

***Youth Forum 2022***  
***STRONG DAUGHTERS,***  
***STRONG LEADERS***





## ***STRONG DAUGHTERS, STRONG LEADERS***

The theme of this year's Youth Forum is **Strong Daughters, Strong Leaders**.

As a popular saying by John C. Maxwell goes, 'A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.' The COVID-19 pandemic may have continued through 2021 into 2022, however, we all became more experienced, resilient and stronger in dealing with the challenges that the past months presented. This newly gained strength and resilience made us know the way, go the way and show the way to our future. This year, we want to celebrate all the strong girls for finding their inner strength, building their resilience and confidence, setting a path for themselves and others, and inspiring and lifting each other up through community engagement, leadership and mentorship.

At Youth Forum, we celebrate our:

- Strengths
- Talents
- Achievements
- Tenacity
- Differences
- Cultures
- Diversity
- Individual power
- Capability
- Will to change and lead the world

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# Youth Forum 2022

**A livestreamed event celebrating the achievements  
of the Youth Mentorship Program**

Broadcast live via Zoom & Facebook on February 17

Emceed by Graca Mbenza and Sonia Czyz

## Program

Keynote Speech – Raman Sawhney

Youth Mentorship and Testimonial Videos

Daughters Day Awards Ceremony

Turkish Musical Instrument and Song Performance – Summeye Sahin

Poem Recital – Nyoka Davia John

Mentor Perspective – Fatima Warraich

Mentee Perspective – Samrah Afsar

Community Partnership Highlights

Raffle Draws

Youth Forum, a pinnacle event of CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program, is celebrating its ninth 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 Daughters, Strong Leaders."

Many youth and their families attending the event access services and take advantage of excellent unique and complementary supports available for them in both agencies. 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 eighth annual Daughters Day Awards. Due to the generosity of our sponsors, this year we will be presenting seven 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 17.

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 2022 participants are carving their way to empower others and become successful community leaders of the future.

*Beba Suigir*  
Chief Executive Officer of CIWA



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 innovating 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, as well as their families, to integrate into our diverse and great city.

- CIWA provides programs and services in 80 community locations
- CIWA serves 15,500+ clients through individual and group services every year
- Over 11,800 volunteering hours support CIWA programming
- Staff and volunteers speak a combined total of 45 different languages



**CIWA**  
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

#### Vision

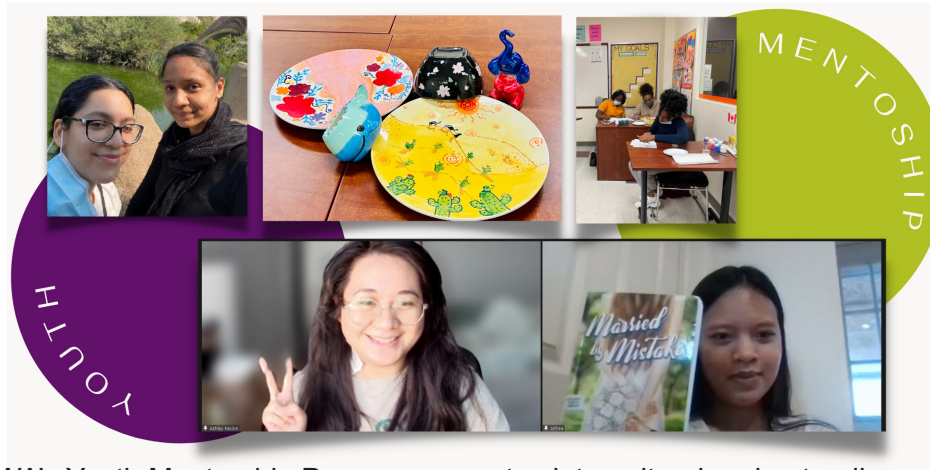
Empower immigrant women.  
Enrich Canadian society

#### Mission

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

#### Values

Integrity. Equity. Inclusiveness.  
Innovation. Leadership.



