

"Although I have encountered many obstacles throughout my life, I have continued to strive for greatness and am willing to break all boundaries that may come my way."

"I believe that I am in a path to the happiness."

"My future self can judge me by the way I continue telling the story of a newcomer who strives for the best version of himself and pursue his aspirations while remaining untethered by any fallacious restrictions."

"The best trip taken is the one you don't know how it will take, the obstacles that don't appear along the way, but all you have is hope and faith that you will make it."

"Life represent a

"My life is enriching yours."

"There's always a path to the end of a road. I've never been born to search for it for the rest of our lives and we always fail to know it is just right under our feet."

"Life is beautiful when you know your opportunities and be grateful for the opportunities given to you."

"Live life as a cat, but be the tiger that lingers underneath. Pounce when the opportunity approaches!"

"Always let your creativity shine through."

"is always a smile on your face and believe in yourself."

through downfalls in life and supportive people around me, I can make a positive impact in the world."

"Be compassionate, empathize and speak up in order to change the world."

"Life is a journey, and anything is possible if you want it to be."

"Every life is unique, become who you want to be."



THE CALGARY BRIDGE FOUNDATION FOR YOUTH

**“** *Our Home, Canada*

**In troubled pasts and rubble  
blasts  
Sits those in fear for trouble  
not passed,  
For the hungry maws of war  
Leave them paralyzed,  
forevermore.**

**Forevermore it may seem  
With lives torn from its  
abused seams.  
Fie, those strands! The  
question still stands,  
Will anyone lend a helping  
hand?**

**Air rafts, airplanes,  
Bloodstains, warplanes,  
Fade away.  
Far, far away...**

**Far away sits the averted  
crisis,  
Now filled with uncertainty;  
But like puzzles will they  
ever fit?  
Foreign they are, and they  
will fit.**

**True north strong and free  
From sea to shining sea,  
A country of unity  
Stands on guard for thee.**

**36 million people,  
36 million worldviews,  
12 provinces,  
1 home,  
Our home,  
Canada.**

**”**

*- Treeva Hakim*

2019



YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



**These are the stories  
written by our 2019  
Youth Achievement  
Award Winners**

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# My Story

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**By: Alaa Ibrahim**

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*“Although I have encountered many obstacles throughout my life, I have continued to strive for greatness and am willing to break all boundaries that may come my way.”*

My name is Alaa Ibrahim and I am a 17 year old girl. I was born in Port Sudan, but have lived almost all of my life in Canada. Since migrating from Sudan, I have only visited back home three times. I feel as if my life is very different than how it would have been if I still lived in Sudan, partly because of how vastly different both societies are. In Sudan, Women's Rights are still infringed upon and woman are still oppressed. Strict gender roles still have a large influence on the society. Not long after I was born, Sudan wasn't as safe because of the government that was in control and is still in control to this day for almost 30 years now. My parents were determined to migrate to a different country to accommodate a safe environment for their children, and to provide greater opportunities for my brother and I. My dad was a businessman and my mom was an at-home mother for my brother and I. Six months after my birthdate, my parents moved to Egypt. My dad worked at a factory and my mom worked twice a week while leaving me and my brother at the neighbors for a few hours while she worked. After spending a tough year in Egypt, my family's immigration request was finally approved by the Canadian government. At the time I was one year old and my brother was four years old. We first arrived to Regina, Saskatchewan in the middle of the winter and until this day my dad still mentions how shocked he and my mother were. He asked "can people survive in this weather?" We lived in Regina for a year and my family was never the same. A family was assigned with us and that one year really impacted our lives, they were Canadian and had two daughters in the same age range as my brother and I. My family did everything with them and we were so grateful because of how welcoming they were to us even though our English wasn't fluent and they didn't know how to speak Arabic; yet we managed to bond with them so well. After gratefully attaining their Canadian culture and knowledge, my family felt as though we were ready to move on to the next step. We moved to Calgary because there were more job opportunities for my dad. I went to kindergarten and have lived in the same neighborhood for 14 years.

My experience living in Canada is very different for me because of how my parents raised me. I was born in a household where I would speak and read Arabic at home and then come to school and had French and English speaking friends because I went to a bilingual school. One thing my parents extremely pushed in our household was education and how influential we could be if we had ambition and goals. With that, my parents didn't want us to lose our native language so they also sent us out to Saturday school where I learned more Arabic each week. My first time going back to Sudan was when I was eight. I was very unaware of my surroundings, but I met my grandparents and realized what a big family I had back home. My last visit was in grade 10 and going back really enabled me comprehend what an opportunity my parents gave me by bringing me to Canada because life there is difficult. A vast majority of people can't afford luxuries we have here such as health care or education. Most people who are educated are

# “My Story”

wealthy and 90% of the work forces are men based, as most girls don't go to school after middle or elementary school.

One of my greatest ambitions in life is to become a doctor and open a clinic for women in Port Sudan. I want to do this because when I went back I also witnessed the medical clinics established in Sudan. The lack of healthcare for women who can't afford it is catastrophic because it is so expensive. This causes more damage to kids and women because when they can't afford to see a doctor, they also can't afford luxuries such as contraception pills. If I were to reach my goal, not only can I help women, but I can also ensure that they have healthy children and the proper necessities to live a healthy lifestyle. I feel like this would make a big impact in the world because it will not only break a lot of the boundaries that women have, but I can truly make a difference in the world. Not only can I help save lives, but I could also be a woman that others can look up to.

When I turned 14 years old my dad was eager for me to learn how to drive, I never realized what a luxury it was for me here. The fact that I'm a girl and have so many opportunities to use all my potential because although women can drive back home, it is very rare. I am now 17 years old and I have a job at McDonald's, and I work once a week. My weekends consist of me going to work and studying. Everyday my parents leave to go to work really early and I have to get my seven year old sister ready and drop her and my neighbor's daughter off to school. Sometimes it can be difficult because if my other fourteen year old sister misses the bus I have to take the responsibility to drop her off at her school, which is far away, and then come home and get my other sister ready for school. It was never out of the ordinary for me until I realized that not everyone has this type of lifestyle or responsibility that I've had since I was younger.

Playing sports has always been a way for me to connect not only with others but with myself. Since I was young I played many sports that ranged from football, hockey, swimming and many more. Basketball was one of my strongest passions throughout middle and high school. Basketball taught me a lot about myself and how to connect and trust others. I learned how to be committed and how to deal with pressure in highly stressful situations. Playing basketball even for fun was just a way for me to clear my head and understand where my priorities and loyalties needed to be for me to succeed. Something I'm involved in that I really enjoy at school are training teams that is involved with my sports medicine class. Training teams are to bandage and ice players when they get hurt. I have done this throughout all of my high school career and have over 150 hours in volunteering for specific teams. In grade 12 I finally have had the privilege to become a senior trainer which allows me to be able to help the players directly and communicate with the coaches.

Some of the things I have volunteered for include volunteering at the seniors centre. I appreciate the company of the elderly in the centre because of all of the experiences they've acquired in life. I have been volunteering at the seniors centre for three years now. I have also been volunteering at a community centre called the "Sudanese Club" which allows kids at a much younger age to learn Arabic. I have over 85 hours of volunteering there with helping kids from the ages of 3 to 6 year olds learn to read in Arabic. The Sudanese Club also has a program for tutoring that I volunteer at to help kids specifically in the eighth grade to with Social Studies and English. I have also accumulated around 90 hours of volunteerism around my high school as a leadership student in 10th grade. Leadership taught me extensively how important it is to have a stable foundation within your community and that to make a difference it can't be done alone, but rather as a unit. Throughout my journey of volunteerism I have gained much insight from people of all ages. The experiences have allowed me to develop stronger skill sets on how to connect with people. I really understand how people can be going through the exact same things, but everyone has their own unique way of dealing with it and I feel as though without these opportunities I would be less inclined to attempt to understand people.

The RBC Youth Empowerment Program has been a major stepping stone during high school for me. The tutors and mentors there have really changed my life for the better because of the inspiration that they give out. By sharing their life experiences and encouraging me to work hard on my studies, my love for knowledge is continuing to perspire. The program is a place for me to go after school where I can feel welcomed and ask questions about homework or career choices with people who are willing to spend time helping me. I value the program as it has not only provided me with many crucial benefits as a student, but I have also gained much knowledge and friendships that I would never have had without this program.

Currently I have applied to Biological Sciences and Health Sciences at the University of Calgary and hope to be attending there this fall. With my Biological Sciences degree I can take the MCATs and get to Medical School. This scholarship would open new doors and provide new expansions for me to reach my goals in the future. This awarded money would enable me to ensure my goals are reached as it would provide me with the equipment required to enhance my abilities as a student. This opportunity that is given by the Youth Empowerment Program can not only provide me with the necessities to succeed, but it will be a stepping stone into fulfilling my ambitions. Although I have encountered many obstacles throughout my life, I have continued to strive for greatness and am willing to break all boundaries that may come my way. My name is Alaa Ibrahim and I would like to sincerely thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

# A Delicate Flower Bud in a Field of Maple Trees

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**By: Albrían Conteras**

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*“My future self can continue telling the story of a newcomer who strives to seek the best version of himself and pursue his aspirations while remaining untethered by any fallacious restrictions.”*

I was born in a humble family of five people that resided on the suburban portion of Laguna, Philippines. Growing up, I did not have any luxurious toys to play with nor any fashionable clothes to wear. I have an older sister and an older brother, and as the youngest child, I spent most of my childhood with them. My childhood memories were filled with joyous moments with my siblings and clamorous recollections with them. I grew up as a reticent, and because of that, I only had a small group of friends that I played with. As an introvert, I mostly spent my time alone especially with the readily available resource - nature. My interaction with nature harnessed my curiosity and made me become passionate about science. Moreover, Philippines is known as a constant pathway of typhoons. I remember experiencing countless typhoons throughout my lifetime. When I was young, it felt like a harsh threat to my mortality. However, as I grew older, I started to become so used to it that I even anticipated them so that classes would be cancelled multiple times throughout the year. All of these turned into comforts of a home that I thought would never slip out of my hands. It was not until 2012 that this would all change when my father got an opportunity to work abroad and hopefully make our life better. It was a pleasing thought at first, that we would be able to go abroad and grab opportunities that were abundantly present in Canada. We migrated to Canada on May 2014. I considered the first four months as a pleasant experience. New foods, new culture and a new lifestyle provided more room for my curiosity to explore. The school district informed me that I can start school on the next school year, September 2014. However, before I even start going to school, everything went downhill in August. My older brother had been diagnosed with Schizophrenia to a degree that he had to be rehabilitated because of his suicidal tendencies. It was only then that the absence of the comforts back at home became more apparent. The thought of going into a new school and making new friends who spoke an unfamiliar language added to my pressures. The alienation of being in a foreign land becomes more conspicuous. The lack of any relatives in Canada felt like a huge void that was enveloping me. My introvertedness made me so distant from everyone else, creating difficult circumstances. It came to a point that the burdens were so overwhelming that it knocked me off my feet, as I cried multiple times during the first month of school. I always ate my lunch alone and it was not until the end of November that I had a group of friends to eat with. As things started to become slightly better, God decided to end my brother's suffering and took his life on June 2015. It was a really harsh experience that drained the last bit of remaining strength in me, but it also marked the renewal phase of my family.

After June, I tried to live a more normal life. I wanted to reconcile my previous life in the Philippines to the life that I have in Canada. All of my family members are fond of food, and being able to taste the cuisines of different cultures in Canada had been a great experience for us. The times that I spent alone harnessed my curious nature. Without those times that

# **“A Delicate Flower Bud**

I spent for myself, I would not currently consider myself as an intellectual. As a person who likes academics and learning, one of my hobbies is reading. In fact, one book series that helped me get through my immigration to Canada is the Harry Potter series. Due to my inclination to nature, I have a preference to science. I remember inquisitively looking at the translucent colour of the leaves as the light passes through its veined skin, and curiously viewing the expanse of the starry night sky, wondering how high the stars were at night. Although I grew up knowing the various Filipino supernatural beings, I did enjoy the night and I can recall plentiful times that I spent outside at the patio. The tropical wind gently breezed past my skin, as I let my imagination expand itself in wonder while I sit in the midst of darkness. Nature played a big role of reconciling my life in Canada to my life in the Philippines. Whenever I feel lonely, I always go to a park and wander around to find some peace and comfort.

Despite the obstacles that I faced when I moved to Canada, I always moved forward and bounced back on my feet after falling to my knees. I worked really hard and by the end of the first year of schooling in Canada, I was one of the top students, receiving a multitude of awards and recognition. I maintained that standing until now, in Grade 12. I focused on the reason to why we moved here, which is due to the desire of improving our life. I put such an overwhelming amount of effort that my memory of my struggles as a newcomer in Canada on top of the death of my brother seemed to fade into the past. These were memories that I would never want to return to. Throughout those years, I shedded my newcomer self and started to establish a new identity in Canada. It was in Grade 11, when my friend in Mentorship Program invited me to join the program. At first, the only reason I wanted to join was the fact that a counselor from Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth helped me get through the struggles I had during my first school year in Canada. Because of that, I wanted to give back by helping other newcomers. I joined the Mentorship Program in September 2017. Initially, I thought that I am a senior when it comes to experience and struggles as a former newcomer. However, Mentorship Program provided an excellent platform for newcomers to fully express themselves and grasp their identities. A platform that I had been neglected to when I was a newcomer. The program made me want to wear my previously shedded title as a newcomer. It made me realize how significant of an experience that was to me. Although it was not a fully pleasant memory, Mentorship Program provided ways where I can empathize with the experiences of other newcomers, in which the same is done to me. Through the Mentorship Program, I can confidently say that I made a new family. In January 2018, I decided to further my involvement by making myself a peer mentor. I believe that my background as a newcomer was the one that led me into being a peer mentor. Since then, I have gained significant leadership, interpersonal, and communication skills that I would never imagine I would be able to acquire with other clubs or programs. Up until now,

## in a Field of Maple Trees”

I believe that my struggles as a newcomer were like puzzle pieces that put me in the better position on attaining my goals.

Mentorship program built my confidence as someone who has a background of an immigrant in Canada. After becoming a peer mentor, I joined Youth Central as a volunteer on February 2018. Since then, I have garnered 367 hours as a volunteer. To further my involvement, I joined the Youth Volunteer Corps Steering Committee who is responsible for planning events and fundraisers for the whole volunteering community. I have been also an active student of Bishop McNally. I volunteered on Feed the Hungry which provides homeless people with food, and Wolves Walk, which is a school fundraiser. I am currently part of the Mental Health and Wellness Team that helps spread awareness about healthy relationships and mental health on our school. I even started my own clubs within our school. I started a volunteering club in my school that is currently creating volunteer opportunities for students in McNally. I also started a fundraiser committee in our school that holds multiple fundraisers throughout the year for kids with cancer. All of these involvements would not have been made possible without my involvement in the Mentorship Program, which placed me in a great head start.

Due to my passion in science, one of my academic goals is to be in the medical field, either as a nurse or as a doctor. In the future, I want to be someone who would be able to prolong someone else’s life even just for another day. I am currently admitted to University of Calgary as a nursing student and after nursing, I am planning to head into a medical school. When I become a doctor, I want to participate on research that involves in finding cures for the currently incurable diseases and illnesses. I want to utilize my passion on academics that I developed throughout the years on creating a difference on people’s lives.

Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth should choose me as a scholarship recipient because I am a living example that being a newcomer should never limit a person from achieving ambitious dreams. From a standpoint of a previous newcomer, one’s success should never be dictated whether or not a person was born in a certain country, but it should be dependent on the effort and the determination that a person puts in. Since the time when I was a newcomer, I can confidently say that I have come a long way. It had been a hard journey for myself, but I did not let myself be incapacitated by the struggles that I faced. Instead, I strived harder and continued to be a role model as someone who faced the struggles of being a newcomer but still pursued his passions and dreams. My previous and current achievements are not the only ones who can attest to my determination and resilience but also my future self, as I promise to continue to create a difference on myself and on other people’s lives. My future self can continue telling the story of a newcomer who strives to seek the best version of himself and pursue his aspirations while remaining untethered by any fallacious restrictions.

# My Story



**By: Brian Lin**

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*“Every life is unique, become who you want to be.”*

My name is Brian Lin and I am applying for the 2019 CBFY scholarship. I heard about the RBC program last year when I was in grade 10, but I felt like I didn't need tutoring help last year so I didn't come to the program. But this year, I started to come to the program because I needed more help with my school work. I came on the very first day of the program in October 2018, and I have been coming weekly (almost daily) to the program ever since. The tutors are kind and helpful with the subjects I don't understand completely such as social studies. I have recently gotten involved with the RBC Reunion Party Planning committee where I have been in charge of creating the video content. I have been coming every day to take pictures and videos to use for the party in May. I also have attended the SAIT and University of Calgary campus tours, and the bowling field trip in the fall. I have taken full advantage of what the RBC program has to offer.

I am originally from Taoyuan, Taiwan and I came to Canada in June 2017, when I was 15 years old. I came here for high school because I wanted to study and speak English. I came here on my own, but my grandma and my aunt already were living here. I had previously been to Canada before when I was just one-year old, but I don't remember that experience. I like Canada because the environment here is not as stressful as it is in Taiwan, there are a lot of open spaces, even the buildings are not that crowded. I liked that Calgary was mostly two-floor houses instead of high rise buildings, it makes Calgary a much more relaxed setting to live in.

For education, I found that life here in Canada was easier than in Taiwan because in Taiwan I had to do tons of homework every day. For example, we would get a list of at least five different homework assignments to do every night of the week. It was stressful, but I was used to it. When I came to Canada, it was a relief because students get a lot of time to complete assignments and there are tutors available to help you. In Taiwan, everyone has to pay for all extra help after school.

I don't necessarily feel like I fit in at school here, and it has been hard to make friends. I have always been a little bit shy, and part of it has been that I am still learning how to speak English fluently. I speak Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English. I can understand Cantonese but I can't speak it. I feel like I am a mix of both Taiwanese and Canadian. I miss the food in Taiwan most of all. The food is so different here. I miss the people as well, like old classmates and my cousins. For life, I would say I would eventually like to live in Taiwan because things there are more convenient, and I find the people there are more open and helpful with one another in some ways.

For my interests and hobbies, I like any music but rap. My favorite types of music are pop and soft music. My favourite singers are Troye Sivan and Shawn Mendes. Photography is

## “My Story”

another hobby of mine. I feel very relaxed when I am taking photos. I first got interested in taking photos a long time ago. I will make photography part of my life in the future, either as a hobby or possibly a job. I like to take photos of landscapes, scenery, and especially portraits. Portraits capture the environment, the mood and the time surrounding the person or people in them.

I am also a teacher’s assistant at the Chinese Academy every Saturday morning. The class I volunteer with are grade 11 students, and I help the teacher mark the assignments and write traditional Chinese because the teacher can only write simplified Chinese. Another one of my volunteer activities is helping administrate a new non-profit organization called ELLAC, Learning Society of Canada. In some of the programs, I will be teaching grade 3 and grade 4 math. Math is one of my passions because I feel like I have an ability to think logically and math involves a lot of logic. It is my favourite subject in high school. I began volunteering at this program because I wanted the experience and I believe it will be a beneficial program as when the kids get older they can teach younger kids themselves. I am also part of the ping pong club every Wednesday at Diefenbaker.

For my future, I first want to finish university as a computer engineer or with a degree in computer science. My dream is to go to the University of British Columbia because they have a large campus which is like a city with a forest, parks, and stores. If I don’t get accepted to UBC, I would like to go to the University of Waterloo in Ontario or University of Alberta, which is closer to Calgary.

This scholarship would help me to be able to afford to go to or apply to some of these universities next year. The scholarship could help me develop my skills to better do creative projects for photography and would be very helpful for my future career. I have been hard working in the program and I would put the scholarship to good use.

# Oh, How They've Helped Me Grow



**By: Carlo Galamay**

*“There’s always a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, except we are born to search for it for the rest of our lives and we always fail to know it is just right under our noses and that’s a good thing because that’s what life is.”*

My name is Carlo Galamay, I was born and raised in the Philippines. Growing up, my sister and I were left in the hands of our father as our mother applied to work here in Canada as a caregiver to give us a better life and to give us the life that she never had. I was seven years old when our father had to raise us on his own. Both of our parents were teachers, which meant learning was not much of a hindrance for us, until we entered high school. When I was in elementary school, I thought money grows on trees and I only had to pray for what I needed. I was young, innocent and oblivious to my surroundings.

I studied in a private elementary school, my family had money, and I was smart and capable of anything, or so, that's what I thought. As I moved to junior high school, life had become tougher and so was education. I was not smart as I thought I was and everything began to crumble right before my eyes. My grades dropped at a consistent rate, I also realized that we did not have much money to buy school supplies. I also came to my senses knowing that I was not capable of everything and worse, I did not have any friends at all.

I was confused and left with no hope and my mother was far from home as well, but the love still remained. The only trouble I had to go through was to wake up at 3 a.m. in the Philippines to call my mother to have emotional support as I could not keep up with the academic pressure. Through talking to my mother, I was enlightened by the fact that she had it worse than I did, and so I began to not complain. Still, the pressure kept coming at us and we still had to face the reality that we had to provide our own supplies in order to complete the requirements that were tasked to us. All that trouble we had to experience, we were not given a chance to learn, experience and practice essential skills that would help us when we finished high school. I immigrated in the year of 2017 with my hopes and expectations up high, unprepared and begging for a better life.

I landed my first step here in Canada and entered school in the second semester. I was introduced to the RBC homework club of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. I was delighted to know that the ideal organization that I wished that existed was already operating before my eyes. It was a God-given moment for me, all the pressure that was circulating inside was suddenly wiped away because of joy. I did not excel at school, however I enjoyed the company that came with being a part of the program. The foundation taught me how to read, comprehend and know how to write a proper essay. English was not my subject, as well as Mathematics, Science, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. I enjoyed learning, especially Physics, the one subject that I truly am passionate about; however, my passion will not be able to make the cut as this subject was really not my forte. I can pass each course with at least a sixty-five percent and CBFY was able to help me increase my grade drastically above what I would have imagined it to be.

# “Oh, How They’ve Helped Me Grow”

The Peer Mentorship Program has also had an important role in moulding myself as a person and taught me how to properly interact with peers. The number of activities that can be done from the Peer Mentorship Program has numerous positive effects on improving a student’s confidence and proper reasoning, and this is another reason why it has been a big help to me. The mentors and mentees that I worked with were able to inspire me with their stories and have helped me to always look on the bright side, to which I never looked onto as I was a pessimist before.

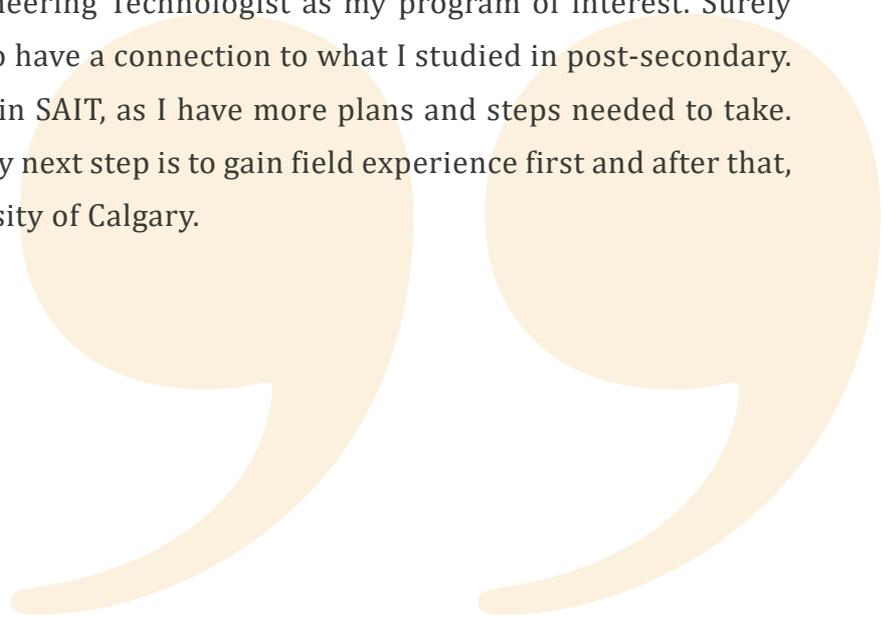
I have also met students from other schools because of this program. When we had a field trip to Camp Chestermere, I was able to work on teambuilding which has served an important purpose for me in terms of group projects. I was used to working on a project as an individual and from this I learned that working with others will always make your work easier, faster, more fun and more meaningful as this creates a positive relationship with others.

Truth be told, CBFY has made the most impact in my life as a student as they have given me so many opportunities that I have never experienced before as a student in the Philippines. They were the first organization to give me the chance to volunteer which has exponentially boosted my confidence in approaching strangers or customers. They have also helped me experience group interviews firsthand. With that in mind, CBFY taught me how to create my own resume from scratch and right now I am attending the Employment workshops and I am currently working on my resume and searching for entry-level jobs.

I have also recently finished the Transitioning Into Post-Secondary program of CBFY which helped me to know how to apply for universities and institutes that I am planning to study at. This helped me to know what program I can apply to and what courses I have to take as a high school student. My mentors and I did a University Tour which it gave me an insight of how everything works on the campus. My mentors were also able to help me cross-out all of my unnecessary and bad habits which prevent me from being productive. I was able to access and know all the offered scholarships in just one tap of a finger.

Most importantly, this program has given me the blessing of being able to be comfortable with myself, because of this I was able to step out of my comfort zone and I realized how useful it can be when you want gain knowledge or go to new places. This organization made me feel like a family member and a place where I felt I belong to. I have never felt so at home in my entire life of going to school. All the schoolmates, Facilitators, Mentors and Coordinators made me feel important and needed. They truly are God-given and have made a huge impact in my life as a student and as a person. The reason why the scholarship should be given to me is because it will help me and my family to reduce the expenses that I need to pay for post-secondary at

SAIT where I will take Electrical Engineering Technologist as my program of interest. Surely enough, my ideal future career needs to have a connection to what I studied in post-secondary. However, I will not stop my education in SAIT, as I have more plans and steps needed to take. After I finished my education at SAIT, my next step is to gain field experience first and after that, I will apply for education in the University of Calgary.



# A Little Boat That Has Found Its Harbor



**By: Deyana Altahsh**

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*“Optimism is contagious; always keep a smile on your face and believe in yourself.”*

## “A Little Boat That

For many years, I struggled to know what home is. I wondered: is it where I was born? Is it somewhere I have lived for a long period of time? Is it a place where I feel safe? Or is it where my beloved people are?

My story began when I was four years old in Syria. My father had passed away and my life completely changed. My uncles and grandfather took away our inheritance because of the notion that “girls will give their bequest to their future husband and will not pursue post-secondary education.” Most of my childhood was spent in courts, watching my mom suffer and fight for our rights. Of course, in Syria, it is hard for a woman to be recognized and valued. As a result of the injustice in our society and within our family, we moved to a new city attempting to start again. Just when we were starting to feel settled, a strange, unfamiliar sound was heard and then suddenly the house shook. It was a bomb that destroyed our neighbour’s house. The Syrian war had begun.

I remember sleeping on the floor with my family in the middle of the house far away from any windows that might shatter from the sound of bombs. I did not believe my mom anymore when she said that it was the fireworks from our neighbours’ wedding that were making these sounds. Days passed and nothing changed, except that the sounds kept getting louder and the streets kept getting emptier. My mom then decided that we had to move away from the fighting. So we moved to the mountains to a safer town and we lived there for about two years.

Things were not getting any better; we had two hours of electricity every day, no gas, and no fire to keep us warm. Life was unbearable, so we decided to leave to Turkey attempting to flee to Europe. Unfortunately, we were deceived by those claiming to help us and we were sent back to Syria. We then went to Lebanon and applied for asylum in Switzerland, but we were denied because of our nationality. For over four years, we tried so hard to find a safe place to call home.

My heart excitedly rejoiced when I took my first steps in Canada. My mind was invigorated and my spirit was rejuvenated. In October 2016, I left my war-torn country of Syria, only to be welcomed lovingly and with open arms into Canada. My new life started in a small rural town called Trochu, Alberta. Although small towns have limits on what they have to offer, I was happily overwhelmed with the diverse and numerous opportunities available. For the first time in my life, I had a caring and engaging school and church community. I joined band, drama, photography, basketball, volleyball, dance, and I started volunteering at a seniors home. I was never the best at those extracurricular activities, but I tried my best to learn and do better every day.

## Has Found Its Harbor”

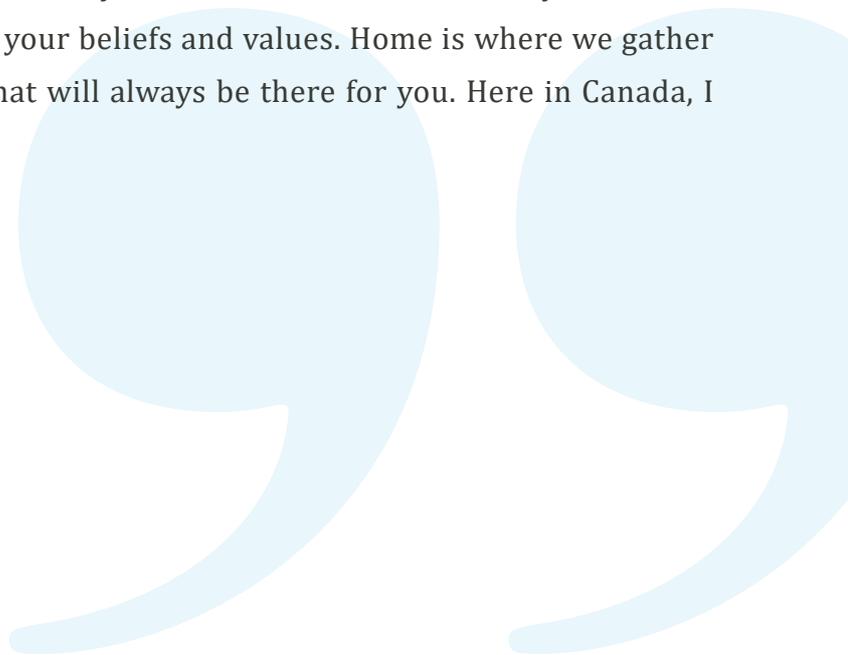
When my family’s one-year church sponsorship was over, we moved to the city of Calgary, Alberta. I completed my second semester of grade 11 at Father Lacombe High School. During this time, I was able to join numerous clubs and extracurricular activities which enabled me to become involved and to develop my leadership skills. I joined the Social Justice Club, Law Club, NxtGen Homework Club, and Mentorship Program. I had the privilege of being nominated by my counsellor, Pia Foss, to join a select club known as the “In the Lead Program” which gave me an opportunity to share stories and to influence other young leaders by focusing on empowering qualities. One of my favourite programs at Father Lacombe was the Mentorship Program. In this program, the coordinators were so welcoming and friendly. The games were fun and engaging and the program helped me meet new friends and a diverse group of motivated individuals. Moreover, Mentorship Program had the best field trips that showed me how beautiful Calgary is and how amazing Canada is to grant us such an amazing program to adjust to our new country. The program also increased my experience by providing me the opportunity to volunteer at different places. Mentorship has definitely affected me in so many ways. It humbled me and showed me how powerful and better Canada is with our diversity. I absolutely love the Mentorship Program and was also able to join the TIPS program in the fall of 2018 and increase my leadership skills by being part of the Youth Advisory Council this school year.

