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## **Annual Report – April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023**

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Indo-Canadian Women's Association - Changing Attitudes since 1984

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## **ICWA's Vision, Mission and Values**

Since its inception 39 years ago, ICWA is amongst the few organizations in Edmonton, Canada, that advocates for the protection of the rights of immigrant women, men and youth alike. Through a holistic approach to service delivery, skill building, community activities and raising awareness about important topics, ICWA ensures that immigrants feel at home in Canada.

***Our vision*** is that all new Canadians will achieve a sense of fulfillment and integration into the Canadian culture and society. Everyone will have an equal opportunity to fully participate in Canadian society.

***Our mission*** is to encourage and promote participation by new Canadians in social, economic, and political life in Canada. We are dedicated to promoting equality, opportunity, and the protection of rights for everyone.

***Our values*** are equality, opportunity, and protection of rights for everyone.

### **Executive Summary:**

This past year, we started to offer our programs and services in person as well as on Zoom. We will continue to offer the hybrid model this coming year.

As you will read in this Annual Report, we offered a wonderful program for our clients called the Indigenous People's Experience at Fort Edmonton Park. It was a cold, wintery day in February, but it did not deter our clients from participating in this fun and educational experience.

We truly enjoyed taking part in Daughter's Day event at City Hall in September, organizing an early morning event for the International Day of the Girl Child in October, and a well-received International Women's Day event in March to celebrate our 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we honoured the late Dr. Husaini, who was a huge part of our organization in the past.

We were very busy offering programs and services to our many clients through educational workshops, teaching English as a second language, and basic computer digital skills. We also continued the important work of helping women undergoing domestic violence and worked hard to conclude the CASA projects which focuses on the importance of cultural sensitivity through home visitation of clients.

A special thanks to our staff, members, clients and voluntary Board Members for their continued involvement and support to the Indo-Canadian Women's Association. We also appreciate all of our funders, without whom we would not be able to provide our meaningful programs and services.



Board of Directors 2022-2023 Photo. Left to Right: Papiya Das (Director), Avau Fast (Treasurer), Rashmi Jyoti (Director), Jagjeet Bhardwaj (Vice-President), Miriam Thomas (President), Janki Shankar (Director), Shivangi (Shay) Sharma (Director). Missing: Mita Das (Secretary)

### Special Events:

- **Strawberry Tea Open House – World Refugee Day**

On June 20, 2022, the Indo-Canadian Women's Association commemorated World Refugee Day, celebrating the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution. We also celebrated the arrival of the summer season as well as Indigenous Peoples Month. We had an excellent turnout for the Open House, including the MLA's Christina Gray and Rod Loyola, and City Councillor – Jo-Anne Wright. It was a pleasure to see our members come out and meet new people as well. The attendees had an opportunity to hear about our programs, especially those being planned by our summer students for the youth in the community.



Board and staff at the Strawberry Tea with Rod Loyola, MLA

- **Daughter's Day – September 24<sup>th</sup> at City Hall**

Daughter's Day is a community initiative that highlights the importance of our daughters as well as the importance of women in every aspect of life in Alberta. The theme for 2022 was: A New Horizon to Build a Better Future! There were 6 women, called Daughters of the Year, recognized on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at City Hall, including Chantelle Cluett-Alstad, Delmy Garcia-Hoyt, Tonia LaRiviere, Laura Murphy, Jayanti Negi, and Mercedes Messinger. They were all truly inspiring.

ICWA successfully nominated Jayanti Negi for the Daughter of the Year Award. Jayanti Negi saw a need in the community forty years ago and filled it, by helping newcomer women to overcome challenges they faced in their new country. In 1984, Jayanti and a group of newcomers from the Indian sub-continent founded the Indo-Canadian Women's Association (ICWA), and she became its first Executive Director. Among the ICWA's first programs, she created a homework club to assist immigrant children deal with school and help with language barriers. She created a "Saheli" (female friends) program to bring single senior immigrants together to reduce isolation and provide a forum where they could discuss common problems. Other programs under her leadership included: conferences to support the human rights of women, a settlement program for newcomers, and the development of partnerships which helped establish the Millwoods Welcome Centre for Immigrants. Jayanti retired from her position with ICWA in 2001, leaving ICWA as a major support organization in Edmonton.