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.



**Number of countries represented:** 28

**Top five countries:** Afghanistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Philippines, and Syria

**Top five languages:** Arabic, Oromo, Farsi, Tagalog, and Tigrinya

**Number of Calgary schools represented:** 15

**Number of participants:** 150

**Number of volunteering hours:** 1200

During the year, matched mentee and mentor pairs participated in the following activities:

- Each mentor providing 4 hours of one on one mentoring support to their mentee on a monthly basis
- Partaking in 25 educational sessions including informational workshops, civic engagement and intergenerational activities
- Volunteering at Fish Creek Provincial Park through the Wild Outside initiative
- Partaking in a Drumming Circle to learn about Indigenous culture and medicinal practices
- Participating in experiential learning field trips to Heritage Park, Calgary Zoo, Winsport, University of Calgary, and Mount Royal University
- Planning and executing all activities related to Youth Forum through 5 subcommittees including design, logistics, publication, social media, marketing and promotion

# *I am a Woman, and I am Strong*

**A poem by  
Nyoka Davia John**

I am a Woman and I am Strong  
I am a woman  
I am strong and willing  
I am caring and understanding  
I am feminine  
I can be where I want to be

I am a daughter, sister, granddaughter,  
auntie and niece  
I am a creator  
I am a leader  
I am fearless and beautiful  
I am confident and driven  
I will not be told how to act talk and dress  
I will be myself and not someone else  
I will be myself and not let society change it  
I am beautiful just the way I am  
I am a woman  
And I am strong



# *Raman Sawhney* **Keynote Speaker**

Raman Sawhney is a Reservoir Engineer-in-Training and the Business Development Manager at FRACMOD, an oil and gas Centre of Excellence that provides subsurface consulting services. After graduating from Queen's University with a Chemical Engineering degree, she began her career with Bankers Petroleum working in Albania, and later spent time in Management Consulting at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

Raman is also the Founder and Executive Director of Apar Initiative, a non-profit organization that works with youth in Alberta to develop STEM and leadership capabilities.

She enjoys volunteering with various organizations locally including her role as the Acumen Manager with Young Women in Energy and as an Ambassador with the United Way of Calgary & Area.

Raman was recognized as Top 30 under 30 and was a recipient of the Diana Award in 2021.



## *Amina Farooq*

### Mentee

My name is Amina and I am a mentee in the Youth Mentorship Program at CIWA. Soon after I arrived in Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic started. It was depressing at times and I felt like I was losing direction. When I joined this program, I got introduced to my wonderful mentor Sarah who helped me deal with the challenges every immigrant girl faces when adjusting to a new country and culture. Through her, I found someone with whom I could share my struggles freely. In our mentorship sessions, we discussed different topics related to Canadian culture, politics, academics, tourism, events, hobbies, relationships, and so on. Earlier I was very worried about my career in Canada due to being new and having many barriers. Sarah connected me with many resources for my personal and professional growth and introduced me to various career paths I can pursue. The weekly and monthly action plan and goals sessions made me truly confident. Having someone as a guide in a new place is a huge support. Thanks to this program and my mentor for bringing a positive change in my life.



## *Sarah Rafi*

### Mentor

My name is Sarah and I am mentor in the Youth Mentorship Program. I joined this program a year ago after hearing incredible things about it from a friend. I was impressed by how CIWA was helping newcomer women and making a positive difference in society. Being an immigrant myself, I was aware of the challenges one faces integrating into a new culture. This program provided me a great opportunity to make good use of my skills and experiences to help other youth struggling with the same. Initially, I wasn't sure about mentoring someone virtually. Once I started the mentoring, Amina and I maintained strong connection through creative activities that helped her meet her academic goals and personal development. We were able to discuss difficult issues through candid conversations which has helped me transform my relationship with Amina into a positive one. Being a mentor with CIWA made me feel more empowered and satisfied as I was doing something worthwhile by providing young girls with a positive direction. Through this program, I have also refined my own social and leadership skills and have expanded my horizons.



