
2009 Immigrant of Distinction Award Recipients

Hadassah Ksienski Distinguished Service Award

The Hadassah Ksienski Distinguished Service Award was created to honour the outstanding contributions of Hadassah Ksienski, Immigrant Services Calgary's CEO from 1993 to 2008. Hadassah played a pivotal role in shaping the agency as well as the immigration sector over the course of 15 years. Her leadership gave new immigrants to Calgary a sense of community and connection, which will extend well into the future. Peter Wong, as this year's inaugural recipient, represents the spirit of this award.

Mr. Peter Wong, Q.C.

In his over 25 year career as an immigration lawyer, Peter Wong has demonstrated leadership and dedication in helping individuals and families immigrate to Canada. He has distinguished himself in the profession by representing clients seeking immigration based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

As a regular contributor to CBC radio and television and Canwest Global, he has brought immigration issues to the forefront in Canada. He has also co-authored a text on Canadian Immigration Law that has been published as part of the Canadian Encyclopedic Digest of Law, which is referenced by lawyers across Canada. He has also written papers on immigration issues that have been published by the Canadian Bar Association.

In addition to Peter's extensive professional achievements, his record of community service is exemplary. He served on the board of Immigrant Services Calgary from 1994 to 2002. It was during this time that he founded the Immigrants of Distinction Awards. Through his innovation and leadership, the outstanding contributions of immigrants in our community have been celebrated while generating funds for Immigrant Services Calgary to continue to support the needs of immigrants and refugees. After 12 years as Chair of the IDA, Peter stepped down in March 2008, leaving an important legacy that will continue for years to come.

Peter was born in Calgary. He graduated in 1983 with a Bachelor of Laws from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. He articulated with McLaws and Co. and joined Caron & Partners in 1984. He received his designation as Queen's Counsel on January 1, 2002.

Immigrants of Distinction Awards

Arts & Culture

The Arts & Culture Award is presented to an immigrant who merits recognition in an artistic endeavor, within visual or performing arts.

Ms. Lyn Pflueger

Lyn Pflueger began her professional career in Australia, where she worked as a biochemist in hospital laboratories in Sydney, Perth and later Scotland. In the summer of 1967, Lyn travelled to Calgary with her husband for the first time and fell in love. They decided to, in her own words, "give it a try for a bit." Forty years later they are still here, enjoying the city, the mountains, the Stampede and the Millarville races, which are a favorite family excursion in the summer.

Lyn's love of tactile craft began on their acreage in Bragg Creek, where the family owned goats and sheep and she began to weave and make felt from the fibre. Her body of work has grown over the decades and been collected from her experiences worldwide. She returned to school and graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 1995 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Fibre. A champion of this art form, Lyn has made sure that works produced by Calgary and Alberta artists are given the attention that they deserve through proper representation in galleries and in exhibitions throughout the province.

As an instructor at the Alberta College of Art and Design as well as at various guilds and colleges around Alberta and the world, she easily conveys her knowledge and passion for textiles and craft practices to students of all ages, encouraging them to engage in creative exploration of their own. As a testimony to her excellence in instruction, her courses are consistently filled to their limit and often have waiting lists. She has travelled extensively to research the connections shared by craftspeople around the world, and brings that knowledge into her art and her teaching. Through her involvement with the Sheep Creek Weavers' Guild, ACAD, and the Alberta Craft Council, she has contributed her time, energy and knowledge to promote the importance of craft in the Canadian art environment. Lyn was recognized by the Alberta Craft Council in 2007 with their Award of Honor for her considerable contributions to the cultural community in Alberta.

Business Award

The Business Award is presented to an immigrant who has achieved success in the creation or operation of a business.

Mr. Raymond T. Chan

When Raymond T. Chan's parents gave their blessing for their young son to "explore the world", seeking freedom and opportunity in Canada at the age of 16, they only dreamed of the success that would meet him in his new country. Today, almost 40 years after leaving Hong Kong, he continues to fulfill that dream. Raymond graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a Bachelor of Commerce at the young age of 21.