Left to Right: Jayanti Negi, Rakhi Pancholi (MLA for Whitemud)

- **International Day of the Girl Child – October 11<sup>th</sup> at the Coast Edmonton Plaza**

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association hosted attendees for breakfast at the Coast Edmonton Plaza on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The wonderful Keynote Speaker was Puneeta McBryan – the



Executive Director of the Downtown Business Association. She focussed her speech on the theme for 2022 which was: “Our Time is Now – Our Rights, Our Future.” The date for International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) was born through a UN General Assembly Resolution 66/170 on December 19, 2011, with the 1<sup>st</sup> commemoration of the day being held on October 11, 2012. With this year being the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IDGC, ICWA wanted to engage the business community by focusing on making a difference in the lives of girls. ICWA believes we can create a world of equality where girls are empowered to reach their goals and realize their dreams.



Left to Right: Kelly McCauley (MP Edmonton West), Jodi Zabloudowski, Elder Karen Mackenzie, Usha Gupta, Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Puneeta McBryan, Harriet Tinka and Sonja Purcell

- **Family Violence Prevention Month- Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> at the ICWA Office**

The month of November is commemorated as “Family Violence Awareness Month” in Alberta. This year, in partnership with the Edmonton Interfaith Centre, ICWA focused on raising awareness about family violence on November 23<sup>rd</sup> by providing a family violence prevention workshop. Three shelter homes were involved including Lurana Shelter, Nisa Homes and Senior’s Safe House. The Workshop explored available community resources and shelter home programs for women, seniors and children. The members and participants generously donated items that were requested for the three homes.

- **Multicultural Day Celebration – Dec 15, 2022, at the Millwoods Seniors Association**

We celebrated our Multicultural Day Celebration on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in partnership with the Millwoods Seniors Association. The event hosted 5 religious community leaders with over 60 attendees. The community leaders talked about the significance of cultural festivals, their respective faiths, and how they are impacted by the festival of light.



Left to Right: Jodi Zabłudowski, Jasvir Deol (MLA, Edmonton Meadows), Sonja Purcell, Shiraz Kanji, Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Lloyd Cardinal, Father Mark Blom OMI, Rabbi Gila Caine, Pastor Ryan Lee

- **Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal Award Recipients**

The Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was awarded to ICWA Vice-President Jagjeet Bhardwaj on January 19, 2023, to the President Miriam Thomas on February 15, 2023 and to Executive Director Jodi Zabłudowski on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The awards were presented by Her Honor, Honorable Salma Lakhani, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. A big congratulations to all three recipients for their immense contributions to ICWA and the community as a whole.



Top: Jodi with Her Honor, Salma Lakhani  
 Bottom (Left to Right): Jagjeet Bhardwaj and Miriam Thomas with Her Honor

- **Indigenous People's Experience – Feb 15, 2023, at Fort Edmonton Park**

The goal of the Indo-Canadian Women's Association February event was aimed to create a cultural and knowledge of Alberta's Indigenous People. The City of Edmonton sponsored this event, and it was successful as there were over 100 women, men, and children in attendance. This initiative was designed to build bridges and understanding between cultures for the creation of an inclusive City.

The day started with most of the participants heading on a bus from Millwoods to Fort Edmonton Park. Each person was able to have 3-hours of exclusive access to the Indigenous People's Experience. It was followed by an hour-long facilitated Reconciliation presentation and discussion. Participants received a pocket-sized copy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls for Action Booklet produced by the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and Bannock treats were also provided.

The educational experience is just the beginning for the South Asian community to understand and empathize with the indigenous population, including the importance of responding to the Calls to Action. ICWA looks forward to hosting future events for the community to learn about Canada and grow in knowledge and education.



Some of the participants who attended the Indigenous People's Experience



ICWA Table at the Indigenous People's Experience Event  
Left to Right: Jodi Zabłudowski, Sonja Purcell, Papiya Das



- **International Women’s Day – March 24, 2023, at Millwoods Golf Course (Woodvale Community Facility)**

International Women’s Day is celebrated every year on March 8<sup>th</sup>. At ICWA, we work to empower all women to reach their full potential. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated our 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and International Women’s Day at the Millwoods Golf Course (Woodvale Community Facility).

The in-person event was attended by over 190 people, and included greetings from the Federal Government, the Mayor of Edmonton – His Worship, Amarjeet Sohi, MLA Rakhi Pancholi, and Chief Justice of Alberta-Ritu Khullar amongst others. The Lieutenant Governor of Alberta – the Honorable Salma Lakhani was the guest of Honor, and we were also honored to have the Former Justice Court of Appeal of Alberta – Sheila Greckol share her thoughts and experiences on the UN theme “Embracing Equity Together”.