In September 2018, our family relocated within Calgary. Moving to a new community and trying to adjust to a new school again was quite exhausting. Nevertheless, I showed my resiliency and started again with enthusiasm and determination. At St. Mary’s High School, I joined numerous clubs and began tutoring students every Friday before school. Sadly, the Mentorship Program is not available at St. Mary’s High School. However, I was determined to keep attending it, so I started going to the program at Bishop Grandin every Wednesday after school. After doing the training to be a Peer Mentor with the Mentorship Program, along with the vice-principal Richard McKenty, I was able to initiate a new club called “Student Welcome Ambassadors” at St. Mary’s. This team consists of multilingual students that are willing to welcome new students to the school and teach them about opening lockers, their classes, the extracurricular activities that they can do in and outside of school, and most of all, promoting the Mentorship Program. One of the newcomers at St. Mary’s was given a tour by the Student Welcome Ambassadors, and now each week, she attends the Mentorship Program at Bishop Grandin High School along with my sister and I. I hope to bring more newcomers to the program at Bishop Grandin and share with them the amazing opportunities we are granted by the Mentorship Program.

During my high school years in Canada, I developed a love for the sciences, and especially biology. My goal is to one day be a general surgeon and to join the organization Doctors Without Borders in order to help as many people as I can. In the fall, I had the privilege of being accepted into the Bachelor of Kinesiology program at the University of Calgary. I want to prove to my uncles, to my country, and to the world that women are more capable than they think and that they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. I believe that I am deserving of this CBFY scholarship because I already have a plan in place to attend university, however, my family and I do not have the financial resources to pay for my post-secondary education.

My family consists of my mom, Hanan, and my lovely younger sisters, Kristin, and Nour. My mother is a courageous, strong woman that is working so hard to learn English in order to get a decent job in the future and help our family be financially stable. I aspire to be like her. She has faced so many struggles in her life at such a young age, and yet she manages to break through them with a big, warm smile on her face. She has taught me how to be resilient and optimistic and always hope for the better. She always says, "We have passed the impossible by coming to Canada, and now everything is possible." My sister, Kristin, is currently in grade 11. She is a strong young lady that is working hard in her schooling to graduate high school and go to university. Kristin and I always go to the Mentorship Program together. My youngest sister, Nour, is in grade eight. She has adapted well in her school and has met a lot of friends. My family and I are working so hard to become effectual assets to Canada, the country we all call home.

Now I know that home is somewhere where you feel loved and safe, where you are free to be yourself, and not afraid to stand up for your beliefs and values. Home is where we gather with family and friends; it is a community that will always be there for you. Here in Canada, I feel peace. Here in Canada, I feel at home.



# My Journey Growing Up in Canada



**By: Huda Mohammed**

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*“Always have the drive to inspire others similar to you.”*

My name is Huda Mohammed. I am an 18 year old girl who is originally from Ethiopia but was born and raised with both Ethiopian and Yemeni traditions. My journey in Canada began in 2000, the year my mother, who was pregnant with me at the time, left her life in Yemen in order to start a new one in Canada. Leaving my father behind, she took my brother and I with her, and we travelled all the way to Calgary. Growing up in Canada, I was faced with a few different ways of life. Though my mother grew up in Yemen, she was born in Ethiopia. This meant that I had to grow up with two types of cultures at home, as well as the Canadian culture outside of home. I was taught to speak Arabic, the language of origin for Yemen, Amharic the language of origin for Ethiopia, as well as English. I would alternate between eating and wearing clothing traditional to Yemen, Ethiopia, and Canada. It was difficult for me as a child to distinguish what my identity was since I had so many co-existing with one another. As I began elementary school, I felt a sense of rejection from the other kids around me. I was an ESL student, and found difficulty in speaking English since I would speak two other languages at home. Everyone looked different than I did, and my lunches were always different than the other kids. This led the students to avoid me, leaving me to play alone for recess constantly. At the age of 8, I moved houses and was put into a new school. I was surprised to see that a few of the students looked different; just like me. The kids were very accepting of me and I began to make friends who did not make me feel bad about being different; they encouraged it. Moving schools taught me that it was okay to express myself and my cultures in society. I realized Canada was a place where it was okay to be different, and that my background was not something to be embarrassed about or hidden.

In junior high, I was exposed to many different opportunities that interested me. I grew a love for many forms of art including painting, drawing, and written forms such as poetry. I also picked up knitting and sewing as a hobby, and joined the art club where I was able to do all of these things. I also joined the track and field team as a long distance runner. This is where I realized my talent for running. I was one of the fastest long distance runners in my school, and received third place in the 3000 meter run during the city track meet. This accomplishment led me feeling more confident in myself and showed me what potential I had. In high school, I continued pursuing my love for art and running. I took art classes all three years and even joined the cross country and track and field team two years in a row. I was also involved in the leadership club, fashion club and the graduation committee. These clubs taught me how to work in a group and how to be a leader. To this day, I continue to use the skills of leadership, organization, and planning that I learned in these clubs everyday throughout my life. Additionally, during high school, I began volunteering more in my community. I became a tutor for elementary students struggling in mathematics and English. I have also volunteered

in organizations such as Youth Central, where I have been able to volunteer in different areas around Calgary to assist in places such as the Salvation Army, the Telus Spark museum, and the Calgary Zoo.

I was introduced to the Calgary Bridge Foundation in the seventh grade. The first program that I joined was the afterschool NxtGen club. I was given the opportunity to interact with all kinds of people across age groups and backgrounds. The club provided me with a space to feel safe and comfortable since I could relate to the lives of many of the other students there. As a very introverted kid at the time, the afterschool NxtGen club allowed me to open up more and connect with the other kids. This program also exposed me to places I have never been before like Banff. They taught me to explore the world around me and have increased my interest in traveling. Since then, I have traveled to many cities around Alberta, British Columbia, and the United States. I have also been to a few of the Calgary Bridge Foundations summer camps as a kid. These pushed me further out of my comfort zone as the mentors encouraged me to play outside more with the other kids and do things I have not tried before like eating new foods and playing new sports. I continued with my involvement in this organization throughout high school. I have participated in many of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youths programs such as the Mentorship club, the TIPs program, and the Level Up program. These programs have motivated me to make a difference where I can, and inspire others when I get the chance. With this in mind, I have been able to become a group-advocate in and outside of school, where I can be a positive influence to others. I have been able to portray myself on platforms like The Power Of Voice stage during the 2018 Calgary Bridge Youth Conference, where I was able to perform a spoken word poem on fear. On top of that, I have been given the honour to return and perform another spoken word poem during the upcoming Youth Conference again this year. Another connection that I have with the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth is through the Youth Advisory Council. Since I have begun volunteering with this program, I have found myself contributing more ideas during our meetings and taking more responsibility for different events that we plan. All these programs have added to my amazing journey of growing up in Canada. These experiences that I have had have helped me develop a better English speaking ability to the point where I am no longer an ESL student.

As a current upgrading student, I have many academic goals that I am currently pursuing. One of my biggest academic goals is to achieve a greater understanding and high grade in high school mathematics. I have struggled in this subject in the past and am currently aiming to accomplish my goal by working closely with my teacher and asking as well as practicing as many questions as I can. Academically, I received honours awards all throughout junior high and have

# “My Journey Growing Up in Canada”

made the honour roll again in grade ten. I have also received honours awards for three of the online classes I have taken with Vista Virtual, and gave a speech during the awards ceremony they had in 2018. In my last year of high school, I also received a certificate to the Breakfast of Champions ceremony at our school and was nominated by my principal to attend. Another goal that I have is to attend a post-secondary institution this upcoming fall. I have applied to and I am planning on attending the University of Calgary to study the Health Sciences. I have always been very interested in biology and in the health field which makes me believe that the health sciences is the best fit for me. The major I hope to go into, Health and Society, focuses on the social and scientific aspects of health, which is a perfect fit for me because I will get the chance to work closely with people and make an impact on their health. Although I do not have a firm idea about a specific career I want to pursue, the health science field gives me the choice to go into medicine after I graduate. I like this idea because it keeps my options open if I ever decide that I may want to become a doctor. A personal goal that I have had for a while is to locate and meet my father for the first time. I would like to reconnect with him and establish an adequate connection with him. One of the reasons why I love the major of Health and Society so much is because it gives me the freedom to travel. Last year, students in that program were able to study abroad to Ethiopia. If I were given that chance, I could go to Ethiopia and look for my father.

I believe that the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth should choose me as a scholarship recipient because of my journey. I have went from a shy, introverted, ESL student to a strong, confident, well-spoken individual. My transition through my school years has made me more outgoing and social. I continue to create new goals and accomplish what I set out for myself. Being raised by a single mother, I was faced with challenges that I had no control over. I could never help my mother financially because I was so young, which meant that she had to work hard to make money and take care of two kids on her own. Now that I am older, I have realized that I have the opportunity to return every favor my mom has done for me. Being accepted into university is my first step to helping out my mother. I would be able to graduate and get a good job so that I can take care and provide for her. If I was chosen as a scholarship recipient, I would be one step closer to being the one to help provide for my mother. The scholarship would be a huge help in assisting me with my tuition and it would also make my mother proud. Receiving this scholarship would show my mother the success that I have achieved in Canada. It would stand as evidence that the hard work she put into raising me was worthwhile and that I have made the most of my time here. This scholarship would also allow me to be a role model for newcomer youth. It would give me the chance to share my story and show newcomer youth how they can make the most of their life here in Canada.

My personal journey of growing up in Canada has been an excellent experience overall. I am very thankful that my mother decided to come to Canada because of everything I have experienced here. The multiculturalism that lies within Canada has allowed me to fit into a society where I started off feeling outcasted. I have learned to embrace my identity as an Ethiopian woman who incorporates traditions from Yemen into her lifestyle. My participation in the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth has helped me realize new things about myself like how much I love working with and encouraging people. They have taught me to take advantage of all the different opportunities provided to me. Through its influence I have become a more active member in society. I have watched myself grow more confident, compassionate, and courageous through all of my experiences with this organization. My development from a young, shy girl into a confident woman is something I take great pride in. I credit the Calgary Bridge Foundation for inspiring me to reach my full potential.

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# The Journey Continues



**By: Ildiko Onodi**

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*“Life is a journey, and anything  
is possible if you want it to be.”*

When I was in grade 10, I heard about the RBC Youth Empowerment Program through CBFY's mentorship program. I have a good connection with RBC because I have been coming to program for the past four years, and I have made good friends through the program. In grade 9, I was a different person. I was very shy and I did not feel confident. Since coming to RBC in grade 10, I have been more confident, especially in presentations. Now I can confidently present in front of the class, but more than that, RBC has helped me to become a better person. For example, back in my home country of Hungary, I used to be scared of teachers, but when I came to this program, it helped me understand that teachers are approachable, and there to help me. This program has been very important for high school career. Also, RBC's workshops helped me to make resumes and now I have a job at Superstore.

I moved to Canada from Hungary on October 25, 2011. It was my parent's dream to come to Canada, and I was really excited to experience a new culture with new holidays like Halloween and Thanksgiving. We moved directly to Toronto and were there for about a month. My family did not all come at the same time. First my parents and my younger brother came; afterwards, my older sisters came. On December 13 of the same year, we moved to Calgary.

I liked Calgary so much better than Toronto. Calgary felt much more like a place I wanted to call home. Back in Hungary there was much more bigotry, for example, the gypsies, who have darker skin, were put in lower classes at school and were treated worse than white Hungarian. So I liked that here in Canada everyone was equal and students of different races were not treated differently in school. The one thing; however, I didn't like was that I didn't speak English and as a result, I felt very different than others, and I didn't understand what people were trying to tell me. Although I was very thankful my parents made the decision to move to Canada when I was in grade 6, it was very difficult for me at first to learn a completely different language. Though it was hard for me, I think transitioning to life here was easier for me in some ways than for my parents because it was more difficult for them to learn English. I feel now like I fit in because I grew up here. I prefer the life I am living now to the life that I would have had if I had stayed in Hungary.

I love being in Canada, and I can't even say that I miss back "home" at all. I speak Hungarian at home because my parents still do not speak English fluently, and we still practice some Hungarian traditions like Santa Day on December 6th. Santa Day involved giving kids presents like chocolate and candies, putting them in boots and placing them outside the window at night. We also celebrate Name day which is like a birthday, but celebrating your name. Just like birthdays, it is on the same day every year; my name-day is March 10th even though my birthday is on July 10th. It's very traditional in the sense that in general the first boy has to

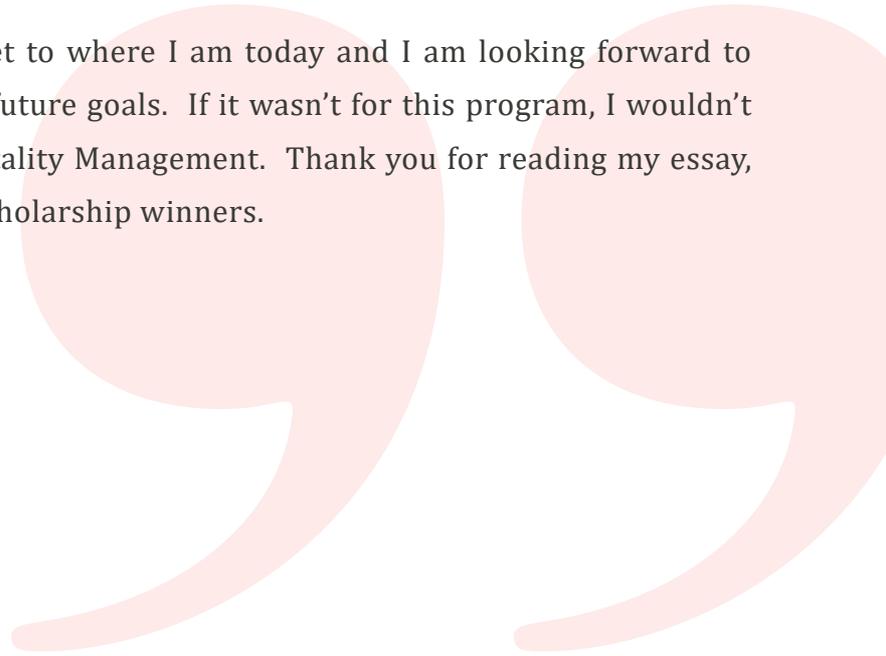
## “The Journey Continues”

have his father’s name and the first girl has to have her mother’s name. Also Hungarian Easter is very different. Everyone cooks and dresses up and kids paint eggs in the morning. The boys sprinkle water on girls’ heads until about noon, then the boys sprinkle perfume on girls’ heads and the girls give them the painted eggs as a gift. The boys also have to say a little poem before sprinkling the perfume. My brother and I spoke to our parents and decided to change this tradition into something more similar to how Canadian celebrate Easter.