Raymond's drive, determination and dedication to his profession is clearly demonstrated in his career path and his recruitment and promotion to increasingly senior roles within the oil and gas industry over the last 20 years, leading to his current role at Baytex Energy Trust. Under his leadership, Baytex has developed into one of the leading oil and gas income trusts as evidenced by leading capital market returns. Raymond also sits as a director on two private oil and gas companies and is a Director and Audit and Finance Committee Member of the TMX Group, which operates both on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the TSX Venture Exchange. Baytex has recognized his contributions with the recent announcement that effective January 1, 2009 Raymond holds the position of Executive Chairman of the Board.

Throughout his professional career Raymond has remained a man with family values, always putting his wife and three children ahead of himself, creating opportunities to spend together and becoming a friend, mentor and role model to his now adult children. His dedication to his family is evident through their sound family relationship and the strong ambition and values upheld in his children who honor him with their success.

Raymond has also demonstrated his community leadership through his involvement with the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation, most recently as Director and Chair of the Audit Committee and a member of the Investment Committee. His professional expertise and corporate experience are invaluable in steering the success the Foundation in contributing to the health and clinical wellness of the children of Southern Alberta.

Community Service

The Community Service Award is presented to an immigrant who has provided valuable service to the city of Calgary and the immigrant community, either as a volunteer or as a professional.

Mr. Cesar P. Cala

Cesar Cala has been involved in the betterment of his community since his youth in the Philippines, where he was active in social movements for almost 20 years before immigrating to Canada in 1996. Even as a student, he was instrumental in organizing peaceful protests to bring democracy to his nation, despite the danger to himself. Internationally, he participated in observing South Africa's first all-race elections as part of the Third World Electoral Experts' Group.

Since moving to Calgary, Cesar has pursued his passion for community work in both a volunteer and professional capacity. His contributions are evident in organizations such as the Arusha Centre, Oxfam-Canada, the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary, and the East Calgary Youth Arts Project. He co-founded the Asian Heritage Foundation for Southern Alberta, and was a founding board member for both the Children's Legal and Educational Resource Centre and the Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary. In 2007, Cesar led Calgary Vital Signs' report at The Calgary Foundation and also coordinated the Neighborhood Grants Program. Cesar currently works as a strategy lead on Neighborhoods for United Way of Calgary and Area.

Cesar's dedication to the promotion of diversity, social justice, and stronger communities has been paramount for the past 13 years in our city. His capacity for building relationships between diverse individuals and organizations has brought people with a shared vision together and inspired essential change in the Calgary community.

Distinguished Professional

The Distinguished Professional Award is presented to an immigrant who has achieved success in a professional career path.

Dr. Tadeusz Dabrowski

Life did not begin easily for Tadeusz Dabrowski. He was born in Lubin, Poland in 1938, where his family experienced many hardships during and after the war. But these hardships did not hold him back from pursuing academic goals instead of the usual mandatory military service. His academic career began in 1956 when he pursued a degree in hydrogeology and geological engineering, followed by a Master of Science degree in karst hydrogeology in 1962.

Dr. Dabrowski's life changed course in 1961 when he married and opportunities to travel opened up for the new couple, introducing them to many countries, including Canada. He returned to Poland to complete his doctorate, but experienced many complications in doing so. Once again, however, he didn't let his circumstances get the better of him; he completed his PhD in 1973 while maintaining a full-time job in the Polish oil industry.

A second visit to Canada in 1974 proved life-altering: Dr. Dabrowski and his family achieved landed immigrant status and eventually settled in Calgary. It was then that he took a pivotal role with Komex International Ltd. His leadership helped Komex to build a reputation in hydrogeology and the environmental field, while he also invested in the younger generation of employees through mentorship ventures. Dr. Dabrowski served as CEO of Komex for 3.5 years, and as the Chairman of the Board for a year after. During his tenure, Komex received many prestigious awards, including 50 Best Managed Private Companies in Canada, 100 Top Employers, and Top Employers for Young People. Dr. Dabrowski and his partner were among the finalists of the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year award during this time as well.

