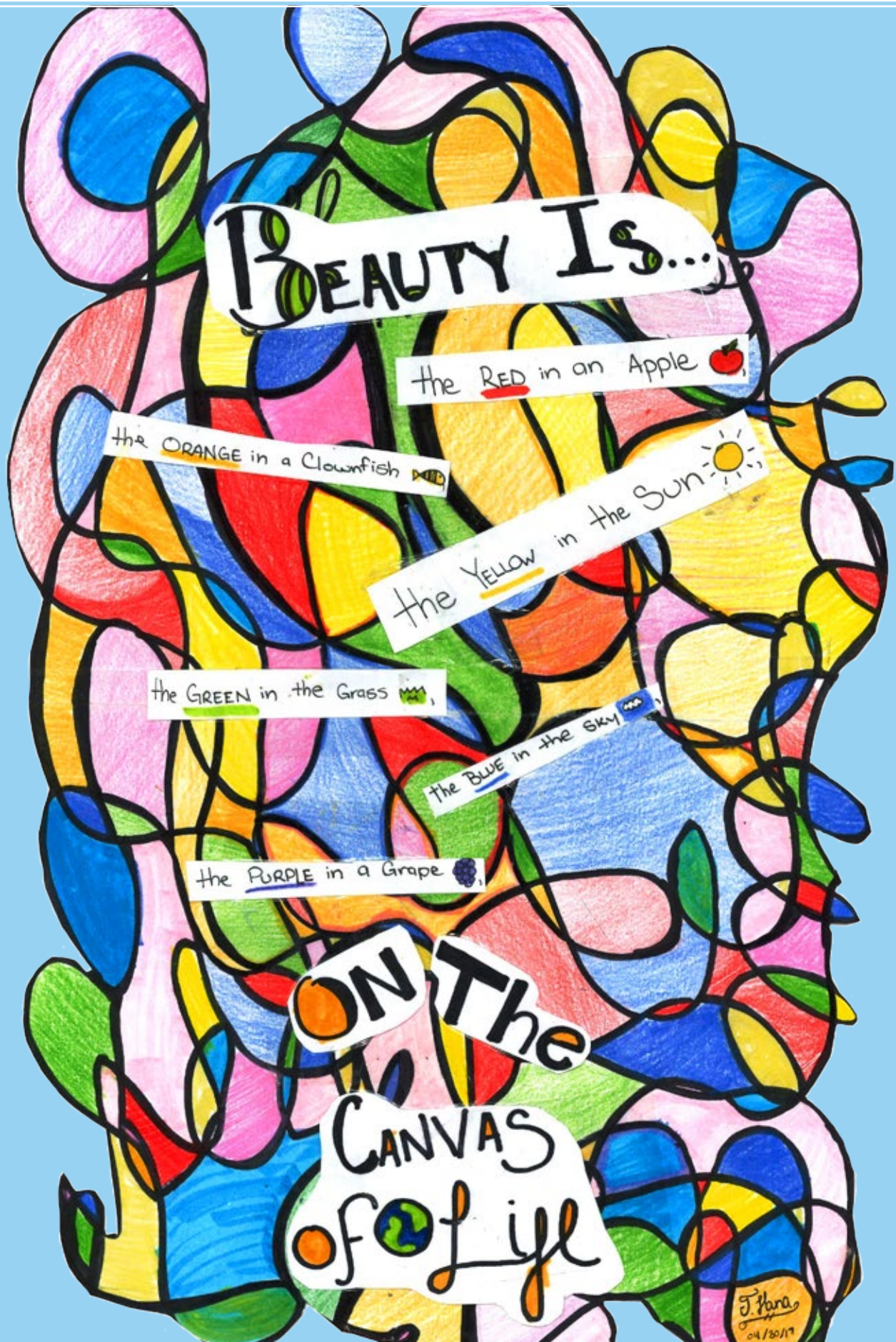


IN THEIR OWN WORDS





**These are the stories
written by our 2018
Youth Achievement
Award Winners**

A Girl with a ball at her feet



By: Marwa Saleh

*"I believe that I have a bright future even though I
have had a difficult past."*

Thank you for reading my essay. My name is Marwa Saleh. I was born in Basra, Iraq, on March 17, 1999. War broke out there in 2001, and by 2004 the situation was so bad that my parents, my siblings, and I had to leave the country. I was only 5 years old.

My family and I moved to Rif Dimashq, Syria. Life there was challenging. Syrians speak Arabic, but the Syrian and Iraqi accents are very different. This made living in Syria really confusing. It was challenging. My parents could not find a job. No one would hire my dad. He looked for a job everywhere - in the village and outside the village. Many villagers hated us because we were Iraqi. They considered us outsiders and treated us badly. We were not made to feel at home. We felt uneasy and unsafe. The villagers did not accept us into their family.

During this time, living in Syria was absolutely horrible. We struggled with money and food. My aunt, who lived in Saudi Arabia, sent us money once or twice a year. We really appreciated it, as it was better than nothing, but we still went to sleep hungry a lot of the time. Other than my aunt's help, we had no help with food until our landlord, a nice lady, told us to ask the United Nations for help. We applied for help with our monthly rent payments and for money to buy food. After a few months, the UN helped us to pay off the rent we owed, and paid for my siblings and I to attend school. As time went on, I really started to enjoy village life. As the years passed, I also started to make some friends. The boys I played soccer with in the muddy village soccer field accepted me. After seven years of village life, the Syrian war started. Many in the village started to move, some got killed. I lost many friends. It is heartbreaking to lose people you love and who you have shared important moments with. My parents asked the UN for a transfer to another country.

In October, 2011, we came to Canada - and left Syria for good. It was really hard to leave my friends there, and I hoped that one day I would return to our village and be with them again. I now know that is impossible. Most of my close friends died and I lost contact with the others. I still think about them.

Coming to the safety for Canada and having a fresh start was a relief, but the attitudes and lifestyles in Canada were very different than those in Iraq and Syria. I was eleven years old but I experienced sadness, depression, loneliness and anxiety. I had to grow up quickly. I worked hard to learn English, to connect with the people in my city and school, and had to learn how to get to school and back home without getting

lost. The easy life I lived in the countryside as the happy little girl playing soccer in the muddy field with her friends was gone. I hated going to school. I did not have friends and I was bullied by lots of people in Junior High School. I was easy to target, especially because I could not understand what people were saying to me, or about me. In grade 7, I was even bullied by a girl from my own hometown/country who spoke the same language as me. I was really hurt that she bullied me just to get everyone else to like her. I often pretended I was sick or not feeling well so I could miss school. Teachers were there for me and listened to me when I was upset, but no one helped me when I was getting bullied by my classmates. I did not tell my parents about the problems I faced at school because I thought it would make them feel sad, and that they would blame themselves for the problems I was having. My siblings found friends really fast, kind people who spoke our language. I was happy for my siblings but also jealous of them. I did not tell them about my problems. I thought my siblings might laugh at me.

I joined the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth in 2015. I attend the program after school every Thursday. Connecting to this program helped me find a path forward, discover my interests and helped me dream about the future I could have in Canada. The Calgary Bridge Foundation of Youth supported me and I am truly thankful for that. I became a volunteer peer mentor through the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth's N.O.W (Newcomer and Orientation) program in the summer of 2017. I got to help other newcomers with their English, and build their confidence. I told them they should not feel ashamed of themselves for not speaking English fluently. I wanted to teach newcomer students how to be brave, strong and how to protect themselves if anyone tried to bully them at school. As a peer mentor with CBFY, I taught new students how to use lockers and understand class schedules in the summer program. I also did translation from Arabic to English for newcomer immigrant youths from the Middle East.

When I joined Forest Lawn High School, I wanted to join programs and activities to get to know people and get past my fear of talking to new people. When I joined the CBFY Mentorship Program, I learned about Canadian culture, visited many places in Calgary (field trips), and improved my English. I met lots of friends with the same struggles as me. We understood each other and helped each other when we did not understand things in English. There was no judgment in the program and everyone was treated equally. The counsellor and the facilitators helped me every week. Due to this, I got good marks in my classes.

I believe that I am a good candidate for this scholarship because I am a hardworking student. I believe that I have a bright future even though I have had a difficult past. I am also a person that wants to help others in the community, especially other newcomers within The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth programs. I hope to go to University so that I can study law, to become a Immigration lawyer, so that I can continue helping newcomers in the future. I have worked very hard towards my goal and will continue to work hard until I achieve it. Winning this scholarship will be a huge help in allowing me achieve this goal.

**“ A Girl
with a
ball at
her feet ”**

By: Marwa Saleh

The Road Ahead



By: Diyana Woldegebrael

"No matter how much falls on us, we keep plowing ahead. That's the only way to keep the road clear."

“No matter how much falls on us, we keep plowing ahead. That’s the only way to keep the road clear.” My name is Diyana Woldegebrael and I was born on August 18, 2000. I was born in present-day North Sudan to Eritrean parents. My father moved to Ethiopia during the war of independence that began in Eritrea on September 1, 1961. Because of the instability of Eritreans living in Ethiopia, he then emigrated to North Sudan, where all my siblings and I was born. As Christians, even though we were born in North Sudan, we were not considered as citizens because of the strict rules concerning who can be given citizenship. My family and I were not given any rights and were constantly looked down upon in Sudan. At school we would be ridiculed for not wearing the hijab and classmates would encourage us to convert to Islam with the promise of a better life. Despite Eritrea gaining its independence, we were unable to move back there because the government was not one to allow its citizens basic human rights.

With the separation of Sudan, things became even more unbearable and my family put in an application for refugee status to Canada at the end of 2009. The application process took approximately 4 years and on March 27th we arrived in Canada. The process of moving to Canada was difficult for my family and I. We had to learn things that were considered basic by most Canadians such as using transportation and learning the customs of this foreign place. Between the medical appointments and sorting of our papers, I was feeling homesick and yearned to move back to the place where my basic human rights were denied. My father was not able to start working right away and we were dependent on our sponsors. This was not an easy feeling for my father. I started school with only two months left in the school year. The system was very different and hard to comprehend, I could not open lockers, and was surprised at the casual way students spoke to teachers and this adds to me feeling completely isolated. This feeling of isolation was increased because I was placed in ESL classes, even though I spoke and understood English very well. I found this to be strange to be placed in a class I felt did nothing for me, simply because I was not born in Canada and English was not my first language. I did not want to be around anyone but my family, which was in stark contrast to the girl I used to be that wanted to be around people and enjoyed school. I tried to make the best of the situation but it was hard to understand the different cultures, the culture back home and the one here. Unfortunately, Mentorship was not available to me

6 and I was left to mentor myself.

“The Road Ahead”

There are certain expectations that my parents have as it relates to education and careers. We were all expected to excel in school and go to universities and have a successful career. I had to make sure my education was first and could not afford any distractions thus when friends ask if I can ‘hang-out” it was difficult to explain that I had to study. That was one of the different cultural beliefs that my friends and I had, they had lax parents that were fine with meeting up every other day after school and soon after they stopped asking. I had learned that friends come and go but I should not lose my goal and move one.

My hobbies include dancing, swimming, reading, and attempting to play soccer. I love to dance and often use it to escape thinking of my old life with music blaring in my ears it is easy to forget. I am very interested in history and politics. My interest in history stems from wanting to learn more about my home country of Eritrea. The first and last time I visited was when I was a year old and the last time I saw my grandparents were when I was 7 years old. I have a naive belief that if I learn more about my country I would be closer to my grandparents. Learning about my culture gives me a sense of belonging that was not always given to me.

I learned about the Mentorship Program through my friend Mateo Vitale and joined the 2017 NOW summer program as a peer mentor. After I gained the necessary tools, I also become a peer mentor in the after-school program at my high school Bishop O’Byrne. I have been a part of the Mentorship ever since the summer of 2017. When the youth advisory council began, I was invited to become a member of the council and represent my school in the decision-making. The Youth Advisory Council was created with the aim of including youth in the decision making process with CBFY Programs. Our council was responsible for the Snowball dance on Dec 15th, the annual Halloween night and many more. I had also joined the TIPS (Transition into Post-secondary) program that helps with the transition from high school to university.

As previously stated I attend Bishop O’Byrne and I am part of the social justice group, student council, the swim team. I had been a swimmer at my high school for two consecutive years (grade 10 & 11). I also volunteer at my school with events such as Run for the cure; breast cancer research, Spread the love; making sandwiches once a month at 7:30 in the morning for individuals in need, and various small projects around the school. I was also selected by my teachers to represent my school in the Social Justice

By: Diyana Woldegebrael

School Summit on May 1st. I was selected with other students from other Catholic school to organize a day where students across the city will hear dynamic speakers, great music, and learn how schools in different parts of the city are being Catholic witnesses to justice and mercy. I had also been given the opportunity to intern during the summer of grade 10 at a law firm called Daunais McKay + Harms to learn more about the law. Under the supervision of Roxanna Petts (barrister and solicitor, mediator) I learned about the law profession. I was able to observe courtroom discussions, evaluate cases, read about the aspects of family law, and give feedback on dispute settlement. I also worked at the Calgary Stampede in Venue Services in the summer of grade 11 my job description was to provide excellent customer service and maintain the appearance of Calgary Stampede facilities by performing housekeeping/janitorial services, including garbage removal, floor care, and washroom cleaning.