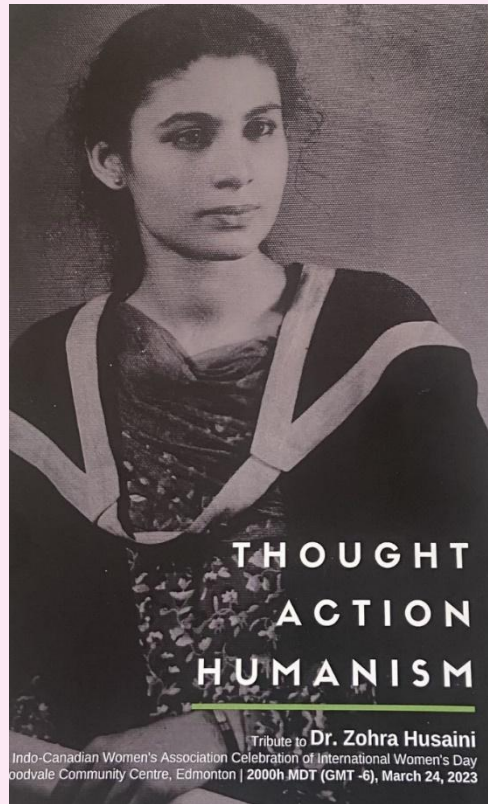


Group photo with the Her Honor Salma Lakhani the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta

Our wonderful Masters of Ceremonies, Adrienne Lamb, CBC Reporter, entertained us throughout the night, as well as spectacular performances by Usha Kala Niketan Dance, flute playing by Vinod Bhardwaj, and musical performances by: Jananie, Aliza, and Maya.

The evening ended with a Celebration of Life for Dr. Zohra Husaini, a human rights champion and long-time leader of ICWA. She was a trail-blazing advocate for women’s rights and collective understanding and action. A wonderful video of her life achievements was shown at the event, and a special tribute was published in her honour titled – *THOUGHT ACTION HUMANISM*.

A special thank you to the Hameed Family for their support in organizing the Celebration of Life and for creating a Memorial Award in her honour. This 1st-time recipient of the Award will be announced and presented at the International Women’s Day event which will be held in March of 2024.



Thanks to all our 2023 sponsors and donors for making this event a resounding success!



Board Photo from the IWD event:

Left to Right: Jodi Zabloudowski (staff), Dr. Rashmi Jyoti, Mita Das, Jagjeet Bhardwaj, Shivangi (Shay) Sharma, Miriam Thomas. Missing: Dr. Janki Shankar and Avau Fast



The staff of ICWA with Board Member Mrs. Jagjeet Bhardwaj.  
Left to Right: Navneet, Kusam, Mrs. Bhardwaj, Jodi, Sonja, and Esther

## ICWA Projects

- **Backpack Program funded by the Edmonton South Rotary**

In August 2022, the students, together with the Program Coordinator, distributed backpacks for children in need with a generous donation from Edmonton South Rotary. 48 children received Backpacks and gift cards from this program. The pencils were supplied by Rod Loyola, MLA. Many of the recipients were newcomers to Edmonton from different countries, including Ukraine.



Sample of families receiving Back Packs in August 2022



- **Project CASA (Culturally Appropriate & Safe Assistance through home visitation for survivors of violence) *Funder: Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), Government of Canada.***

Project CASA (2019-2023): Culturally Appropriate and Safe Assistance through Home Visitation for Survivors of Violence. The Funder was Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), Government of Canada. Province-wide training took place focused on “Cultural Safety” to promote the delivery of culturally safe home visitation and support of multicultural at-risk mothers. This project concluded in April 2023.

Cultural safety is a crucial aspect of home visitation programs because it ensures that families from diverse cultural backgrounds feel respected and understood. When home visitors are culturally safe, they can establish trust and rapport with families, which is essential for effective communication and positive outcomes. By recognizing and addressing cultural differences, home visitors can better understand the unique needs and strengths of each family they work with. This can lead to increased engagement, better health outcomes, and a more positive experience for families. Overall, promoting cultural safety in home visitation programs is vital for building strong and trusting relationships with families and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

Thanks to the many organizations that have been instrumental in proceeding with this project, especially the Alberta Home Visitation Network Association (AHVNA). **Partners:** Indo-Canadian Women’s Association (Lead) **with AHVNA**, Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, Government of Alberta (Family Violence Unit, Children’s Services – Edmonton Region), and many others too numerous to mention.

