

In Their Own Words



These are stories written by our 2017 Youth Achievement Award Winners

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Foreword from our CEO



In Their Own Words is a collection of inspiring and compelling stories of real life experiences written by the fifteen award winning immigrant and refugee youth. These audacious, talented and vivacious young authors provide the reader with an account of their personal settlement and integration journeys to Canada. Each story shares a unique experience and has a special nuance and flair to it and reminds the reader that adversities will always walk beside us but dreams are worth pursuing and one should never stop yearning to follow them. As you read *In Their Own Words* you will recognize the strength, resilience and tenacity of the youth in the power of their words and the appreciation they show to all those individuals who touched their lives along the way. I feel honoured and humbled to be a small part of this magnificent book of stories and very blessed to have crossed paths with these exceptional youth and experienced the world through their eyes. This book has transformed my world and believe you me it will transform yours.

- Umashanie Reddy

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“Girl Meets World”

By: Peace Emmanuel

I made a choice that I would take a chance and it has changed my life forever. I went headfirst into the world and I was almost swept away by its big waves. I was tossed left and right, up and down, and I felt like I could barely hold on. But I had faith that I was not going to drown and found myself swimming to shore. I have had rough times in different environments but they are tied to my growth and have made me who I am today.

My name is Peace Oyiza Emmanuel; I am a seventeen-year-old girl in grade twelve at John G. Diefenbaker High School who is proud to say that she has come very far in her life. I lived in Nigeria for over thirteen years before I moved to Canada in December 2012. There is a high level of cultural, social, economic, and political differences between Nigeria and this was something I did not realize until I arrived. When I arrived, I was still very young at heart and was naïve in the way I saw the world. I was ignorant to the changes I was about to encounter. Call these changes big or small but for me they were the factors that would influence my behavior and my future. I still remember stepping out of the Calgary airport and seeing white fluffy snow drift down on me; I just stood there and took it all in. I felt like this was my new home away from home.

This all changed when I went to my first day of school. I was in grade eight and I walked into my first period drama class. I looked different, talked different and acted different. I will never forget the isolation I felt that day. The teacher told me to take off my boots and put them on the rack at the front of the class and take a seat at the far back where there was an empty chair. After I put my boots on the rack and turned around to walk to my assigned seat, my boots, being too heavy, fell straight into the trash can right in front of the rack. It was really awkward for me and I had to go all the way back to the rack and pick up my boots from the trash can. Everyone stared at me but nobody got up to help me. After drama class, I headed down the hallway to get to my next class and I tripped over another trash can in the hallway; there were so many people trying to get

to their classes and I was not yet familiar with the rush of the hallways during class switches. I thought it would be like my school in Nigeria but it was not. It was really discouraging for me and I realized that I would have to put in a lot of work to be able to adapt to the changes I was faced with.

From that day on, I did not try to make friends or smile at anyone I came across. I did not act cruel to anyone, I just did not engage in a conversation with them. I thought I was cursed with bad luck in school for the longest time and it was worse for me because no one was telling me what not to do. For example, I accidentally went into the boys washroom and when I came out and finally realized where I had entered, everyone around was giving me odd looks. In my head I heard them saying, “what is wrong with her?” or “what is she doing in the boys’ bathroom? Is she okay?” I was embarrassed, but had no one to confide in or talk to about what I had done. I did not have any friends to laugh with or simply turn it into a joke. It was at this time I started to pause and actually weigh the differences between my home country and Canada.

I finally met a girl who, to this day, is the closest friend I will ever have. I felt like she was God-sent and my guardian angel. She was already late to her math class when she saw me roaming the hallway looking very lost. Instead of just ignoring me, she walked up to me and asked me where I was going and I showed her my schedule. She introduced herself



*Grade 12,
John G. Diefenbaker*

Girl Meets World

as Maureen and she told me that we were going to the same class; since that day, she helped me fit in. She is also a Nigerian like me but has been in Canada much longer than I have so she was able to understand the changes I felt and help me adapt. Life started to get a little easier. I began to smile more and had a brighter aura. Even though change is inevitable, it is still hard to let change take its course. I left everything back in my hometown to come to Canada. I had built very strong relationships with many people, and even though I was very excited to be moving, I was not expecting such a drastic change of events. The excitement lasted for a short while but soon after I was drenched in my own tears. However, life improved after meeting Maureen and other people, and for that I will always be thankful.

Life must go on and so it did for me. I entered high school and things were different again but I could cope better this time around because I had built strong bonds with people who I could trust and who I knew had my back. I also got introduced to the Mentorship Program and the RBC Youth Empowerment Program. Joining these two branches of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth (CBFY) was one of the best choices I have made in my life. One of the reasons I could not cope so well in junior high was because I did not have people to confide in like I do now. I lacked people who could help me academically with my schoolwork or socially when I was away from my parents and siblings. I now had friends and the CBFY programs to support me. Although the Mentorship Program is no longer at my school, I still attend and am continually thankful for the support of the RBC Youth Empowerment Program. It has provided me with support whenever I need it and makes me feel important and even a bit pampered by the tutors. They take our learning seriously and do their very best to help progress in our learning; they even seek us out and offer help before we admit we need it. I continually see great improvement in my academics and I am thankful to them for that. This program is a gift and I am privileged to be a part of it.

Along with the CBFY programs, I became more involved in many other activities in my school and community. Presently I am part of my school's Student Council Executive

By: Peace Emmanuel

Board. My specific job title is Special Events Executive, meaning that I am in charge of organizing and running events that happen in my school. I volunteer whole-heartedly and give it 100 percent of my effort. I volunteer to give to others and in turn, I feel accomplished when I succeed in making them happy. Formerly, I was part of the junior girls' field hockey team in grade ten; this experience helped me realize that I was stronger than I thought. I did not think I would even make the team, but after attending many strenuous tryouts and workouts, I pulled through and actually made the team. That on its own was a personal achievement and I was thankful that I did not quit or give up on myself.

Another factor that helped me grow as a person was having the privilege to be able to work and provide for both myself and my family. It was difficult for me at first, but I pulled myself together not long after. I worked at Chartwell Colonel Belcher Retirement Residence in the summer of 2014 as a Dietary Server. I remember going into work on my first day and feeling terrified and intimidated by the other workers who were all older than me. I was worried that I would mess up and make someone angry at me. I started my shift and in less than an hour, I had already spilled a plate of mashed potatoes. I felt very disappointed in myself and started to cry when the manager called for me. I thought she was going to fire me so I asked her if I could call my dad. She did not fire me, and all she said to me was, "This is the real world, Peace, and in the real world, we do not call for our dads." She was blunt, but I left her office and thought to myself how right she was. I had to be able to cope with the fast changes or I would be left behind in the dark. I pulled myself together and finished my shift with dignity. What my manager said helped me grow stronger, and that is why I hold on to the lessons from my past. All the little lessons I have learned have taught me that there are always going to be obstacles and hurdles in my way. The higher the hurdles, the higher I will have to jump, but I will never give up.

I have come so far but I still have much to learn about myself and the world around me. I will improve the outcome of my future by attending post-secondary school and focusing

Girl Meets World

on my education. I love science and find myself naturally applying what I learn in my biology, physics and chemistry classes to help myself in my daily life. I have applied to Ryerson University, the University of Alberta, and the University of Calgary to begin an undergraduate Bachelor of Science degree in the fall. I love the work of pediatricians, and other than their obvious job description, they also bring hope and happiness to children who are sick. I see myself being that person in the future. I want to be a pediatrician and help build a hospital with a cheerful atmosphere that also provides daycare services for the busy parents of patients to drop off their other children to be properly cared for. This is my dream, but I am open to what my future holds for me as I continue to grow.

No one knows what tomorrow holds; therefore, planning for the future is very crucial in order to achieve a good outcome. I believe I am an eligible recipient for the CBFY Scholarship because I have high hopes and dreams for my future and this scholarship can help me in reaching my goals. I plan on attending a post-secondary institution next year but my family does not have the sufficient funds to completely support me. I am open to any help I can get and I hope to make every one of my supporters proud. Someday, I want to be able to smile back on my past and be thankful that I had people who helped me achieve my dreams. The future is very vague but I am the one that will clear my path as I go along; it will not be easy, and I am humbled by and open to receive any support I receive along the way. This scholarship would go toward my academics and would further give me the opportunity to go to university and develop the skills that I will use to help make the world a better place. This is my dream and I hope I can get the support of the CBFY Scholarship Committee. Thank you very much for your consideration.

“Reshape Our Perceptions.”

By: Lorraine Frilles

My name is Lorraine Frilles, I was born and raised in the beautiful country called the Philippines. I lived in the Philippines for 15 years. We lived near a beach and every summer my cousins and I would go there and swim until our skin turned dark from the scorching sun. The Philippines is a place where the sun was always bright and trees were everywhere. I was surrounded by my friends and my family. I was happy.



*Grade 11,
Father Lacombe*

I was just two years old when my mom decided to make the tough decision of leaving our home to work abroad. Growing up was difficult without my mom since I also did not know who my father was. Though the challenges of being apart were not small, the experience gave me great perspectives about life. There were times where I felt very lonely especially if there were school events where we would have to bring our parents but growing up without my mom gave me the opportunity to be raised by my incredible grandparents and to look after myself.

I feel incredibly blessed to be able to grow up with my loving grandparents and auntie. My grandparents are the sweetest and did their absolute best to provide for me. My auntie was hard working and independent, she is the reason why I developed great study habits, she also inspired me to become who I am today. The relationship I had with them was very special. I was the first child in our family and despite not having my parents around, I felt

It's a New Beginning. 🗨️

loved, unconditionally. They gave me all the support and care that I needed, that anyone could ever ask for but I still often longed for my mom. My mom did her best to visit the Philippines occasionally every 4-5 years. But ultimately it was very hard to establish a connection to her, at times this made me feel like she didn't care about us at all. I had to repeatedly remind myself that distance is just a hindrance that we can always defy, but during this time, the idea of reuniting was rough. I felt like it would be impossible for my mom and I to be together. I couldn't even imagine the idea of living with her under the same roof.