My future career goal is to become a lawyer in order to achieve that I need to a get my bachelor's degree. I got any early conditional acceptance to the University of Calgary's Political Science Program.

I am aware that there will be many worthy candidates applying for this scholarship but I want this scholarship because it will bring me closer to my dream. I want to become a Human Rights lawyer that advocates and works to make the change I want to see in this world. The country I was born in taught me what greed and selfishness can bring to the most vulnerable people in the community and I no longer want to see that reality happening. Children have to bear the scars of wars they have no business being in and hop for peace that seems to always slip pass their fingers. I have no naive thoughts of being able to change the world that is too big of an aspiration for one person but I want to help one person so that they will have the power to create a ripple that would keep going on and help others. I want to live in the world that gave rights to women, people of different cultural backgrounds, people of different religious backgrounds, etc for no other reason than that they are human beings. That's my dream and I would like to use this scholarship to get one step closer to it.

Hidden Version of Me



By: Nicole Ianne Almonte

*"I learned to be a better person not just for myself
but also within my community."*

My name is Nicole Almonte. I was born and raised in a land known as the “hidden gem” called the Philippines. For 15 years, I spent my childhood and preteen years in the Philippines. I lived near the city with a lot of trees. It was a good essence for me to feel the nature because whenever the wind blows hard against the leaves, it calms me and I pretended it was a musical number to my ears. The Philippines is a good place to feel the wonderful creations of God as he made some mesmerizing and outstanding places that are ones can be found only in this lovely country. What makes it more special was having a strong tie of connection with my family and friends. I was grateful to have them in my life. They are the real “hidden gem” in me.

Reminiscing before, I was almost four months old when my dad made his decision to go abroad (in Canada). For him, he visualized it as a great opportunity to earn more money and to support our family by sacrificing all the time away from us while working abroad to provide a good living for my mom and me. I was considered a “Momma’s girl” because she was always there guiding and supporting me as I grow up. There were often times I wonder how was it like to have a father, but my mom did her best to make me feel complete through my family who loves me unconditionally. Not having my dad around gives me the courage to continue life and appreciate what I have, such as a loving family. In the Philippines, I grew up with my two awesome uncles, grandma, and my mom. At home, my grandmother was the one who supervised me, every time my mom was at work. Even though my dad was not around, I felt his presence because of my uncles. They gave me all the support and care that I needed, that anyone could ever ask for, but I still often longed for my dad. Both of my uncles are very hard working and talented in their own ways. They inspired me to become the person that who I am today. My first uncle was the one who introduced me to God in a deeper level. I learned most of the ethical values from him as I become closer to God. He also influenced me in his great talent in art. He was the reason why I developed my skills in drawing, crafting, painting, and photography. With that, I did not expect what I can be capable of. Then, my other uncle taught me his skills in Math and his great sense of adventure. At the age of ten, I started climbing mountains and waterfalls that made me fall in love with the beauty of nature. As I climbed mountains, I learned how to hold on a tight grip on my way up and have hope because reaching the top is never too easy, but choosing to be on top is my end goal.

“Hidden Version of Me”

In the year 2014, my mom and I had a vacation trip to Canada. The day we landed at the Calgary International Airport was also the day I saw my dad after a very long time. I felt nervous at first, but it was all worth a wait to see him again. The main purpose of our vacation trip was to check the environment and what was in this country. As I first landed in Calgary, I enjoyed the fresh air, the cleanliness of the environment, and the goodness of the community. A year after that, my mom decided for us to move permanently to Canada. For most parents, they put their child in their top priority, as my mom who sacrificed her career back home just to access a good life and better opportunities for my future. It was the toughest decision she had ever made, but I believed that there would be a better adventure waiting ahead of us. Leaving everything behind including my family was the most heartbreaking moment of my life. They gave me everything. In return, I have to make them proud. I felt so lonely leaving the place I called home, but I constantly tell myself that all of this happened for a reason.

In the Philippines as well as in Canada, I was an active participant when it comes to volunteering. I started volunteering at the age of ten when I was in the Philippines. I tend to be involved in charity works and experienced volunteering in an orphanage facility and even in an animal shelter. I was exposed through all of these social activities because of my uncle. I learned to be generous and thankful at all times as I have everything that I need and want. I loved spending my time on volunteering because I made a connection with those people I met and it made my heart pound as I witnessed their smile on their faces. In Canada, I participated in one of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth Newcomer Youth Conference volunteering where I did a lot of assisting to the CBYF staff as well as the participants of that event. Then, I made myself involved in helping at my mom's work as a health care aide, where I assist her on giving meals with the senior citizens at their care and being consistently alert at all times when she needed me. It was some blissful moments as I felt useful whenever I serve my community.

During high school in the Philippines, I was involved in many things. First, I am part of the Glee Club. Every Christmas Eve, I performed in front of many people and played few musical instruments such as guitar, beatbox, and xylophone together with my choir mates. Also, we often performed as a choir every time church was held in our school. At school, I always got picked in most of our school shows. As far as I remember, I was chosen to be Ms. Thailand as we celebrated the United Nations Day and won the

By: Nicole Ianne Almonte

best performance and costume. One time, I performed a singing musical dance number as a sign of giving thanks during Teacher's Day. It was a fun time experienced as I get the chance to show them my talent. Then, when I was in grade 9, I got involved into several contests such as a flag contest, spelling bee contest, a riddle contest, and a Math quiz bee contest. Being that proactive and confident before was then got me shaken after I found out that my mom and I would move to a different country, permanently.

Moving to a different country was the biggest challenge I have ever encountered in my life. I have to go back to scratch and adjust myself for the significant events that may come. I believed that moving to Canada was my second chance to improve myself in a way that I would not lose the traits and values that my family instilled to me. As soon as I landed in Canada again, I knew there was no returning back after several years, but I repeatedly remind myself to be open in different possibilities to continue life. My first day of school in Canada was intense. I felt so lost and isolated because of many unfamiliar faces and different surroundings. Luckily, I met good friends that helped me along the way. Then no longer after that, I got involved in a dance group as well as a dance class and that was the start of my adjustment in my social life. Realizing that it was not too bad to be part of something again.

I am proud to say that I have been connected to The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth and the Mentorship Program for two years. It all started with a friend of mine that introduced me to the Mentorship Program. Mentorship Program made me feel so welcomed and has given me a sense of belonging. This program engaged my confidence and social skills that allows me to interact more with new people. It also taught me how to be open on different ways of expressing myself with other newcomers in order to create a comfortable environment and to maintain respectful to them. In those two years of connection, I learned to be a better person not just for myself but also within my community.

The Mentorship program has been a huge transition in my life since I started at day one as a shy, isolated, and homesick newcomer that turns out to be a peer mentor. The winter of 2016 was when I finally became a peer mentor. Being a peer mentor has given me the opportunity to get out of my comfort zone and let my potentials grow. In year 2017, I joined to mentorship summer program. I considered it as the most educational

and fun experience I ever attended. It made me developed my inner leadership skills, communication skills as well as my confidence. I enjoyed meeting newcomers as I shared my stories and adventures with them. Helping newcomers has challenged me not to be misunderstood by anyone, instead I kept my exciting and optimistic side on me to be able to communicate with them as I encourage them to be the best that they can be. After that summer program, I felt a sudden growth not only for myself but also the strong bond that I shared with my youth counsellors, co-peer mentors, and my new friends. With that, I become more passionate on helping others. Being a peer mentor also inspired me to apply and win the CBFY poster design art competition for the Youth Conference on April 20th, 2018.

After graduating from high school, my goal is to get into a University. I want to study at Mount Royal University and attend in a Massage Therapy program that meets my interest. Since I was a kid, I am very passionate of helping other people, especially my loved ones. There were often times that my mom has her back pain due to her long working hours and I healed it with my basic massage techniques. Same thing with my grandma, but this time she always has her body pain due to her age. I believe that with a better hands-on training I could enhance my skills and put it on a professional way to do certain massage techniques. Now, I am taking my required courses for this program. Then, I will commit to my efforts and persistence to be able to pursue on my chosen career.

I believed that Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth should choose me to be their scholarship recipient because I have big plans to help other people through relaxation and healing. In order to achieve that, I need a financial support from CBFY as I fulfill my goal to be a massage therapist. Plus, it is a huge help not just for me, but also to my mom as I am still dependent to her. My mom has given me everything I ever wanted, therefore I want to make her proud by winning this scholarship award. I know this would not be put into waste as I give my best shot to be successful in my goals in life.

My Story



By: Sinit Abraha

*"As my mom always says,
'tough times don't last; but tough people do.'"*

My name is Sinit Estifanos Abraha, an Eritrean child born on June 12, 1998 in Khartoum, Sudan. Sudan is a Muslim country which follows the rules of the Islamic religion. Being both a Christian and a girl in Sudan was a brutal experience. I was facing a lot of racism and hatred with my family, but that never stopped me from dreaming and proving myself. At the age of 16, I graduated from high school and won a scholarship to a college in Europe but because I was a member of a religious minority, it was given to a Muslim Sudanese boy. I did not let this experience break me, and I applied to an international university.

Upon receiving my application, the university president granted me a full scholarship. I launched out to prove myself in that university by becoming a student ambassador, volunteered in many charity events, promoted human rights, and worked with environmental organizations. I only studied there for two years before I came to Canada, but I left with 19 appreciation, training, and volunteer certificates. I took French courses as part of my studies in university, and worked at the external relationship office of my university, which works with embassies and ambassadors. Through that position, I was able to present about my university to the German, Italian and British ambassadors. I had the honor of meeting the ambassadors, as well as personnel from many other countries. I was part of the team who won the first place in the “Pass It On Initiative” competition which was under the theme of gender and women rights, and was part of the Orange Week celebrating women’s achievements.

I always had a dream about coming to Canada because if you work hard enough here, you can achieve anything you can dream of. Coming to Canada was a beautiful journey, but leaving home and friends was very emotional. We all cried on the journey from our home to the airport, and a lot of hugs and tears were exchanged. The flight from Khartoum to Egypt was short and fun, but I liked the one from Egypt to Toronto more. We took Egyptian airlines, and the cabin crew were nice enough to give me a tour around the plane. I spent the 12 hour flight talking about politics, reading my favorite book, and getting to know amazing people. I was able to document all the places we passed by, and my most favorite view was the European lakes and the sunrise I caught from above the clouds. It looked magical, and even though it was my first time flying I enjoyed it to the max.

I have a big family which includes five sisters and one brother aside from me. My parents put our education as a top priority. My mother never had a chance to complete her education, so she always works hard to give us the opportunities she never had. As a result of my parents' hard work, I have 3 siblings who graduated from university, and one who was in her last year of university before we came to Canada. My parents planted great values in us – love of God, family love, respect, discipline, and education. My father, being the wise old man he is, always says “my girls will change the world through education”. That’s why he always buys us books and encourages us to read. I loved reading ever since I was child; even in a country that suppresses girls’ education, we had our own home library.

I was introduced to the Bridge Foundation through Ms. Jam who works at my school. She took me to the Mentorship program, then I was able to join the Tips program too. I wasn’t attending the mentorship program constantly because I was very busy with my classes and exams. As you can see in my attached transcript, I was taking Biology 30, Social Studies 30-1, Math 20-1, Religion 35 and Physical Education 30. I finished all those courses with great marks, but it was a huge struggle coping up with the whole educational system which is very different from back home in Africa. The classes started off rough, as going to a new school in a new country was very overwhelming. However, because I have a goal, I stayed resilient and was able to finish the courses with great marks. In biology, for example, I started that class with a 50. By the time I was doing my diploma exam, I had a mark of 80 percent. All of this occurred after only having been here for six months.

In my second month here, I became involved with the Youth Employment Center and IYOP (immigrant youth outreach program). Through the YEC I was able to build up a resume, got a job interview, and got accepted to work at Starbucks. Through the All in for Youth program in my school, on October 30 I was one of only three students who got an opportunity to volunteer and participate in WE Day at the Saddledome. I was part of a workshop prior to the event by RBC about personal branding, then completed another training concerning the event at Saddledome stadium. I was able to meet a lot of inspiring great people, like Spencer West, and Kristi Lay. On the day of the event I worked with different teams at different times, I cheered and encouraged a lot of kids who came to the event, raised funds that would be sent to help the needy, and was able

to collect three recommendation cards that called me to work on the next year event as a group leader, not just a volunteer.

Being part of We Day gave me a great feeling of belonging, and showed me that I am capable of making changes with small steps. It had a huge positive energy and so much inspiration.

My academic goals are limitless, and I am aiming beyond a bachelor degree. I would like to complete a masters' degree and become a lawyer. I want to make myself, my parents, and Canada, the country that embraced me, proud of what I will become. I believe my road will be long, exhausting, and full of obstacles. However, there is nothing that can't be achieved with hard work. As my mom always says, "tough times don't last; but tough people do".

I see myself as the most one who deserves the CBFY scholarship, because I think that I am a great example of all the beautiful values the Bridge Foundation and Canada holds.

“My Story”

By: Sinit Abraha

Sojourner, The Lost Boy



By: Gio Angelino Galang

"I can proudly say that the lost boy has finally found his missing pieces and his back in being the sojourner and his name is Gio Angelino Galang."