Dr. Dabrowski's dedication and ability to overcome adversity have been evident throughout his career. Through hard work and commitment to excellence he has prospered and established a life for his family in Canada, where they continue to contribute their strength and enthusiasm to the Calgary community.

Organizational Diversity

The Organizational Diversity Award, business category, is presented to a business that has made outstanding achievements in implementing diversity initiatives in the workplace or has made significant contributions in serving ethnically diverse client groups.

Bow Valley College

Bow Valley College is committed to meeting the needs of the diverse communities it serves. The college strives to eliminate barriers through strategies and programs to meet the needs of immigrants in the pursuit of learning and development.

As the largest English-as-a-second-language provider in Calgary, Bow Valley College is one of the primary resources for those seeking this most critical skill for success in Canada.

The Bow Valley College Young Adult ESL Literacy program helps students who have not completed high school gain the necessary language skills to continue their education. The success of this program is evidenced by the multiple awards it has received since its launch in 2005.

Bow Valley College offers settlement and transition focused programs such as the Corporate Readiness Training program, which provides new immigrants with extensive full-time employment-related ESL and work experience training, and the Directors for Immigrants in Trades and Professional Careers service that assists foreign-trained, skilled immigrants to obtain foreign credential and work experience recognition. The college promotes a new course of strategies to ensure the success of new immigrants and our community at large.

2009 Youth Scholarships

Youth Scholarships are awarded to immigrant youths between the ages of 14 and 25 who have made an outstanding contribution or significant achievement in one or more of the following area: Arts & Culture, Sports, Community and Volunteer Activities and/or Academics.

Ms. Ana Angela Lopez Quiroz

Born in Mexico, Ana Angela Lopez Quiroz immigrated to England with her family and later moved to Canada in 2003. Watching her father's study of science and observing his work in the laboratory, Ana Angela became interested in the field, and eventually her keen interest and determination landed her a summer position with the University of Calgary Faculty Of Science. Her passion for science has won her numerous awards including three consecutive gold medals at the Calgary Youth Science Fair.

Ana Angela is currently enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program, where her commitment to knowledge and the pursuit of learning is further evidenced by her status as an honor role student and contribution to her school's honor society.

Fluent in English, Spanish and French, Ana Angela earned the best academic average in French in junior high school and currently serves as president of the Spanish club. Her devotion to helping new immigrants is unparalleled, generously devoting her time to teaching new immigrant children English and immigrant adults about Canadian norms and culture.

Ana Angela is passionate about sports and a decorated martial artist, specializing in karate. Adding to her athletic accolades are her accomplishments in cross-country, track and field, badminton, swimming and wrestling.

Ana Angela's volunteer experience is diverse; she devotes her time with a number of non-profit organizations including the Kidney Foundation, Brain Tumor Sprints for a Cure, and Bow Valley Lodge. Whether Ana Angela is volunteering with her school's Youth Volunteer Corp or Environmental Club, or helping seniors in her community, her focus and drive are extraordinary.

Ms. Bani Turkmani

To say that Bani Turkmani has succeeded in achieving her goals is an understatement. Her turbulent journey to Canada is similar to that in a novel. Bani was born in Iran to Afghani parents, who struggled to give a secure education to her and her three siblings. Life was hard for the family and eventually unstable; they were compelled to leave Iran for Azerbaijan after Bani had completed the fifth grade.

She describes this journey as a, "tough thing to do without passports." This transition with her family was a "partly happy, partly sad" journey that took a long time before finally ending in safety. Bani was not able to continue her studies in Azerbaijan and only had a Grade 5 equivalent when she began Grade 11 here in Calgary.

Although she was six years behind her peers, and at times worked two jobs, Bani confidently chipped away at the course requirements for a high school diploma. She first completed the 14 level streams, then the next level of applied courses required for her diploma, while working as a swing manager at a local MacDonald's restaurant. Through each course and each shift, Bani always remained focused on her dream of one day going to university. This dream has now become a reality; Bani has attained admission to university in the fall by completing a full-course load of pure 30 credits. After only three and a half years at Ernest Manning High School, Bani has given herself the opportunity to achieve a higher education. The dedication she has applied to her studies, work and family are honorable. Her story is one of beating the odds with compassion, dedication and fierce determination.

Mr. Di Mo

When Di Mo came to Canada from Beijing at the age of 8, learning English was an obstacle. But Di's drive and unrelenting determination to become fluent in a short time frame set the stage for the achievements gained through his commitment in the years following.

Gifted in mathematics, Di has excelled in local, national and international math competitions, achieving two consecutive gold medal wins at the Canadian Mathematics Competition involving more than 20,000 math students across Canada. His excellence in speech and debate has earned him first place in a provincial speech competition.

As an honor student at the Royal Conservatory of Music studying piano, Di has attained countless accolades and awards including a scholarship and numerous first place awards at the annual Kiwanis Music Festival.

Di is a devoted citizen who volunteers regularly. His continuing volunteer commitment working with youth at the YMCA and his initiation and management of a student-run badminton club are just a few ways Di gives back to his community. His dedication and demonstrated maturity are highly distinguishable and make Di an excellent role model.

Ms. Fariha Ahmed

Fariha Ahmed is a shining example of how leadership, dedication and compassion can strengthen a community from the outside in. Her extensive academic and volunteer accomplishments are without a doubt remarkable for this young woman hailing from Bangladesh.

Recognized as the most outstanding student in Grade 11 for her contribution to her school and to the community, Fariha has been a member of the honor role society for three years. Currently enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program, Fariha has joined school committees and clubs aimed at increasing awareness for important local and international causes, advocating for youth in her community, and fundraising for causes at home and abroad, including efforts in Bangladesh, Kenya and Darfur. Fariha explains, "I cannot imagine children like me not getting the basic right of education."

Fariha's extensive volunteer work includes working tirelessly to support LINKages, an organization helping to build intergenerational relationships between students and the elderly. Fariha pairs this with volunteer contributions to both the pediatric and geriatric wards at Peter Lougheed Hospital.

Awarded with the Alberta Premier's Centennial Medallion for outstanding leadership skills and academic excellence and the Mount Royal Citizenship award, Fariha is a devoted citizen who volunteers for the Mayor's Youth Council and Calgary's Youth Volunteer Corps, just to name a few.

Dependable and driven, Fariha has a zest for life and a desire to help those in need through advocacy and the spread of

good will. She partners academic and volunteer pursuits with a love of music and the arts, which she showcases at school, Bangladeshi shows and, most recently, Global Fest.

Ms. Valez Lumi

Valez Lumi is truly an inspiration. Forced to flee war-torn Kosovo, Velez and her family escaped to Albania where they lived in a refugee camp hoping for a chance at a better life. At age seven, Valez and her family moved to Canada where she began to realize her own potential.

Once Valez overcame the language barrier and became fluent in English by Grade 6, she excelled academically. She achieved the highest over-all average in junior high school as well as the highest average of anyone in her Grade 9 class, earning her the Ivan J. McManus scholarship. Now in Grade 11, Valez continues to challenge herself academically.

She has also flourished athletically, making her mark in high-school track and field, swimming and cross country teams; and enjoying volleyball and volunteer score-keeping. She helps create awareness of sports in her school as a contributing member of the Casey Council, promoting athletic programs.

Valez works part-time for the Calgary Public Library and cares for children in her community to help raise money for her family and support her parents who are both enrolled in school.

Her unwavering commitments to her family, her community, and to the fundamental betterment of herself and others like her who have suffered through unspeakable strife, serve as an example to all of us to never give up in the face of adversity.

Immigrants of Distinction Awards

Previous Recipients

Since the Immigrants of Distinction were first awarded in 1997, the Calgary Immigration Aid Society is proud to have honoured the following individuals for their achievements and contributions to the City of Calgary and its immigrant community.

Arts & Culture Award

- 2008 Cecilia Gossen
- 2007 Vahe Tokmajyan
- 2006 Alexandra Haeseker
- 2005 Alina Dabrowska
- 2004 Umran Sumen
- 2003 Elizabeth Allen
- 2002 Siegfried Wieser & Mrs. Joan Xauen Wieser
- 2001 Angelique Gillespie
- 2000 Neel de Wit-Wibaut
- 1999 Helen Seka Owen
- 1998 Antonia C. Wicherts & Mr. David M. Spriggs
- 1997 Mark Skalinski, PhD

Business Award

- 2008 Saad Ibrahim
- 2007 Lina Castle
- 2006 Nashir Samanani, Elluminate, Inc.
- 2005 Abed Itani
- 2004 Wayne Chiu
- 2003 Gerald Wood
- 2002 Chan Yang Kim
- 2001 Mike Ciccaglione

2000 Said Arrata

1999 John Dasilva

1998 Hatim Zaghoul, Ph.D.

1997 Dan Capitanescu

Community Service Award

2008 Dr. Kabir Jivraj

2007 Dr. John Wu

2006 Tseden Dhogonpa

2005 Dinesh Dattani

2004 Ashid Bahl

2003 Vinay Dey

2002 Ms. Baljinder Mann &

Mr. Michael Embaie

2001 Vettivelu Nallainayagam, PhD

2000 Chamnan Chap, PhD

1999 Vilma Dawson

1998 Teresa Woo-Paw

1997 Nirmal Dey (Volunteer Service Award)

Distinguished Professional Award

2008 Dr. Alykhan M. Nanji

2007 Dr. Thaddeus Demong

2006 Margaret Styczynska & Sinisa Sonny Tomic

2005 Daniel Lai, PhD

2004 Hetty Roessingh, PhD

2003 Hans Vogel, PhD & Gamil Tadros, PhD

2002 Wilhelmus (Duffie) VanBalkom, PhD

2001 Taj Jadavji, PhD & Max Coppes, PhD

2000 Elaine Chan

1999 Hans van der Sande, PhD

1998 Henk E.D.J. ter Keurs, PhD

1997 Magdalena Amnestica

Diversity Award

2008 GlobalFest (Government or Non-Profit)

2008 Haworth Ltd. (Business Category)

2007 Calgary Public Library

2006 Boys & Girls Club of Calgary

2005 Calgary Health Region

2004 Village Square Leisure Centre

2003 Calgary Public Library

2002 Calgary Police Service

2001 The Westin Calgary

2000 Cyberwave Technologies Inc.

1999 Shell Canada Limited

1998 Standen’s Limited

Youth Scholarships

2008 Simon Atem, Hin Man (Ivy) Cheung, Zoe Beatrice Cheung, Sana Tariq, Jane Wu

2007 Alice Chen, Nyail Majock, Eva Ouyang, Joseph Lagasca, Carrol Zhou

2006 Aleksander Dshurkov, Elva Fan, Mahesh Hariharan,

John Reuben Lagasca, Lina Roa

2005 Karen Hyo Min Kang, Shuyang Li, Hong Lu, Sherry Qin, Xiao Wang

2004 Abednego Deng, Yao Li, Vinh Luu, Salil Pradham, Celine Zeng

2003 Natalia Beloukhina, Olga Konwisorz, Jan Owoc, Crystal Rego,

Jeremy Torio

2002 Genesis Juat, Eisha Alemao, David Lee, Steven Cheng, Pascal Yu

2001 Dominika Boczula, Shirley Ngo Suet Ho, Jung-Mee Hwang, Danijel

Margetic, Sheila Muy Lee Ung

2000 Susan Doan, Nilou Davoudi, Samir Pradhan, Stephen Kung,

Casy Wang

1999 Newman Yu Ting Lin, Aly Kassam-Remtulla, Alisa Palic,

Wei-ting Chen, Omar Tahmisic