My life in the Philippines can be view as challenging with many barriers but I choose to see things differently. The glass will always be half full for me. At times, living in the Philippines is like living in a dream, but every dream eventually has come to an end. I was devastated when I heard the news that I was moving to Canada even though I was finally going to be with my mom. I understand that in Canada, I will have a better education, a better career in the future and many new opportunities but this also meant that I would have to leave everything I have ever known. It was especially difficult to leave my grandparents, they were with me since day one and it was heartbreaking to leave them all of a sudden. I felt so lonely leaving the place I call home. Leaving my grandparents was more than difficult, leaving them was the hardest thing about moving to Canada. The thought of not being able to talk to them at any moment crushed me. They gave me everything. They have taken care of me since I was a baby and I wish that I could be there to do the same.

During high school in the Philippines, I developed a strong interest in learning music. I started playing guitar and sometimes I would perform in our school shows. I was shy, therefore only few people know that I play guitar and sing as well. I am an avid book lover. For as long as I can remember, I would filled with excitement every time I turned a page in a book. I had already finished high school and was about to enroll in University. I worked hard. I focused my drive and efforts in being on the Honour roll and excelling in all of my classes. My dream has always been to get an Bsc in Biology and finally I was

taking the first step, this was another reasons why it was so hard to leave home. I had to constantly remind myself that this move was for my own good while also feeling like I would have to start all over again.

I travelled from the Philippines to Canada alone, I was terrified but being alone is nothing new to me. While I was growing up my aunt and grandparents trained me to become as independent as possible. They keep on telling me that they will not always be by my side and that one day I would have to take care of myself. Being a newcomer to Canada, I was scared and lost. I had no idea on how to start a new life from scratch, not only with my education but also with my family, friends and community. It took a little bit of time but I soon realized that all things happen for a reason. When I started school in Canada, I was disappointed to learn that I had to complete high school all over again. Though this became another barrier, I am resilient and choose to take another perspective. Completing high school all over again meant that I had a second chance to push myself to be the best that I can be. Moving from one country to another is hard, you have to adjust in several ways, you have to integrate without completely losing yourself, but it also means that you can improve and that there is a space to grow.

I am excited to say that I have been connected to The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth and the Mentorship Program for almost 2 years now. I started as a shy, isolated, homesick newcomer who did not want to participate in anything. The Mentorship Program provided a sense of community that I never expected. There was finally a safe space for me to make mistakes, attempt new things and chase the opportunities that I left home for. This program helped me become more confident in socializing with other people and I was finally able to make new friends. The Mentorship Program has not only helped me with my confidence and relationships as a newcomer, they have also played a huge role in introducing me to what my new home is gonna be like.

The summer of 2016 was when I finally became a peer mentor. Being a peer mentor is a fun responsibility and a great opportunity for personal growth. I get a chance to develop

Reshape Our Perceptions. It's a New Beginning.

my inner leader and give back to my new community. I love that I get to meet other newcomers and share my story and my journey with them. I feel empowered knowing that my job as a peer mentor is to encourage newcomers to excel and be the best they can be. I really enjoy being involved in my school and my environment. I am a part of Homework Club at Father Lacombe and the CBFY Youth Advisory Council. CBFY helped me in so many ways and for that I am grateful. Aside from the CBFY Programs I am proud to say that I am also a part of the Father Lacombe High School dance team.

After high School my goal is to get into University. I want to study at the University of Calgary and pursue the medical career that I have always dream about. I am dedicated to getting back on track on turning my dreams into reality. My grades and education has always been one of my top priorities. I currently have honours with distinction in all of my classes and work with much determination to maintain these grades. I have been on the honour roll since I was in Grade 10. My goal is to take Biological Medicine or Nursing in University and in order to get into those program I have to work hard to improve my language skills and maintain a high average. Since I was a kid I have always wanted to be a doctor mainly because I am surrounded by people who works in a hospital and my passion lies in communities that help other people. Now that I'm living in a Canada and have experienced directly helping people through the Mentorship program, my desire and passion for working in a hospital has skyrocketed. It's what I want to be and it is where I know I'll be happy.

CBFY should choose me as a scholarship recipient because I know that I deserved it. I have been working hard my whole life and will continue to work hard to achieve my goals. Please rest assured that if I received this scholarship, the money it will not go to waste. I will make you all very proud. I am a girl with big goals, big aspirations and big dreams that will be difficult to achieve without any help. The support from CBFY will go a long way in for a girl with a big heart.

“A High School Student’s Dream”

By: Yahye Hashi

My name is Yahye Hashi. I was born in the capital city of Somalia, Mogadishu. Life in Somalia was not easy. The lack of security was the most challenging aspect about living in Mogadishu. The city of Mogadishu suffered a lot because of the civil war that broke out in 1991. During the war my mom’s family emigrated from Somalia, but they returned to Somali after the situation was settled. As a child, life in Mogadishu seemed amazing. Not because of the development but because of its people; it was a beautiful city and its people were very nice. Safety was never my concern as I only thought and cared about playing. However as I grew older I realized how difficult the situation in my country was. I liked school because it was the place where I could find hope and inspiration. My mother cared a lot about our education; my siblings and I were fortunate that we could go to school. I remember wearing my uniform, a white shirt and blue pants to school. As a young kid in Mogadishu, sometimes it was very difficult to concentrate on my education and ignore the distractions of the unstable politics within Somalia.

Coming to Canada as a refugee from Somalia was difficult. Adapting to a new culture, learning a new language, and leaving relatives and friends was the most difficult part about moving to Canada. My family and I had hopes of a brighter future and one day helping those we left behind. We have been living in Canada for more than two years. We noticed a big difference between Canadian culture and Somali culture, but we have adopted the Canadian culture with our own. The cold climate of Canada was challenging, as a family who were emigrated from East Africa we have never experience a drop in temperature less than five degrees Celsius. Two months after we arrived, I started studying at John G Diefenbaker High School. I was astonished by the difference and contrast between the school systems in Somalia and the one in Canada. However I like my high school. I have made great friends who help shape my ideas about Canada. I like the school’s environment; all the teachers and students encourage and support me.

A High School Student's Dream



*Grade 12,
John G. Diefenbaker*

I have a dream to become an electrician and winning the scholarship award would make a big impact in achieving my aspiration. The money will surely help me in my educational journey. I want to become an electrician, believe by doing that, I can help to repay some of the goodness that I have received from the government and the people of Canada. My dream is to contribute to the society that I am living in, the society that welcomed me and assisted me to become who I am today.

“The Bumpy Road”

By: Nardos Abebe

The Calgary Bridge Foundation For Youth (CBFY) has helped me and still helping me a lot to engage in my plans and dreams. Even though I have only been in the program for two years, I have learned lots of things that will be vital for my future. For example, I have learned how to study, how to read effectively and how to help other students and help yourself at the same time. When I first went to The Calgary Bridge Foundation After School Program, I was able to see the bright side of my futures. The mentors made me realize that I am someone who has the ability to use their education to make a difference in the world. In the program, I feel a great sense of belonging and loved because of the fact that everyone is treated equally and welcome. My name is Nardos Bedilu Abebe. I am 17 years old and currently studying at Father Lacombe High School as a grade 11 student. I spend most of my time studying and doing my homework. During my free time, I like to read a memoir, watch movies and play soccer with my dad. I am now applying for a CBFY scholarship in hopes of attending post-secondary education.

Back in Ethiopia, my mom was a teacher and my dad was a journalist. My dad's job was the reason why we decided to leave our home country. One morning when I was getting ready to go to school, my dad told me we would be moving to Kenya tomorrow. First I refused because I never thought of leaving my friends, my soccer community and families without saying goodbye. But I knew I wouldn't miss school because the school wasn't fair. In my opinion, the Ethiopian government created the school system to make students less intelligent so then they can always have the power. But after a while, I thought about the freedom I could have in Kenya and meeting new people and getting to know new cultures and traditions so I decided to go. But I felt guilty because I knew I wouldn't have the time to say sorry to my neighbors who I broke their window several times when playing soccer. We didn't also have the time to pack our stuff and to say goodbye to anyone except my grandmother and my uncle. My relatives took our stuff and promised they will sell it and send us the money if we needed it. My mom sold our TV to our neighbor hoping it will help pay for our transportation. My mom and I cried when we

The Bumpy Road

saw our empty one room house. In this one room house, we used to cook, wash, eat, and sleep. It was very small but it was full of love. We will miss it.

The worst thing about moving to Kenya was that we had to use public transportation from Addis Ababa to Moyale and a big truck from Moyale to Nairobi. We could have gone by airplane but we could not afford it. We didn't have passports either. When we moved from Moyale to Kenya which is (about 772 km), we got on the big truck and they separated my dad from my mom and I. We both cried but no one cared. They put him in the back seat with two other people. The truck had many kinds of wheat stored in huge bags. At first, I thought they were there because they were delivering them to Nairobi but after I realize they were there to hide my father. They put about five huge bags of wheat on top of my dad. I ask the driver why they were doing this and he told me it is because we don't have the legal passport and if the police saw it, they could deport us back to Ethiopia. My mom and I sat beside the driver. After about five hours, the driver allowed my mom and I to go outside and get some water from outside. That was when I saw my dad under the huge bags of wheat struggling to breathe. I asked the driver to allow my dad to sit with me with tears running on my face. First, he said no but when I refused to go in the truck he allowed my dad to sit beside me. My dad was still struggling to breathe and that was when I asked him why we do all this just to run away from the government. He told me he was doing all this for me because if we went to Kenya we would have a chance to go to US or Canada and there I will have the chance of getting a better education. That was when I decided I would do whatever it takes to go to post-secondary and help many people around the world just like how my dad wanted me to. With prayer and strength, we made it to Nairobi after two days and three nights.

When we got out of the truck, I couldn't handle standing on my own legs so I laid on the ground. I think I fainted because I couldn't remember anything after that. When I woke up after a few hours I found myself in a small room. That small room became my first house in Nairobi, Kenya.