It is been a year since I left my beloved hometown- Philippines yet everything is still as fresh as a flower that just bloomed. Migrating in a foreign country is not as easy as it looks, given the fact that I was not born and raised here. It gives me thirst for a sense of belonging that I have been desiring from the day I came here. Afar from my hometown- loved ones, I have seen my own self across the road, worn out as separation anxiety consumed me. As I went outside to get a glimpse of the sky; I have seen numerous stars shimmering at me, and suddenly a cold breeze has touched the deepest part of my heart while I reminisce the beauty of my precious hometown. As time goes by, the situation gotten worse that even my identity were turned into fragments that are now scattered. At that very point in my life, I was a sojourner that turned out to be a lost boy, wandering in this unfamiliar neighborhood. Everyone who is reading this maybe wondering what is the meaning of a sojourner and a lost boy, a sojourner significantly implies traveler and a lost boy implies wanderer.

I was a lost boy for a long period of time. I was like a warrior in the middle of the war, risking my life but fully aware that at the end, I will be defeated and my sacrifices will be in vain. Previously that was my perspective, I do not have motivation, determination, and I am hopeless. Everything changed when I finally understand my situation. In the middle of my darkest times I have seen the light, the dawn finally break the dusk that imprisoned me for so long. I swallowed the courage that was left in me and stepped out as I embraced the new beginning in my journey. For a moment I was confused, who was that light who brought back me to life. I was sure it was God, I have been praying since the beginning that he will help me to overcome this situation. Fragments were starting to form on its own like a child completing their puzzles. As my identity was restoring, I have seen the images of my two mothers. Since I came from a broken family, my biological mother went to Canada and faced the cruelty of the unfamiliar neighborhood just for me to receive a brighter future, and my god parent that I treated as my own mother took care of me ever since I was an infant. They fuels my motivations in life, they have taught me different Filipino Values and ethics that made me who I am today- a decent person. Whenever the dusk tries to imprison me again, I sway my hands back and forth saying I am a better version of who I am in the past. I can proudly say that the lost boy has finally found his missing pieces and his back in being the sojourner and his name is Gio Angelino Galang.

Despite of Canada being a multicultural country, Mentorship tends to overcome the hindrance between different cultures, which results in life full of understanding and acceptance. I would be honored to say that The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth Mentorship gives me an opportunity to regain my inner self and to explore more, outside my comfort zone. They also helped me to complete the missing fragments in my identity that greatly affect my life. I admired how the counselors and the Mentorship itself sees a potential in every young immigrants they have been with. Given the fact that Mentorship builds a unify community, they engaged us in activities with different children to develop our self-esteem and interpersonal skills. That being said, Mentorship became one of my training ground that enhance me as an individual and it introduced me to a new people that now I treated as my family. I want to express my gratitude on how Mentorship is trying to help me succeed in my life. Firstly, I am a peer in Mentorship for 1 year already and soon to be a peer mentor after my training in February, I am grateful that they have seen my potentials and chose me to be a peer mentor. Secondly, I applaud Mentorship due to their encouragement to participate, us- peers in this scholarship that will eventually help us in our post-secondary education. I know that this is only the beginning of my journey in Mentorship and I am looking forward for more life changing events.

Last summer, I worked in Calgary Stampede as a venue staff cleaner. Calgary Stampede symbolizes the community spirit that says we are greatest together. In this significant event in my life aside from Mentorship, I have met different people with different culture as well. At first I was afraid I do not know who they are, what culture practices they have, what perspective in life they have. I was surprised, I was with an African woman, Spanish woman, Black American woman, and A Chinese man and me being the representative of the Philippines- a Filipino. I never thought that my co-workers will treat as their own son. I was the youngest, but they were so kind to me. At that point, I realized and said to myself, how life is beautiful, we were born in different places, nations, race, and cultures yet we are compatible to live with each other. Life is beautiful, only people makes it complicated. If everyone will just give it a try, not to judge other people, try to get to know them first, and set their mindset in being optimistic; our world will be full of peace and harmony. As a sojourner I would love to go in different countries and explore different culture that will help me to understand more about them.

Way back in the Philippines I am already a second year college student studying Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Major in Marketing Management but somehow I was put back in High School and I am currently in grade 12 graduating this year. I have heard that Business courses here in Canada are not in demand as the other courses. I have been thinking of shifting in different course, but sadly to say, I really like the business course, and I believed I am destined to continue what my heart really desired. That being said, my goal is to finish my studies at SAIT with a great knowledge in my profession for a better opportunity. After I finish my studies I would immediately find a decent job related to my profession to make my mothers' dreams come true which is to be a sojourner who travels around the world visiting the wonders of the world, eating different fancy cuisines and of course I would never forget the dream that the three of us desire since the beginning, to build our own family house. I will make my own business career in the future where I am the CEO, in a food industry where my business will be known for serving delicious dishes and giving a great satisfactions towards its consumers. While I am pursuing my dreams I will never forget to share my blessing to other people, as of now our family is giving tights and helping people who are indeed need of our help. Part of my future goal is to help students especially in the Philippines who could not afford to study in college, in Philippines education is the key to success, without it, you would not succeed that easily. Donating in charities and orphanages will be one of my mission in this world. As Saint Arnold Janssen said "To God be the glory, to my neighbors the benefits, and to me the burden."

I finally understand why I had to go through all these challenges. I need to understand what suffering was, in order for me to become more compassionate towards others. We encounter different situation in our lives, we were put in a situation where light had not shine upon us but once we believed in ourselves and we make God as the center of our life, the impossible will always be possible. That being said, I can proudly say I definitely deserved to receive the scholarship award due to my determination in pursuing my dreams. If I win this scholarship it will not only help me and my family, my essay will be published that will inspire more students who are in the same boat as I am before. Students who will read my essay will be given an idea that no matter how hard their situation may be, no matter how hopeless it looks, no matter how difficult it is to be a far from your beloved hometown, there is going to be people who will be in your

side, and that time you will not be alone fighting your anxiety, there will people beside you believing in your capabilities that you will overcome the complexity of life. This scholarship will not be in vain, because I know how expensive it is to go to college, and I will not tolerate anything that will affect my studies. I will always know that education is the key to succeed in life but being compassionate towards others will help you to be a better person.

“Sojourner, The Lost Boy”

By: Gio Angelino Galang

Never Did I Lose Hope



By: Jasfer Nerio

*"Never believe external factors dictates you,
because in the end the opinions of others do not really
matter but your opinion to yourself is."*

Living abroad was unimaginable when I was a child because my home country gave my family a comfortable living where trying to make ends meet was not always a problem. I remembered back then, Mama used to prepare scrambled eggs, hot steamed rice and a hot chocolate drink on the side for breakfast. My father on the other hand, always comes on time for breakfast bringing pan de sal on the table after an hour of driving our tricycle. Those were the happiest mornings of my life, it was just too sad it did not stay that way. I have a younger sister and a younger brother. We were raised to live life simply. However, living simply was not enough because demand for basic needs grew up too. Not to mention my parents sent us to a private school because they want us to have the quality of education that they did not experience themselves. My Mom used to work as an accountant for a company and my Dad drives our tricycle and often did part-time jobs to earn extra money. Despite the financial problem that my parents were experiencing, they managed to support our education from kindergarten to elementary. When my sister and I reached high school, it was not another problem for my parents because we both received a full academic scholarship from a renowned STEM school in our city. Yet even though we have this scholarship my Mom's pay was cut by a quarter and my Dad did not have much part-time job as he used to because of the recent global economic crash that shook the whole Philippine economy. For that reason, my Dad decided to join the millions of Filipinos searching for opportunities abroad. At first, he was hesitant to work abroad because he did not want to leave his family and he did not want to see his children grow in a photo album. But his love for his family and his goal to give us a better future persuaded him to do it. He received job offers from many countries to work as a meat cutter and the offer that caught his attention was a job offer from Cargill Foods Canada which he accepted. A few months before his scheduled flight to Manila he taught me how to drive our motorcycle which I easily learned. While we were driving on the highway, he told me that I need to learn how to drive like responsibly because as soon as he was gone I will take on all the responsibilities of taking my siblings to school and my Mom to work everyday. At that moment, it seemed like play time for me was over because what my father said felt like a wake up call for myself to man up. By the time I earned my driving license, the day after that was my Dad's scheduled flight to Manila. He said goodbye to us and at the same time promised us that one day we will follow him to Canada. He asked me to drive him to the

bus stop and told me that our trip to bus stop will be memorable. I did not understand what he said. I drove him to the bus stop and then as he hopped on the bus, I started to head back home. As I was driving my vision started to be blurry. I did not realize that tears were flowing out of my eyes. I then understood what he meant about that drive to the bus station being memorable.

Many things had happened, and many things had changed after my Dad left. I finished high school and was set to attend university. I received a scholarship from The University of Mindanao, the university where my parents first met each other. I decided to go there to pursue accounting. I spent my first semester there and got transferred to The University of the Philippines thereafter to study economics. I almost finish my first year of university when I finally received news from Dad that we are going to see each other in Canada. It has been a year and half since I have seen my Dad and knowing that I would finally see him soon in Canada, I felt so excited and can't wait for that moment to happen. When we finally arrived in Canada and after passing the Canadian Border Security Agency, we saw Dad from a distance. My siblings and I rushed to give our father a hug. At that moment it felt like we were in a movie scene.

We spent a day recovering from jet lag and adjusting to the climate. After that, we headed to many appointments regarding many important things. We went to a Catholic school board office in Kensington to register us for school. There was a middle-aged woman who talked to us for a bit. She gathered relevant information from my parents and at the same time made photocopies of our documents. She then picked up some file folders, inside of it were a series of tests that we needed to answer in order for them to gauge our knowledge. She handed one to my brother and one to my sister and I had no idea why I did not get mine. She talked to my parents for a little while and she approached me and told me that they cannot accept me as I was already 18 at that time and so I was supposed to go straight to post secondary. I was happy that I do not need a Canadian high school diploma to go to post-secondary. She then booked an appointment for my English test downtown at ILVARC. I took the test and the results ended up good. The counsellor from ILVARC then sent me to Calgary Catholic Immigrant Society. I spoke to another counsellor from CCIS telling me that I should try their youth employment program. However, I was not interested in joining their program because the only thing I had in mind was to go to school. I asked her questions about how to get into post-

secondary and she said she had no idea about it. I started to lose hope. I suddenly felt what it's like to be deprived of something that you really want. I felt helpless at that time. Without hesitation I went to University of Calgary and asked them about how I can get into U of C. They asked me about requirements that I did not have, like high school subjects from a Canadian high school or GED. I then politely thanked them for the information but as I turned my back I heard laughter from them. I felt disheartened because I knew they were talking about me. I decided to work in the same company where my father is working. I was lucky because even though I had no knowledge about the job they still hired me. They put me on night shift because my father was also doing the same shift, but they must put me on a different department. The working as a meat cutter was tough. Not only I was struggling from the job, I also suffered bullying when I was working there. Being the only eighteen years old working in the company, they asked me questions on why I did not stay at school instead or are my parents forcing me to work for them. It was on August of 2016 when I decided to give SAIT a try. I talked to an student advisor who fortunately understand my situation as he was in the same shoe before when he came here to Canada. He gave me concrete detail on how to get into SAIT. I had now the knowledge how to get in, I will just do academic upgrading at SAIT, pick a program that I want and apply to that program. Although there was a problem, I do not have the money to do upgrading. The student Advisor suggested two things: to get a loan from the government or to earn the money myself. However, he said getting a loan at that time was difficult because of the oil bust. He was afraid that because many people applied for student loan, my application would not come on time for the start date. There was a moment of silence. He then spoke and asked me if I want to go back to high school then do the upgrading there instead. He told me that there is chance that the Calgary Board of Education accepts students like me and there I just need to pay for school fees. I hastily called CBE and they did accept me. They told me to come to their office in Kingsland, Calgary. I did the assessment tests and then they said that they I am going to Forest Lawn High School. My parents and I went together to that school to register. We met Ms. Boehnert she is an awesome and probably the coolest counsellors that I met. She helped me register into classes and gave me school supplies three weeks before the school starts. These events happened so fast that I could not even believe that I am now actually going to back to school. I finally quit my full-time job a week

“Never Did I Lose Hope”

before the first day of school to pursue something I really want, to go back to school and go to post secondary.

My first day of school in FLHS brought back the memories of the first day of my high school in the Philippines. Unfortunately this time is different as I need to start the school year with no friends and nobody to talk to. Two weeks after the first day of school, Ms. Boehnert told me to come to the information night for ELA students and for their parents. There I watched different presentation from after-school clubs and activities for newcomers like me. One of which was Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth's presentation. I met Jackson that day and told him that I am interested to join their program. He then gave me two different papers to sign, one for Nxt-Gen Homework Club and another for Mentorship Club. I decided to join both clubs since I want to meet new friends and improve my conversation skills in the process. Moreover, as I get used to speak English and the culture shock subsides, I started to help other new immigrants like on adjusting at school and often help them adjust. This school year I am now a peer mentor for the Mentorship Club. In addition, since I am now a grade 12 student I often help grade 10 and 11 students to better understand Math and Science concepts in and out of Nxt-Gen Homework Club.