As for my interests and hobbies, I love sports and music. I particularly love playing badminton, soccer, and tennis. In my spare time, I babysit and travel with my family during the summer. I volunteer with the Senior Centre once a month where I talk with seniors and learn about older peoples’ lives and perspectives. I love learning about their stories. At the beginning, I was nervous, especially because I have never known my own grandparents because they passed away before I was born, and I never socialized very much with older people. I am also a part of the Brave Dog Clan. It is a club where we learn about indigenous culture and the ways in which we can help First Nations and understand them. It has been useful to know more about Canada’s first peoples and have information that goes beyond the negative stereotypes. Canada’s indigenous peoples are very unique and I have enjoyed spending every Monday after school learning about such an important part of Canada’s culture. I did work experience at school, and afterwards, I went to see if I could get a job at Superstore. I met with a manager and she told me she was hiring for the GM beauty section. My role is to stock shelves, do rotations, check the expiry dates, face the products, and help customers.

My plan after high school are to go to summer school and take Math 10-C because I would like to Hospitality Management at SAIT. I feel like I will have a lot of opportunities in this industry, and I would really like the program. I really like to travel and interact with people and to be able to travel for work would be a dream. With RBC’s help, I feel more confident that I am fit for this program because it has helped me to feel more confident when talking to people. I particularly want to go to Spain, the Philippines and England. After summer school, I need to go to Chinook Learning Centre to take Math 20-1 and in September, I will apply to SAIT. In ten years, I see myself as a hotel manager, and I hope to be involved with RBC sometime in the future to give back for what the program has given me. I know how it feels being new and not speaking the language, and I can help other students who are experiencing these things. I believe that I should be chosen as a scholarship recipient because I have been a part of CBFY for years, and I have made relationships with the tutors, attended workshops, and taken full advantage of this program since I was 15 years old, and now I am 18. Since grade 10, I have come to program almost every day, and I have attended field trips and campus tours. I have overcome language

barriers and lack of self-confidence to get to where I am today and I am looking forward to financial support to help me achieve my future goals. If it wasn't for this program, I wouldn't have had the confidence to choose Hospitality Management. Thank you for reading my essay, and I hope you choose me as one of the scholarship winners.



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# The Desolate Ice Cube I Now Call Home



**By: John Eymard Estepa**

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*“Nothing is set in stone, enjoy the journey of life.”*

My name is John Eymard Estepa. I grew up in the beautiful city of Baguio, Philippines. I woke up to the smell of Milo (Filipino hot chocolate) and the calls of vendors selling Pandesal (popular Filipino bread) almost every day of my life. I remember my early life being simple, but happy. For the most part my neighbors were kind, yet I always sensed a competitive nature amongst them. What reminds me most of home? The smell of flowers and pinesap. Funny enough that was one of the things Baguio was known for, its flower festival. I have to say, if you ever find yourself in the Philippines, you should definitely see it. The flower festival had to be one of the most beautiful memories I ever had. As a little kid, everything I saw was an opportunity of learning. I have vague memories of me trying to mimic scientists, entrepreneurs, environmentalists and engineers in my front porch. I think most of what made me such a peculiar child was my love of National Geographic. I found the world to be breathtakingly beautiful. I appreciated and loved everything around me. My most enjoyable memories were my experiments. I remember gathering up flowers, soaps, and all sorts of things just to make bubble solution. There were times where my curiosity completely took over my rational thinking and fear. I remember putting wires through an outlet just to see what would happen. I thank God every day I didn't hurt myself during those times of dangerous curiosity. I think what makes experiments enticing is the aspect of the unknown. Before going into Canada, I thought it was a desolate ice cube filled with opportunities. A desolate ice cube filled with opportunities? Hearing that, was I supposed to be happy? When we were little our parents held the most influence in our lives. In my mind, what they felt about Canada was what I was supposed to feel about Canada, and because of that I was excited for snow, for polar bears, penguins, seals to roam the streets, but most of all a fresh start in a new home.

One of the first memories I have of Canada was the Rocky Mountains glaring back at me from the window seat of the airplane. The jagged scenery brought a sense of excitement and relief. At that moment, what I thought about Canada completely flipped upside down. This place was no desolate ice cube, it was beauty in a different, unfamiliar form. I slept like a baby when I first arrived in what I would soon call, family's home. I had little to no relationship with my aunt and my cousins before immigrating to Canada. I remember the only times I had a chance to talk to them was when there was an important event or holiday. I didn't expect the overwhelming warmth and love they presented my family with. My aunt treated my brother and I almost as if we were her own kids. Canada opened so many new doors for me, as I experienced new and bizarre things. One of which were cherries. When I first arrived here, cherries were practically alien to me. That memory may have not been grandeur, but it was definitely eye opening. I realized that Canada was like a whole new book I had to learn, in a new chapter of my life.

# “The Desolate Ice Cube

Living in the Philippines, I saw people who looked and acted the way I did. When I moved here, fitting in was probably the hardest obstacle for me. The few first days felt like a breath of fresh air, yet something felt missing. There was a sudden shift of status quo I was not prepared for. It hit me that my life was never going to be the same again. I needed a game plan in order for me to fit in. I knew Canada was different, and because of that, I needed a part of me to be different. I created a Canadian John, a John who could absorb all of Canada’s untapped knowledge. Considering Alberta is 2.2 times bigger than the Philippines, I had a long way to go before I could call Canada my new home. We lived in my Aunt’s house for a couple months until my parents got employment and earned enough money for a temporary home. At the time, the house in Marlborough we move in looked far more extravagant to the houses I was used to in the Philippines, so naturally I was thrilled. Moving meant me and brother were going to start attending school. One would think, as an immigrant, I would be nervous to transfer to a new school, but surprisingly being peculiar like me, fear hadn’t crossed my mind at all. Instead my head almost gushed with excitement. Soon enough, I felt like I belonged, and the stigma of being an immigrant washed away. My parents worked their butts off and so, in the middle of fifth grade, we got a permanent home. I had already made some friends, and it saddened me that I had to move once again. Living in Marlborough taught me that people can come together despite the differences in culture, language, and appearances. I have now been living in the Martindale area for about 7 years. Here is where I established myself, and grew as an individual. I think my personality truly shined after I moved here; I discovered my passion for art, my love for badminton, and met good friends along the way. Although I am still trying to figure out a lot of things about Canada and the world, I have a firm idea of my identity. I think it is a collection of my interpretation of the past and present life, as well as my hopes for the future. My interpretation of the past includes my Filipino culture and identity. My present life is all about figuring out my personal biases and beliefs. Lastly, my hopes for the future is my drive towards success, not only for me, but for the valuable people in my life.

I heard about the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth through word of mouth from fellow classmates. It came to me in the shape of a Mentorship Club. It was my grade eleven year and people were saying it was fun. I was not much for clubs and all that but I gave it a shot. I met new and interesting individuals who had familiar circumstances and stories as mine. The overall atmosphere was kind and accepting. Compared to the majority of people in mentorship, I have lived in Canada for a longer period of time. It was a bit daunting for me to try to relate to some of them, because on a spectrum I felt that I had become more Canadian than Filipino. Even though I felt that way, the program facilitators made me feel like I had a place. After that

## I Now Call Home”

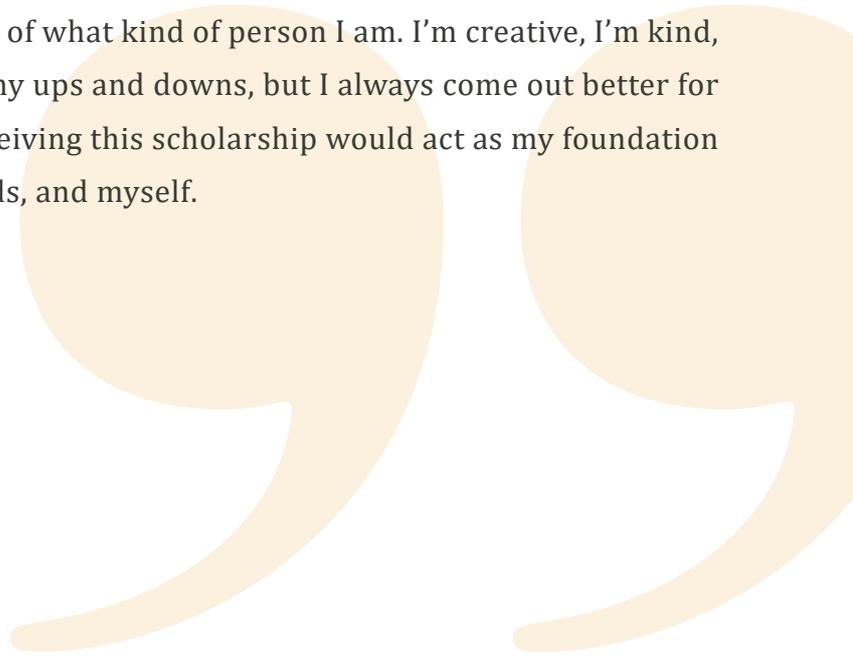
I kept coming back, and with every visit I felt like I grew in some way. I think what is so great about a mentorship club is that it nourishes people, and allows them to be the best version of themselves. Life can be mundane, it lacks opportunity for an individual’s personality to come through, Mentorship provides an escape from all of that. Eventually, I was asked to become a mentor for the club. At first, I was reluctant, but my friends in mentorship reassured me. Soon enough, I became a mentor and got more involved. I learned to be empathetic towards others circumstances. I learned to value and respect everyone, even if their ideologies went against mine. I admire what the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth stands for, to create a place where people (immigrant or not) can feel like they belong.

Lately, I have been feeling busy, as a lot of things are going on for me, though I am grateful for it. School wise, my friends and I have started a fundraiser club for Kids Cancer Care. I am also involved in a musical, and I plan to participate for Feed the Hungry coming up this April. During my grade 10 and 11 year, I have been immersed in volunteering through the organization Youth Central. I’ve accumulated around 200 volunteer hours. I also have 7 hours of volunteer work with Helping Hampers, a local organization that packs and delivers food to the less fortunate. Volunteerism taught me so many personal lessons and has greatly affected how I view and act in society. Some of the volunteer opportunities I quite enjoyed were Salvation Army and Between Friends. Salvation Army taught me that anyone could be a victim of poverty, no matter their circumstances, and that the last thing the world needs is judgement. I realized that if I were ever placed in a situation like theirs, I would want someone to help me. For Between Friends, I saw people’s innate humanity, in the sense that even with a disability, they create a meaningful impact in people’s lives. Volunteering for two weeks at the Between Friends Camp taught me to get past the superficial. I saw the potential and worth of every individual I worked with. These two organizations showed me the value of resilience and helped me become less of a negative Nancy. I have recently acquired a job, and I plan to apply every lesson I learned from volunteering as a barista. I work at a bubble tea stand in Crossiron Mall, and I am proud to say I beat nepotism. To me, helping people out didn’t feel like work. I’m grateful for everyone who has impacted me whether good or bad because of the lessons that came with it. I’m grateful for the opportunities presented to me and I’m proud of what I’ve accomplished.

Furthermore, I got accepted at the University of Calgary for Business, and plan to major in accounting. Currently, I’m working hard to get my high school diploma. I did all of what I was expected to, and will be walking the graduation stage in the coming months. I chose to do accounting, because I felt like it is versatile enough for me to one day change professions if I chose to. I do not think a person can decide what they want to do for the rest of their life in the

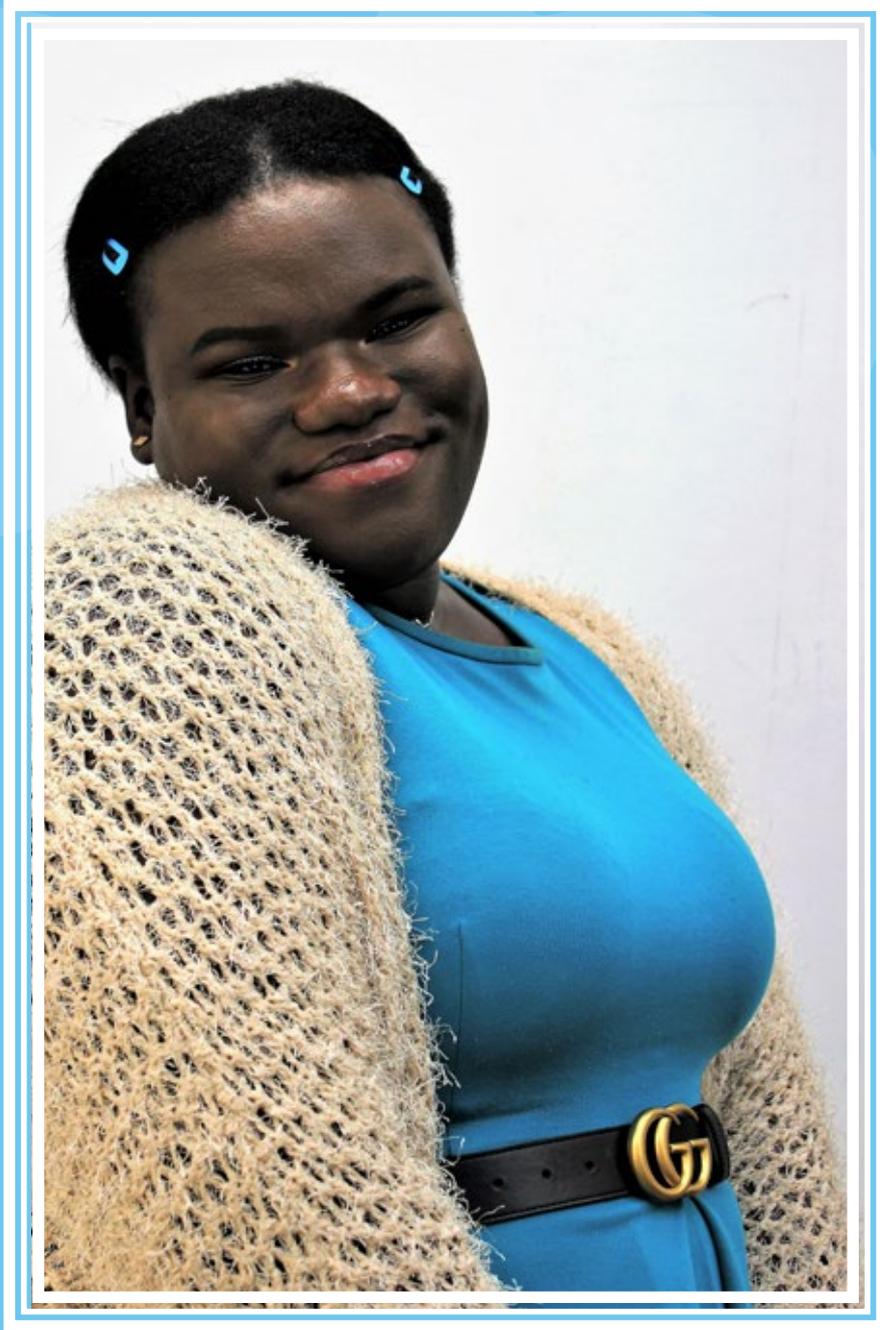
span of 3 years. I think going to university will spark other passions I have yet to discover. My English Language Arts teacher told me that life isn't a straight line, as we take all sorts of paths until we find our place in the world. Right now, I have that same sort of mindset. Later in life I want to do all sorts of things: create a mural, travel, and do social work. I think dreams die when people stop being ambitious.

Hopefully, my essay gave you an insight of what kind of person I am. I'm creative, I'm kind, and I'm hardworking. My life consists of many ups and downs, but I always come out better for it. I'm no genius but I have a good heart. Receiving this scholarship would act as my foundation towards my ideal future for my family, friends, and myself.



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# “ESPOIR” – HOPE



By: Marianne Nibou

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*“Always let your creativity shine through.”*

My name is Marianne Nibou, and I am a grade twelve student attending Lester B. Pearson high school. I am a French speaker, and a lover of makeup, art, baking, crafting, sports, dance, and basically anything that involves movements. In this essay, I will be talking about myself, my background, and more importantly about my connection to the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth.