*Yaishshel*  
*Carrascal Gamez*  
Mentee

Hi everyone! My name is Yaishshel and I am a mentee in the Youth Mentorship Program. Since I joined the program in September, my mentor Gianna has always helped me explore my education and career paths. She has helped me gain a better understanding of university and student aid applications, and how university admissions and scholarships work here in Canada. She carefully guided and helped me understand how to choose a college major that is right for me.

Apart from that, Gianna and I both appreciate and love art. We love painting together and dedicated time to talking about art, books, our cultures, backgrounds, and our common interests and challenges as immigrant women in Canadian society. Also, Gianna not only encouraged me to continue writing poetry, but gave me critical feedback to improve myself. As a mentee, I am appreciative to have a mentor and a teacher that had answers to many of my questions and was able to guide and support me anytime I needed.

The Youth Mentorship Program made me aware of my career interests, academic goals and also inspired me to be the best version of myself. When I look at Gianna, I don't only see a mentor who is there to help and guide me, but I also see an image of my future self, someone who I can look up to as an example of who I want to be and what I want to be. I am thankful to the Youth Mentorship Program making this possible.

*Gianna Soupouli*  
Mentor



Hello, my name is Gianna, and I am a mentor at Calgary Immigrant Women's Association. I joined the Youth Mentorship Program in September of 2021. My inspiration to get involved in my community and help address the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women stems from my desire to help empower young immigrants who are just starting out or are about to embark on a professional path. As well, I am a proud daughter of immigrant parents and, therefore, an immigrant myself. I acknowledge that as immigrants and refugees, we face very similar challenges and barriers as we try to adapt to a new culture, assimilate into the workplace, and eventually build our lives here in Canada.

One of these barriers, in particular, is the lack of resources, including lack of access to public services and social programs. Sometimes, it is the case that resources to support immigrant and refugee youth exist, and they are free and easy to use. However, newcomers are not aware of them, and this frequently becomes an issue of not knowing where to go. Therefore, mentoring with CIWA has given me the opportunity to help immigrant youth become familiar with services and resources offered within Calgary and Alberta.

As a mentor, I have invested in my mentee's personal growth and professional development by facilitating her access to education, employment, or other basic needs. In addition, our mentor-mentee relationship has allowed me to support my mentee and create a strong sense of belonging by helping her interact with others and confidently transition into the next chapter of her life.

CIWA youth mentorship program has been really good for us. It provides a space for girls like us to build our freedom of speech and confidence. Our mentor has been really wonderful. She takes us to new places, supports us with homework and helps us practice our English. (Selam & Rahwa)



I feel like I changed a lot after I joined the mentorship program. I became more confident than I was before, had more friends, and was no longer shy to talk to others. I thought this was just a program where mentors will talk to and help youth immigrants acclimate to Calgary. What amazes me after joining the program is that I can experience places I have never been with my mentor every week, which helps me have more topics to tell my friends. Besides, I can also share my story and ask my mentor for advice, who has more experience in academic and related matters. (Anh)

Youth Mentorship Program has helped me in connecting with someone outside of my family. It gave me an opportunity to give back to my community by sharing my experience of what living in Canada was like. It also allowed me to guide someone and give them advice on how to succeed academically and also some tips to adjust to the Canadian lifestyle. I am honored and pleased to be a part of this program because it is helping me grow my social life as well as emotional skills that are essential in life. (Hamziya)

This has given me the experience to talk to other immigrant girls about their rough transition into Canadian life and has helped me become more empathetic and understanding. I have heard many stories from my mentee about the culture shock they have experienced and not only have I been where they are, but I am glad to give them a listening ear and an open mind to their troubles. I have also learned from this mentorship that it is not as easy to make friends and set goals with just yourself without someone to hear you and help you understand who you want to be. Empathy was definitely a major lesson I've learned and will want to continue to learn through the CIWA mentorship program. (Azhley)