Back in in country, I used to join and volunteer in various clubs and organization. Examples of these are Red Cross Youth where we pack relief goods and distribute them to affected areas, Youth for Christ where youths 15-21 can sing and praise Jesus, and Philippine Youth Titans Club, where young triathlon athletes meet and socialize. Here in Canada although I want to volunteer and join various activities, my work schedule hinders me from doing so. I work at McDonalds as a team leader. I have a more responsibilities compared to a crew member; therefore they give more than usual amount of work hours per week. The reason why I decided to be a working student is because I want to help my parents financially by paying my phone bills, bus pass and etc. However, I still managed to volunteer to some organizations. I volunteered once for the CBFY with Dinesh, Habitat for Humanity, Food Bank and Calgary Drop-in Centre. I also volunteered for YMAP once for tutoring kids in middle school for Math and Science.

I am graduating this year and so I am aiming to get high low 80s if not high 80s for Math 31, Chemistry 30, ELA 30-1 and SST 30-2. I need to achieve these marks so that I can get into SAIT's Bachelor of Business Administration Program which I was given

By: Jasfer Nerio

a conditional acceptance December of last year and later this January I confirmed to accept the offer. I would choose Accounting as a major because that was the program that I was doing in university back home. It was a perfect program for me back then and I hope that it will still be like it. Additionally, I want to be an accountant like my Mom someday. I liked how balance was her work and life was. Never she had a conflict between those areas. I also was not expecting that my mom was not only awesome a housewife but was also awesome accountant. Everybody in her office knew her and they also care for her as well. And I want to have a carrier where work and live never contradicts each other.

Since I came here to Canada I have been through a lot of situations that truly tested my personality. And I want to share my experience to inspire others to pursue whatever they want to achieve. Never believe external factors dictates you, because in the end the opinions of others do not really matter but your opinion to yourself is.

From 50 Degrees to Negative 50 degrees



By: Shaivi Mehta

"I am doing it for my parents first and then me, I want to see the smile on their faces when their daughter makes them proud."

As the title suggests or attempted to suggest this essay is about my journey from my home land, the hot and sunny India to the land I've now come to love, the cold and snowy Canada. I was born and brought up in New Delhi, India. Me and my father moved to Canada in 2016, almost a year and half ago. I was sixteen years old then and it was the first time I was going to live without my mother and my younger brother, that too in a foreign country. I was excited, as well as very nervous. The craziest and the most amazing thing that happened to me was arriving to Canada on the night of 14 August and then being told to go to a thing called "Mentorship Program", the very next day. I was jet lagged, cranky, and homesick already. But on the very first day of program, mentorship made me feel like I hadn't left home at all. I met the nicest people, my closest friends today are the ones I met during the summer program.

As a sixteen year old who was almost alone everyday at home (father has to work late hours), newly shifted to a foreign country, mentorship has genuinely been my biggest strength, I feel like they always had my back in one way or another. My first few months in Canada were extremely hard, mentally and physically challenging. In India I lead a comfortable life transport wise and emotionally content because I had my family and friends. But in Canada I felt alone, I had never traveled in public transport let alone travel alone, in India, but it was totally opposite in Canada. I had to travel alone, make my own food, study on my own (in India almost every student goes to tuitions or tutors), and I am not complaining at all. Even though it was a huge change and quite difficult at first, but now when I look back at last year I see how much I've changed as a person and I like it. Coming to this nation transformed me into a completely different person, I feel more independent, more confident, more free and comparatively more content with my life.

I've been a swimmer since I was 5, and I used to be a competitive swimmer in India. When school in Canada had just started it was probably my 3rd week in school and I heard about swim team tryouts, I was dying to join the team, but was very hesitant and nervous to even try out. More than my performance I was nervous about the process of trying-out, talking to people I didn't know, performing in front of people I don't know, nervous if they would laugh at me, if they would make fun of my accent or how new I am to the country, what if I'm not good enough, these were the questions and concerns I had in my head for at least a week, until I told a mentorship coordinator, Milan about

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it. As soon as I told her how nervous I was, she spent good ten minutes talking to me, listening to me and encouraging me to try-out, she said “How would you know about the actual result when you don’t genuinely try, giving up is not the real result, go for it and then you’ll know the real result,” till today her words give me such confidence, such strength and comfort, the power and guts to attempt new things. It was that day when I started to doubt myself less, to try more and little harder, and encourage others to do the same. For this confidence I can never thank Milan and mentorship enough. Mentorship didn’t only give me the chance to turn myself into a better version of me, they gave me the chance to try to do the same for other newcomers and people by giving me the chance to become a peer mentor. I understand how difficult it is for newcomers to try to blend in and not just for the sake of it, to genuinely feel like you belong in this country. I have been through it, I fought it and yes there are still days when I feel low, but being a peer mentor gives me the chance to help someone else going through the same thing with a little strength and positivity, i get to be someone’s ear when they need to talk, their backup when they feel like giving up, their go-to person when they feel a little lost and it’s all because of mentorship, who did not only make my life better, but of thousands of kids.

In almost 10 years I see myself working as a dentist, in a foreign country, like Africa or Cuba where I can work as a part of a NGO or any organisation that works and helps the needy. I am actively or at least try to be actively involved in working toward the good of our community. I volunteer with the calgary public library every week, the old age home, calgary dream centre (feeding the needy), I am part of clubs like Leadership, Mentorship, Peer Ambassadors, school choir, swim team, dance crew. It might seem like something almost every kids these days does, for college or impressive resume, I will be lying if I deny that community involvement won’t benefit my resume, but moreover I do it to contribute towards the good of our community and for my emotional satisfaction. I come from a country where seeing kids of merely age 3 or 4 on the streets, hungry, begging, alone, is not at all strange, a scene that is quite common in India, but it doesn’t make it any less heartbreaking. I work and volunteer in hope to not see that scene here in Canada (at least not very often). I realise I am just another one of 36 million people in canada, but I believe no contribution is less, each helping hand is a contribution in making something big happen. Volunteering or helping someone in need might not

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benefit me directly, but it does so much indirectly, it makes the world a better place, and the mental satisfaction you get when you make someone in need smile is unbeatable.

Like I mentioned my goal is to become a dentist, I have applied to Universities and giving my all to perform my best in my senior and final year of high school. I first plan on getting my degree of bachelors of science in psychology (it is a requirement before pursuing dental school), I personally like psychology, I am intrigued by it. I like to be lend my ear to people in need, if my words can help someone get through a tough time then I am all up for it. Having a degree in psychology even if I might not pursue it professionally (because I plan on eventually going toward dentistry), gives me a tool and way of helping someone out, I won't not charge someone because it won't be therapy, but at least I can hear someone out when they need it the most. And if future permits it I want to be part of a dance crew and travel the world, be it just for a year, but, dance is my hobby and I am just as passionate about it as I am about dentistry, the dream of doing something I love and travel the world is something I hope can come true in the future.

It is no secret that continuing education after high school is not cheap, in fact is it quite expensive. We have been in Canada for almost two years now financially our family is not on the best terms, my mother is still in India and my dad is the only one earning in our house right now, both my parents are or were aircraft engineers back home, but unfortunately my dad's education doesn't hold the same value as it did in India, so he has to do survival jobs in order to earn. My mother has three degrees (engineering, a teaching and business) my dad has two (engineering and business). My dad comes from a small village in Punjab, India, his entire high school education was in Punjabi till grade 11, and when he started college for his degree in Delhi, that was the first time in his life he ever was asked to read and write in English, yet he did it, at the age of 19, during first year of his college he fought through and successfully got his degree while self-teaching himself english. He lived alone in Delhi, a 19 year old boy in a strange and big city struggling and never letting go of his dream, that's my father. My mother in late 90s a girl in a country where educating girls is still considered a "waste", where girls are married off at the age of 18, yes I am still talking about today's time, in small cities it still happens. But, imagine being a girl in the same country in such old times and telling your parents that you not only want an education you want to become an engineer,

a field that is considered ideal or was considered ideal for men. She was one of the 4 females in her entire college out of a total of 400 students to study and successfully completed not only one but two degrees at the same time, a woman who stood not up not only for herself, but her sisters and fought the society's perspectives and rules for an ideal woman with the support of her family, that woman is my mother. At the risk of sounding like a cliché, I am proud to say my parents are and will always be my biggest inspirations. I am proud of them for fighting hard just to receive their education and then sending their kids to a country in hope that we don't have to face the same things they did. They have been married for 21 years and it is only for me and my brother they decided to stay thousands of miles apart, for my future. When I continue my education, when I will be called "Dr" instead of just "Ms" or "Mrs", I am doing it for my parents first and then me, I want to see the smile on their faces when their daughter makes them proud.

I sometimes still find myself amused when I look back to the days when I was a girl who used to spend an entire class alone in the washroom crying, missing my mother, my home, to a girl who doesn't stay quiet, is always blabbering and never stops laughing and tries to cheer up any sad face she sees. A girl who would rather stand on the sidelines than show my face in front of strangers, to a girl who today doesn't hesitate for a second to be the first to climb the stage as soon as the music comes on. I owe that to mentorship. I owe it to mentorship, the credit of turning me into this new person that I have become.

Thank You Mentorship.

A Plum Tree of Two Worlds



By: Yu (Sally) Zhou

"Being able to love the plum tree both for its flowers and for the shade it gives in the summer helped me embrace my identity as a Chinese-Canadian and not allow either part of that identity to be assimilated by the other. I am truly the plum tree who can grow in both worlds."

The first time I heard about Canada was in the winter when I was five years old. My family lived in the northern part of China where, although it never snowed, had the feeling of winter as everyone was wrapped tightly in coats, their scarves blowing against the wind. My mom, who is a teacher, came to pick me up at my kindergarten class on her bicycle. I sat behind her, with my arms around her waist as we pedaled home. At this point in my life, I did not want anything to change and I was looking forward to starting elementary school with my fellow classmates. From what I could tell, my life was perfect. This was before I found out that I was moving to Canada. I remember the moment when my mom took me to the side while I was playing games with my friends. After she told me the news, the first thought that came to mind was, “why?” Why did we have to leave our life behind to go somewhere that I’d never even heard of before? I loved China, my friends, and the homogenous society advocated by the Communist Party. The neighborhood I lived in was enclosed by a large wall lined with ivy, and there were numerous parks and sports centers. Everyone knew everyone, we all grew up together, learned how to walk, speak and play together. My favourite place in my neighborhood was the small area in which a small plum tree grew. In summer it was filled with luscious green leaves that gave me shade from the heat, in winter beautiful red blossoms dotted the branches. I loved the plum tree because it could survive in two completely different worlds: the one of ice cream sundaes, bright sunshine, and the chirping of grasshoppers to the cold, windy, cloud-covered skies of winter. I loved the plum tree when it blossomed as a child, but I did not understand why the flowers only bloomed in one of the worlds; I felt that a tree susceptible to the cold should not be able to survive in the heat of the summer.

My family came to Canada in the summer of 2006, and I didn’t get to see my plum tree again for 5 years after that. When we first arrived in Canada, my parents applied for immigration through the Quebec provincial government, however, there were no jobs in Quebec and our destination changed to Alberta. When we first arrived in Edmonton, we did not have anything with us but the two suitcases my parents brought, which included nothing that could make me feel at home. Just as I always wanted winter to come so I could see the plum blossoms, I waited in Edmonton for the eventual day in which I would return home to China; Canada just did not feel like home. We lived in Edmonton for 6 years before moving as my dad got a job working at an environmental company in Calgary. When I was in my freshman year in Canada, I walked alone down

the streets in the same type of wind which blew across our small northern city in China. Our neighborhood was no longer fenced in and I could barely recognize the people living next door to me. There was a time in my life when I didn't want to acknowledge my Chinese heritage. I wanted to be viewed and seen as a Canadian, and to the 10th grade me, I could not be Chinese and Canadian; I was not a plum tree. The blossoms of the plum tree felt like something of the past; nothing blooms in Calgary during wintertime. My hobbies developed alongside my desire to become more 'Canadian'; I listened to American music, watched American TV shows, and only ever wanted to speak in English. I despised having to go to guzheng class in elementary school because the classical Chinese instrument felt so out of place in my life, like plum blossoms in the middle of summer. I learned to play the guitar, an instrument that I still play today. I no longer thought about the plum tree in China; the tree became something of a mystery, hidden deep in my memory.

At the beginning of grade 11, I got to know a lot of Chinese International students that went to my school. I started to hone my Chinese speaking skills as I wanted to fit in with them. It was upon their recommendation that I stayed after school, for something that the 'Canadian' kids in my class did not go to, and began going to the RBC Youth Empowerment Program. At first, I only went there because my friends were there and not because I thought I needed help with schoolwork, which to my classmates and I, was such a 'foreigner' thing to do. However, RBC did not give me the feeling of being out of place, and soon I enjoyed going there very much and started going as often as possible. I got a lot of help from the amazing tutors there on who helped me with everything from math and chemistry to university advice. The RBC program also introduced me to two other programs under CBFY, the Mentorship Program at St. Mary's School and the TIPS program for high school students. I loved working with immigrant students at St. Mary's. They were curious about my cultural background and for the first time in many years, I talked about my life in China and reminisced about the plum tree that I found fascinating. I was a mentee in the TIPS program in October of 2017. My mentors were both from U of C and they helped me out a lot in terms of learning about how post-secondary institutions function. My friend and I were enthusiastic to go to all of the TIPS meetings and enjoyed having talks with our mentors. One thing that I love about CBFY is how included the people and programs made me feel. For the first time, I felt

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like speaking in Chinese to my peers and had the urge to share my heritage with others who were part of the program. The people in CBFY made me see that Canada does care about my culture and does value my beliefs and heritage.