I was twelve years old when I moved to Canada in 2014. I thought that my life would be easier in Canada and that everything was going to be just like on television. In Cameroon, I never had true friends and I was very insecure about myself, and my body. I used to dream about what my life would be like when I arrived in Canada and I remember being very excited when my mother told me that we were moving; In my mind, I thought that all our problems were going to go away.

In Cameroon, my sister, my mother and I experienced many difficulties. My mother did not have a job and our family did not have enough money, so sometimes we had to beg for money and food. My mother had to make hard decisions and tried hard for us to be able to go to school. Going to school was not easy for me because I grew up very shy and insecure; I felt like everyone was judging me, so I would sit in the corner and never interact with the other kids. I never had true friends, and people used to make fun of me because of my body. It was a challenge to feel confident when I got judge all the time for the way I looked. I used to think to myself that everything was going to be fine once I got to Canada, with friends who will love me unconditionally for who I am. I needed the love and the affection from other people, and I needed to feel good in my own skin. When my family and I arrived to Canada, I did not speak any English, so communication was difficult for me. Canada was definitely different. I started going to school when I arrived, but since I came to Canada in May, there was only a month left in the school year. I was a very shy girl, and I did not know how to talk or open up to people other than my mother and my sister. I did not know how to make friends, but my teachers were very supportive.

One day, my sister was introduced to the Mentorship Program at Forest Lawn High School and she told me all about it. I attended the WIN summer program, and to be honest, that program changed my entire life. At first, I did not feel like I was fitting in because there was so many different individuals from so many different countries and I felt intimidated, but the Mentorship staff guided me through everything. They made me laugh, they had a translator for me, they played with me, they made me feel so comfortable, they pushed me to do things I had never done before, and their assistance was truly a blessing. I never had so much fun in such a short period of time. I was still getting to know myself and the people around me; I tried to get out of my comfort zone and it felt so pleasant. That is how I was introduced to the Mentorship

# “ESPOIR” – HOPE

program, where people loved me for who I was, a place where nobody ever judged me or laugh at me, and where I was treated like family.

As a newcomer in Canada, the beginning is tough but once you meet the right people at the right time, everything changes. The CBFY helped me build my confidence and I can even say that the Mentorship program made me the girl I am today. After that summer, going to school for me was not as frightening anymore, and I felt very good. I have been passionate about art for my entire life, but in Cameroon I did not really have the opportunity to use it to express myself. When I came to Canada, I started doing so many things I had never done before like makeup, baking, and dance. My mother always told me “Tout ce que tu touches, se transforme en or” which means, “Everything you touch, becomes gold”. She felt this was true for me because I became a whole new person over the years. My mother and my sister mean the world to me and even more, because they are the two people I always had by my side throughout all of life’s challenges.

Coming to Canada was very challenging, but I have learned a lot and I have grown so much... I never imagine myself speaking, or even writing English this well. It was very hard when I arrived, but with time I began to fit in and be more comfortable. In grade eight, I started coming out of my shell, so I took a leadership class at school to gain more confidence and learn about leadership skills. I started volunteering, I joined the drama club and the dance club, and I was very open, kind, and positive both at school and outside school it was at school or outside the school. I started making good friends. My friends introduced me to CAS (Calgary After School), an after-school program that changed me profoundly. It was not about the program, but more about the people and how they made me feel. I started going there very often and just be happy to be involved. CAS was not just a program where we played and had a good time, it was also about how we should act in society, including how to treat others and the environment. They gave me so many opportunities to volunteer and get summer jobs.

In grade nine I was a new person who had learned so much in two years. I was already familiar with the community and volunteering, so I joined the LEAD program at CAS. It was a nine weeks program that helped me achieve more goals and make a difference. After nine weeks of learning so much about leadership, communication, conflict management, diversity, personal wellness, planning and organization, problem solving, decision making and teamwork, I received a certificate for completing the LEAD program.

Going to high school was no longer scary anymore. I had doubts and worries that everyone was going to judge me or that I was not going to fit in again, but it was far from that. I had a good relation with my teachers, I was positive, and I always tried my best. In grade ten, I joined the Mentorship program and with my positive and fun attitude, I was offered the opportunity to

become a peer Mentor. I was very surprised and happy because I knew that people appreciated my hard-work and my good energy. I kept volunteering and I was more confident than ever, and I received another certificate for successfully completing the Welcome and Information for Newcomers (WIN) Program, this time as a peer Mentor.

I have to say, what did not kill me, made me stronger. I am very proud of myself and the person I have become. Never in a million years did I think I would have everything that I do now. I am no longer the shy girl who lacks confidence.

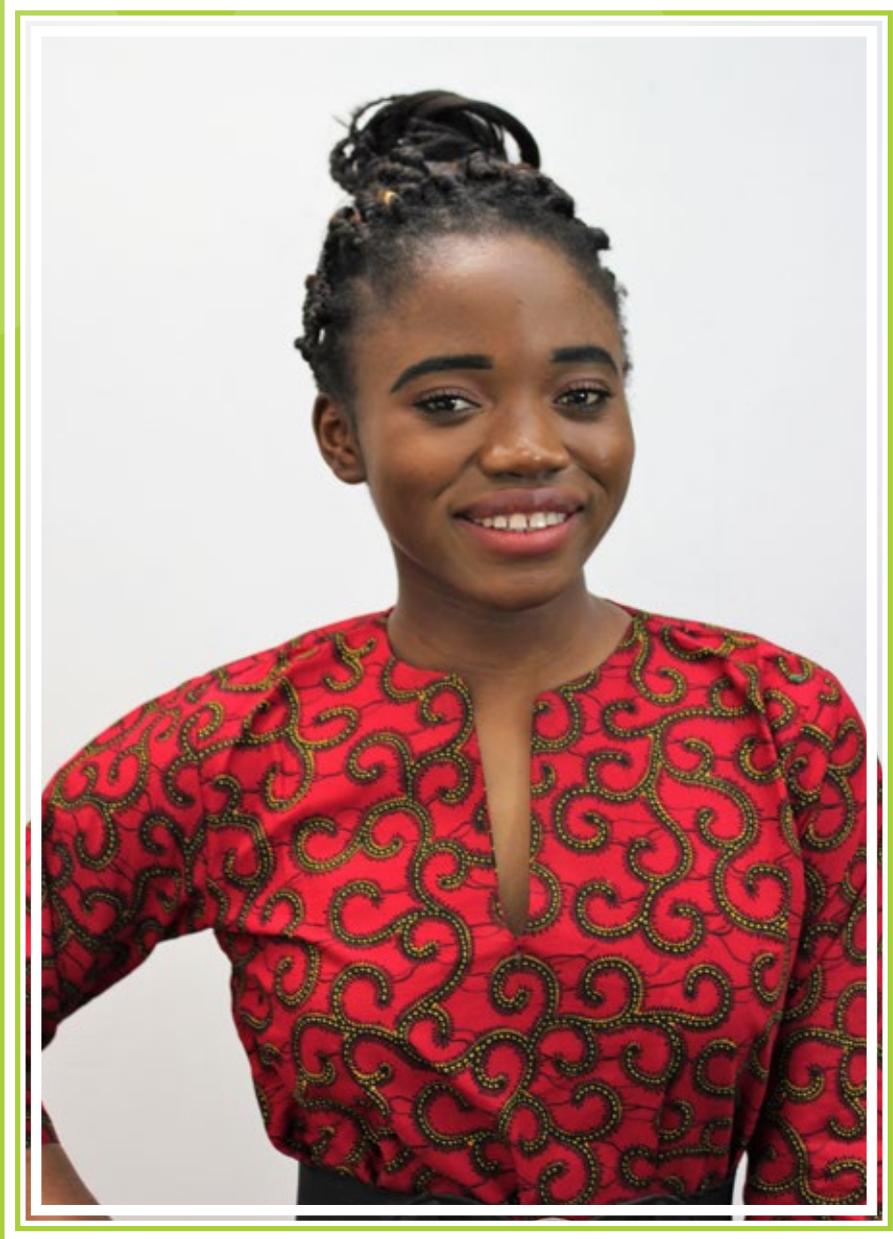
I have always wanted to become a surgeon, it has been my goal/dream since I was a little girl. People might think that I want to become a surgeon because of the money, but it is far from that. I want to become a surgeon because I want to be that person who assists others like some people did for me. I want to save lives, help people, and make them feel safe and appreciated. It is my dream and I am not giving up on it because I know that with hard work and perseverance, I will accomplish it. Nothing can stop me if I put my mind to it. Even though sometimes I start to doubt myself because I am scared, and because it takes such a long time and so much knowledge, I have the right people to cheer me on and tell me that I will make it and that I will be a great surgeon one day.

For my academic goals, I would like to finish high school and get a diploma, and also enter university and study sciences and hopefully obtain a medical degree.

I am so proud of myself and also the person I am today. I fight for myself and my happiness and no one will ever demolish that because I have earned it. I am extremely thankful for CBFY for giving me so many opportunities and to the staff for being so kind and understanding with me. I am thankful for my family and friends because they mean enormously to me; without all the amazing people who surround me, I don't know where I would be today. Finally, I am thankful for the powerful, beautiful, truthful and confident human being I have become and always will be. I would have never been able to accomplish all that I have if I did not have hope and positivity; hope is a good thing, maybe the best thing you can have in life. I kept pushing through life's challenges and it has made me the best version of myself.

Overall, I think that CBFY should choose me as a scholarship recipient because I have learned so much and I know that I can do great things in university and beyond. I grew up not loving myself and thinking that I was not good enough, but with the love and support of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, I can finally look at myself with love and pride. CBFY has been with me since I was a newcomer participating in the Mentorship summer program. Because of CBFY, I have met people who talk to me, laugh with me, and who love me. I have fought hard to be where I am today. I am strong, and I am ready for whatever comes next.

# The Adventure of Melodie Mutombo



**By: Melodie Mutombo**

*"The best trip taken is the one going. Because, you don't know how long it will take, the obstacles that might appear along the way, but all you have is hope and faith that you will make it."*

# “The Adventure of

My name is Melodie Ntumba Mutombo, and I am seventeen years old. I live in Calgary Alberta, Canada, and immigrated here five years ago with my grandparents and older sister, who is two years older than I am. My stay here in Canada has been amazing. I've had the opportunity to meet many beautiful hearted individuals and had the privilege to listen to their stories and get inspired. Before I continue to talk about the impact this country has had on my life, I will tell you a little bit about myself and where I come from.

In 2001, I was born during a war that was taking place in the village of Nksayi; a town in the Bouenza Department of the Republic of the Congo, which lasted five years. During the war, both of my parents and three of my siblings were killed, with the exception of my older sister who I currently live with. As a young girl I had no idea what was going on, but all I remember during that time was the cry of my mother and my baby sister. My older sister and I survived by asking for food from strangers on the street. We lived in this difficult situation for a couple of years before a woman who seemed to be compassionate found us. While staying with her and her family, my older sister and I were forced to become the babysitters of the woman's newborn child and labourers. We farmed from six in the morning until eight in the evening, and whenever we came back from the farm we had to go to the river to fetch water and fill all the containers in the house. At times, we would go days without eating and other times we were beaten with a chain belt because we were unable to perform the task within the timeframe expected.

One sunny morning, my grandmother, Rosalie, came looking for my sister and me. My grandmother told the family that she will be taking us home, they refused and said that she had to leave me behind. This was unacceptable to my grandmother, which caused the family to fight against her with witchcraft and black magic. My grandmother, being a Christian, sought support from Jesus Christ to be able to leave safely with my sister and me. This confrontation escalated, forcing us to flee on a train, and this train eventually became involved in a bad accident. We were one of the few survivors of this accident and I thank Jesus Christ, who helped us survive this tragedy. It was at this moment that I really began to put my faith in Him.

After the accident, we arrived in Lubumbashi, where I attended French school for a short period of time. Due to the war that was taking place, we were forced to migrate to Maheba; a refugee camp located in Zambia that was sponsored by the United Nations (UN). They provided us with health care and free education in learning the English language. In the refugee camps, we were given the bare minimum to survive, because many of the provisions were taken by the officials and officers. Due to the lack of food and resources, my sister, my younger aunt and I had to drop out of school to help our grandparents grow crops in the farm and go to Solwezi, Zambia to sell edible dirt. During this time, we received notice that my family and I were now able to

## Melodie Mutombo”

move to Canada. Unfortunately this news was bittersweet because my aunt was pregnant at the time and we were unable to take her and her unborn child with us to Canada. We were required to withdraw her from the forms because this would result in an extended eight years of waiting in the camps by adding a new person.

Moving to Canada was a new adventure for me. My life here feels less worrying and has purpose. The education system, system of government, freedom and democratic rights varies greatly from what I am used to back home. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms gives me hope of doing something that will help kids with similar circumstances like myself. I want to help them overcome the feeling of shame when telling their stories because they are afraid of being judged. My ultimate goal is to one day work for the UN, but first I am going to work towards studying nursing. As a nurse, my dream is to build a free health care clinic in poor villages to help these children stay healthy and alive. Along with my nursing degree, I will later go to law school to study law so I could defend child soldiers, early child marriage, child trafficking and also give justice to orphans. With my passion for sports, I would love to sponsor kids in different countries and provide them with sport equipment just as the Kid-Sports has done for me and most of my teammates. I also believe that education and positive socialization is very important, therefore, I would provide other fun programs like NxtGen Homework Club and Mentorship program to these children. With the help of my teachers at Forest Lawn High School and The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth (CBFY), I have faith that my dreams will move mountains and become a reality.

As a newcomer to Canada, I became involved with multiple programs in CBFY. With CBFY I have had the chance to get help with my school assignments through NxtGen Homework Club. I have had the chance to meet new students in the Mentorship Program, which helped me get over my shyness and gain more confidence. The CBFY program has helped me learn how to put myself in someone else’s shoes and understand their pain. Most importantly, I have learned how to love who I am and where I am from. Since I joined this organization I have taken part in a lot of fun activities provided by CBFY. I have also become involved with the City of Calgary leadership programs, YMAP, and The Calgary Afterschool Program. All these programs have had a huge impact on my individual identity and have also offered me a new perspective on life.

Taking part in the community has changed my way of seeing life. I used to believe life was all about what you do to prepare for your future until I had the opportunity to experience different ways of living. I have volunteered in the community with NxtGen Homework Club, YMAP, and community service hours with The Calgary Afterschool program. I volunteered to help keep the community clean by picking up waste and items that are dangerous to our environment. Other

activities that have shaped me include, camping trips, dance classes, fitness, and acting classes. One of my passions is to share my story with people all around the city through my poems and spoken word pieces. I have performed at the Glenbow Museum and during my school's Remembrance Day Ceremonies. I have participated in the national political party platforms in 2016 during the elections. Being engaged in my community has taught me to stand for the ideas and values I believe in, in order to implement change.

With the help of this scholarship, it will allow me to be more financially secured, paying partially for my tuition fees and reducing my stresses. My education path will be less troubled and more attainable, allowing me to focus on my educational goals rather than finances. Not only will this scholarship aid in helping me pay for my tuition, it will also alleviate any stresses my grandparents may have regarding the payment of my tuition. I plan to also maintain a part time job during my studies in order to help pay for the rest of my tuition fees. My dreams are big and I know my journey will be long and hard, but I have the spirit, social support, and drive to push me towards successes.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to share my story and future aspirations.

# Memoir of a Compassionate Overthinker



By: Reeana Tazreean

*“Be compassionate, empathize and speak up in  
order to change the world.”*

# “Memoir of a

I believe we all have a story. Some of us have found the confidence and courage within ourselves to share our story and some are still searching. Nonetheless, vulnerability is what cultivates empathy, which is essential as a member of society. It is the fundamental thing that allows all of us to grow and truly understand one another.

My name is Reeana Tazreean and today I will share my story with you. While growing up, there were many moments in my life that I will never forget and that will always remain with me. My parents and I moved to Canada, while I was at the young age of three. I didn't know any English at the time and I was bullied and teased all throughout elementary for being the “dumb and stupid ESL kid.” I have a vivid memory of some of my classmates throwing rocks at me at the back of the school. I was cut and bruised, yet I lied about it and told everyone that I fell really hard on concrete. I remember feeling so intimidated and fearful. Kids can be so cruel.

During the start of junior high, I was caught up in a really toxic friendship. It had resulted in conversations about emotional blackmail and suicide. I remember crying myself to sleep at night and feeling as if my every thought and movement was being controlled. What I've realized is mental illnesses don't just come from one little thing; it's multiple moments in time that eventually build up. When you get to this horrid state in time, you feel stressed and anxious about the smaller things and lose your sense of sanity. I should also mention, school work isn't necessarily the issue, it's the people surrounding us and the external influences around.

In my life moving from a different country to North America, and trying to connect the two very different lifestyles together was quite difficult and had many negative impacts on me. When you spend a good chunk of your life in a completely different collective with different languages, cultures, traditions, beliefs, clothing, food, etc., it feels as if you cannot fit in anymore when all of that suddenly changes. You feel as if you have to sacrifice who you are to fit in with everyone else. To be completely honest, one of my biggest regrets is throwing away my individuality just so I am able to belong and fit in. To this day, the things I have experienced affect my identity. Due to my past experiences, I'm so used to bottling up my emotions and not telling anyone how I feel, that I still do it now. Many times it makes me appear as a positive and joyful person that has these crazy mood swings and can change in an instant. Many people think I'm really bossy and too much of a perfectionist, but they only see the surface. That is not all of my identity and it is not all of who I am. I once heard a fact, and I love it very much, “If an iceberg is floating in the ocean you are only able to see 10% of it (the surface) and the remaining 90% is submerged underwater.” I believe this is similar to us humans, others can only see the surface-level “us”, yet they judge and stigmatize without knowing who we truly are.

# Compassionate Overthinker”

I have also grown a lot as a person through these rough times. If I was to experience something similar now, I would be strong enough to deal with it. I have learned a lot from my past and I've really gotten in tune with my emotions. There's a book titled "Tuesday's With Morrie", where they talk about the idea of acknowledging your feelings (what they look like, sound like, feel like, taste like, smell like -- basically really get an understanding of them) and then softly and slowing let them go. This is a skill that I have mastered over the past few years. I believe this is what has allowed me to truly love and accept who I am and not become what I am expected to become.

I'm now in grade eleven and after everything I've been through, I've grown into a very strong individual. Now my only hope is to give back and be there for someone else that is going through what I have been through. I want to leave a positive mark on this world and be able to teach the younger generations that it is okay to ask for help and that they are never alone. If I can get through it, so can they. I am now a hardworking student who can also be defined as a speaker, innovator and philanthropist. I am passionate, eager and I have the desire to explore, reflect and challenge myself while remaining compassionate towards others. I believe in the importance of lifelong learning as well as self-growth. My curiosity drives my desire to change the world. My past volunteer work and research have investigated mental health challenges as well as using synthetic biology and genomics to better our day-to-day world. I am a volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club, the Calgary Public Library, Free The Children and Empowering Minds. I am the co-founder of Rant and Relate; an organization started to raise awareness and prevention on mental health issues. Through Rant and Relate, I am able to engage in multiple conferences at the University of Calgary, where we discuss "What issues youth face today, and what WE can do about it." Our team first began as complete strangers but we were brought together through our similar passions. Everyone on our team has a purpose and is respected. I am also currently employed at Kumon, where I strive to create a strong mathematical and literacy foundation for young children. I am also highly involved with the iGEM Foundation in San Francisco, where I work to come up with innovative approaches to solving complex problems regarding synthetic biology. Through BioDesign, I got to take part in the Berkeley Program, which is a partnership between CEOs and IDEO in the Bay Area to promote communication and design skills. I also get the chance to learn about basic molecular techniques such as cloning and manipulating DNA. After our trip to Berkeley, our team realized this whole process isn't just about science. We learned multiple life-skills and lessons: such as learning to embrace failure and ambiguity; working effectively as a team, being able to question the given and the importance of passion and motivation. Ultimately it opened up an array of possibilities for our futures. I'm also in a concert

band, music council, leadership club, speech and debate team, swim team, drama production committee, a peer ambassador and a youth champion. I still remain close to my culture through my involvement in the Bangladesh Canada Association of Calgary. I emcee events in my native tongue and perform cultural dances. All these experiences have allowed me to learn new things and meet new individuals. I've also been fortunate enough to receive multiple awards such as Youth Leadership In Mental Health, Academic Achievement, Outstanding Student and Great Kids.

I became a Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth participant in the Afterschool NxtGen Homework Club program in September of 2017. My favourite memories from the club are the multiple field trips we have been on such as Camp Chestemere and the Holiday Celebration. I really enjoyed these events because I was able to meet like-minded people and make new long lasting friendships. The mentors have helped me not only with my school work but also with constant support and guidance throughout all aspects of my life. They taught me how to be accountable with my classwork, encouraged me to always do my best and helped me decide on my future endeavours such as post-secondary and career choices.

My dream now is to become a Medical Military Officer with the Canadian Armed Forces. As morbid as may it sound, I hope to die saving others' lives. I know that I am capable of the rigorous process it takes to get me there, however, I am worried about the financial aspect of my dream. I come from a middle-class family, and I don't want to have to bury myself and my family in debt. This is why I believe I deserve this scholarship. If there is one thing that you take from this, let it be that I have goals that I want to achieve and I focus on those positive aspects of my life. I believe when there is darkness and all you want to do is give up, look to the light and there you will find something incredible. What I have learned is that people will break you down and throw you to the ground. They will try to crumble you to bits and pieces, but you can't give up. Life is about getting back up and going in for another round and another battle and believing that you will win. It is about having goals, dreams and unstoppable ambition. It is about always remembering that if you work hard enough, you can achieve anything.

# The Power of Will and Purpose



**By: Selamawit Gebregziabher**

*“Life is beautiful when you know your purpose and be grateful because opportunities open to you.”*

My name is Selamawit Gebregziabher and I am writing to you to express my interest in being a recipient of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth Scholarship. My story starts in 2000 when I was born in Eritrea, East Africa. My family is made up of my mother, father and my five siblings, with me as the middle child. However, I was raised by my mother alone because my father had to escape the country under life-threatening political conditions. Aside from the expected hardships of being raised by a single mother, these challenges were further increased because of where I was born. Eritrea was a totalitarian monarchy which in present-day continues to be governed by a tyrannical dictator. The Eritrean government persecutes many people over alleged political disagreements and this was also the misfortune of my father. Without the traditional male breadwinner, my mother had taken up the role. However, that too was cut short when my younger brother's disabilities needed her to stay at the hospital with him. His condition was also so grim because of the lack of adequate healthcare in the country. My older brother, Abraham, had to grow up quickly and become the single provider for our whole family. Even at my young age, my family's sacrifices were clear to me and this motivated me to be the top of my class and make my family proud through this act of giving back in the only way I was capable of doing so. I took part in the National Exam in Eritrea, a federal academic competition, in which I ranked highly. This was my final memory of Eritrea before we escaped to Ethiopia in 2015.

The journey to Ethiopia is the biggest challenge I have ever faced. Eritrean soldiers were not forgiving on defectors, so we had to leave in the darkness of the night and our five-day directionless journey on foot was with minimal water and without food. The risk was also elevated by the severe contrast of scorching weather during the day and the crisp cold at night. But at last, I remember the second we hit Ethiopian land, we ran to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the other asylum seekers. We resided here for over two years until we were accepted by Canada on August 10, 2017, and finally, after 12 years, I was reunited with my father.

I was able to start school within a couple of weeks and started making amazing Canadian friendships, as well as enjoying the countless perks of living in Canada. However, as newcomers, my family and I faced a lot of struggles, some of which were trying to adopt a new culture, community, and language. When I started school at Forest Lawn High school. It was very difficult for me to understand the educational curriculum of Canada. I started at ELL level two course, because of my English proficiency was not be able to take the harder courses even though I was good at it. It really makes me feel that I was not qualified or good enough. Despite being told by one guidance counsellor that I would not graduate until 2020 or 2021, I

# “The Power of Will and Purpose”

decided to dedicate myself to learn English and spent most of my time after school in the public library. I was introduced to the public library by a Social Worker, Mr. Tut. Due to my persistent determination, I progressed to English Level Three. This is a significant accomplishment for me because not only did I overcome a tough challenge, I also have set an example for my three younger siblings to follow after. I see myself as a role model for my three younger siblings and to youth in my community. I strongly believe that when you rise up to do something of significance, opportunities will open to you. As I was looking for a new opportunity, I heard about the challenge exam where you have to study for weeks and take the exam in order to gain credit. Though I failed the initial challenge exams, I persisted and passed the next two challenge exams. I chose to stay positive and believed in my ability to do amazing things.

My persistence was developed through my faith belief and some key people in my life which I will touch upon momentarily. I often read the bible to keep my spirit and mind strong. A key individual in my life who helped me to persevere was Mr. Paris. Mr. Paris was a teacher in a leadership class I decided to take in order to develop my leadership and English-speaking skills. In the first term, I received a final grade of 60% in that class. After confiding in Mr. Paris, he told me that I was amazing and capable. I will never forget that moment. It was then that I started to perceive myself in a different way. I also decided to be proactive in making new friends and participate in class. One of my successes in that class was that I was able to present on my own. Furthermore, I had succeeded so much that I was able to present my presentation by myself. I am more than proud to say I passed that class with a grade of 88%. This led me to excel in my spoken English skills and in other core classes. My new guidance counsellor, Mr. Gossen, told me how much he loved my confidence and how much he believed in me. This also gave me the strength to persevere. With joy, I am pleased to say I passed to English 20-1 from English 10-1 in one summer. I still am amazed. This year, I took English 20-1, Math 20-1, Chemistry 20 and Biology 20 as well as Social Studies ADLC. Though challenging, I never gave up and stayed focused on my goals. I passed all of them and now I am in English 30-1 with 120 completed credits. The situation told me that I was not qualified, capable, or good enough but guess what, I did it. Through challenging courses, I am now en route to graduate in 2019, not 2021 or 2020 and relatively quicker than other migrant students. I look forward to sharing my story with others and letting other youths know that when a situation attempts to tell them that they are unqualified, incapable or not good enough, indeed they are very qualified, capable and good enough if they would so choose to persist and never give up on improving as I did.

Professionally, I aspire to be a counsellor and perhaps eventually a professor. As a counsellor, more specifically, a marriage counsellor, I want to be a part of healing the mass divorce rates and also help individuals shape the way they view marriage and the link it has

with self- fulfillment. I would also like to one day write spiritual books, which can help youth find hope and inspiration when they are in circumstances where the physical means of success are not available to them. I hope to attend post-secondary school here in Calgary and attain a Bachelor's' degree in Clinical Psychology before going for my Masters of Counselling. I intend to do my undergraduate studies in Calgary as I hope to also eventually work and live here. In the meantime, I am enjoying the winter chinooks, the summer Stampede Festival and the year-round Flames pride the city has to offer.

Despite my past and continuing financial struggles, I am always cheerful because my good days are ahead of me. I find peace in my faith in God and that peace allows me to remain optimistic and a source of strength for others, through offering emotional support and helping them find the professional resources available to further aid them. My desire to be useful is reflected in my involvement in school and my community. I volunteer by touring new students in high school and making them feel welcomed by hearing their stories and utilizing my story as a common ground to relate with them. I also volunteer on Sundays in my church by teaching young adults Bible stories, singing songs and tackling controversial issues.

My greatest joy, however, is through the Mentorship work with the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth (CBFY). I have been a member since my initial arrival to Calgary, and my membership with them has certainly served me a double purpose of me being able to serve and give back, while I am also learning new things and finding opportunities for growth. I need a university education to achieve all my goals, however, financial barriers are a reality for me. I believe that this scholarship would make a world of a difference to my education and ultimately my future if I had that sense of peace knowing that the burden of education costs was covered. I believe that every recipient of the CBFY scholarship is unique and has stories like mine, but I believe that CBFY should consider me for the scholarship, because my sense of perseverance, work ethic and desire to be useful is unmatched. Thank you for your time and for your consideration, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

# Life Demands Struggle, Work Hard to Achieve



**By: Susan Sun**

*“With determination through downfalls in life and supportive people around me, I can make a positive impact in the world.”*

## “Life Demands Struggle,

I was born in a small and beautiful town in China, where I lived in a safe neighborhood with my family. Growing up in an authentic Chinese family meant that my parents' main focus was on education and a good quality of life. I was a happy child living in a home that was quite contented. However, my life took a dark turn in 2010 when I got into a car accident that almost cost me my life on my 8th birthday. It took me a full year to recover and learn how to walk again. My ability to run and play sports deteriorated significantly during this time. At the age of 13, I experienced the death of my grandma, with whom I had a very close relationship. She suffered from brain cancer and was unable to pull through. My family went through a hard time overcoming her death. These two life and death situations drastically changed my outlook on life. They pulled me out of the childish fantasy world and displayed the harsh reality of life right in front of my eyes. I do not expect to live a perfect life without bumps on the road and these two incidents made me realize how fragile people's lives were. From then on, I decided that I must not take anything for granted and be appreciative to everything that is given to me.

As a child, I enjoyed drawing and dancing. Drawing remained as my all-time favourite hobby as I grew up. Due to the car accident, my passion for dancing somewhat went away, until recently, I reconnected with dancing. I learned breakdancing and popping on my own and joined the E.P. Scarlett dance community. My passion has been restarted, it relieves my stress and allows me to make friends that share the same interest.

I stepped onto the wonderland of Calgary for the first time in 2014. It was a terrifying experience for the 12-year-old me. My life changed significantly. Without the comfort and familiarity of my mom, I had to cling onto my dad as my last line of protection. He could not understand my feelings in the beginning. He thought I was just my usually shy and quiet self. I had to learn a new language and force myself to communicate with the limited words I knew. In Grade 7, I spent all of my free time enhancing my reading and writing abilities. Life was full of misery, each day was filled with new challenges. I worked through tears of public shaming and isolation. It took me an entire school year to overcome the language barrier. At the start of Grade 8, things got easier. I was able to freely socialize with others and focus on my academic learning without the interference of poor language skills. By the end of my Junior High years, all of my hard work paid off. I graduated with over 20 awards and fluency in the English language. I continued to strive for my best and worked on expanding my knowledge and perceptions in High school. I achieved Honours with distinction all through Grade 10 and received a perfect score in three courses. I won awards in Leadership and Spanish, as well as finishing my freshman year with good overall grades. This year, in my first semester of Grade 11, I continued my hard work and achieved Honours with distinction again. For the rest of my school life and in my

## Work Hard to Achieve”

future career, I will continue to dedicate myself towards my learning and self-growth in order to accomplish more goals in the future.

In 2017, I attended my first Mentorship club meeting as a freshman in Dr. E.P Scarlett High School. I was introduced to the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth through the Mentorship program. I was absolutely amazed by the program. It was an eye-opening opportunity for me as an individual to socialize with others who have similar experiences and interests as me. I highly enjoyed all of the activities from the program and learned new things about the Canadian Culture. I first came to Calgary in Grade 7. I did not have access to newcomer support programs, it was such a struggle for me to integrate into the new environment. However, upon the discovery of Mentorship, I was able to make new friends and be exposed to other cultures. In my second semester of Grade 10, I was trained as a Peer Mentor. I had the desire to take a leading role in the program and take initiative to help newcomers to adapt to their new school life in Calgary. I shared my past experiences with them and offered them the knowledge that I once needed. The bonds I made with the newcomers remained strong even outside of school, these friendships can last for a lifetime. At the beginning of Grade 11, I was given the opportunity to join the Youth Advisory Council. Under the presence of the YAC program, I had the chance to take part in planning and organizing CBFY events. I have an active part in the team. I help plan and organize the events, lead and encourage group discussions and take responsibilities as a leader. I participated in the marketing group by making posters, as well as hosting events and note-taking. I am beyond glad to be able to give back to the community with my hard work and bring joy into people’s lives.

Apart from my involvement with the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, I actively participate in volunteer work both in school and in the community. I volunteer for the Calgary Library for over a year and obtained over 90 hours from different programs such as Math Quest, Coding Club and buddies, as well as school days out. Within the programs, my duty is to teach and mentor children from the age of 5-12. I am extremely glad that the youngsters can benefit from my knowledge of Coding, Math, and Literacy. Since grade 10, I go to Canyon Meadow Elementary School along with my Leadership class every Wednesday and Thursday to work on social and reading skills with the young kids. My passion to develop their interests in learning and leading them as a role model overfilled me with joy. Throughout the year, I also participated in multiple events such as helping out for Meeting the teacher’s night, Terry Fox Run, posters for club events, football events, Grade 9 tours, and the Helping Hamper Project. I was able to strengthen my communication and leadership skills from these events. In school, I was a part of the Yearbook, Asian Culture, and Mentorship Club in Grade 10. Within these clubs,

I was responsible for yearbook work, organizing events, surveys, and posters. I carried out my duties well and completed each job wholeheartedly. This year, I decided to bring diversity to my experiences by joining the Youth Advisory Council, Model UN, and a dance group. I enjoyed every volunteer opportunities that I participated in. I have a strong desire to help people and be a contributing member of the communities around me. All of these experiences are truly valuable to me. Being a part of a group that can impact people's lives for the better is an honorable feeling. I will continue my involvement within the school and the community going forward, knowing that all of the efforts I put in count towards benefiting someone else in the community and self-fulfillment.

With the remaining time I have in High school, I want to continue to improve my leadership skills and strive to gain more knowledge. I will maintain my hard work in all course and dedicate myself fully into building a stronger version of myself. In Grade 12, I will apply to the University of Alberta and other Universities for a dual degree program in Education. I want to become a secondary Math teacher when I graduate from University. I will gain work experiences with the co-op program or the class time within the BEd program. I am already volunteering for programs related to teaching, therefore I am guiding present self towards my future career. I am willing to share my knowledge with others and I am very passionate about educating children with so much potential. I want to build a strong learning foundation for youth and be a role model in teaching them to take initiative and contribute to the society for a bright future.

I am an extremely dedicated and responsible individual. I am constantly wanting to improve myself in every aspect and put in all of my effort to achieve my goals. I don't take anything for granted and expect everything to be perfect. I had perseverance when overcoming some major obstacles in my life and I would not trade any second of those experiences for pleasure. They help define me as an individual and strengthen my character. My main goal now is to study at a University that has a strong Education department for me to take one step closer to my dream career. This Scholarship opportunity can help me achieve my goals and relieve some financial pressure. I am truly grateful for this opportunity and I really appreciate CBFY for providing this chance for me. Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I am really looking forward to hearing back from you.

# Upholder of the Teachings



**By: Tenzin Pema**

*"I believe that I am in a path to the happiness".*

My name is Tenzin Pema and I am proudly Tibetan. The beauty of my culture and my country have been overshadowed by years of turmoil and appropriation of the land. I was born in India and was there till I was 14 years old. I am Tibetan but also an Indian by heart.

Being born as a stateless person in India, my loving parents always believed that it was important to preserve our heritage. At the age of 6 I began attending a Tibetan boarding school. By this point my parents were noticing that there was a threat of me losing my Tibetan identity since I was growing up among Indians and speaking Hindi fluently. Sending me to boarding school was a hard decision for them as it was located in a different state, and it would mean not being able to see me as often as they would like to.

The first few weeks at the boarding school were quite tough as I remember feeling quite lonely away from my family who had been raising me with so much love and care. Being in this school was a blessing in disguise, as hard as adapting to it was at first. I grew up around Tibetan people who spoke proudly of our land and people, and educated me with the language and faith.

I became a very active student over the years and participated in drama, cultural dance, debate groups and sports. Not only did it count as credits in my education, it made me develop a stronger personality and sense of identity and community with the other students. From grade 1 to 5 the education is in Tibetan with English classes weekly, and starting in grade 6 all curriculum is taught in English. This was the beginning of my struggle with the language; it has always been one of my greatest challenges.

My parents owned a clothing store in India which my mom ran while my dad was deployed in the Army. I remember helping my mom at the store during winter breaks and seeing how hard my mom worked to provide for the family and still take care of me while dad was away. I was always so happy to see my parents and always felt I was the most important part of their lives.

By the time I was 14, the Dalai Lama had been advocating for years for other countries to welcome Tibetan Refugees into their lands. My parents went through the status application and our family was selected to depart to Canada.

I was very afraid of this transition. I knew in Canada I would have to speak English all the time and face my biggest fear; I would also have to leave the school where I had lived for the bigger half of my life and start from scratch.

We arrived to Calgary in February, and I remember feeling like I was in a magical land. The snow was falling, trees were covered in frost, and the snow looked like it had glitter; so calming and soothing. I went outside to feel the air of Canada, and must say my face froze a bit even if I enjoyed every second of it.

Shortly after our arrival, I suddenly had to become the adult in the family. My parents' education in English was not as strong as mine and it became my duty to act as an interpreter and translator for them during official meetings. I felt I did not know what I was doing since I was barely understanding the language myself, but I had to help them as much as I could.

It became my obligation to speak on behalf of my family for important meetings. I grew up always relying on the adults around me, and this transition was especially hard for me as I did not feel I was fit for such responsibility, or that my language was strong enough for me to communicate and understand everything my family needed. I started working part time as soon as my age allowed me to, I wanted and needed to support my family with finances while they set themselves up in Canada. This felt like too heavy a responsibility for me at 14 years old when I didn't even know who I was or what I was doing, but I had to do it anyway.

I used to be very talkative and confident in India; teachers would always find me having spirited debates, being loud and a very frank person but somehow I changed when I came to Canada. I do not know whether it is a good thing or not, or if it came from age or the new environment, but now I find myself being quite soft spoken, quiet, and shy specially to strangers.

It's been four years since I got to Canada and I feel I am improving every day. My first day of school was not bad as I thought it would be, but not as great as I wished it to be. People talk differently, behave differently, and think differently. It took me a while to get used to not seeing the sun for most of the day, the strange taste of the water and the food.

Language hit me hard; I could not understand my lessons for the first few months as teachers spoke too fast for me. People were nice and I also made a friend, but I still remember feeling quite shy and embarrassed to talk to others and make a mistake. I did not want to be judged by others how I judged myself.

I remember my friend got sick one day and missed school and I would spend all breaks in the bathroom and often would cry feeling very lonely, hoping time would go fast so I could go home and feel safe again. I started watching videos in English which really helped me understand the lingo.

In the middle of the year, I started talking to more people and by the end of the year I had a great group of strong friends. I thought being alone was the worst thing that could happen to me, not knowing anyone, but now I like to think of it as a blessing. I experienced the low points of life, which is important to see to appreciate and better enjoy the happy moments.

Starting grade 10 was quite challenging. Although my language had gotten better and I felt more confident, the education system was very confusing talking about credits and levels

# “Upholder of the Teachings”

of each subject. I had to take a test which said I was in English level 3 and did not know what it meant or how it would impact my future. Today, this level means that although I have tried my hardest to excel in school, I am unable to enter into the university programs I want because I can't complete one of the essential science pre-requisites. I have not let this stop me from moving forward, as I have always dreamt of becoming a role model for people and overcoming challenges.

During my second week of grade 10 I received a visit from two people from the Calgary Bridge Foundation; Ahmad and Liu came to my classroom and told us all about Mentorship Program and how it would help me understand the school system better, and make more friends. I took a form and began participating in the program 2 weeks later.

The first day I was nervous, but Ahmad and Liu welcomed me with a smile and made me feel at home. We played a lot of games and ate pizza, and I met 30 new people! I kept coming back every week and although I was quiet most of the time, I never missed a day. I found a place where I could feel that sense of community again like in my boarding school in India. They also introduced me to Kay and Eryll who were my Peer Mentors and were always very friendly during program and in normal classes as well.

Now I am in my 3rd year participating with this program and I am proud to say I am a Peer Mentor volunteering to support other new students at my High School who may be feeling out of place, just how I was when I first started.

I have had the opportunity to volunteer with beautiful causes like Operation Christmas child and the Drop-In Centre, helping the needy in my city. All these experiences have been surreal, and have taught me to always be grateful for where I am in life and remain humble.

Although this has been a beautiful experience, I still missed the Tibetan community I had in India. I missed being able to express the arts of my culture and began to feel a bit disconnected.

My parents and I found out there was a Tibetan Community Association a year after our arrival, and immediately went to enroll and began participating with them. It was such a great feeling to find our people again! This community also organized performances for cultural dance, learning and teaching how to play traditional music, and even drama! I felt more at home once I began participating in the community, and was even able to show my passion for my culture through my performances.

My name translates to “Upholder of the Teachings” and I take this responsibility with pride. I have dedicated the last two years to contribute to the teaching of dance and musical instruments to younger Tibetan youth who are also First Generation Canadians. I want to teach

these children how beautiful it is to be Tibetan, to carry our heritage proudly, and represent our heritage strongly.

I am very dedicated to my studies, my family, my heritage, and children. During the school year I spend 60 hours or more to my studies, and my free time to teaching young children how to play traditional Tibetan instruments. This has helped me overcome my shyness and loneliness, and I am happy to say I feel happy with the life I live, and can finally look forward to a bright future.

I began a dual credits program with SAIT under business management; this is all in hopes of being better prepared to be admitted and complete my Bachelor of Commerce in the future.

I have been working for over one year at a fast food chain, participating in school sports, working hard to improve my English, and always leaving time aside for the Tibetan community. I feel I am back to being the confident girl I was at boarding school, involved in many areas of interest, representing the community proudly, and working hard to make my family and my people proud of who I become.

My ultimate goal in this world is to be a role model, a successful and independent person who motivates others who like myself have many high goals and don't even know how or if they can reach them. I hope this to be happening soon. This is why I am applying for a scholarship today. I want to be the best version of myself in any possibilities. We have a saying in Tibetan, "Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength" No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster.

I may not have the highest grades or have volunteered the most compared to other participants but I do have potential and a desire to achieve my goal. I know all I need is a bit of support to taking one step further to achieving my goals in life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

# Stranded up North: A Story of Rediscovery and the Canadian Dream



**By: Treeva Hakim**

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*“Live life as a cat, but be the tiger that lingers underneath. Pounce when opportunity approaches, and let them hear you roar!”*

Memories, like stories set in the first-person perspective, are fabricated with glimpses of the past and how our experiences manipulate them to suit our range of reality. For instance, during a drive to a local amusement park, my mother recounted her story as a girl on the run with her family in the midst of the Second Persian Gulf War in Iraq; how rubble sat where playgrounds stood and the notion of kids going to bed with empty bellies was not an action film Hollywood concocted for her, but fact. Fact: my grandmother made one dollar per month as a high school physics teacher. Fact: her family was considered 'well-off'. Despite adversity at such a young age, they enjoyed the fruits of their hardship by being closer to their friends and family than I ever was with my siblings. That arduous drive became another thrilling ride as she told us about the food, lights, and celebrations that the Islamic holiday Eid would bring. From then on, her stories became memories, but not just about the devastation of war, but our interpretation of a world so alien yet so close to our daily lives. Being a first-generation Canadian, I never had to endure the suffering that ensued war but sacrificed the opportunity to explore my Kurdish identity the way my mother did.

Although my parents fought an uphill battle to keep our heads above water, in no way did that hinder our desire to live life as it was. From my first steps on ice skates to canoeing down the sparkling emerald Banff rivers every summer, my mother has taught me to appreciate the struggle of exploring the unknown to reap its rewards. Despite her encouragement to embrace my Canadian nationality, I had little insight as to what my ethnicity meant as a part of my identity and how to embrace the best of both worlds. My sleuthing came mainly through my parents and videos about the upcoming of the Kurdish nation, and although it has not integrated me into Kurdish society, it has increased my appreciation for my heritage and what I have to offer as a member of Canada's next generation.

From then on, I have evolved into a proud member of Nelson Mandela High School's Peer Ambassadors, CIWA's girl's club, my high school's chess team, the NextGen Homework Club, and advanced instrumental band, for which I have committed over four years of discipline, perseverance, and skill. These clubs were not just extracurricular activities, but an outlet to empower me and my community and represent a minority in Canada's collage of diversity. The extent I have reached to represent Canada's ever-evolving demographic stretches to my active role as a volunteer with Alberta Health Services by working with health care staff and patients to help those who need it most for over three years. I have also worked with Calgarians on the other end of the age spectrum at the TELUS Spark Science Centre. For three years, I have encouraged children to explore STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) by leading experiments and fueling their imaginations during shows and throughout the galleries.

## “Stranded up North: A Story of

My commitment to the science centre has not gone unnoticed, as I am the recipient of the Volunteer of the Month award for September 2018. Our future is in our children and youth, and by sparking their curiosity and growth, I learn to grow as a human and understand my identity and purpose in society. My journey of soul-searching is not an anomaly among Canadian youth with contending loyalties, and by winning the very award known for encouraging the upbringing of diverse students, I can stand as a figurehead for others to find strength and belonging in the worlds they hold dear.

Despite my involvement in my community, there are times where I lose sight of the meaning for my work, but my personal and academic goals are what help keep me going, and has finally evolved into my goal to become an oncologist. Since as long as I can remember, every student was made aware of how debilitating cancer is to the very essence of life, but also how science has brought us one step closer to changing that. Since as long as I can remember, Terry Fox has been a globally-renowned hero, and the name I ran for during the runs named in his honour. However, these exposures to reality only left me sympathetic. Having very few first-hand experiences with cancer, the struggle of someone's life was just another story until it became part of my story, too.

After joining Alberta Health Services, I had little experience but overflowing enthusiasm for what lay ahead. Day by day, meeting patients became second nature, but my perspective on the silent battles fought changed monumentally after meeting a veteran receiving treatment for leukemia. Our first conversation was interesting enough, but the more I visited, the more we became comfortable. Eventually, we delved into things like diversity, history, life in the Canadian Military, and the weekly news. As open our conversations were, her condition was the one topic that caused her grief, which I learned to avoid. The recurring distress patients experienced, especially those with few visitors, was a barrier for me to understand their situation, if not to help. This, in addition to my growing interest in the various lymphomas, leukemias, and their respective treatments, I began to familiarize myself with the world around me and my work. My fascination took me beyond the web pages and booklets and into connecting factors, leading to questions such as why mutinous cells develop the way they do. Very slowly have I been able to connect better with my patients, changing my perspective of my duty as a volunteer.

In unfathomable ways has my volunteering experience changed my perspective on issues influencing society, but nothing has moved me as profoundly as my captivation towards oncology. My curiosity in searching for answers that do not just help those suffering, but find connections that will explain the unknown world of cancer; a world I dream to help understand alongside the next generation of scientists. This scholarship, along with the financial support it

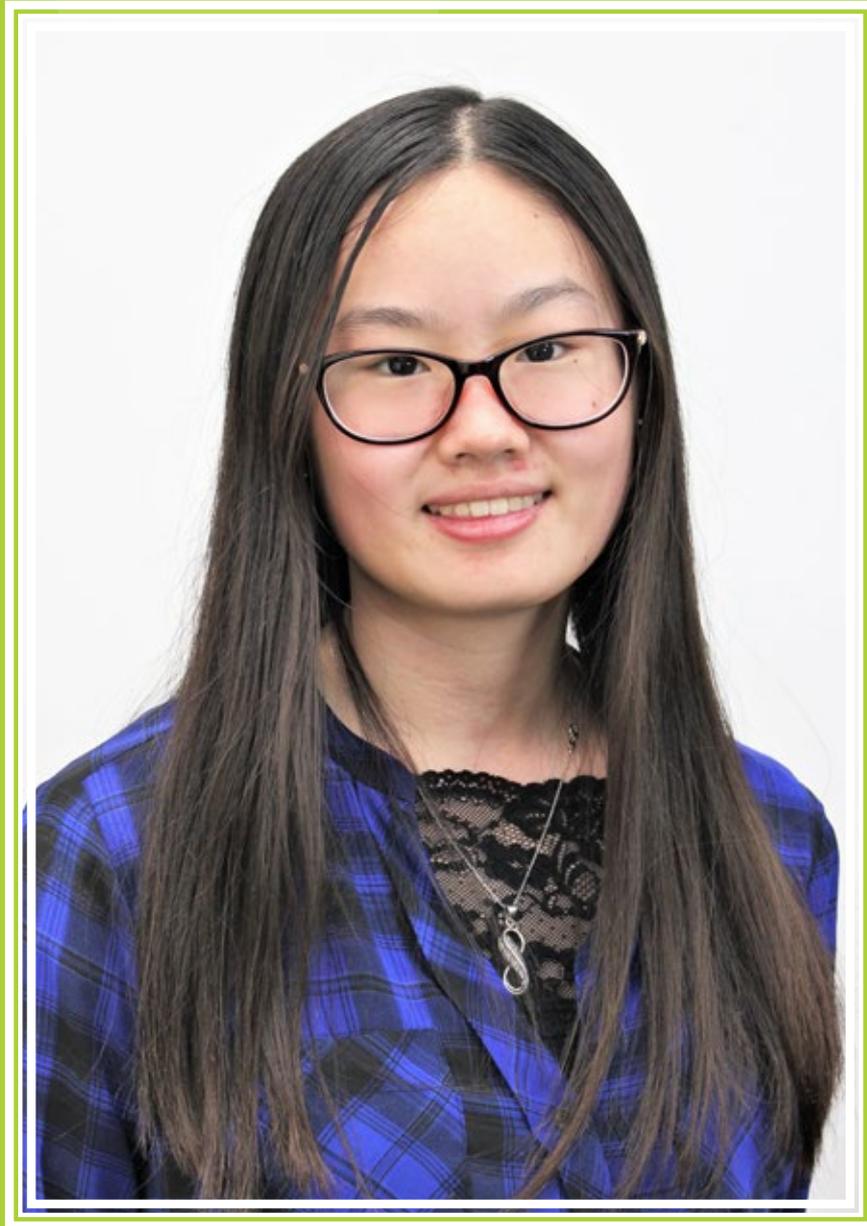
# Rediscovery and the Canadian Dream”

provides to begin my academic adventure, is the support of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth for women of Canada’s visible minorities to make their mark in the world of STEAM.

Beyond my astounding aspirations, I pride myself on my various personal goals that keep me occupied whenever I have free time. Some, such as my goal to learn French, stems from my Canadian identity and the bilingual status of my nation. Others, such as my plan to finish the complete short stories of Edgar Allan Poe and advocate to start a fundraiser to support WWF Canada’s Arctic Species Conservation Fund during the succeeding school year, have been established through my experiences with teachers, peers, and clubs. The former was a recommendation that my poetry club leader gave me after reading a recent poem of mine while the latter was from discussions about fundraisers the Peer Ambassador club can work for next year and my passion for the mysteries of Antarctic and Arctic wildlife. Personal and communal (and global) growth are the central forces that are a part of my identity and are the parts of me I try to apply to establish a sense of identity, which are the pillars that the Calgary Bridge Foundation For Youth associates with as well.

From feeling lost to discovering myself amongst the chaos of everyday life has been a constant struggle. However, the very soul searching my curiosity, future aspirations, and my family have pointed me in the right direction when it comes to my place in Canada to achieve rediscovery and define the Canadian dream.

# To Infinity and Beyond



**By: Vivian Liang**

*“My life is enriched, and I am ready to enrich yours.”*

When I came to Calgary for high school in the year 2016, I knew nobody here. At registration for school, CBFY gave me a lot of information. It felt like my first friend and first home. I started to go to the RBC after school program in grade 10. There, I got help from friendly tutors, while making friends with a lot of other people with different skin colors. It amazed me when I saw students from different backgrounds study, work and live harmoniously together, and everybody was proud to display and share their unique culture, tradition, and foods. This made me feel that I was not alone. I started to talk to other people, sharing my stories and experiences. Due to my advantages in math and science studies, I quickly became welcomed in this small group, and I started to build courage and confidence within myself. Nowadays, I have become part of the tutoring group, where I help those students who have difficulties finishing their homework. I also talk to the newcomers of the program and make them feel this is a place like a second home. This is my grade-12 year, which is my third year in the RBC after school program, and I am selected as the recipient for the Rotary Adventure in Citizenship Program sponsored by CBFY. I am very grateful for this awesome opportunity that the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth provides and feel honored to participate and compete for all these awards with students like me.

Back in China, unfortunately, our culture undervalues girls greatly. My parents got divorced partly because my father wanted to have sons instead of me, a girl. So he had a young mistress and finally married her. I used to question a lot why I was not cherished or valued no matter how good I was. In the year 2015, I came to Canada with my mother who was on a work visa as a live-in caregiver. Since her employer didn't allow her to bring me with her, she had to leave me at a homestay in Toronto. Being left alone in a totally English-speaking environment with nobody understanding my mother tongue, especially being apart from my family for the first time in my life, I was nervous and worried about my new life. However, it didn't take too long before I sensed the warmth and felt secure in this new place. People smiled at me kindly everywhere, drivers stopped to let me cross the street safely, complete strangers opened and held the door for me. When I went to school for the first day, we had a basketball class, which I had never played before. I didn't know what to do, but my teacher and fellow students encouraged me to try. Nobody laughed at me. Instead, they gave me applause when I made tiny improvements. To me, Canada is such a friendly and supportive country, and I fell in love with it immediately.

Since Canada is such a diverse and multicultural country, I joined the Culture Club in my school and I have never been so close to these many different cultures. I believe the world is much more beautiful with these many colors and diversities. I am very proud of my Chinese

# “To Infinity and Beyond”

background and I volunteer as a teacher assistant at the local Chinese Academy every Saturday. With teaching the Chinese language, I feel like it is opening a door to China and Chinese culture for Canadians. I believe the more people learn about Chinese culture, the more they will be fascinated. Counterwise, I am open to learning about other cultures as well (especially foods haha). This year, I participated in the Youth Cultural Ambassador Training offered by the CCIS Alberta Youth Connections Program and become a YCAT who gives instructions to newcomers and immigrants that are new to the Canadian education system. I love my jobs as an YCAT because meeting the newcomers in our school is just like seeing myself from the past. I am open to accept any diversities and I am glad to use my knowledge of different culture to help students who are like me.

Here in Canada, nobody discriminates against your gender, what background you are from, or who your parents are. Opportunities are equal in front of everybody that is interested. This is what I love about Canada. There are so many opportunities as long as you are self-motivated and is willing to participate. In my 3 years of life in Canada, I have tried a lot of different things that I couldn't imagine doing before. I joined the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets and learned sailing and marksmanship; I joined in the cross country running and I am running 5K regularly; I am in the school swim team and improved my swimming skills; I joined in the Green Chiefs Environmental Club and was elected as the Vice-president; I joined the JA Company Program and was elected as the Financial Director; and I was given the opportunity to take part in the Technovation Program which supports girls in computer science and engineering. Through these awesome programs and opportunities, I feel that I have grown so much. I have developed strong skills and abilities in different fields that can be beneficial for my entire life.

Since age 13, I self-taught coding and started to develop computer games by myself and published some online. As I entered high school at 15 years old, I was happy to see Computer Science among the optional courses. I took Computer Science 10, 20 and 30 and I learned about codings like a sponge absorbing related knowledge and skills. I excelled in all these courses. By now I am quite skilled in developing games. My games were greatly welcomed among my fans and I gained some fame among game developers. I was invited to join in teams to develop bigger games and nobody even knew that I was only a high school student. I know there is a lot more to learn in the Information Technology field, that's why I plan to take computer science at university. Math is one of my favorite subjects. I finished all the math courses in two years with a 100% average. I also excel in science courses and get above 98% for both physics and chemistry. Last year, I finished my grade 11th year with an average of 97% and I won the Spring Award metals for math, physics, chemistry, and computer science. I was also awarded for being the top grade in the Waterloo Euclid Math Contest, which was a Grade 12 world-wide math contest that

I took in Grade 11. Solving problems with mathematical thinking is always a great joy to me. I am fascinated by how computer technology changes the world. I want my interest and talents in math and computers to be well applied in real life and make the world a more fun place to live in.

In the future, I look forward to building my own game team. In real life, I have seen so many children being attracted to or even getting addicted to games. Many of them develop a sedentary lifestyle and they won't leave their devices or go to sports. Some people "socialize" only online and gradually they will become reluctant to socialize with others in real life and I always feel sad about this phenomenon. So I was pretty excited at the game Pokemon Go and I believed it was a very good example to encourage people to get out of their houses/rooms to explore their surroundings. I hope my game team can dedicate time to creating more educational games to help people, especially young kids, to learn in a fun and playful way, games to lead people to a healthier lifestyle and drive them to join sports, and games to draw people to socialize with each other in the real world. As Visual Reality technology is getting more mature, we might be able to design games that inspire teenagers to do things that are more meaningful. Imagine in the near future, people will be walking in the street, while playing games and establishing "missions" and achievements that can make their lives more interesting. I hope my ideas and dedication can contribute to change people's daily lives in the future. Thank you for considering me as a scholarship recipient.

# Role of Understanding in Personal Development

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**By: Yuanpu Yang**

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*"Life represent a condition, while living a life is about understanding."*

# “Role of Understanding

If an individual's insight on a specific subject is the measure of understanding, then the individual's understanding must come with experience. Personal understanding also differs in different age stages. This paper will explore the inner thinking of an individual in three stages of his life. In the three age stages, the essay will discuss his experience with family issues, going abroad, and finding the meaning of nature.

The shadows of the trees were swaying, and the night winds of the early spring were still with a cold atmosphere, walking in the quiet courtyard, and there was no glory of the stars and moons in the hazy sky. A mood, bitterness, lingering in the heart, thoughts floating with the gray clouds, could not find the shore. A little boy was sitting on a stone waiting quietly, he seems a little sad. His parents divorced just a month ago, and he could not understand why. Before the divorce, his life was both colorful and simple. Back in the day, there was lots of homework for a primary school student. He gets up at 6 a.m., goes to school at 7 a.m., back home at 6 p.m., then does 3 hours of homework straight, but he never feels stressed. As a young boy, he understood he must complete the work before he gets to play without worrying about anything else. Therefore, he always does work before playing with friends, until the day his parents were no longer together. After his parents' divorce, he loves sitting by the window, watching the pedestrians passing by, the wandering kittens, and the flying birds. Sometimes he got so lost in thought that he ignored his surroundings. As time flows, he lost his ability to stay on task. Fortunately, it did not take too long for him to get adapted to his new life. He realized he did not do anything wrong, and he should never feel unsettled.

Early 2014, he left his hometown, crossed the Pacific Ocean, and came to Canada. The teenage boy will face the biggest challenges of his life. He felt hopeless in the corner of the basement, he wanted to go back, but there was no way back. He could not fall asleep for three days until he was exhausted. In the first three days, the teenage boy was finding reasons to stay. He thought about the better education system, the fresh air, the beautiful sceneries, the diverse culture, and the universal healthcare. He then thought about his friends, relatives, and mentors. He understands that they hope he will at least achieve something by the next time he comes back. Despite this fact, the teenage boy knew that he would not be able to talk like the native speakers, possibly could not make a friend, but he chose to face the challenges since he knew this is a valuable opportunity for him to pursue his goal. He was lucky that he got invited to an after-school program established by The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth in his first year in Canada. In the program, the teenage boy gets to know new people, contact the new culture, and play with other newcomers to learn English and build interpersonal skills. He returns home by himself every day around 5 p.m., and sometimes he felt he was like a ghost, desolate, and no one cares. He could have lost all his senses with that kind of loneliness. Luckily, in the gap of despair, he saw hope.

## in Personal Development”

The teenager slowly turned into a young adult and got interested in defining the nature of matter. First, he believes human nature was complex and abstract. People describe abstract ideas as subjects detached from human senses. Second, he started to look into human actions and interactions, and the possible cause or origin of these behaviors. He likes to define these results as a series, and he believes there must be certain conditions to start an event. Finally, he tries to explain the connections between events. He then uses the same logic to define other applications. Due to the complexity of human nature, he more often uses the logic and imagination for scientific subjects. Therefore, as he experiences more, he became more interested in the pure-side of matters. In life, he volunteers at the Calgary Chinese Academy to help set up the classrooms for teachers. He also volunteers at the Mentorship Program at St. Helena Junior High School to work with mentees to develop social skills. Take a brief look at his high school experience, he studied hard and had few great friends. One of the long term experiences he has had was attending the RBC Youth Empowerment program held by the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth for the last five years. For the most recent two years, the young adult has been searching for his interests. He thought about studying Business, so he joined the Business Management Dual-Credit program. He then thought to become a doctor, so he devoted a lot of his free-time in studying Biology. He also tried to find other subjects that may interest himself, so he learned some Computer Science and other Sciences. Finally, he found out that Mathematics was most intriguing to himself. One of the reasons for him to choose Mathematics was because after he met one of the tutors in the after-school program who spent a lot of time helping him with his Physics homework. The young adult believes Mathematics was the foundation of Physics, and it helps scientists to describe and refine theological ideas. However, he knows that life was not simply about understanding. In order for success, he needed help and understanding from others. A scholarship would help him in his pursuit of Mathematics, specifically, it could ease the financial pressure on him so that he could apply to the universities that offer programs in Mathematics. He hoped he could be a Financial Analyst or a Mathematical researcher that one day he could contribute his knowledge to the world. Therefore, he wanted to use Mathematics to define and build concepts that deal with the nature of matter. In the end, the young adult understands the idea of exploration, rationalization, and understanding.

In conclusion, although he finds life misery at a point in the three stages, external assistance and logic have helped him get through all the difficulties and challenges. Especially in his hardest times, the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth has helped him quite significantly. Sometimes, he goes out of his way to help his friends and others once he has gained understanding as a way to contribute to society. In the end, he has grown a lot and showed how understanding can make a difference.

2019



YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



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*“Since childhood I liked to draw something that inspired me. I behold the beauty of nature and find inspiration in things that surround us. Science and art created an amazing combination in me, so I can dream about the ocean with its dark depths, endless space with giant galaxies, animals and their behavior in the wild, and, what is the most important, try to release my emotions on the paper, using the regular brush and paints. It seems like for my whole life I will have to merge my science and art sides, which I think is beautiful.”*

- Anna Nikolenko (Age 17)