- **Family Law Guidebook for Recent Immigrants- second edition**

The publication of the Family Law Guidebook was funded by a grant from the Canadian Women’s Foundation. The second edition of the Guidebook was updated by lawyers Shilpa Jaswal and Harshdeep Jakhar, and it was professionally edited and fact-checked in English and Hindi. If anyone would like a copy, please contact the ICWA office.

- **Neighborhood Equity for Aging in Racialized Communities (NEARc)**

Since March 2023, ICWA has been working with the University of Alberta to engage women living in South Edmonton who are 60 years and over, and who speak Urdu, Punjabi, or Hindi to become part of this Walkability Study. This study aims to promote outdoor mobility and enhance neighbourhood walkability for racialized older immigrant women in Edmonton. We are currently in Phase A of the project whereby the women are being interviewed and data is being collected by the University of Alberta students and researchers. Phase A will conclude in October 2023.

## **ICWA Programs**

- **Creating Safer Communities – Funded by the Canadian Women’s Foundation**



Creating Safer Communities was funded from April 2022 until March 2023. This project provided individualized support and appointments to the survivors of gender-based and family violence through phone calls, referrals, and informational workshops.

- **ECALA (Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association) funded Program**

The ECALA program served a total of 133 clients last year, through the ESL Functional Literacy, Seniors Conversation Circles, and Digital Skills Facilitation classes. To make it easier for the learners to attend, a lot of our classes were facilitated remotely via Zoom. In 2022-2023 there was a hybrid model of service delivery.

- **Kitab Connections (Book Club) – Funded by the Edmonton Community Foundation**

A 6-month facilitated specialized book club called Kitab Connections (Kitab means book in Hindi/Urdu). Immigrant women in south Edmonton are engaged to read and discuss books on the immigrant experience with a facilitator's guidance. This program runs from May 2022 – November 2022. The benefits of this Program include creative engagement, connections, recovery and respite from isolation and stress.

- **Pro-Bono Law Clinic – Funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation**

The Canadian Women's Foundation and its partners have generously funded this project until March 2023. This Program is still being provided by a generous lawyer who is dedicating her time to helping women in need suffering from domestic violence issues. A lawyer is available bi-weekly, for a one-time, free and confidential consultation for women about matters related to gender-based violence and family law. Appointments can be made by calling: 780-490-0477.

- **Service Canada Summer Jobs Students Program**

ICWA received funding from Service Canada to hire two summer students. We offered various virtual workshops on diverse topics, particularly through the youth leadership program.

Our workshops and information sessions were targeted to the youth and covered a variety of topics including a Wellness Workshop, job preparation skills, resume writing, budgeting and managing money, and pottery painting.



### **Students Distributing the Family Guidebook for Recent Immigrants**

- **Steps to Empowerment – Funded by HelpAge Canada**

This Program provided individualized support to isolated South Asian seniors in Edmonton. The purpose was to increase awareness of recently immigrated women and men by connecting them with appropriate community resources, facilitating participation and in-person wellness and educational activities.

There was a weekly session of fun, wellness and information for the seniors from July to November 2022. In total 70 unique seniors participated in different sessions, and we received positive feedback from clients. Thanks as well for the funding received by the Edmonton Public Teachers and the Yoga Association of Alberta for providing for the yoga teachers.



Seniors Yoga Session

**Governance:**

The list of the April 1, 2022–March 31, 2023, ICWA Board of Directors is noted below:

President – Miriam Thomas  
Vice-President – Jagjeet Bhardwaj  
Treasurer – Avau Fast  
Secretary – Mita Das  
Director – Papiya Das  
Director- Dr. Rashmi Jyoti  
Director- Dr. Janki Shankar  
Director- Shivangi (Shay) Sharma

**Acknowledgments:**

ICWA sincerely acknowledges the generous support from our funders, donors, and volunteers for their continued support of our association.

**ICWA programs and projects in 2022-2023 were funded by:**

AGLC- Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Commission

Canadian Women's Foundation

CIBC

City of Edmonton

Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association (ECALA)

Edmonton Community Foundation

Edmonton Public Teachers

Edmonton Rotary South

Government of Canada

Help Age Canada

Service Canada Summer Jobs Program

Women And Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada