the Family Services Department at CIWA.

Along with the ordinary struggles all immigrant women face, Selma was also experiencing trouble at home. Over time, she had given birth to two sons and the family was in constant conflict to the point that she was considering a separation from her husband. Selma and her husband decided to attend counselling together at CIWA in February of 2012. After just two months, they have found a new peace in their family. *"After I met Bela [a Family Counsellor at CIWA], my life changed. Now I can communicate with my husband and we both listen to each other."*

Selma has now decided to take time off and stay at home with her two sons. With the help of CIWA's Family Services Department, she and her husband have vowed to work towards healthy communication and Selma has learned how to get involved and make friends. *"I have lots of friends now and I talk to everybody. My family is stronger and I'm not afraid anymore."*



Language Training & Childcare

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)
- SMILES Childcare
- Pebbles in the Sand Program
- Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)
- Technological Literacy Curriculum
- Canadian Pronunciation Course

An important part of the integration process for many immigrant women is overcoming language barriers. CIWA provides a variety of classes, workshops and programs to assist clients in achieving proficiency in the English language. We offer certified Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada classes daily, while providing all language training students and all CIWA clients with free, quality childcare.

This year, HIPPY home visitors provided 2,460 literacy support sessions to immigrant families.



Client Journey: Maria

Maria's journey to Canada began in Boyacá, Columbia. Maria decided to leave Boyacá in order to save the lives of her children and protect her family. Paramilitaries were trying to coerce her son into their service, and if he refused to join they threatened to kill Maria. Together with her husband, son, and daughter, Maria fled in the middle of the night into Venezuela where they were provided with temporary refuge before travelling to Canada in 2010.

Initially, Maria felt lost and alone in Canada. In order to find a job and help her children with school Maria needed to learn English. Both Maria's husband and their daughter suffer from disabilities, which provided further financial and emotional stress.

One night, Maria took her daughter to the hospital after she was complaining of feeling ill. Maria felt helpless; she could not speak English, so she could not communicate to the doctors and nurses what her daughter was feeling. It was after this experience that Maria decided to go to ILVARC, where she had her language skills assessed before she was referred to CIWA for language classes.

Maria enrolled in the Pebbles in the Sand Program, designed to help immigrant women with less than seven years of education learn to read and write in English. Since coming to CIWA, Maria has considerably enhanced her language skills and is now attending LINC 1 classes. Additionally, Maria and her son are receiving one-on-one counselling support to access resources and deal with the integration challenges they are experiencing.

Having been supported by CIWA for a year now, Maria no longer feels alone and she continues to learn. She looks forward to the day when she is sufficiently fluent in English to help her children achieve their goals. Now that her children are safe, Maria's dream for them is to have a meaningful and successful future in Canada.

A woman with dark hair and glasses is smiling while talking on a black telephone. She is wearing a purple long-sleeved top and a gold bracelet. The background shows an office desk with a Canadian flag, a tissue box, and a coffee cup.

Employment Services

- Employment Skills Program
- Links to Success
- Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants
- Office Administration Program
- Childcare Training for Low Literacy Immigrant Women
- Employment Preparation for Retail Industry

Immigrant women are among the lowest paid populations in Canada. CIWA believes in the determination of immigrant women and works with them in many ways to help them achieve their career goals in Canada. Working alongside employment partners, immigrant women are offered training in the classroom and on the job.

This year, Employment Skills Program provided 2,617 individual career counselling sessions to CIWA clients.



Client Journey: Amy

Amy and her family come from Baguio City in the Philippines, where she worked as a Certified Public Accountant. She recalls thinking of leaving her country as early as 1997. *“It was the first major financial crisis in the Philippines and I was working for the National Power Corporation. I thought, ‘If the country’s largest power corporation is struggling now, what will my future look like?’”*

After their first child was born, Amy and her husband began talking about immigrating to a more stable financial economy, but it wasn’t until 2004 that the *“first seeds were sown”* for this project. Amy and her family finally arrived in Canada on a cold Spring day in 2011. *“We looked out of the airplane window and saw snow for the first time!”* she excitedly recalled.

Upon arrival, Amy encountered financial and cultural challenges that many immigrants face when arriving in a new country. After a few months of hearing about CIWA through various community and government partners, her final referral came from a unique place. *“I met a Filipino woman on the bus and she told me that I had to go to CIWA, so I did.”*

Amy began her CIWA journey through the Settlement Program, where she received advice and counselling while working a *“survival job”* at Wal-Mart to cover expenses. She was referred to Bridging the Gap for Foreign Trained Accountants where she spent six months learning, networking and doing her 10 week practicum at KPMG.

Beyond the invaluable career connections and advice, Amy has found a new sense of self. *“In the Philippines, I was silent. At work and out of the home, people did not like it when I spoke up. Now, I can say Yes and No and I can express freely all those suppressed thoughts.”*



Settlement & Integration

- Intake, Settlement and Referral Services
- Integration Program
- New Friends and New Neighborhood Groups
- Filipino Community Development Program
- Breast Health Initiative for Newcomers
- Volunteer Program
- Assisting Immigrant Mothers (AIM) Project
- Find Me a Home Project
- Engaging Immigrant Seniors

Settlement and Integration Department is the front line service for immigrant women who come to CIWA for assistance. Settlement and Integration staff conduct a thorough needs assessment for all clients and provide regular follow up to support their successful integration. Community based programs ensure our services are made accessible to all who need them.

Volunteer Program connects 700 community members with the opportunity to support newcomers at CIWA.

This year, 2,314 newcomers to Canada received support through the Integrated Services Program (ISP).



Client Journey: Teigist

Teigist hoped for a better future when she fled from Ethiopia and claimed refugee status in Canada in August 2010. She faced extremely challenging obstacles while trying to settle into a new country with very little support. Shortly after arriving, Teigist was referred to CIWA's Settlement and Integration Department by a community organization.

A CIWA counsellor provided her with detailed information on how the immigration system works and outlined her rights and responsibilities. CIWA became Teigist's main source of support after her first meeting with the integration counsellor who assisted Teigist throughout her work permit and Alberta Works application process.

Teigist was struggling to pay rent and provide for herself and her daughter. CIWA assisted her with rent payment through the Find Me a Home Project and referred her to community organizations to get household items to meet her basic needs. Teigist received information on the healthcare system and assistance to find a family doctor. CIWA also helped with her resume and cover letter and helped her to apply for many different jobs.

Teigist has become more familiar with the immigration system and the community resources available to her. She received her first part-time job last year, and was encouraged to continue to grow. In 2011, Teigist secured a professional job as a community development worker at Calgary Family Services. She is still in the process of finalizing her refugee claim, but with CIWA's support she has been constantly progressing and improving her life.



International Women's Day 2012

Policy makers, activists, academics, leaders from the private sector and service providers were among those who attended the International Women's Day Conference at the TELUS Convention Centre in Calgary on March 8, 2012. The theme of the event was: **'Strong Women. Strong Leaders. Strong World.'**

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association partnered with Alberta Health Services Women's Health Resources, Discovery House, the University of Calgary Women's Resource Centre, the Women's Centre, YWCA and YMCA to present the conference. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, United Way of Calgary and Area and ConocoPhillips Canada graciously funded the event as it brought together leaders from all over the province to raise awareness of issues that affect women in our community. Mayor Naheed Nenshi introduced the event to the audience and panelists discussed issues related to employment, equality, family violence, health and immigration. Upon listening to the presentations, participants were invited to become 'change agents' and take an active role in enhancing the lives of women in the community.



Celebrating our Volunteers

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

Volunteer Program welcomes community members willing to assist CIWA with our day to day business. Both mainstream and immigrant volunteers at CIWA create positive change in the lives of the immigrant clients we serve on a daily basis. They promote diversity, share their knowledge and skills, and offer services such as mentoring, translation, tutoring, and overall program support.

Senior immigrant women are a very active group of volunteers at CIWA. They share their skills and talents through handmade arts and crafts items they make while networking with their peers, learning English and promoting multiculturalism.

This year, CIWA's volunteers contributed 23,633 hours of their time to support our mandate and overall agency capacity.

Employee Milestones: Celebrating 15 Years at CIWA

Ela Kostanecka



Ela arrived in Canada from Poland in 1989 with her husband and two children. She worked tirelessly to integrate herself and her family into Canadian culture.

She was able to take language training courses and work odd jobs until she was hired for a data entry position at CIWA in 1997. Over time, Ela has become invaluable to CIWA, and she is a pillar of the Administration Department.

Ela's office is a busy place where staff members know they can go if they have a question or need a favour. Ela is always happy to oblige. *"I love to work with people on a variety of tasks"* Ela says. *"I enjoy the challenges my job offers. It makes me very happy to work hard at something."*

When Ela is not working at CIWA, she is tending to her garden at home, baking sweets for her family, reading from her large collection of books or going for walks with *"the love of her life"*, her dog Sumi.

Her secret to success? *"Work hard. Knowledge is power and will lead to happiness."*

Jane Larush



Jane is a born and raised Albertan – a rare find around CIWA headquarters. *"I like to call myself a transplanted farm girl"* she says of her rural upbringings. Jane was hired as an instructor for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC 1) in 1997 after receiving her Bachelors Degree in Education.

After 15 years of teaching, Jane still works in LINC 1. Her love for this work has only grown since. *"LINC 1 is my favourite. It brings me so much happiness,"* she says. *"The students are so eager to learn and have fun, and that inspires me."*

Jane and her husband Rick have spent a lot of their life together traveling the world and will celebrate their 41st anniversary this year. Jane spends her time appreciating and learning more about other cultures and ways of life. In her free time, she reads, knits and bird watches in various parks throughout Alberta.

"The LINC staff at CIWA are amazing and have been a major part of my continued work here. I'm not ready to retire any time soon!"

Staff

Reyhangul Abdurehim • Marlene Acosta • Jyoti Agnihotri • Sara Agzey • Fozia Ahmed • Worknesh Alemu • Marcela Alfonso • Janeth Alonso • Ginger Amos • Sameena Arif • Fatema Azim • Stephanie Banschky • Ouahiba Benani • Samina Bibi • Elisabeta Bilegan • Melanie Bonnar • Anna Boruk • Juliet Burgess • Luz Buritica • Marilee Campbell • Leanne Casuncad • Annet Chu • Mae Chun • Meghan Cobb • Debra Colley • Yan Ping Dai • Punam Dalal • Katarzyna Denys • Azhar Dewji • Ana Dubon • Jocelyn Echenique • Shannon Edeonu • Malake El-Malt • Hala El Madani • Didem Erman • Yvonne Ethier • Tatheer Fatima • Rekha Gadhia • Jian Gao • Grace Gatdula • Nabila Ghaffar • Myrtle Gomez • Betty Good • Miharu Goto • Marilyn Gummo • Bela Gupta • Fiona Hayes • Sepideh Hejazi • Yolanda Hernandez Nunez • Ute Holewa • Reham Jadallah • Seema Jindal • Gurmit Johal • Tamara Jorgic • Mehreen Kapadia • Saeideh Khajeh • Mojnura Khan • Tanya Kitteringham • Jenny Ko • Sibyl Ko • Mani Korha • Ela Kostanecka • Judit Kovacs • Jenny Krabbe • Anosha Kumara • Melinda Kunyi • Jane Larush • Janet Layton • June Lee • Paw Ler • Queenie Leung • Sherry Li • Bing Liu • Bethany Love Ulriksen • Ruby Luo • Yulia Lvova • Charlotte Lynn • Betty Mao • Laura Martinez Garcia • Jennifer McColl • Neelam Mehta • Xiamixinu Mijiti • Deborah Millward • Yulia Minakova • Smita Mithal • Shokoofeh Mousavi • Farzana Mubashir • Pierre Mugisha • Lucy Natana • Masime Ngo-holo • Azmeena Nurddin • Fanny Oliphant • Shinobu Otoyama • Yan Pan • Shahnaz Parveen • Natalia Pastuhova • Tao Peng • Ana Perdomo • Slobodanka Peric • Crystal Perratt • Vesna Petkovic • Sajida Qadir • Lesley Randal • Afra Rawanshid Shirazi • Naomi Robins • Leanne Roemer • Christin Rosa • Zohra Roudi • Anubha Saxena • Heidi Schwab • Noreen Seib • Cynthia Shi • Uzma Siddiqui • Adedolamu Sijuade • Aileen Singh • Larissa Skorobogatova • Malgorzata Skrzynski • Amal Souraya • Grace Stolte • Beba Svirig • Eva Szasz-Redmond • Kirsten Sztain • Leontina Teodorescu • Hellen Tesfai • Rona Tokhi • Rocio Toledo • Mary Jane Turcato • Hamda Umar • Meral Unal • Anita VanderVeer • Silvia Vidal B • Kim Dat Vu Thi • Yan An Wang • Kathleen Webster • Liette Wilson • Rajena Wool • Kaylee Woronuk • Yan Ling Wu • Michael Wyman • Christine Xiao • John Xiong • Yang Anna Zhang • Lisong Zhong • Helen Zou

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