Being part of CBFY has made me strive to become like a plum tree, by being able to exist and grow in both worlds. One of my greatest passions is being involved in Canadian politics, as democracy is something that I truly value and I am honored to live in a democratic society. This year, I signed up for the Forum for Young Canadians, a week-long immersion program in Ottawa that gives students the opportunity to widen our network by meeting MPs, senators, and other important figures in Parliament Hill. The program taught me a lot about Canadian politics and visiting the locations where history was being made right in front of my eyes solidified my goals for the future. I plan to go to McGill University and study Political Science. It is important to me to go there as I believe that as a Canadian, it is my duty to learn the French culture and language and I believe that living in Montreal is the best opportunity for me to do so. As far away as my career goal may be, in the future I'd like to represent Alberta as an MP or Senator in the federal government. I want to be part of the people who create history. To achieve this goal, I plan to focus on my academics by doing well in all my classes, especially Social Studies and Chemistry. I want to be able to pursue both these subjects in post-secondary and strive to achieve above 90% in these subjects now. However polar opposites these two subjects may seem, I feel that it is important that I excel in both the humanities and the sciences. Canada is a very diverse nation built on history and innovation and I believe that exceling in both, and especially knowing the different cultural groups that make up Canada, will help further my career as a politician.

As a student, I am very actively involved in both my school and community. This school year I started volunteering at Telus Spark for their new Whales exhibit. As a volunteer, I am in charge of keeping an eye on the displays and interacting with guests by giving them information about the whales and whale bones. Like the plum tree in my childhood yard, I have been able to grow both as a Canadian and as a Chinese. I now take Chinese folk dance classes and have self-taught myself the bamboo flute. I perform both these hobbies at my church each year during Chinese New Year and share them with other Chinese immigrant children who may not believe in the beauty of the plum tree as I do now. In school, I am part of the Student Council. As a member of Student Council, I am

By: Yu (Sally) Zhou

tasked with hosting, planning, and running various events throughout the school year. The events I headed this year included the school's Open House and the Kindness and Mindfulness Week. Organizing these events has helped me build my leadership skills and hone my abilities in time-management and group work. For Kindness and Mindfulness Week, I organized the making and distribution of compliment cards. I wanted the cards that I made to be reflective of my school, therefore spending the weekend creating two designs I felt students would like. When I realized that not many people were coming to write compliment cards, I took the initiative of organizing a team to distribute cards to each homeroom as I felt it was important for students to give their thanks to their fellow peers or teachers. This event has gained a lot of recognition and approval from teachers and students alike who appreciated the fact that students were given time to reflect on the privileges they are able to receive by being a part of the free world. I have also been a part of my school's swim team for the past three years. Although at first it was very hard to get up in the morning to go to practice, I soon developed the initiative to continue in this hobby. Three years of practicing with my relay swim team allowed me to develop invaluable teamwork and team-building skills. As part of a national and local initiative, I am currently in the process of organizing a visit from a Canadian Senator to my school. The senator I hope to bring in is Senator Marilou McPherdran. I had the opportunity to meet with her and talk about issues regarding human rights, sexism, and Canadian culture. These issues are important to me as a first-generation Canadian, as sexism is still a big issue for immigrant children since their parents may still hold on to some sexist views that are part of their culture. It is important to me that my peers learn which aspects of their culture are good and which are infringing upon their ability to become part of Canadian society. Another community program that I participated in was the "Coding Buddies" program at the Calgary Public Library. By volunteering in this program, I have learned how to be a better teacher and mentor to those younger than me by encouraging them to pursue the things that interest them. By being part of both the Chinese community and my local Canadian community, I have truly become like a plum tree in that I am able to thrive in both worlds and be identified as someone who is a part of both.

I deserve to win the CBFY scholarship as I am a very well-rounded individual who strives to do my best in both my academic and community life. As I am very certain about the path I want to take in my life, I am able to put the money from this scholarship to good use right away in helping me achieve my academic and career goals. The money from this scholarship will aid me greatly in post-secondary. Since I want to be a part of my local and national community, I take pride in volunteering whenever and wherever I can. I hope this scholarship will be able to go towards my tuition or textbook fees, so that I do not have to take as many part-time job shifts to earn the money for my education, thus giving me more time to pursue my passions.

For a long time in my life, I did not believe in the significance of the plum tree. In grade 10, I thought that it was enough to be in the luscious, warm summers where trees blossomed with life like how Canada blossomed with opportunity. I have realized that my identity is not stuck in the world of winter either, when the plum tree blooms with the innocence and beauty of my cultural background. Being able to love the plum tree both for its flowers and for the shade it gives in the summer helped me embrace my identity as a Chinese-Canadian and not allow either part of that identity to be assimilated by the other. I am truly the plum tree who can grow in both worlds.

All About Me



By: Aya Gaili

"I always push myself to do the very best I can to achieve my goals and improve."

I was born in the United Arab Emirates in Dubai. I've lived there and was raised until the age of 11 before moving to the city of Calgary in Canada. My experience of moving to Canada was quite difficult to adjust to in the beginning, because coming here we lost the extended family support we had there, and the lifestyle or culture here in Canada wasn't as luxurious. In order for me and my siblings to get a more worldwide recognized education, and have a better experience. My parent had a well comfortable life back in the United Arab Emirates, but in order for me and my siblings to get the worldwide recognized education, they sacrificed their job as a lawyer and physician to provide us with a better experience in our life. There were a few challenges I've also faced when I came here, one of many being was making friends, fitting in with people, and gaining my confidence. Altering the meal hours wasn't easy at first, back at home breakfast was something as light as cereal, and due to the shorter hours of school, lunch was served warmley at home being the main meal of the day, and following dinner which was a light meal usually consisted of baked eggs with some salad. I found that the education in the United Arab Emirates and Canada differed in some aspects. The learning there was through big loads of homeworks, memorizing what you read, and finally the final exam. Here I found that it was learning through interacting, self research, and through projects that required little bits of detailed information put all together, which helped develop what we learned in class more. I feel like the education system here in Canada, helps me a lot more with real life situations, like I can apply what I learned in school from an assignment or project to a real life situation.

I grew up with one brother and sister, along with my parents, extended families, and my additional friends at school. Culture back at home was families gathering together in one huge house, lots of cousins running up and down, and the variety of food along with the chattering you'd hear left and right. A major difference from here and there was the weather, coming from a hot humid environment where it gets as hot at 40 degrees with lots of raining season, it wasn't easy to adjust to the snowy and slippery weather here in Canada especially since I came in late October. Back at home, there were many festivals that you could expect throughout the year, but a favourite of mine that I've always looked forward to every season was the Global Village. This festival represented many cultures through a number of countries. The cuisines and shops consisted of the middle east, Asia, Europe, and many more. What I really liked

about this specific festival was how it was a small experience that allowed me to feel as if I've travelled to another country and got a taste of what it's like. I have interest in the music I listen to, although I have certain tunes or styles that I prefer, I'm really open to any genre or language I come across. My current favorite is Korean Pop, especially the band BTS who I find really inspiring due to the lyrics they write and the way they try to communicate to the world about well known issues with their music. My hobbies are swimming, and playing the flute. I find these two the most relaxing things I could do to release myself from some of the tension that builds up from school, especially in 12th grade.

I had a little bit of connection with the Calgary Bridge afterschool program that took place in Judith Umbach Library, from there I got my help and support from them since I was in 7th grade as I yet had to master the basics and develop my English skills. When I entered high school I struggled with physics on my second year and when my mother reached out for the program we were told that there was an after school program that takes place in the high school, and they offered free tutoring and support. The RBC Youth Empowerment Program through The Calgary Bridge Foundation has given me not only experience, but also the benefit of developing as an individual. The environment helped me gain more confidence in myself in many ways, be it by expressing myself more or always bringing the best of me to achieve more. The program empowered me, they helped raise my social skills, I felt accepted, and I was motivated to excel. The tutors gave me individual and emotional support, furthermore when I struggled with math this year I received even more support from them and I couldn't be more thankful. They provided me with a one on one tutoring, and I was able to identify my issues which helped me fill in the gaps I was missing, and I saw quite an improvement.

In the past when I was in leadership I used to volunteer at my little sisters day care as I was interested in working with the kids. Wanting to not only have fun but also develop my volunteering experience. The Calgary Bridge Foundation has given me many opportunities to volunteer such as the Winter drive, CBFY Youth Conference, Youth Achievement Awards, and my most memorable experience and best one being WE Day. Many of these experiences helped me gain confidence with handling conferences and developing communication skills.

My academic goals in terms of school is to score high grades, in addition to being successful in getting accepted into my first choice career and university. My future career and goal consist of being a psychologist and although I'm not quite sure which specialty specifically, I find interest in the human brain and behavior. Due to the support I received, I want to give back by helping and empowering others. I find aiding others delighting and fulfilling. I want to see how unique each different individuals brain, feeling, and thoughts are. This requires me to have a flexible view by being able to see things and putting myself in the individuals shoes and finding the suitable solution to help the person. In the back of my mind I've always had thoughts of another career goal, which was to go into a subject that's art related such as an interior designer. Reason being was, I find interest in things that require creativity such as art.

This Scholarship will provide me a chance to achieve more, it'll be a privilege for me to place it on my resume as it'll show how my efforts have been crowned by the program. I'm regularly attending the program at least 4 times a week to get the help I can get, and as I always push myself to do the very best I can to achieve my goals and improve. I simply hope that I can earn this scholarship because it'll also help me pay for my education and be honored with it.

“All About Me”

By: Aya Gaili

My Story



By: Eni Okelana

"[I'm] Proud that I stood strong through it all and proud to have the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth by my side."

My name is Eni Okelana and I was born on April 18th, 2000. Being the first female child in my family, words could not explain the level of excitement and enthusiasm displayed by both my parents and relatives at the day of my arrival. I have an older brother, named Daniel and two younger sisters, named Grace and Favour. I came to Canada at age 11 on May 21st, 2011. My Parents wanted my siblings and me to have a better quality of life and better education. They sacrificed their jobs, our home, friends, family and overall stability and moved to Canada. Back then, I didn't realize the how much the move would affect my life. Moving to Canada has helped me get introduced to so many amazing things and experience life in a way I would have never been able to in Nigeria. Canada is filled with so many different amazing people that all work together to make sure they live their best life. Moving here has helped me to discover more about myself and grow as an individual. I am a very creative person that often finds it difficult to reside in a place of no change or growth and be comfortable. With schooling, I love that there are various options available to choose from and that I am responsible for the path and career I choose. I always enjoyed music and things of the arts because I have the freedom to express myself and am able to put my ideas across. Recently, I have gotten into crocheting. What I find fascinating, are the things that can be produced from just weaving wool together using a needle. I really love creating things with my hands and seeing how far I can push myself. I believe in exploring the world around me, making use of every opportunity that is given, and being open to trying new things.

In my family, we are all Nigerians and of the Yoruba tribe. Growing up, my parents made sure we knew all about our culture and our people. We occasionally wear traditional clothes, eat Nigerian food and attended gatherings and parties hosted by our people. In my house, we are all Christians and my parents continue daily assisting my siblings and me to grow into strong men and women of faith. We try our best to learn more about the Lord and worship together as a family. We all attend Beddington Pentecostal church regularly and help out the church where possible. I make sure to help out around the community around me, but mostly at my church. In the past, I helped out with the kids' ministry. I volunteered to assist with things like the Easter egg hunt or Community barbecue, which I would help set up and sometimes face paint for the kids. On Sundays, I used to help out with teaching the kids more about the word of God, crafts and giving out snacks. In the recent times, I have become more involved in the youth ministry. I am

a part of Student Leadership in my church. We help to plan programs for youth and at the end of the year, we have an opportunity to go out and minister to a group of people. I also, volunteer at school and go out with people in school to hang out with seniors and learn more about them. Volunteering helps me grow as an individual and learn things new about myself.

I started attending the Calgary Bridge Foundation program in grade 7 at Sir John .A. Macdonald. The Program has allowed me to grow socially and academically. At the start of junior high, I was a very shy kid, seeing that I just recently moved to Canada. The program introduced me to so many people from different parts of the world with different worldviews. The various field trips like bowling or a going to the zoo helped strengthen my relationships with the people in the program and got me out of my shell. The different mentors that I have encountered along the way have all encouraged me to keep working hard and progressing in life. There were instances in which I would fall short in a class. I would always be really upset and go into the program complaining. They helped me to figure out what was wrong and how to improve for next time. In addition, the program has also help me to be watchful and make good use of the resources around me. Instead of just giving up and asking someone to help me do my work, they encourage me to use my textbook, ask my teachers for further explanation and research helpful videos. An example of a time when the program really assisted me was through my journey taking Physics 20. Physics isn't really my strong suit and I was never be able to grasp the different concept and ideas. I was very frustrated and wanted to just give up and drop the class. Odeza, a program tutor, encouraged me not to carry on with this idea. She assisted me with the different labs, homework assignment and helped break down the different ideas. I also received assistance from my peers skilled at physics in the program. Although my final mark of 65% seems not so good, I know the amount hard work, perseverance and late nights it took to achieve this and I am proud of myself. I'm proud that I was able to get the credits. Proud that I stood strong through it all and proud to have the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth by my side.