Youth Mentorship Program has taught me many wonderful things over the last year and it enriched my life. My mentee is incredibly resilient, a quality that I have learned to foster since mentoring her. Additionally, my mentee has become a genuine friend to me. Mentorship has fulfilled me greatly, as I am able to do something meaningful in the community with today's youth. (Sarah)

The program helps me with my school work and daily life, emotionally and physically. It gives me a new opportunity to try new stuff and to meet new people. I can say that being part of the mentorship helps me a lot as an individual and youth in the society. I'm so happy to be part of CIWA's Youth Mentorship Program because it gives me a chance to learn new things and to meet new people and to be with my mentor who helps me a lot. (Althea)

This has given me the opportunity to work with a mentee who has had similar experiences as I had as an immigrant youth. It has been truly fulfilling to guide them in different aspects of their life, from chatting about family, to helping with schoolwork, to setting specific goals to strive for. I am excited to continue my work with CIWA as a youth mentor! (Vella)



The program helped me gain more confidence. YMP continues to help me know Calgary better, making my life easier. It also helps me build good relationships with people. Thank you so much for everything. (Melat)



Through the Youth Mentorship Program, I met an amazing friend through my mentor. She was someone I can trust and confide in. She gave me guidance with challenges I was experiencing. She also gave different points of view on a lot of things – and I really find that helpful especially in a vibrant city like Calgary! My family and I moved to Calgary nearly a year ago, and I still don't have many friends here that I can talk to and share my daily stories or to meet up and have fun with. Since participating in the Youth Mentorship Program, I finally have someone to accompany me to explore the city and have some relaxing and fun time. (Jenie)



My mentor helped me improve my English skills and my confidence in talking to people. She also enabled me to meet new people and have new and exciting experiences like visiting Heritage Park. Going to that park allowed me to experience some ways that people in the past lived their lives. I really enjoy being a part of the Youth Mentorship Program because it is helping me adjust and learn about living in Canada. (Obse)



With the help of my mentor, I have grown into a Canadian youth with a vision of the future. I have learned life lessons big and small, expanding my knowledge of education, career, country, community, and identity. Through CIWA's programs, I have also connected with other women who share the same experiences and values as me. I will forever treasure the friends, teachers, and confidence that I have gained. (Juliene)

The Youth Mentorship Program was beneficial to me in many different ways, such as socially, mentally as well as physically. My mentor taught me how to play basketball, which is why I could improve my basketball skills. I had a chance to make new friendships and meet people from different countries and cultures because of the various field trips that we attended together. (Graca)



*Daughters Day Awards 2021 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 28 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 5 jury members selected seven youth from 19 applications received to be presented as part of Youth Forum 2022. We thank the following CIWA Board of Directors who adjudicated over and selected the award recipients: Elena Esina, Saskia Knight, Gayathri Shukla, Cheryl Oishi and KayLynn Litton.



**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, CIWA Fund Development Committee member**  
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, Community member**  
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.



**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.

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## Youth Forum Planning Committee



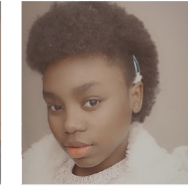
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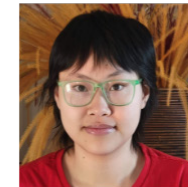
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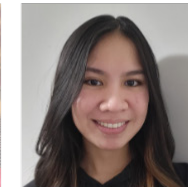
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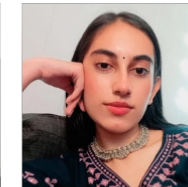
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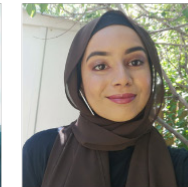
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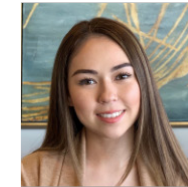
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# Strong Daughters, Strong Leaders

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