By: Nardos Abebe

In Nairobi, my mom and dad couldn't find a job because they didn't speak Swahili, they didn't have references and didn't have any work experience in Kenya. My parents were very depressed and so was I. We didn't go hungry and we had clothes to wear because my two aunts from Boston and my uncle from Calgary were sending us money. That made it even worse for us to live in Kenya because we felt so ashamed whenever we ask them for money. The food we ate and clothes we wore didn't feel like it belonged to us because we didn't work to get them. One day when I was talking to my uncle from Calgary on the phone, he said: "Instead of giving you the fish I will show you how to catch it". I didn't know what he meant so I asked my dad. My dad told me my uncle is going to start a process that will help us come to Canada. When I hear my dad saying that I felt a peace that I never felt before because I realized if I went to Canada I will be able to get the best education and that will allow me to help other people in life and also my parents will be able to have their own job.



Grade 11, Father Lacombe

We stayed in Kenya for 11 more months and 5 days. Throughout this time, I never went to school. I used to go outside only once or twice a month because in Kenya the security is very poor especially for people like my parents and I who didn't have citizenship. If police officers saw people walking down the streets of Nairobi, they would ask for money and if you didn't give them money, they will jail you or kill you if they chose too.

The Bumpy Road

My parents were everything to me and that when I realized my parents are my life and I learned could never live without them. When I was in Kenya I experienced racism in a way that is extremely hard for me to explain but I am thankful for all the obstacles I had to go through because those obstacles made me who I am today and gave me strength that will always stay with me.

I moved from Kenya to Canada on Wednesday, November 27, 2013. For about two month we were getting donations from the government and we stayed at my uncle's house because my parents couldn't find a job. I started school after four days as a grade eight student at Father Scollen school. I was able to make friends quickly. I loved the system of the education, my teachers and friends. As a result, I feel like Canada is the country that I belong. My parents were also able to find a job. We rented our own house shortly and started our new life. Canada is still very hard for my parents because of the weather as they do not drive and the language. But my parents never regret the fact that we came here because all it matter to them is that I am able to receive an education.

The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth should pick me as the recipient of the scholarship because I have strength in me that will always be with me for the rest of my all life. I am unique and I can overcome problems. For me, it doesn't matter how long it takes to achieve what I want to achieve. I will never give up. I have experienced almost everything throughout my life. I have traveled a bumpy road to become who I am today, but I am thankful for all the obstacles that I had to go through. Because I believe those obstacles have lead me to a beautiful destination.

After finishing high school, I am planning on attending post-secondary for a civil engineering program. I am willing to go to any university that would accept me. The reason why I want to become a civil engineer is to re build the road from Ethiopia to Kenya that almost made and my parents die. If I build that road I would save millions of people's lives. I don't want anyone to travel on that road. I don't want anyone to struggle

By: Nardos Abebe

like me or to lose their life because of that bumpy road. I would love to work anywhere around the world but especially I would love to work in poor countries because they need engineers more than any other countries. I will not stop learning after finishing post-secondary. I would love to take other courses like medicine that could help me save millions of lives.

After working and making my own money, I am planning to take care of my family and people who have no one to take care of them. I am planning to use my ideas and opinions to make the world a better place. I am planning to do that by volunteering for different programs. Right now I am nominated for In The Lead program. We do lots of volunteering especially for new immigrants and single moms in Calgary. We help them to engage with Canada's lifestyle and to fulfill some of their needs. I have also volunteered in Drop-in Center by serving food to the homeless. I am also planning to do some volunteer work in summer besides my summer school. The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth has a mission to engage immigrant families to make their dreams come true and to fulfill their needs. I would do anything to make my dreams and plans come true and this scholarship will open the first door for me to do that.

“My Story”

By: Alejandro Garza

It is normal for people to refuse change, because of fear or uncertainty. But to move forward and find success, you can not let that fear hold you back. I truly believe that the people who are successful in life are the ones who have learned to expect, embrace and adapt to change. And one of the best ways to learn from change is through personal experience.

I was born in Mexico City in the summer of 1999. I was born in a country with many challenges, history, and contrasts. There I grew up surrounded by my family. Since I was very young, my parents instilled in me the values of respect, caring, responsibility, loyalty, and love. Values that to this day, guide me through every challenge I face in life.

During my childhood, I enjoyed learning things related to mathematics, science, and technology. My favorite toys were the ones that allowed me to be creative. Solving puzzles, building with Lego, playing sports, watching movies and reading books were my favorites activities growing up. From them, I learned about teamwork, problem solving, history and the world in general.



Grade 12, Bishop O' Byrne

These activities created in me the spirit of learning and the search for new experiences. These hobbies, inspired me to choose what I wanted to be when I grew up. When I was 10, I was doing a research project for school when I encountered the word “engineer”. The word introduced me to the world where science and technology drive innovation. Then I knew that if I wanted to use my skills to make this world a better place I needed to become an engineer.

As I grew older the idea of engineering as a career was becoming more and more realistic. When I turned 13, I decided that I wanted to study abroad. By studying in a different country, I was going to be exposed to different cultures, perspectives, ideas, and opportunities. And I really wanted to experience all that.

The dream of becoming an engineer has fueled me throughout my life. And my desire to fulfill that dream inspired me to make one of the most important decisions of my life.

Without a doubt, moving to Canada has been the most challenging, interesting and transforming experience I’ve ever lived. I moved here with my family right when I was about to turn 15. But the process of moving here started back when I was 12. I remember when my father told us about a job opportunity in Canada, and how he wanted us to move to Calgary with him. For me, this meant that I had to leave behind an opportunity for an academic scholarship in one of the most prestigious colleges in Mexico. But it also meant that I had a great opportunity to experience a different culture, language, and country.

So, after a lot of thinking, we decided to move forward with the plan. When I was 13, my dad moved to Calgary and in August of 2014, my mom, my brother and I moved to join him. During the first month, I was just starting to get used to seeing labels of food in a different language, to seeing our house without furniture and to not being able to visit my grandparents every day. Up to the first month, the change did not hit me as hard as I would have expected. But it was not until the first day of school that I started to really feel the change.

My Story

Since that day, moving to Canada has had a major effect on the academic, social, and athletic aspects of my life. This experience has changed me in ways I could have never imagined.

The moment I stepped into Bishop O'Byrne High School, my academic life was affected. Since I was in elementary school, I have always been a person who likes to do well in school. I always had a good relationship with my teachers because of the interest and effort I showed at school. As I previously mentioned, mathematics and science have always been my strongest subjects, and because of that I regularly participated in projects or science fairs at my school. On my last year of junior high school, I was offered a scholarship for one of the most prestigious high school institutions in the country. But that was the year when my family finally decided to move to Canada. And of course, I absolutely wanted to experience this opportunity. On my first day of classes, I remember being intimidated by the language. During my first year of high school, I struggled to communicate with my teachers. But that never stopped me from trying. I was determined that I was going to do well at school. Because of this mindset, I managed to score high marks in Chemistry, Physics, and Math. And after a while, I started to get along better with my teachers and classmates, and the language started being less of a problem. This change only made me realize that I was absolutely certain of my decision to become an engineer. This challenge forced me to hold on to the things that I have always excelled at, to prove to myself that I could do well in this new country. And that is why regardless of the struggle, I have managed to get on the honor roll with distinction for 2 consecutive years.

Canada also changed my athletic life. Since I was very young, I have always been in contact with sports. By doing sports I have always found a place of relaxation and a place where I can improve through practice. Back in Mexico, I used to practice two of my favorite sports, Tae Kwon Do, and Basketball. In Tae Kwon Do, I managed to achieve the black belt and competed at the national level. In Basketball, I was the captain of my junior high school Basketball team and was a prospect for athletic scholarships in different high school institutions. But that changed when I made the decision to move to Canada.

By: Alejandro Garza

When I moved, I wanted to continue playing Basketball. But not making the team after trying out at my school really hit me. It made me question my skills and abilities. But it was thanks to my mom that I found a new path. She suggested that I should try out for the swim team. I learned how to swim when I was three years old. I used to compete during the summer, but it was never interesting for me. After the tryout, I made the team. At the end of every year, the school hosts an athletic banquet where they give prizes to the athletes that participated in teams throughout the year. After I saw people receiving the awards, I realized that my goal was to get at least one of those awards. And that is why during grade 11 and 12 I have participated on the football, handball and swimming teams. I have earned a Bronze Athlete Award for my participation in Bishop O'Byrne athletics, and a third place in the CSHAA Swim Meet.

Finally, the last aspect I would like to talk about is my social development in Canada, which is perhaps one of the aspects that has been more transforming for me. I remember that during my first year of high school, I had no friends, no one to spend lunch with. That situation, made me realize that I needed to be more confident in myself and to be more open with people. And after a while, I started making new friends. Friends from places all over the world. From them, I have learned about different cultures, opinions, and perspectives. They have taught me about the challenges their countries face and how those problems need a prompt solution. It was because of the new people that I met that I started to get into volunteering. I believe that by volunteering your time and effort, you can start to create small, but real change. I have volunteered in places and programs like the Food Bank, The Calgary Drop-In Centre, The Calgary Zoo, Paint the Town, and The Mustard Seed. I have also participated in programs that help immigrant youth to adapt to this new culture. In the CBFY Mentorship Program, I have found a place where a community is built. In my first year of living in Calgary, the program was not in my school. But when the program arrived at Bishop O'Byrne, I saw it as an opportunity for me to help other immigrant youth in the process of adapting to this new country.

By: Alejandro Garza

Participating in the CBFY Mentorship Program has shown me the importance of helping others. That is why to this day I still want to be an engineer. I want to use my skills in technology and science to help this world become a better place for everyone. I want to create solutions for the problems that affect us all. I want to change the world the same way Canada changed me. I want to see a world where everyone is open to new perspectives and ideas, a world where nature is treated the way it deserves to be treated, a world with more opportunities for everyone.

This scholarship will help me accomplish my goals. Achieving a degree in engineering is difficult, but I am determined to succeed. I have already been accepted to the of Bachelor of Engineering program at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta. And with your help, my family and I will be able to pay for an opportunity to make my ideas turn into reality.

I thank you, the committee for your time and your consideration for this prestigious scholarship award.

“Recovery”

By: Grace Tu

Imagine dropping your phone in the toilet but you don't have any rice to place it in; thus you are left with a broken phone that is there in your hand, yet you can do nothing with it. You have lost the phone without truly losing the phone. What I felt upon my arrival in Calgary was exactly like this; the phone is analogous to my home, in the sense that it's a part of your identity; it's a place you fully trust and feel secure to store all of your important valuables and your pleasant memories. When that phone falls out of your hand, suddenly you are stripped of everything at once: your contacts, your belongings, and your connections to loved ones. My name is Grace Tu from John G. Diefenbaker High School and this is my story of moving to Calgary.

I was born in Montreal, Quebec, a French-speaking city, but before I grasped any of the language or heritage, my family of three moved back to China where I spent over six years of my childhood. It was my first exposure to a language, a culture, and community I could call my own. Like many other immigrants, moving to a new environment is a paradigm of adversity akin to the experience of dropping your phone. There's the progression of loss of identity, self-evident culture shock, and struggles adjusting to the drastically mismatched lifestyle of a new country. For me, beyond that was losing a mother figure in my life. After our arrival in Calgary in 2008, my dad, brother, and I felt the emptiness of a family without a mom. Soon, I found much of the family responsibilities instilled upon me. With my dad working multiple part-time jobs to provide for us and still barely getting by, while my brother focused solely on studying English, I was left alone to assume roles unfamiliar to me. My maternal instincts emerged as I began to embody this new role. Being female, many of the household chores fell on me; cooking, cleaning, and managing expenses only held a portion of my newfound duties. I would get up early in the mornings to make breakfast and prepare everything before waking my brother up for school. This commitment was unsettling at first, but it consolidated us as a family. I believe these challenges, along with the assistance I received from the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth, moulded me into the hardworking, well-rounded individual that I am today.

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As cliché as it may sound, CBFY directed me through my journey as a newcomer, and introduced me to countless aspects of Canadian culture and resources to help make my integration into Canadian society much more pleasant. Since joining the Mentorship program nine years ago and the RBC Youth Empowerment Program six years ago when it began as the Rogers Youth Empowerment Program, I have grown tremendously as I have learned how to adapt to changes in culture and lifestyle, deal with the unexpected, and have unlocked my nascent leadership skills. The CBFY programs helped me adjust to life in Canada, guiding me during the most challenging time of my life. I will never forget my first year as a CBFY member; it was filled with remarkable experiences, such as skating in the Olympic Oval feeling faster than Sonic, swimming at Village Square where I swallowed enough pool water to end the California drought, bowling for the first time but focusing more on my pizza than the sport, happily making snow globes despite getting burned by glue for the first time, and going curling where I discovered my hidden talent for this unique sport, earning much “respect” from my peers, and leaving the ice to be spoiled with some nice, warm, crispy fried chicken. Everything was so fascinating and exciting. A major part of what made my experiences so memorable was the mentors and leaders who took care of us as if we were family. I am truly grateful now and forever for encountering and getting to know those mentors who did their best to make each day a great one. As time passes, we might not remember what exactly people did, but we will never forget how they made us feel. I remember feeling joyful as I left school each day. As an eight year old kid who had never been exposed to any of this before, I was blown away, not only the amount of fun activities I had access to, but also the generosity of the people who provided these services to strangers’ kids. These altruistic acts seemed foreign to me. In the days when I understood little to none at school, I found much comfort in my afterschool meetings with my mentor who I could actually communicate with through the same language. Out of all that she did for me, the memory I hold most dear to my heart was when I was sick at school. My mentor did not choose to simply visit with someone else, but instead she took care of me and stayed with me in the nurse’s room the entire time to talk and spend time with me. I genuinely respect and appreciate this organization for the endless opportunities it has provided

By: Grace Tu

me, from job fairs and volunteering to workshops and field trips. I have come to know exceptional tutors at RYEP who often help us past their work hours in order to ensure that we leave understanding the subject. Thanks to the help of the tutors, I graduated junior high with Honours with Distinction (90%+ average), achieved the top mark of the school in both the Lagrange and Pascal Mathematica contests, received the top mark in my school for grade 11 science, and managed to maintain Honours all throughout high school. It is amazing to think that this easily-accessible program provides a necessary service to students completely free of charge!

After experiencing so much kindness as an immigrant, I now try to reciprocate the same compassion to others. I have mentored kids both in the Mentorship program and at a nearby camp in order to assist immigrants while they're becoming accustomed to a new culture, just like the program did for me. I also volunteer at Brown Bagging For Calgary Kids to provide youth with nutritious lunches. We make sure that all children have access to free and healthy meals at school. In addition, I like to spend time each month visiting a nearby seniors' centre with a group from school to simply play games and enjoy conversations with the elders. With the doors that the Calgary Bridge Foundation For Youth opened for me, I was also able to participate in a great initiative from RBC called "Make 150 Count" to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary. I was involved in presenting unique ways to give back to the community with a budget of \$150. This opportunity made me realize how easy it is for everyday people to spread kindness. Along with my friends, I gave out balloons and prepared herb seeds to bypassers in downtown Calgary. It was a simple act, but what came from it was the realization that nothing can stop people from taking action and changing the world for the better. Lastly, I volunteer for a cause I am deeply passionate about with an organization called Do It Green. It uses a social approach in promoting green actions and environmental awareness. While volunteering for Do It Green, I have learned what we as individuals can do to reduce our trash output and vehicle emissions to help save the planet on which we live. We promoted clean and green living by implementing recycling and compost stations in order to divert waste from landfills, but more importantly, we educated others about what they could do to

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make changes in their personal daily routines. Due to the influence of this organization, I began to transform my knowledge and words into actions. It encouraged me to get outside and to try and live a healthier lifestyle with a more sustainable and economical form of transportation. Since joining, I have established a separate recycling system within my home so that fewer recyclable items accumulate in landfills. I am now conscious of my individual actions and how they can impact others; I continue to do what I can in my home and community to become more environmentally responsible. Unless we confront them seriously, the present issues with our environment will only progress further until our land is annihilated to a point of no return. Years ago, it was a joke that one day companies would be selling bottled air like water once the air became far too polluted. Now the joke is a reality for people in China; the air that they breathe is so contaminated that they often have no choice but to purchase canned fresh air in order to live. This situation should evoke our sense of responsibility for our planet, as we cannot keep ignoring the signs of its deterioration. When we live our first-world lives with our unlimited clean air and drinking water, it is easy to forget or to even imagine our counterparts on the other side of the world suffering from the ramifications of our excessive exhaustion of the Earth's resources.

My future career goals revolve around the field of psychology. I find psychology a fascinating subject in which I want to acquire much more knowledge.



*Grade 12,
John G. Difenbaker*

By: Grace Tu

In pursuing a career related to psychology, I can uncover some of the mind's mysteries and understand human behaviour from the core. The mind is the basis of our world, and can be used to market to target audiences, or even to solve mysteries. The knowledge obtained could be used to contribute to research and theories. Furthermore, I believe that almost everyone has issues and struggles that may require a psychologist, counselor, or therapist at some point in their lives. Therefore, I hope to become one who helps individuals understand their problems and alleviate their difficulties. Ultimately, I hope this career leads me to becoming a licensed psychologist at my own practise.

I believe CBFY should choose me as a scholarship recipient because I have been part of the Youth Empowerment Program since it began and I continue to participate regularly in the club. This program has become a meaningful aspect of my life and I have grown with it. Likewise, I have seen the program develop from a small group of students playing Uno to a whole classroom of peers with the common desire to advance and excel in their studies. Thus, I hope that this aspect of my identity will stay with me in university by helping to pay for a portion of my tuition. Being granted this scholarship would support me greatly, as I come from a single-parent family with my dad as the sole provider. He too has dropped a phone into the water; however, he did so as a sacrifice for the sake of his children and their education. For the betterment of my brother and I, my dad chose to part with his comfort and familiarity. Seeing the lengths he traveled for his children, I feel a stronger obligation to succeed his expectations. Receiving this scholarship to go to university would significantly alleviate my father's financial stress. I've seen my father work long, hard hours my entire life, constantly worrying about making ends meet, while managing all the expenses on his own. Day in and day out, he does his best for us, and all his efforts are to pave a road my brother and me. There hasn't been a day in my life that I have seen him get more than 6 hours of sleep. While other immigrant families who arrived later than us are able to buy houses, we are still exactly where we were 7 years ago, renting the same small two bedroom apartment. My dad struggles each day in his efforts to create a good foundation for my future. This scholarship is an opportunity for me to assist my dad with our finances, make him proud, and support our course to recovery.

“ Road to Success ”

By: Kay Vicente

On June 18th of 2015, I travelled by plane for the very first time. It was the start of my journey, my new adventure. I've been through a cascade of insights about life since then, which has led me to grow personally and intellectually. I've become more aware that the world is a vast place filled with endless possibilities where unfathomable dreams can be realized; I've come to acknowledge that hard work, grit and resilience is needed to get there. Leaving the Philippines and immigrating to Canada was a huge life-changing experience and it contributed to my growth and maturity, molding me into the person I am today.

My mother is my role model, the epitome of hard work and sacrifice. When I was 9 years old, she decided to find work overseas because it was difficult for our family to get by in the Philippines; she said that my two siblings and I probably will not be able to acquire post secondary education had we stayed. So, our family endured 8 long years of tormenting separation. Nevertheless, my mom persevered as everyday, she said, the thought of my siblings and I gave her strength. As a result, she was able to bring our family to Canada, one of the best places to live in the world having one of the highest standards of living. Although she has fulfilled her promise, she continues to take care of us every single day – rising early in the morning to prepare our lunches, coming home late from work then cooking food for the next day. For everything that she has done, I want to someday repay.

In Canada, teens as young as 14 years of age are eligible to work part time, while in the Philippines, there is nothing of this sort. This is one part of Canadian culture that I had trouble with. I felt pressured to work, earn money and help my family pay the bills. Of course I wanted to do all that, but at the time I felt so inexperienced and insecure; I was afraid I might make mistakes and embarrass myself. These feelings taught me the true meaning of responsibility and independence. I learned to respect every student younger than me who was earning and saving their own tuition for university – self-reliant and

confident; I was inspired. As time passed, my courage built up; I decided to volunteer, and I loved it. Since then, I've made sure to sign up for a project or event whenever I have the time; I've collaborated with a group of volunteers to mentor grade school students in math and science in the Calgary Public Library. I also volunteered with Youth Central in fun, various activities such as assisting seniors in field trips to the Calgary Zoo and the Stampede. I also currently volunteer as a peer mentor with the CBFY Mentorship



*Grade 12,
Henry Wise Wood*

Program. My role is to collaborate with the youth counselors, program leaders and other peer mentors to assist newcomers, particularly youth, during their integration into Canadian Society. We help them adapt by ensuring that they feel welcome through programs such as the Summer Newcomer Orientation and Welcome (NOW) Program, where we bond with them and prepare them for the new school year. Lastly, every other Sunday, I assist teachers with their lessons in the Sunday School rooms at church. Through these involvements, I've met wonderful people, made lifelong friends and meaningful connections.

Ever since I took that first plane ride, my world, initially consisting of only me, continuously expanded and grew. I have become more aware that there is a whole world out there that I have yet to see, people I have yet to meet, and

opportunities I have yet to explore. Back in the Philippines, money was a huge issue in influencing a person's future as it was difficult to receive financial aid. In Canada however, the government offers loans to support every student's desire to finish their education. Additionally, many organizations provide scholarships and bursaries. Knowing this

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made me feel unstoppable; like I can do anything I want – having multiple professions, for instance.

My educational aspirations include completing a bachelor's degree in biology or other related degree programs that would assist me in pursuing a career as a Clinical Pharmacist and Pharmaceutical Scientist. In addition to assisting physicians and patients in proper drug use, I want to contribute to the drug and technological advancement of the health care field. My passion lies in ensuring that patients receive optimal health services and treatment within my scope of practice while promoting a healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle. This passion encourages me to provide medical aid to people who need it no matter where they are. Thus, it is one of my goals to participate in medical missions and volunteer with humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders so I can reach these people in need. Finally, after sufficient years of experience, I want to work in an educational setting to impart the knowledge and skills I have gained to students seeking careers in Pharmacy and other related fields of medicine.

A person I really look up to asked me, “If your Great Uncle Bob, whom you never knew existed, passed away and left you with a billion dollars, what would you do with it?” Upon hearing this question, something deep within me stirred and suddenly, I felt excited. I deserve to be chosen for this award because I have a vision to which I am actively working to realize; I have concrete plans for my future. Every amount I receive will help me go a long way, starting with post secondary. I refuse to let anything halt my pursuit. I shall continue my journey, my adventure, with confidence in one foot and determination in the other, moving together in unison towards a bright future.

“My Story”

By: Similoluwa Bankole

My name is Similoluwa Bankole and I am a grade 12 student at John G. Diefenbaker High School. I was born on December 3rd, 1999 to a Christian family in Lagos, Nigeria. I am the third born of four children and my entire family migrated to Canada in April 2013. Having relocated from Nigeria to Halifax, Nova Scotia, I attended and completed my middle school education in 2014. In 2014, I won my middle school’s “Principal Award” and also received an award for earning the highest grade of my graduating class in mathematics. I continue to be an honor roll student, and I’m also involved in athletics including track and field and rugby. Furthermore, I was bestowed the 2017 “Daughters Day Award”. I am an active volunteer in my community, and I have participated in multitudinous leadership trainings. My goal is to one day become an emergency physician and surgeon.

Moving to Canada with my family was a huge decision to make. Many sacrifices were made that affected our comfort, friends and family. I was thirteen and in grade 10 when I moved to Canada. Since there was a large age gap between my classmates and me, the principal made the decision to pull me back two grade levels, and I was required to repeat grades 8, 9, and part of 10. It was disheartening to think that I was at a grade level people younger than me were at back home. However, ahead of my fellow classmates, which led me to win awards for the best grades in various



*Grade 12,
John G. Diefenbaker*

My Story

ahead of my fellow classmates, which led me to win awards for the best grades in various subjects, and the “Principal Award”, which is given to a student who demonstrates academic, athletic, and social achievements.

I joined the RBC Youth Empowerment Program the same month I moved to Calgary and started schooling at John G. Diefenbaker High School in October 2015. I am currently still a member of the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth (CBFY), and have participated in many field trips which include camping, conferences, and volunteering opportunities. Joining CBFY has not only benefitted me a great deal socially, but most importantly educationally. I was struggling with a couple of courses, and I was not only provided with tutors that are ever ready to help, but also with learning materials and snacks! I have become better with time management, and learned important study skills; these skills and the help I have received from CBFY have become evident in my report cards.

I am currently a volunteer at the Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (CIWA), the Holy Cross Manor Seniors Home, and RCCG House On the Rock Chapel. I take great pride in my volunteerism, and make use of every volunteer opportunity that crosses my path because it’s an amazing way to give back to the community I love and cherish. I am a regular participant in leadership opportunities as I was in the leadership team in my middle school and have attended numerous leadership conferences and events such as “We Day”. I am currently a peer mentor in my high school. I was also involved in the “Leadership 360 Conference” that took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia in September 2015. Leadership 360 is a Canadian student conference that takes place in various cities across Canada where students come together to discuss issues surrounding Canadian culture, world involvement, and multiculturalism. Additionally, I am part of the culture club in my school which celebrates cultural differences and allows me to learn about other cultures.

After graduating from high school, I plan to obtain my nursing degree from the University of Calgary beginning in the fall semester of 2017. My career aspiration is to become

By: Similoluwa Bankole

an emergency physician. Even though there are many different undergraduate degree options to get into medical school, I chose the bachelor of nursing because if I do not end up becoming an emergency physician, I would love to be a nurse. I understand that the road to becoming an emergency physician is a long and stressful one that requires 100% focus and determination. However, I am prepared to work hard and do my best work, so I hope finances would not hold me back from achieving my goal.

I would be a perfect candidate to receive this scholarship award not only because I meet all the requirements, but also because I am an important contributor to my new community and school. Ever since I moved to Calgary, I have acquired numerous volunteer hours, and have been involved in my community, church, school and anywhere that allows me to give back to others. I am also looking for different sources of financial assistance for my post-secondary education, because I don't want to have to take a year off to work to be able to afford university. I have a big dream, but I am determined to achieve it and do the very best that I can to succeed.

Thank you very much for your consideration and review of my scholarship application.

“A Step Forward”

By: Matteo Vitale

“Opportunity is missed by most people, because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work,” Thomas Edison says it best when it comes to reaching goals in life. Individuals often seek success but the long journey that they have to take is harsh and rough. I was born in Lattakia, Syria in 1999. Where I come from young minds are encouraged to reach their limits and achieve greatness. Unfortunately, six years of brutal civil war can change everything. When a country loses its safety it suffocates the future of its young adults. It becomes really hard for a sixteen year old to focus about school when his life and everything he cares about is in fatal danger. Life was never easy: in September 2015 I ran away from a kidnapping attempt right after school and a few weeks later two rockets hit Tishreen University fifteen minutes after my brother had left there. The danger and near-death experiences had helped make up my family’s minds and that is when we decided to pack our bags and escape to Lebanon. We had to leave everything behind, my brother and I are our education and my parents their practice as doctors.

It was hard staying in Lebanon because we did not have family there and we did not know anyone. We had no home and nowhere to go, and nothing that we could identify with. If we ever tried to cross the border back to Syria to complete our exams we were never allowed; we were always made to go back to Lebanon.

After a tough three months we finally landed in Toronto on 26 February 2016, and two days later we completed our journey of refuge to Calgary, Alberta. Everything felt unreal at first, I remember noticing how clean and incredibly

organized the streets were in this city. The quietness was odd and a bit intriguing. I had trouble sleeping, however. I kept thinking about Syria and about the shells and bombing. I missed my friends, I missed my family and my routines. I felt like although we were finally safe after living in war for so long, we were now just lonely with no one to talk to and no one to count on when things got tough and that thought scared me more as well.

It was the first day of school when I heard about the Mentorship Program. The weekly meeting was happening the next day, and the kids in my classes had told me to come check it out. I thought I could make some friends and meet people from my school so why not and I attended the next day after school. I felt instantly comfortable with the people who were there. Everyone was from a different background, everyone did not speak English as a first language, and I was not afraid to speak up to people and messing up. I felt I was accepted by everyone, and for a newcomer, I think it is really important to feel that way about a place especially when they have been displaced from their home for so long. I started going there regularly, getting to know my Coordinator Sadiya Shah, who was extremely nice and supportive. Life seemed to be returning to normal routine: I focused on my education again, I played soccer again, I had a place to go and a mentor to speak to if things were going wrong. The biggest worry at the time was that my parents, who were doctors in Syria, could not get recertified here right away and so financial stress was beginning to become a burden on us but by focusing on my future I kept myself occupied from thinking of these things.

One of the greatest things to happen to me in Calgary was when I was asked to speak at the 2016 Youth Conference: Power of Voice event at the Central Library

A Step Forward

Library with my friend Khalil Al Rashed. I was excited, because I could clear and talk about the misconceptions people have about our country, and our culture. I was able to get my frustrations across – that not being able to speak English, or speaking English with an accent did not mean that we were not intelligent, and that being boxed into the category of immigrant and newcomer was very tough here in Canada when people did not understand. I loved that everyone there understood the struggle, and I felt like we were all united.

Because of the Youth Conference, I was asked again to speak at the 2016 CBFY Scholarship Gala, and I was honored to do so. I spoke briefly about the problems a young adult faces growing up in war, and what it was like to try and adjust to a new culture after so much struggle.

In the summer I applied to volunteer as a peer mentor in the Mentorship summer program so I can help newcomers the same way this program helped me when I was one myself. The training week taught me many life skills; it strengthened my communication skills, and my abilities to speak in front of large groups of people. The fun

I had meeting newcomers from various countries including my own was unbelievable. It felt amazing to give back to the community that helped me personally when I was a newcomer. So after the summer program I was given the opportunity to be a peer mentor at my school Bishop O' Byrne with the mentorship program. Becoming a full time peer mentor was definitely one of the best choices I have made so far since I came to Canada.



Grade 11, Bishop O' Byrne

By: Matteo Vitale

I love keeping in touch with the newcomers I met during the summer, giving them advice and making new friendships are the parts I love most about this job, and most importantly I loved being able to help out my Coordinator and my In-School Settlement Worker if they ever needed someone to do Arabic translation for them. It made my heart happy to see myself helping newcomer families from the same background as me because I think it always makes someone feel better to know that someone is there for them.

Aside from CBFY, I have always been an active member in my society. Back in Syria, I used to volunteer regularly with The International Red Crescent Movement. I used to deliver food and school supplies with a group of people to churches and mosques. I come from a family of doctors and it is my goal to become a doctor as well so I can help others, and make a positive change in this world, just like my family has done for years. My parents lost everything and left everything behind for a better life here, and I do not plan on failing them because it would mean failing both my dreams and theirs. I believe that the CBFY has great faith in this young generation, and that is why I count myself lucky to be part of this organisation. In the words of Umashanie Reddy, “ They take your breath away, they exceed your expectations. With minimal support, we try to do the best we can given the funding that we have. They just overwhelm you with their brilliance.” It is obvious how much this foundation trusts the youth in this society and this is what keeps pushing me. Once I graduate from high school I am planning on studying general science, passing the MCAT exam, and then finish studying medicine to become a doctor. I know it will be a rough, long journey but with the right kind of help it could get a lot easier.

“My Future Is Not My Past”

By: Eden Beyene

My name is Eden Beyene, from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I was born in 1999 February 18th. I left my country with my mother and her younger sister when I was only 10 years old. I did not understand why we were leaving, I just remember my mother telling me “My child don’t worry it is for the best and especially for you, my dear”. I always had many questions why it was the best thing to leave as we had everything we needed; family, a roof over our head and all the other necessities of a human being. All the same I had no say in the matter, mom had decided that we were leaving.

One morning before the sun rose we took a bus to the border of Kenya and Ethiopia to a place called Moyale. It took us two days to arrive at Moyale. Afterwards we took a heavy truck to the the capital of Kenya, Nairobi. I enjoyed the journey as any kid of my age would but I nagged my mother why we were not taking the plane but inside a bus and a heavy truck to another country. She said, planes were not safe, to make me feel better. There was some truth in that. She meant that they would find us if we took the plane, as I would understand later on.

When we arrived in Kenya we did not know anyone. It was a Strange land, very different from the one we had known. People spoke different languages, that I would later come to learn as English and Swahili, but at the moment I did not know either. The people in this new land also eat different things and also dressed differently. The first few months were the worst, but as we got used to the area we moved around and found people like us (refugees), from our country and even other countries. Some of the people we meet, had stayed in Kenya for over ten years and knew their way around. They helped us with a lot of things as they were once in our place.

We asked around for me to start school and picked one that we could afford as the education here was really expensive. Mother started working immediately and also my aunt. Mom worked as a cook and also a house help. My aunt was a waitress at a small

restaurant. I remember school as fun where I did not need to worry about anything it was my safe heaven. Once I was outside of school I would be scared to be caught by the police, who would threaten us to pay them off or they would deport us back to our country.

As time passed I was able to understand the situation that my mother was in. My dad was in trouble with the government as they tried to blackmail him and mom was caught up in the middle and she had to leave or risk my aunt's and my life and even her own. So she took us and left without a word. I have never seen him since we left home and I miss him so much. I hope we will meet one day before our time on earth is done.

In Kenya we lived in a single room where we shared the washrooms and bathrooms with other tenants in the building. It was very difficult as some people did not clean after themselves. We would often get sick many times as the water supply was limited to one day per week water flow, from a two tap shared by more than ten households.

My mom and aunt have been caught many times by the police and they would have to pay them to be free. We had all the documents for legal refugees but they didn't care all they wanted was money. In september 21st 2013 there was a terrorist attack in a mall called Westgate Mall, in the capital city, Nairobi where we lived. And the police were arresting all the refugees they could find. I did not know what was going when I went to get a pair of shoe for school with a neighbour. The police found us and took me to jail as the kid who was with me was Kenyan they let him go. I asked him to hurry and tell mom what had happened.

It was the worst day of my life and one I will never forget for as long as I live. I cried my eyes out and asked God what I did to deserve such a thing and at the same time pleaded with Him to be with me and protect me. The jail was more like a house and even filthier than the one we live in. Both men and women were put together in one room. I was so scared more than I could explain. I was only 14 at that time. Mom did not fail me she gave them all the money they asked and got me out. The last of what she had. To make matters worse she was pregnant. The guy I still don't know.

My Future Is Not My Past

Mom was saving for us to get a sponsor so we could live the country, after three more years of living in suffering we got the sponsor from here Canada. The process took one year and we arrived here on 16th of June 2016. At first it felt like a dream. I am scared I would wake up as this was what I would dream of when I was back there in Kenya. I am grateful everyday that it is not a dream that I have been here for the past eight months. I feel blessed and I am ready to make use of my blessing and make something great of myself.

Once we got here our sponsor showed us around and helped us apply for things and connected us with people. She took us to social services and she told us many important things we could get, like subsidy for my little sister's daycare and how to get tax return. For me they told me to go to St John's reception center. I got an appointment and went to the reception center. They gave me a math and language test.

I was sent to Bishop McNally High School, grade 11. They also gave an invitation to a summer program with Calgary Bridge Foundation For Youth. The program was for newcomers like me. I went to the program that same summer and had the best experience ever. I made friends there for the first time since I got here. They told me a lot of things about the school world here. How to do things like open my locker, use D2L and even graduate high school.

I am still part of the CBFY, mentorship program and I became a peer mentor on 18th of February 2017. I chose to be a peer mentor because I want to help newcomers like me adjust better to the new environment. I have a first hand experience on how it feels to be new to a place and not to know what to do or where to go. I could understand them better thus be able to help them. I have also volunteered in the wolves walk at school and have been to the Mustard Seed to volunteer. I was also in a Model UN conference on 25th and 26th of February at the University of Calgary, it was a great experience.

By: Eden Beyene

My short term goals are to get my graduation requirements to graduate on time. I want to get my 100 credits and also the right courses for graduation. As I do my best in my education I would like to continue volunteering and serving my community. I want to focus more in math as my long term goal is to get into a business school. I am good in math and know I could be successful. I also want to use this chance I have been give to learn here as it is not the same as before. Coming here has changed my present and I want to change my future too, I don't want my past life and torment to hold me back for a great future I can have.

I think I deserve to get the scholarship because I have all the requirements and also because I want to make my mom proud as this would be my first scholarship or any award for the matter to win for me. Also to motivate me, to be strong and keep working harder as life has not been easy on me. Lastly I want to end this by saying thank so much to everyone who is part of the scholarship program and also the supports of CBFY for they have helped me since day one of my school life here in Canada. Be blessed and live long to help more and more newcomers in Calgary. Even if I don't get the scholarship I know someone will and they would have been helped. Thank you for the opportunity.



*Grade 11,
Bishop McNally High
School*

“The Butterfly Connection”

By: Faiza Ordon

This is the story about my journey from a cocoon to a butterfly. When arriving to Canada after leaving everything I knew behind in the Philippines, it was like starting from a tiny cocoon, having to build myself anew until I could once again break free into a beautiful butterfly. This transformation has been greatly aided by the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth.



*Grade 12,
Bishop McNally
High School*

The hardest part about moving to Canada was leaving my grandma behind. I will continuously thank her for everything, especially because she has played a big part in who I have become today. When I moved to Canada I did not know anything about the country; how things were done, how the school system functioned, where to go, what to do, the climate, what the culture and traditions were, or how long it would take to adjust to the changes. For instance, in the Philippines I was considered a top student in my studies in each grade, but currently my grades do not reflect my determination and hard work ethic as it has been difficult to adjust to the Canadian school system. It was tough for me to handle the sudden changes because normally when I go through change, I reflect deeply before I can find a coping method.

To help with the adjustment I attended the Mentorship Summer Program in 2014. I did not care for the first day and was not thrilled to attend the remaining days, but then I met others and in particular Mariel (a current Program

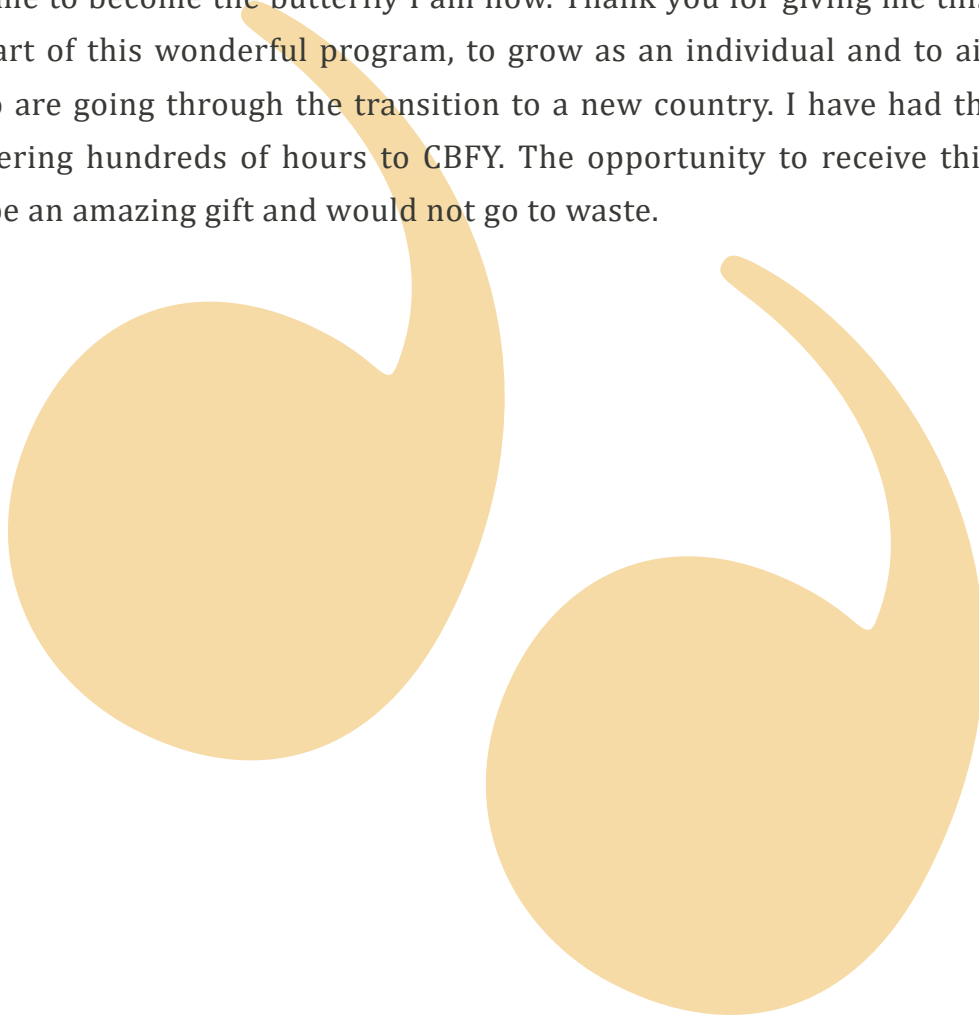
Facilitator). Interacting with her provoked me staying. That was the start to my three years of participating in the Mentorship Program. After the first year as a newcomer I became a Peer Mentor, and most recently was chosen to be part of the CBFY Youth Advisory Council. As a mentor I am able to help other newcomers who are going through similar challenges and changes I once faced. I take them on schools tours, introduce them to other individuals, take them to their classes and they shadow me in classes for the first few days. I attend each meeting, and volunteer extra hours for events like Peer Mentor Training and Winter NOW. For the Youth Advisory Council we meet once a month to talk about upcoming projects and plan events. I greatly enjoy my roles within the Mentorship Program and it has been a huge help in building my confidence and breaking me out of my cocoon.

Apart from the activities with CBFY I am part of the Constituency Youth Council with MP Darshan Kang. We discuss social issues, such as the upcoming pipeline construction as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wants the future generations of Canada to be involved. In school I am involved with the choir and band, as well as an upcoming musical production. I volunteer my time as a lunch server. I am an active member of the field hockey and track and field sports teams. In the evenings and on the weekends I work at McDonalds to support myself. Most recently, I have began training for a baking competition, as one of my goals is to become a professional baker.

In the future my goals are to become a baker and a teacher. I would love to travel the world to visit and experience cultures, also trying different cuisines. Currently, I am taking the first year apprentice course at SAIT through my high school, and when I graduate will look for a hotel to take me on as an apprentice. After I will take my baking course and possibly an education degree, I would love to teach baking or my native language Tagalog. I am excited to see where this profession will take me.

The Butterfly Connection

I feel that I am truly grateful for everything that is in my life. I am grateful I had the opportunity to come to this wonderful country and have great experiences with my family, friends, mentors, mentees and everyone in general. This is why I am quite thankful for the Mentorship Program of The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. This program has helped me to become the butterfly I am now. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to be part of this wonderful program, to grow as an individual and to aide youth like me who are going through the transition to a new country. I have had the pleasure of volunteering hundreds of hours to CBFY. The opportunity to receive this scholarship would be an amazing gift and would not go to waste.



“ My Story ”

By: Fetiha Yassin

I had always wanted to live in a country where there was opportunity to do multiple activities and the chance to experience nature. Canada became the place where I found these opportunities. Ever since I was little I have always been interested in being on a soccer team, since it has always been one my favorite sports. In 2012 I was on the Ethiopian soccer team and I can honestly say it was an amazing experience because it gave me and my sisters a chance to explore Canada, since most of our games were out of the city. I have 5 sisters, three which is older than me and two that are younger than me. Although there are two others that are younger than me, my older sisters have always been the hardest on me and I will never understand why, but I'll always be thankful for that because it is because of them being strict towards me that helped me become the person I am. Even though my sisters and parents expect a lot from me, especially when it comes to my school, I could not be more thankful for them and do not know what I would do without them. They have been by my side throughout everything and do not know what I would do without them. They have been by my side throughout everything and helped me know from wrong to right. My parents are my motivation. They are the reason I go to school every day and work as hard as I can just to make them proud. They brought me to Canada for a better life and sent me to school so I would not have to struggle the way they did, so I am going to repay them for everything they have done for me by succeeding and making them proud. I would not be at this level of my education without my family's support.

My connection with the CBFY is that I am part of the NxtGen homework club that's held every Monday and Tuesday to help students with their work. This is my first year being a part of the homework club because I did not know about it until a friend told me about it this year, but ever since I have joined I have improved so much on my school work. I went from getting failing or getting 50% in math to passing with 61% and 50% in social to getting 80% which I believe is a huge improvement and it is all thanks to homework club. On top improvement on my school I got to meet plenty of amazing people that

My Story

kind and accepting. Other than homework club I am involved in model UN club at Forest Lawn High School, which is an extracurricular activity where students enact the United Nations and imitate UN committees. After students get all the information they need on the country they are given, a conference is held at a high school or university. At the end of the conference, the outstanding delegates in each committee are given an award. Other than Model UN I am also apart of United for Africa club. Forest Lawn and many other schools around Canada will fundraise money to build an orphanage in Kenya. I was also on the Forest Lawn rugby team in 2015 and I plan on being on the team this year if it does not interfere with my school. Outside of school I also volunteered for the Canadian Breast Cancer Run for the Cure in 2012 and also for the Being Me conference in December 2016. Both of these were really amazing experience for me because I got to meet so many amazing people and also it felt really great to get involved and give back to my city.



*Grade 12,
Forest Lawn
High School*

“An Immigrant In Canada”

By: Abhishek Sewak

My name is Abhishek Sewak and I am currently enrolled in Grade 12 in Lester B Pearson High School. My family consists of my Grandfather, Parents and a younger sister who is currently studying in Grade 7 at the Annie Gale School, TLC program. We migrated to Canada in the year 2015, and it has been an amazing journey since then. We approached the challenges, and struggles with an optimistic and dedicated mindset. It wasn't hard for us to settle in the new culture, and society thanks to social programs like CBFY, and The Centre for Newcomers. My personal experience in Canada so far has been very interesting, and challenging at the same time. It is hard to get well acquainted in a totally different school system, and environment. But the Mentorship Program had the solutions for all the concerns, and has assisted me in every difficult situation.

My childhood was blessed with huge knowledge of general science, society and culture, community services, spiritual and inspirational lessons provided by my parents and relatives. They also encouraged me to give equal importance to sports and academic career. My Grandfather helped me in increasing my mathematical skills and general problem solving capabilities. My parents gave a lot of questions and made me do good practice of each subject. Since my aunt was a Ph. D in chemistry, she had a huge role in my science subjects. Her approach towards science was unique and interesting. I am thankful to all my family members that provided me with best of their knowledge and improve my overall development. I also volunteered in the charitable dispensary established by my Grandfather with a vision of helping people lacking financial aids, and providing them with great medical services at low costs.

My contributions towards society include; volunteering as a Peer Mentor with the Mentorship Program that helps the high school students to settle in the new school environment with utmost care, and comfort. I have also been actively taking part in the various clubs in our school such as the Leadership Club, and the Yearbook Club. Besides the school involvement, I work as a Course Instructor at UCMAS Mental Math Program

An Immigrant In Canada

which helps in improving the capacity of young kids to learn more, and become more efficient with their mathematical skills. I have been playing cricket for the Kings 11 club, U-19 Calgary, and U-17 Alberta Cricket Team for more than one year now. Due to my academic accomplishments and community involvement, I recently got selected for the Prime Minister's Youth Council in Calgary. All these participations and efforts have helped me evolve as a youth, and encouraged me to strive for a better and brighter future.

My personal hobbies are playing cricket, solving mathematical problems, Sudoku, and other Logical Problems. I spend a lot of time improving my game and learning different techniques from everyone. One of the best leisure that makes me happy is helping my peers with their daily life school struggles, homework, or assisting them with understanding a concept which is hard for them. I have learnt Tabla (an Indian classical instrument) for four years, and have been practicing since then on regular basis. This learning connected me with the true sense of music. My hobbies have definitely helped me in shaping my personality, and transforming me into a better human being. I took the interest in Cricket seriously, and worked hard to work on my weaknesses. I got selected in the U-19 Calgary team, and participated in the Intercity Championship between Edmonton, and Calgary in the year 2016. My performance in the Championship earned me a crucial spot in the U-17 Alberta team as well. We went to Toronto for the cricket Canada Cup in July, and ended with the third spot all over Canada. My high school (in India) quiz team selected me for participating in different competitions as I was having good knowledge in various subjects related to daily life. We won many inter school competitions including Vodafone Faster Smarter Better Challenge, and Bourn Vita Quiz Contest at District Level. I also love exploring different adventure sports such as Rafting, Hiking, and Camping.

The wonderful journey with Mentorship Program began in August 2015 when I attended the one week summer program in Crescent Heights School. The program was authentic and it was an amazing experience. I got to learn a lot of useful stuff and gained knowledge about the Canadian Education and Culture. Peer Mentors were very helpful and were always there to support everyone. It was truly a praiseworthy effort by the staff of CBFY

By: Abhishek Sewak

to gather so many students, and help them get adjusted with the new environment in such a short period of time. I joined the Mentorship Program in the school as well. We all made new friends, shared our experiences and knowledge with each other. Mentorship program helped me to get well acquainted with the school culture and accommodate myself to the new world. I really want to thank every member of the CBFY, and my co-coordinators who take initiative in order to support newcomers settle in without any problem. I got an opportunity to be a part of the Peer Mentors, and I grabbed it with both the hands. Being a peer mentor has been a totally different experience as I was able to see myself in other people. I could feel the nervousness, and lack of confidence that one has when they have to adjust in a totally new environment. Every moment in the program is cherishing, and beautiful enough to be remembered forever.

The aim for high school is to end up with an overall average of 95%+. I am consistently working hard to accomplish this goal and set up a strong base for my post-secondary education. My goal after completing the high school is to pursue the education of Mechanical Engineering from the University of Calgary. I am working hard in order to get an acceptance from the University. My goal is to pursue my post-secondary education

in Calgary so that I can continue working with the CBFY. I had the passion of becoming a Mechanical Engineer since my childhood. I used to observe my father operating various heating systems, power generators, and boilers. My father used to discuss about the



*Grade 12,
Lester B. Pearson
High School*

An Immigrant In Canada

mechanism behind the operating systems, which further encouraged me to learn the concepts of machines in depth. I have keen interest in mathematics, and understanding the laws of physics that work behind the building, and operating of various machines.

As a highly ambitious, motivated and accomplished academic student that has also been an engaged leader in various clubs at school, and other community services, I believe that I am a deserving candidate to receive the scholarship from the CBFY. I have been consistently helping my peers with studies, sports, and other necessary aspects of life. I have gained tremendous respect from my peers, and teachers for the efforts I put in, and am also known for encouraging, respecting, and motivating my peers. I have represented Alberta during last year's Cricket Canada Cup held in Toronto, Ontario which exemplifies my passion towards sports. Apart from the school, I work as a Course Instructor at UCMAS. I have been teaching for over a year now, and have enjoyed every bit of it. I am also the Junior Editor of our School Yearbook, and my goal is to create a memorable yearbook for all the graduating students this year. I wish to make a yearbook that will bring the fond memories shared during high school, whenever they look at it. I am constantly trying to improve as a student and human so that I can become a capable citizen, and a strong leader for our present and future.

“ My Journey ”

By: Axelle Wilson-Bahun

My name is Axelle Wilson. I am from Togo, West Africa. It is a small country which has several dialects and the official language is French. It is one of the countries in Africa under authoritarian rule. Our leaders only look out for themselves instead of the right of the population. Therefore, the country is divided into different social classes. Some people have a hard time affording basic needs and others are able to acquire those needs. In addition, you can only be in university for a maximum of six years, limiting my ability to go to medical school or get a masters education. This is caused by the limited education and funding we have in the country. Furthermore, I have six siblings which makes our life a little harder but always entertaining! Our main food is seafood because we lived near the coast line. We spent our leisure time at the beach after school.

I have been in Canada for three years. I experienced many changes. First of all, I spoke French in Togo. Since I was living in Alberta, I had to learn English. The hard part of it was that I had no friends in my school who spoke the same language as me. As a result, I spent one year without speaking English to anyone. I always felt lonely. Also in my class, there wasn't anyone with my skin color. No one talked to me even though I asked them questions. I felt rejected. Sometimes, I stayed by myself and cried. The weather also was a total surprise. It was too cold for me, since I am from a tropical country. In summary, I will say that year was the hardest year in my life. I overcame so many struggles.

The next year, I was in high school. I had class with some Spanish people and this is how I made new friends of different races and different cultures. I started learning about other people's cultures and their points of view. By that time my family too had started adapting to the Canadian system by the grace of God. It was hard at the beginning but we slowly started to understand the system, and are still on that journey.

My Journey

The next year, I was in high school. I had class with some Spanish people and this is how I made new friends of different races and different cultures. I started learning about other people's cultures and their points of view. By that time my family too had started adapting to the Canadian system by the grace of God. It was hard at the beginning but we slowly started to understand the system, and are still on that journey.

I have been involved in the Mentorship Program since 2015. It has been a great experience for me to be part of CBFY. I chose to join this program because it had plenty of advantages such as the reinforcement of my ability to speak English, learning how to lead groups, more volunteering, and helping others in need (especially newcomers). Furthermore, this program presents opportunities and enjoyments such as pizza parties, field trips, chance of making new friends and also winning a scholarship award. Beyond these activities, we also have guest speakers who basically talk about different things that we didn't know about. Personally, I think they are great topics because we get to know about what we should do or not do to improve living in society. The important point that spoke to me was the helping of newcomers. When I first arrived, I did not have anyone to help me. I wanted to be able to help others, so they don't have to go through all the difficulties I had to confront.



*Grade 12,
Bishop Grandin*

By: Axelle Wilson-Bahun

To achieve this desire of helping people around me, I started participating in all kinds of activities and attended the program every week. I completed the training and became a Peer Mentor.

In the last few years, I have been able to help newcomers by touring them in my school, taking them to their classes and eating lunch with them. Sometimes I help with French and Spanish translation, and tutor other students in those languages as well as in math. After loving my role as a Peer Mentor, I was chosen to be a member of the CBFY Youth Advisory Council. Along with students from other schools, we plan events to spread love around us and connect students to each other, while giving advice to the Counsellors of Mentorship. As a result, I volunteer a lot. We did 'Happy Friday' which was about distributing snacks to people passing by which had positive notes attached to them. We brought happiness to many people. We also had a movie night where I got to meet new people and shared my experiences with them. This year in Mentorship we had the Winter NOW Program which I also helped at. That one was special for newcomers and as a group, we taught them about the school system in Canada and how it is different for them. Moreover, we included how to find their classes and how to open their locker. From all these events, some things that I have learned are speaking in front of people, and how to lead a group.

Apart from the CBFY program, at school I am part of the Green Club which is about spreading love in our surrounding community, such as at school. One thing we did was put compliment notes on people's lockers to make them smile and remember that they are unique and special. Another event was the Multicultural event where I helped set things up and assisted in the event. Currently in my school we are organizing another cultural day, and for the Youth Advisory Council we are working on a project to do with discrimination. Volunteering and the Mentorship Program have built my confidence and leadership skills, as well as introduced me to many great people and friends. Being involved in a lot of activities and events can lead to many opportunities that are useful in my future career.

My Journey

In addition to the activities I'm involved in, I am a Christian and regularly participate and lead Bible studies. I love discovering new things about people, other living creatures and the world in general. I just find it fascinating and instructive. I also like music. I used to be in a marching band in grade 10. We played at hockey games and Christmas programs at church and school, it was a very great experience. A lot of my time is also spent caring for my five brothers and sisters as I am the oldest.

I love biology and math. I am determined to be a Pediatrician for my future career. This includes a lot of studying and the caring of children. I like children because they are the future. By helping them and taking care of them, we are also building a nice strong future. There are also a lot of people dying so we need doctors to save people's lives and help people to improve their health because a human's life is very important. We need each other and we should come together to achieve this project.

I think I should be the scholarship recipient because I believe that my dream could be possible to achieve even though right now it is hard for me. The money received would not just help me with my studies, but since in the future I would be taking care of kids in need, it would be beneficial for all of us. That money would change my life and also change the life of other people around me. I am determined, and as a grade twelve student like others I am looking for a bright future. Without the influence of CBFY in my life, I wouldn't be at this level today, being able to see my future and helping people. Thank you to everyone at this organization.

“ My Story ”

By: Saeb Qazzaz

On the first days of our arrival to Calgary as new immigrants, my parents took me to do a school placement test. There we met with Ms. Xiao Chen who works with Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth. She was very helpful in providing us for the needed information to settle and integrate in the educations system. She advised my parents to sign up for a library card and told us about the organization’s room at Sir John A. MacDonald school where I joined for mu junior high school. For the last two years, Ms. Chen was very supportive to my family and me. I occasionally visited the resource room and always gathered the information that was helpful for me. When I finish high school, I would like to volunteer with the Bridge Foundation and help other young new comers to get the same service I received and help them to grow in a healthy environment and enjoy their teenage years.

My name is Saeb Qazzaz. I am 15 years old. I was born in Palestine and my family immigrated to Canada in 2012. I speak Arabic and English. My extended family is still living in the Gaza Strip. My parents wanted to have a better future for me and my older brother and sister. Being the youngest in the family I always enjoyed the support of my parents and siblings. Both my parents are highly educated. My father is a professor of physiology and my mother is a professor of education and development. Both my brother and sister finished university education. I grow up valuing education.

Moving to Canada was not an easy experience for my family or me. I missed my friends back home and my parents could not find jobs easily. I was worried and not settled until the school year started. The school placed me in an class and my teachers were very supportive and caring. They helped me to adjust and build my knowledge and improve my English. Soon I made new friends from different ethnic groups. I am still in contact with my friends in Palestine through the Facebook and Skype. I hope to be able to visit them next summer.

My Story

I am interested in sports. In Palestine I used to swim and played soccer. Coming to Canada opened my horizons to many new activities that I really enjoy. In my first junior year I tried all types of sport that were offered at school. I realized that I really liked basketball

and track and field. In the last two years I played in school teams in both sports and excelled. My basketball team in grade 9 was undefeated all season. I also did swimming and completed Bronze Medallion course at Thornthill Recreational Center.



*Grade 12,
John G. Diefenbaker*

I am a caring and responsible person. I can make friends easily and my peers look up to me. I joined leadership programs in my school and in my last year at junior school I was elected for the student's council. I work well under pressure. I am very organized and have good planning and time management skills. I am a good team member and my sport participation proves this. I am at the same time a natural leader. All my teachers and friend can confirm this.

In my junior high school I enjoyed the workshop and food production classes. I managed to make some really nice products out of wood. I also learnt to cook. I received training on leadership and was involved in many activities including: participation in "My world conference" in 2012; participated in

"We Day 2013"; participation in Leadership event planning; participated in the 30 hour famine for two years. I was chair for the "Toy and Food drive at Sir John A. MacDonald". I am currently active in the leadership group at Diefenbaker High School.

By: Saeb Qazzaz

I volunteer with the Calgary Public Library who trained me on social skills and then gave me the chance to teach computer skills to young children in a program named “Computer Buddies”. In the program I helped kids (age 6-10) explore computers. I also answered any question they have about computers. I volunteered in “Reading Buddies” program, where I read for younger kids who struggle in reading. I also volunteered in organizing book collections and called people and thanked them for the donations.

I volunteered with the election campaign of Premier Jim Prentice and in the office of the MLA Honourable Teresa Woo Paw. I gave out flyers and participated in door knocking. I was part of the youth active in the election campaign.

I think I should select be selected as the recipient of one of the 2014 scholarships because of my involvement in volunteer activities as well as my dedication to education and interest to complete my university education. This scholarship will be an incentive and motivation for me to

I started the IB program in grade 10. I hope to finish school with good marks that will enable me to be accepted in a good school in Canada. I would love the study law at a good university in Canada. I would like to focus on international law.

In the future I would like to develop a career in international law. I would like to work on international development where I can address injustices around the world, especially in developing countries. I want to address injustices by defending rights of the poor people in different areas around the work.



THE CALGARY BRIDGE
FOUNDATION FOR **YOUTH**