After high school, I am attending the University of Alberta and going to Augustana Campus where I am enrolled in their Kinesiology Program. I find the human body and how it works interesting and with the program, I am able to explore how the human body moves and functions. With this knowledge, I will later be able to get my major in

physical therapy. Being a physiotherapist will allow me to assist individuals with series of treatment techniques that will help rehabilitate them and restore their health. My goal is to be consistent with school work and not allow anything to deter or slow me down. I decided on Augustana campus in Camrose because the campus is small, so I will be able to communicate with my professors and attain a high-grade point average. The fact that the school is away from friends and family will be a bit hard for me to adjust to initially, but at the end, it will be worth it. There is a number of reasons that I believe the Calgary Bridge Foundation for youth should pick me as a scholarship recipient. There is an expense with living on the university campus rather than going from the house. Toiletries, housing, and food will all have to be paid for. In addition to this, my brother who is five years older than me is currently attending Mount Royal University and he also lives on campus. My parents have to provide for both of our schooling, my little sisters' education and their own living expenses. This scholarship will ease off some of the pressure on them and reduce the amount of student loan debts. I am grateful to be given this opportunity and forever thankful to have been a part of the CBFY program.

“My Story”

By: Eni Okelana

Where I have been & Where I am Going



By: Halima Hussein

*"Immigrating to Canada changed my entire life
because it provided me with the ability to create a
new beginning."*

“Where I have been &” Where I am Going

Hi! My name is Halima Hussein and I am a grade 12 student at Forest Lawn High School. I came to Canada on June 19th, 2013 from Massawa, Eritrea and have been a part of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth program since 2015. The program has helped me improve my English language skills and helped me adjust to Canadian society.

I was born in Jigjiga, Ethiopia on May 10th, 1999. When I was only one, my parents left my two older sisters and I to be raised by our grandma. My parents had to spend their time working to earn money in order for us to survive. The city I was born in was a city where poverty was common and there was an ongoing civil war which made life difficult. For example, it was hard to find a job, education was not provided, and women were not allowed to attend school or work. As a result, my parents decided to move to another country, which was not an easy decision. When I was three, my parents finally decided to move to Eritrea. At the time, people from Ethiopia were not allowed to leave the country and it was illegal to move to Eritrea, and if we were caught, we would be sent to jail. However, my parents took this risk of moving to Eritrea because they were told that there was a United Nations (UN) refugee camp, which helped families who were less fortunate move to a more secure and supportive country. While we were on our way to Eritrea, we faced many difficulties such as my dad being put in jail for about six months when the Ethiopian government learned we were on our way to Eritrea. Being alone was very hard for my mother to deal with, as she was three months pregnant at the time. My two older sisters and I were very young and did not understand why our father was gone, but when he was freed, we continued our journey to Eritrea, facing even more challenges. We had to travel by ship and heavy storms made the Ocean hard to travel through. Many people got very sick, as we ran out of food and were near death, but thankfully everyone survived. When we landed in a city called Assab, located in Eritrea, my mother went into labour. The night she gave birth, my mother and the baby passed away. This news was very hard for my father to cope with because he had lost two people who were very precious and dear to him. I was very young and could not understand this news, but as I grew older, my dad explained what happened to my mom. This was one of the hardest things I have dealt with in my life and continues to be. When I was eight, my dad remarried. He needed someone to take care of us so that he could work and create a better life for us. In Eritrea, education was provided and people were able to work, although life remained difficult. There was no clean water, the weather

By: Halima Hussein

was very humid and we lived in camps, which did not really protect us from the heat, storms or floods. After 10 years of adversity, we learned that we would be able to move to Canada.

Immigrating to Canada changed my entire life because it provided me with the ability to create a new beginning. I never thought we would be lucky enough to live in a place like Canada, but because of the UN's support, we had this privilege. When we arrived in Calgary on June 19th, 2013, we were taken to a hotel where we stayed for 19 days before finding a basement apartment, where we lived for three years. Canada was beautiful but also very difficult to adapt to, and took time for us to meet people who spoke the same language as us.

In attending NxtGen Homework Club, I receive plenty of help with my school work. This program has also helped me with many other things that I have been struggling with since coming to Canada, such as my English, which has improved since I have joined the program. I have also met many others, who have come to Canada from many different parts of the world. The people I have met in homework club have inspired me in many ways and I have been able to build strong relationships with them. They have helped me change my perspectives and adapt to living in a new culture, and the mentors have inspired me to work harder for the things that I want to achieve in the future.

Being involved in my community and school activities is very important to me because I am able to invest in the things that I think are important in life. I am involved in many different clubs within the school, such as Homework Club, Mentorship Program, Peer Ambassador and YMAP. Through these, I have built relationships and been involved with many volunteering opportunities. These programs have helped me explore and experience things I was unable to in Africa, and have inspired me to give back to my community. Through these programs, I have been able to volunteer in many places, gaining valuable experiences and career opportunities such as working at the Stampede, Tim Hortons and The Great Events Catering. I was able to provide financial support to some of my family members back in Africa, and use my experiences to volunteer in my own community. Every year I volunteer at the mosque during the month of Ramadan in the evening when people are breaking their fasts, and serve food and drinks to them and sometimes babysit their children.

I want to earn my high school diploma and apply to university to study accounting or social work. Before attending the program, I did not give much thought to my future or worry about school, but now my future and school success is the most important thing to me and has helped me improve my grades. I was inspired by the people that I met at Homework Club and they have had a positive influence on me and taught me that working hard in high school will help me reach my goals.

The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth is an amazing program because it creates a safe and helpful environment that helps English second language students like myself learn and grow. I remember being scared to speak out aloud in fear of rejection, but the foundation has helped me get over such fears and move forward in my learning. I love the all Bridge programs because it promotes the importance of school work and also helps me in real life problems. The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth should select me as a recipient for one of the 2018 scholarships because the award would be very beneficial to me for my post-secondary education. I know I could achieve greatness with some help, the same way I want to help others achieve greatness. I have learned a lot from my past and from coming to Canada, and have learned that hard work is the key to success no matter what I encounter. Receiving this scholarship would help me advance in making my dreams part of my reality, alongside trying to make the world a better place. I am thankful for my father and the UN for providing me with better opportunities in order to be successful and I would like to thank the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth for the support that I received and the opportunities that they have provided me with.

2018

A Year Filled with Excitement



By: Kai Yi Tan

*"My relationship with my mom is
the most precious relationship I have.
I will treasure it forever."*

The moment I stepped on to the ground in Canada, I knew that I had many things to learn and that everything in my future would be different. I could feel the cold of the winter and remember seeing actual snow for the first time in my life. The trip to Canada was exciting for me. It was my first international trip to a country that had a different culture and background than my country. The trip from Malaysia took one whole day. We departed from Penang, Malaysia and arrived at the Calgary airport. It was still the same date when I departed from Malaysia yet it was a different time, country, and season.

I identify myself as a Malaysian Chinese since I was born in a Chinese family that had resided in Malaysia for more than four generation. Malaysia is a country that has summer all year. It rains sometimes, but mostly it is hot and humid because of its location near the ocean and equator. It is small compared to Thailand which is Malaysia's neighbour country. I am from a single-parent family. This has been a unique experience in my life. My relationship with my mom is the most precious relationship I have. I will treasure it forever.

My mom decided to leave me with my grandmother to come to Canada to find work when I was nine. After my mom left I couldn't sleep because I had always slept with my mother and now she was gone. At first, I had to sleep with the light on, but I did get used to sleeping by myself. I decided to come to Canada as a permanent resident when I was a junior high school student. The procedure for me to be eligible to move to Canada took about 4 years. On February 5, 2015 I left for the first time my home and my country to go to a place that is literally the other side of the earth. Everything needed to be planned ahead such as knowing which plane I had to take to arrive in Canada. I needed to pack everything that is needed to live in a country with four season. The hardest part was to leave my friends and family in my home country. Now I have lived in Canada for three years, and my daily life is simple yet lovely, with my mom by my side. I have the support that I need and hope for a great future too.

It's been about three years since I came to Canada. I have experienced life with my whole heart as a high school student, which includes volunteering, participating in school clubs, and joining meetings related to religious activities. It all started when I was introduced to the Mentorship Program in grade ten at John G. Diefenbaker Senior High School. The program pushed us to be involved in the community, which lead me into volunteering. I volunteered with the Mentorship Program at various events.

These experiences with Mentorship was the start of my volunteering and then I started volunteering with other service agencies, including being a part of the CIBC Run for the Cure, a helping hand in the Chinese Academy, and being a recreation volunteer at the nursing home. This year, I am also a mentor at the Cross-age Mentorship Program and a Youth Cultural Ambassador for the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society. I volunteered at the CIBC Run for the Cure last year by cheering the participants even though I was not directly involved in the event. I have volunteered at the Chinese Academy for two years in the lower elementary grades. It has been a great learning opportunity since it is different interacting with children than with people that are around my age. As a volunteer in the recreational section in the nursing home, I learned how to engage elders in activities and how to interact with them. Volunteering in the recreation department of the nursing home has helped me sharpen my artistic skills as sometimes I needed to help make certain props or even decorate for the event. I am also a Youth Cultural Ambassador of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society. A Youth Cultural Ambassador helps those who are new or just recently move to Canada to be comfortable with their new environment.

When I was in mentorship, I also belonged to the RBC Youth Empowerment Program, which focuses on academic tutoring. I learned about these Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth programs through a friend. I regularly attended both programs and took advantage of every opportunity. I always go to the tutor when I have a question in my studies. The tutors are kind and helpful and we are just like friends. I can relax in the environment since it is not very formal like it can be sometimes in class. I feel comfortable to ask questions. The program also provides workshops on studies skills and how to manage my time that has helped me to improve my grades and my future. Aside from the academic support, I have participated in various events like going to the opera and the theatre, camping, campus tours, which were new experiences. As part of the program, I have made several friends and have wonderful memories.

Now that I am in grade twelve, it is time to decide what to do in my future. I plan to become an optometrist, which requires me to study for about eight years. I have applied to University of Calgary and Mount Royal University to take my undergrad degree in Science. I have already been conditionally accepted by Mount Royal University and am still waiting to hear from the University of Calgary. Four years in to the future, I will

have finished my studies for my pre-optometry program, and then I will be continuing my studies as an optometrist by going to study at Waterloo University in Ontario. Alongside my studies I hope to get an optometry related job to help with my future career.

I should be chosen as a 2018 Scholarship Award recipient because I am a part of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth as a member of the RBC Youth Empowerment Program. I have attended regularly for three years in the RBC Youth Empowerment Program. I have volunteered for the program whenever it is possible. The most important reason I think I should get accepted as a scholarship recipient is that it would help me in funding my post-secondary studies. I am so grateful to The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth and the RBC Youth Empowerment Program and Mentorship for making my time and transition in Canada easier and for supporting me in both my academic and personal growth.

**“2018
A Year Filled
with Excitement”**

By: Kai Yi Tan

Me. Myself and I



By: Tina (Liruoshi) Meng

*"As my father once told me, unraveling yourself
can be a long and painful process, but it is
a better option than suffering daily from being
someone that is not the true 'you'."*

On April 19th, 2000, I was born in Shanghai, China to a middle class family. My parents are originally from Shandong, a province in northeastern China, but decided to move to Shanghai about twenty years ago in search of greater opportunities and a higher quality of life. They are both such amazing figures in my mind. My father used to work in a hospital after graduating from medical school. Later he found out that being a doctor was not his passion, so he resolutely quit his job and began to study law. Now he is a successful university professor and a part-time lawyer. My mother, on the other hand, works for a real estate company. Although she does not have as many academic achievements as my father does, she enjoys her life through her broad range of hobbies such as music and sports. Influenced by them, I grew up as a girl who strives to pursue my dreams and live a colourful life while appreciating what I have in the moment.

Back in elementary school, I was often bullied and laughed at because of my name - it has four characters in total, whereas other Chinese names usually have only two or three. I still remember vividly on the first day of school, when the teacher was going through the attendance list and called my name, there was an uproar in the classroom and almost everyone was whispering, "What a strange name!" From that day on, a number of classmates started making fun of me and calling me "little Japanese". Feeling deeply insulted and hurt, I became extremely shy. I preferred to be alone rather than spending time with others. After I got into junior high, I realized that it was time for me to step out of my comfort zone, since I no longer wanted to be an injured and helpless child. Therefore, I put a lot of effort in attempting to be flawless and perfect in every way. I studied hard, did my best to be involved in school events and socialized actively with others. Very soon, I became one of the most popular kids in school. While I was happy to experience the transformation, I was also desperate to receive affirmation from other people and the fear of criticism had quietly developed in my heart. I was afraid of the consequences of making mistakes, like getting scolded or losing friends. It was not until the end of my grade nine year that I finally understood that nobody is perfect and everybody makes mistakes. All the pressure I felt went away and I decided that from then on, I should just be myself and not worry too much about what others think of me. As my father once told me, unraveling yourself can be a long and painful process, but it is a better option than suffering daily from being someone that is not the true "you".

My parents have always wanted the best for me. Two months before my junior high graduation, they discovered an opportunity for me to go to a Canadian high school. Honestly, I was not excited at all to hear the news because that would mean I would have to leave my friends and basically everything I loved in China and start a new life in a foreign country which I was totally unfamiliar with; just the idea of studying abroad freaked me out. “But try to see the great side of it. You will get to experience another culture and enhance your English language skills. Sure, it will be challenging for you at first, but it is these challenges that make you stronger,” my parents persuaded me. So here I am, at John G. Diefenbaker High School in Calgary.

When I began my first year of high school, which was also my first year as an international student, I found everything exceeding my expectations. I had a flexible timetable, an extensive range of options and clubs to join, a multicultural study environment...All of these things completely blew my mind. However, I had some concerns. Although I had been learning English as a second language since elementary school, I was still worried about my English skills in a pure Anglophone environment, especially in speaking and writing. My first semester of grade ten went smoothly. I did well in both of my ESL classes and my teacher said that I was ready for regular ELA and Social Studies classes. I was very proud of myself because very few ESL students got out of the ESL program in less than one school year, and I was confident about the upcoming grade 10 English class. However, a bigger challenge awaited. As soon as I had my first ELA class, I sadly realized that there was a huge gap between my English level and that of the local students’. Specifically, group discussions, writing assignments and

Fortunately, I got help from the tutors in the RBC Youth Empowerment Program.

When I first arrived at Diefenbaker, I had no clue how to get involved in school. I had a limited friend circle and did not have much going on outside of my regular schedule. One day, when I was in my ESL Canadian Studies class, a lady walked in and introduced the RBC program, an after-school tutoring program, to us. The idea of this program - connecting international students, new immigrants, and first-generation Canadians with each other and providing both academic and mental support to these groups of students fascinated me. I immediately signed up for this program, which turned out to be superb, thanks to the incredible staff. To me, the most difficult subjects are Social Studies, ELA and Science. Since being in this program, whenever I scratch my head on a tricky question or when editing an essay, I will not necessarily be scared anymore. **58**

“Me. Myself and I”

The staff are not just tutors who help out with assignments; they have become my best friends. I feel comfortable sharing what delights or troubles me with them. The program also regularly offers fun activities, such as field trips, camps and workshops, in which everyone in this program learns useful information about studying and living here and feels a sense of belonging. I just want to express my gratitude to all the wonderful people who put a great deal of effort into this program. It is you who makes a difference in the world!

After joining the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, I gained enough confidence to join extra-curricular activities. In grade 10, I joined the yearbook club and was responsible for editing the “Band & Choir” page. I have also been an active member of the Culture Club since then, where I met a lot of friends of diverse cultural heritage and learned many fun facts about different cultures. In my first semester of grade 11, I, being a member of the school cross-country team, participated in two races and was the first Diefenbaker student, ranked around fiftieth in a total of approximately 120 girls in the intermediate girl’s group, to finish a 4k run in the City Championships in Cochrane, AB. I have been involved in both the Senior Centre Club for almost two years, in which we visit the Manor Village at Huntington Hills, a senior centre near our school, once every month to entertain the seniors. I was in concert choir in my grade 10 year, and in grade 11, I became a member of the girls’ choir and the chamber choir, which is technically the best among all five choirs in Diefenbaker. We have taken part in numerous performances and competitions and have made notable achievements, such as the second place in the senior high school choir division of the Alberta Music Festival. While continuing to sing in the chamber choir in my final year of high school, I also joined the jazz ensemble. It is a new experience for me to sing in a different style, a smaller group and a more intimate environment, and although I feel the pressure of balancing the time I spend on academics and choir rehearsals, I am glad to say that I enjoy every single minute of my participation in the John G. Diefenbaker music program. Outside of school, I volunteered twice for the CIBC Run for the Cure in Calgary, which is an annual event raising awareness of women’s breast cancer throughout Canada. Apart from that, I have also devoted three hours every Saturday for over a year and a half to volunteer at the Chinese Academy Mandarin class for kids in kindergarten and elementary school. There, I act as a Chinese teacher. I am in charge of assisting class teaching, managing students’

By: Tina (Liruoshi) Meng

being a teacher because it required more patient towards kids that are younger than me. However, by getting in touch with students of various characteristics, it broadens my horizon and my capacity of dealing with different people. Besides, I am very happy since it is a great way to use my knowledge of Chinese language to help others.

At present, I am a grade 12 student who has the ambition of continuing my studies in the field of Psychology in a university level. When I first began to show interest in Psychology, I simply thought the concept of it was cool; I thought I could learn everything about a person through a simple conversation or by studying their behaviour. As time went by, I began to have a more in-depth understanding of it. I learned that mental illness is just as dangerous as physical disease. Nevertheless, an enormous proportion of the population around the world does not have enough recognition of the importance of mental health. Hence I resolve to become a psychologist to help those who have psychological disorders restore a healthy and normal mentality, as well as promote mental health awareness. Of course, as a prerequisite of that, I will not only need to maintain high academic averages in high school courses, especially in English, Math and Sciences, but also try to understand the world and people around me in a more empathetic way. After completing my post-secondary education, I would consider working in either Canada or Asia, however I would prefer to work in China due to the lack of psychological treatment that people there are able to receive.

What makes me a good recipient for this scholarship? First of all, I am a good student. In spite of being an international student whose mother tongue is not English, I am willing to work twice or even thrice harder to succeed. I also have a strong math and science knowledge base, which gives me an advantage in raising my overall average. In fact, I just got an offer for Psychology major from University of Toronto St. George campus on January 18th, and another one for Human Resource major from McMaster University. Secondly, I am an active member of many extra-curricular activities at school and in my community. I think of them as valuable experiences in the path of my life, for they build up my sense of responsibility and shape me into a useful member of society. Last but not least, I am very thankful for what my parents have sacrificed in order for me to study in Canada, yet I am also aware that my family is not wealthy. I would cherish every chance to reduce my parents' financial burden.

In conclusion, I would like to say thank you to the scholarship committee for considering my application.

The Scope of a Believer



By: Sharvani Ram

"I believe life is a gift that God has given us, and I want to use my past and let it strengthen and drive me to be a better version of myself daily."

My name is Sharvani Ram; I was born and raised in Calgary and am 17 years old, currently attending John G. Diefenbaker High School. My connection with the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth is through the RBC Youth Empowerment Program. Since joining back in 2016, I have grown academically and strengthened my relationship with my mentors. By being a part of this program, I have noticed a substantial improvement in my marks and work ethic as a student. My mentors have taken a lot of interest and have invested time in tutoring and giving considerable advice for my future. Every time I step into this program after school, it feels like coming home to a family. The atmosphere is very welcoming, engaging, and interactive with my mentors and fellow peers. I get the privilege to learn and build off of one another, especially in the workshops. This program has given me wonderful opportunities that I would have not encountered myself, for example “WE Day.” This year was my first time going and it is by far one of the most eye-opening experiences I have had. I was pleasantly overwhelmed with the positive energy and empowerment given to youth. From that day on, it inspired me to be more aware of my environment and the world I live in today. It changed my outlook on life and had given me hope for the future knowing that there are like minded individuals that are passionate about making a better impact for the coming generations. I am thankful for RBC Youth Empowerment Program and as well as, Catherine Clark for giving me the opportunity to explore and see more phases to life. The most memorable trips during my school year was going to Banff and Drumheller. I got the opportunity to bond and create friendships that are each unique and diverse as each person. Many of them already graduated and is in post-secondary, but I am thankful that our friendships are still as strong as they were last year. I do truly feel blessed to have a keen sense of belonging within this supportive community, and I know that it will help shape me and other students in becoming better individuals.

My family is originally from Fiji and moved to Canada, because they wanted to give our future generation a better life filled with more opportunities and freedom. For the most part of my life, I had a good upbringing into this world. However, I did have some rocky patches during elementary school when my parents were in the process of divorcing. At that time, it was the biggest change I had to get used to. It still shakes me up a bit when I think about it, but I remember that I persevered and did not let these family matters hold me back from my potential. All these years, I have lived with

my mother and sister and they are the most empowering women that I know till this day. They have shown me what it is like to struggle, sacrifice, and fight during the dark times, yet they always find the light at the end of tunnel coming out with resiliency and unconditional love. My family has always dealt with many hardships, and the toughest one was when my father passed away seven years ago. Since then, nothing has quite remained the same, and there is still a void that is incomplete and healing, yet I cannot dwell on it forever. I use his advice and rejoice our memories and use it to bring out the positivity in every situation that I can. I believe in life we have two choices:

1. We can use our past and struggles to feel pity and let that destroy us
2. Use our past and struggles to find value in it and use it to build our character in a positive manner. I believe life is a gift that God has given us, and I want to use my past and let it strengthen and drive me to be a better version of myself daily.

Faith and Christianity plays a significant role in my life. I am an active participant in my church and there is an abundance of happiness, love, and blessings there. While I attend church, I plan to keep on spreading that positivity outside of it as well. Weekly youth nights are my favorite, because it keeps me grounded and refocuses my attention to God during the week. It is a great opportunity for me to meet people that spiritually share the same passion for God, and another way to build stronger relationships with my youth leaders. As part of being a senior student, a responsibility to be a role model and to help guide the little ones is a huge part of my role. Mentoring primary and junior high students has really opened my perspective and helped me create a deeper bond with them. It allows me to share my personal experiences and struggles, while gaining a deeper level of trust. Church has done so much good for me in many ways, while guiding me towards a safer and happier path in life. It deterred negative influences which the younger generation easily sinks into and pushed me towards positivity and fulfillment. In the future I plan on making a positive difference and embracing God's love through all the work I do.

Nutrition and health has been one of my passions as of recent. Food has always been an important thing in my life, because of the value and memories that are attached to it. There would always be a family function, holiday, or even a simple Sunday night dinner where everyone would gather together to enjoy a delicious meal. Food is not

something that we just intake, but it brings the entire family together to enjoy time with one another. Nutrition was unknown to me until I hit high school. From the previous leading up to high school, I ate anything and everything I desired, and eventually my weight got the best of me. Finally, there came a point where I realized that I need to do something because if I want to strive to be a better person and achieve future goals, then I need to start taking care of myself first. Slowly, I started implementing healthier eating habits, exercise, and educating myself on living a healthy lifestyle. As I was learning more, I was feeling happier mentally and this showed physically too. I genuinely fell in love with this lifestyle and became eager to learn more on how to be the best version of myself mentally and physically.

When I first took Sports Medicine in grade 10, I learned about how the body functions and ways to treat and prevent the body from injury. They taught me how proper nutrition can enhance an athlete's performance for training and games. Every week I volunteered to help the senior trainers in assisting them with various tasks for several sports teams. In the first semester of this school year, it was officially my second year in becoming a successful senior athletic trainer. In these three years in class, I have learned a whole lot about what it means to truly take care of your body. With my own health and fitness journey, it has taught me to religiously appreciate and value life and my body. When I started my health journey, I decided that my goal in the future is to inspire and assist individuals in living a healthier lifestyle. Being the person that I am, when I have a goal I am determined to get started on it right away. Now, I currently work at GNC (General Nutrition Center). GNC is known for being a nutritional supplement store to accommodate to a variety of health needs and this was my first stepping stone into the industry of nutrition and fitness. Prioritizing health is a huge foundation for this company and I am so glad that I get to be a part of it. When I come to work, I am satisfied knowing that I get to assist individuals with having a healthy lifestyle. Working there allows me to share my knowledge and experience with all types of customers. This job has also helped with my confidence, teamwork, communication skills, and building strong work ethic.

My career goal for the future is to get into health or food sciences for post-secondary, because I want to have a career that allows me to take care of people's health. That comes in many forms, however the two paths I see myself in is within nutrition,

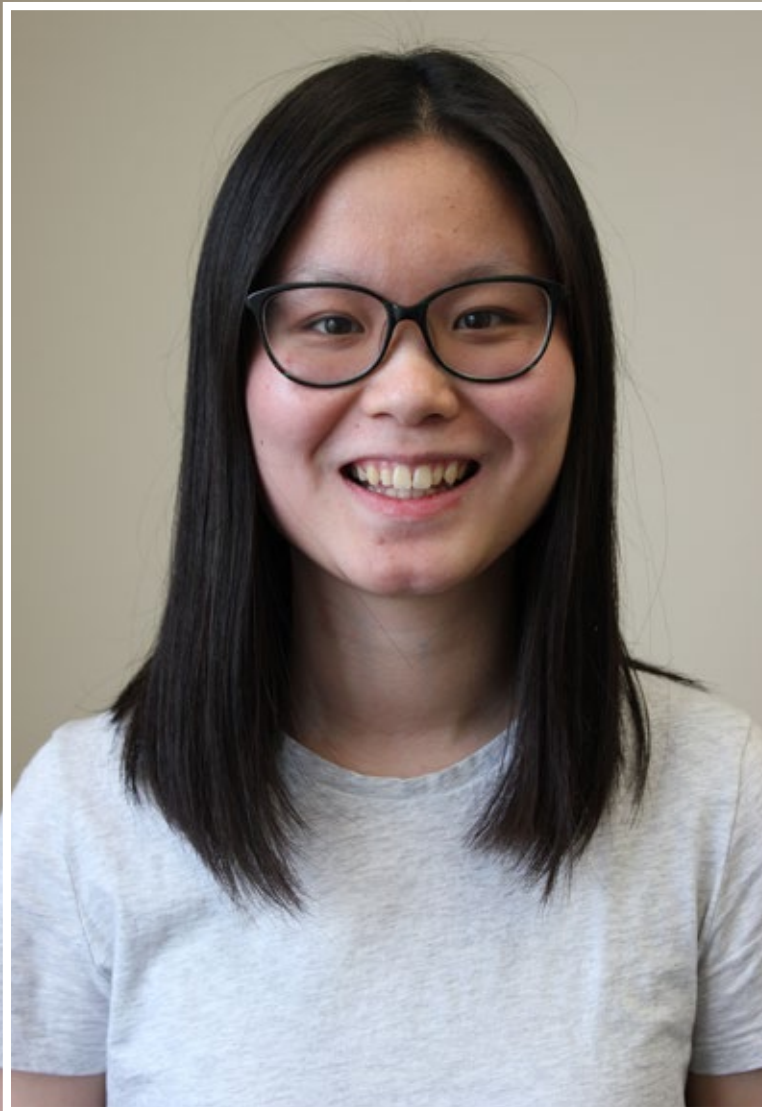
dentistry, or pharmaceuticals. I love food, especially cooking healthy food that provides great nutrients to fuel you and make you feel good on the inside and out. I would love to educate individuals and especially those from a younger age to set a healthier future in front of them. Based on my personal experiences and adversity, I feel it can be used for someone down the road that might have a similar struggle. I am a dedicated student and I know whatever I put my mind to, I will achieve it. Determination, consistency, and patience are all values that I came to learn in this journey and it is something that is not easy to get a grasp on. However, once I do get a grasp, I feel so much more liberated and stronger. My academic achievement can be showcased through my consistency in being an honor roll student though out the start of junior high and to this present day. Most of all, anything I aspire to do in the future, I will actively put in the effort, attention, and ultimately love for it to flourish.

CBFY should choose me as a recipient, because I am a hardworking individual in both school and in the community life. I am a determined person with a huge passion for spreading positivity and helping the welfare of others. When I am committed and have a passion for a goal, I put my all into it. Financially, my family has its ups and downs, and having only a mother as my sole support can be a burden on her. This scholarship will lift the pressure off of her and will allow me to truly experience university completely. I am a studious person, and I make the most out of all that I have with immense love, effort, and good intentions. I am blessed to have gotten this far and having the opportunity to apply makes me very grateful for the possibilities and opportunities this scholarship will open me to.

“The Scope of a Believer”

By: Sharvani Ram

All The Great Things: My Journey To The North



By: Shengnan (Sheena) Yan

*"I did grow up from a teenager to an adult,
but more importantly, I have shaped a better self
from all the positivity I have received from the
organization and the society."*

I am Shengnan (Sheena) Yan, a Grade 12 student in John G. Diefenbaker High School. I have joined the Calgary Bridge Foundation program since my second half year in Calgary. Most of the school days I spend my after-school time there with the tutors and people who share similar experience with me. The program really provides a comfortable circumstance that is beneficial for the newcomers. Tutors are responsible for helping with homework and understanding concepts. I also discuss academic problems or sharing my own experience with friends in the program. Those are all effective ways to adapt to the brand new environment in a distant country from my hometown. The program offers volunteer opportunities, celebrates festivals, invites guest speakers to share their stories, and organizes camping and trips to Banff and local universities. These events play important roles to get me engaged more into the community.

I have also benefited from TIPS Program offered by CBFY in winter, 2017. It is a brand new program that opens to help high school seniors transition to post-secondary institutions, offering information about universities and colleges. I was matched up with two mentors studying in University of Calgary. We spent two and a half months together every week, going through whatever I was curious about. By the end, I have gained a lot. I completed the university applications as well as have a deeper understanding of the higher education system in Canada.

I came to Calgary in summer, 2015, from Shanghai, China. It took me some time to fit myself into the Canadian society. I was cautious on meeting new people before because Canada has such a different culture, history and weather compared to my home country. However, since I made some friends in the RBC Program I have found out that unique aspects of me also make people want to know me. Canada is a multicultural country where we share various cultural backgrounds and my special experience of being involved in CBFY based programs has helped me to develop more maturity. Little by little, I have met more friends, not only Chinese, but also friends with different ethnicity.

I was born as an only child. It was hard for my parents to make the decision of sending me abroad living by myself. However, they sacrificed and dealt with all the uneasy time worrying about my condition in Canada because they wanted me to have a different experience when they have the ability to offer so. They are the most important people for me who guided me through all the immaturity and innocence before I am

independent enough to take care of myself. It was also them who introduced me to the music field. Since Grade 3, Alto Saxophone has become an instrument I practice constantly. Although I did not make the choice to play it, I did find that I have learned a lot as being a music student. Besides the techniques, joining the band has provided me an opportunity to make more friends and adapt to the new environment and gain more confidence. I learned how to overcome obstacles, about techniques and relationships with others, through optimistic and persistent mentality. Music is also one of the efficient ways that I use to relieve stress. It has inspired me a lot and given me a sense of accomplishment that I have gradually improved myself.

For the past two years, I have been a member of the symphonic band, as the section leader, and jazz band. Currently I sing Alto in the Concert Choir. In the past swim season, I also participated in my first sports team. I was not a sport person, but in the swim team I did enjoy swimming and also make friends. Guided by both school and professional coaches, I managed to learn the diving entrance and flip turn, which I used to think only the professional swimmers could do.

For volunteering, I volunteer in the Chinese Academy for Grade 4 kids every Saturday afternoon. I was also one of the volunteers for CBFY Volunteer Group, where we contributed to events like the Youth Conference, Youth Achievement Awards and the Multicultural Family Fair. This year I joined the Cross-Age Mentorship Program as a mentor to welcome young, junior high immigrants and provide them with a comfortable place in Canada. I am really grateful that I have been helped since I came to study in Canada. I have given back to the society by passing down the caring and loving I received.

The academic goals I set for English is to pursue 80 percent. The other subjects are 90s. I will be going to one of the universities in Canada for Engineering or Science, which are the appropriate choices based on my interest and capacity.

I think CBFY should choose me as a scholarship recipient because of my unique life experience, personal characteristics, and also academic achievement. I once restrained myself from people with different skin colors or cultural backgrounds, but now I am intimate with some Canadians as well as other international students from different countries. I am proud to be a responsible person, which means I have a clear mind of my commitments without taking on more than I can afford or am capable of. I also have strict self-discipline that keeps me positive and active. Modesty is the attitude of my

personal daily life. For academic achievement, I am working on not only better grades but also thoughts and practical applications, especially for English and Social Studies that I am not so good at compared to other courses.

It has been three unforgettable years with Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. I have met a lot of interesting people and offered what I have to the society in return. The tutors in the RBC Youth Empowerment Program have devoted themselves to take our questions and inquiries seriously. They are so approachable that we talk about anything just like intimate friends. Along with all the volunteering experience and field trips offered by the organization, I have had such great opportunities to broaden my viewpoint and develop the abilities required to be responsible for myself and help others. I did grow up from a teenager to an adult, but more importantly, I have shaped a better self from all the positivity I have received from the organization and the society.

“All The Great Things: My Journey To The North”

By: Shengnan (Sheena) Yan

Learning Commons



By: Daniela Lapada

“Until the end of high school, every Tuesday after the school bell, at the Learning Commons, it is where we, the humble students, will persistently study, will continually improve, and will jubilate the joy of learning towards the future which we hold.”

It was a casual Tuesday afternoon right after the school dismissal bell. For the first time, I was not planning to head straight home. Motivated by the intercom announcements and the simple need for a serene place to study, that day's destination was the seemingly unknown "Homework Club" in the Learning Commons. I entered, I wandered and quickly did I search for an empty, isolated seat with a computer. Thinking its purpose was only as its name suggested, I was immediately proven wrong. After introducing me to the group rather awkwardly and given permission forms, it was already breaktime. There were snacks. I was lured in. At first reluctant, I then gave in, joining a small but diverse group of students casually pausing their studies to discuss and bant about their long days of schoolwork. This was the second quarter.

Different voices , different skin tones, distinct accents, diverse stories. Everyone is unique. Some were from war-torn homelands, others born here. I was born in the petroleum oasis, Saudi Arabia to a Filipino family. That usually tickles people's curiosity. Contrary to the stereotype, the Dhahran Mall was one of the best shopping centres I've ever been to. At five years old, my family immigrated (back) to the Philippines. The stay was not the most prosperous and instead we were faced by poverty. The elementary school days were bittersweet, from being bullied due to gender-confused me, to racist commentaries attributed to my birthplace and hooked nose, then there is winning quiz bee medals and gaining academic achievements. In search of a more sustainable future, a classified ad from a weekly pushed my father to immigrate to the cold north, Canada, as a kitchen cook. Seven years passed before we were reunited.

Spring of 2012: the season of landing here in Canada. Calgary had chilly, arid nights, in contrast to Dhahran's humid maritime desert and Manila's meteorologically unstable mess. I, the pixie-cut lad thought Canada welcomed me rather warmly, the environment was more livable. Fortunate that I already spoke English of the Philippine variant, I pursued a challenging path to one Canadian stereotype: Being bilingual, or rather trilingual in my case. Entering cluelessly into a French-immersion junior high, I gathered the Franco-Albertan linguistic mode-de-vie rapidly. With the frank and nasal jargon of the Québécois French along with the butter-greased tongue flawlessly linking words with liaisons, it proved useful when reading ingredients and conversing during a school trip to the city of Québec. There, I was cordially addressed "Mademoiselle, voilà, your poutine, NEXT!" Wait, all my life society made me think I was supposed to be a

man, but somehow this comment in French made me feel glad. Everything was about to change.

Bishop McNally High School is modest in size nevertheless aesthetically pleasing. Throughout grade 10, I chose to stay low key, joined a few clubs, coexisted with the condescendingly smart and canny AP classes, and became the goody-two-shoes of my minuscule but chaotic French class. The classes were more legitimate, teachers never joking, the pace supersonic. Sidenote, I came out as a girl at the same year. The foreseen repercussions from parents relating to this grave epiphany, the dire and deprecating dysphoria, and the shock from the sudden boatload of schoolwork, were all together a lethal combination. Grade 11 was a period of exploration and renaissance. Some friends deserted the new me yet they were replaced by new ones. I had to find myself and create a balance between intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Along with the gang of science classes, I was lured into theatre. There my childhood interests in fine arts and languages proved advantageous. My affinity to accents did I exploit for monologues. The crafting skills I formerly abandoned aided shaping B.M.H.S.'s rendition of "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown." I was given the honour to be the play's Properties Mistress. A formerly unknown dimension was opened, I became more involved in the high school lifestyle.

Grade 12, the final year of high school. New clubs joined are the Model U.N. as a delegate for Spain, Robotics as a content creator and Writer's Club as a hermit scribbler astray. Outside, I participate in the Inside Out Youth Group, and thrift shopping and exploring Calgary unwind me. Stress more elevated pushed me to improve my study and work ethics. Initially, note-taking needed to be ameliorated as I had horrid organisation: colour coding, diagrams, vocabulary banks. The goal is efficiency and aesthetics. However, these practises did not prove sufficient. Throughout the K-12 years, I merited the title as the mistress of procrastination. This is when, as of divine calling, the intercom announced the existence of the "Homework Club." Tuesday afternoons became beacons of academic accomplishment, and the institute of anti-procrastination. I completed most of my work on time and there were less all-nighters. In addition, the club's members were given mini-seminars on time management and dreams, and snacks. "Dreams!" and I panicked. Other colleagues already applied, even accepted into university. I, on the other hand, have not yet. I felt unable to choose between the diversity of choices and

my savage interests. “Talkative me” desires linguistics, as languages had been a keen obsession of mine. Languages, whose number is drastically decreasing over the last centuries, is one of the non-concrete riches of humanity. Promoting linguistic diversity and integration through their study bookwise and fieldwise is necessary to enrich and preserve collective identities especially of those who are assimilated and marginalised. Likewise, “nerdy me” craves the sciences, especially astrophysics and particle physics. There exists the opportunity to discover new stars, protostars and supernovae alike, and learning about our history as creations from starstuff. Currently, high school is the reality and adulthood rapidly approaches. Simply dreaming is not sufficient anymore, one has to act. In the close future, I’ll have the liberty to study and expand my knowledge in my own terms.

We are now in the third quarter, graduation looming above the horizon. Post-secondary presents a frightening unknown. It will be a new and fresh start. When I was given the opportunity to participate as a candidate to this distinguished scholarship, it gave me confidence to be engaged and excited about the future. Its financial relief is a catalyst to the monetary gates of universities, a fraction of an economic preoccupation less and instead dedicate that time to learning. However, my interpretation of its further significance is that it is an honour to merit such a respectable award and use it to expand the knowledge of humanity. To whomever seizes this grant, may it help them to the path to a successful career and a life of continuous learning. Perhaps my dreams are trivial, but my intents are stronger than the doubts lingering. Until the end of high school, every Tuesday after the school bell, at the Learning Commons, it is where we, the humble students, will persistently study, will continually improve, and will jubilate the joy of learning towards the future which we hold. And after high school, we could use what we learned to learn more.

“ ”

Learning Commons

By: Daniela Lapada





2018



YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS