



**Centre for Research,
Education, and Social Services
(CRESS Centre)**

Thank You Note

It is with immense pride and heartfelt joy that we gather today to celebrate the recipients of the Senior Social Inclusion Award in Seniors Week Celebration Event, 2025 led by the CRESS Centre in collaboration with over a dozen of organizations and media partners. Each of you has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to building stronger, more inclusive communities through your selfless volunteering, inspiring leadership, and unwavering dedication.

To our awardees- thank you for being the heart of your communities. Your actions have not only uplifted others but have also set a powerful example for generations to come.

I would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Award Selection Committee members for their thoughtful deliberation and dedication in recognizing these remarkable individuals. Your time and care have made this celebration possible.

A sincere thank to all the nominators, whose submissions brought these inspiring stories to light. Your efforts ensure that these contributions do not go unnoticed.

And finally, to all our supporters and well-wishers-thank you for believing in our mission and standing with us in honoring those who make our communities better every day.

**Bishnu Bajgain, MHCM, MSc, PhD (s)
Executive Director, CRESS Centre**

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Senior Week Celebration Event, 2025

Seniors Social Inclusion & Community Development Award

Featuring Stories of the Award Winners

In Collaboration with



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Supported by



About the Award

The Senior Social Inclusion Award is a heartfelt recognition of older adults who have made outstanding contributions to their communities through volunteering, inspiring others, and fostering inclusive environments. This award celebrates seniors who continue to lead with purpose, compassion, and dedication—proving that age is no barrier to making a meaningful impact.

At its core, the award honors those who have selflessly given their time and energy to support others—building communities through arts and culture, promoting multiculturalism, and advancing anti-racism awareness. These contributions take many forms, including community events, engagement sessions, interactive dialogues, and educational workshops, to name a few.

Equally important is their role as inspirational figures. Many seniors lead by example, demonstrating resilience, empathy, and a deep sense of civic responsibility. Their stories motivate others to engage, connect, and contribute to the greater good.

The award also recognizes efforts in community building—creating spaces where people of all ages and backgrounds feel welcome and valued. These seniors help bridge generational divides, foster understanding, and strengthen the social fabric of our communities.

More than just an accolade, the Senior Social Inclusion Award is a celebration of lifelong contribution. It challenges age-related stereotypes and affirms that seniors are not only valued members of society but also vital agents of change.

Gopal Bhatta, PhD
Lead, Award Selection Committee



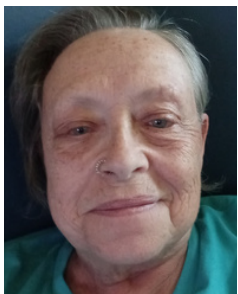
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About CRESS Centre

The Centre for Research, Education, and Social Services (CRESS Centre) is a non-profit organization registered by a group of dedicated experts and community leaders with a vision of making it a centre of excellence by integrating research, education, and social development to transform the lives of the citizens meaningfully. With a plea of "working with and for the communities," the organization's mission is to identify the pertinent needs of vulnerable citizens through research, implement educational and engagement activities, and provide social support to needy people to enhance their Quality of Life (QoL). The fundamental principles upon which our strategies, actions, and decisions are built are collaborative work culture, bottom-up planning process, collective community action, social inclusion, and service diversification.

Our Programs and Services

- Community Gardening
- Indigenous Cultural Learning and Sharing
- Senior Engagement Activities
- Home Alone Safety Training for kids and youth
- Digital Literacy and Digital Devices for Vulnerable Calgarians
- Multicultural Tours and Interactions
- Diversity and Intercultural Sharing Sessions Meet and Greet, and Storytelling Sessions
- Conversation Circles on anti-racism and multiculturalism



Carleen Detbrenner Jenkins

Carleen is an outstanding volunteer who dedicates countless hours to community programs across the city. In 2025 alone, she contributed over 100 hours to Village Square, organizing impactful workshops with enthusiasm and care. She leads initiatives like Crafternoon, encouraging seniors to connect through art, and creates inclusive programs for differently abled individuals, fostering meaningful engagement. Her passion for sustainability shines through her efforts to reduce waste by reusing materials. Willing to take on any challenge, Carleen inspires others with her dedication and kindness. Many have expressed how her work has positively impacted their lives. Her hard work and welcoming nature make her an invaluable community asset.



Hema Anand

Hema is a highly respected community leader whose dedication stems from her own experiences. After arriving in Canada in 2007, she faced personal struggles, including homelessness, before finding support at CIWA in Calgary. Inspired by this help, she committed herself to assisting other women in crisis, guiding them to shelter and resources. With over 200 volunteer hours at the Genesis Centre and recognition as CIWA's Volunteer of the Month (April 2025), her impact is undeniable. Hema leads Grandma's Kitchen, organizing meals for 35+ women, fostering inclusion and empowerment. She also coordinates cultural activities like giddha, helping isolated seniors feel connected. Known for her compassion and leadership, she assists women with practical needs—from food banks to transit—while motivating them through her resilience. Her ability to uplift others, regardless of age, makes her a role model. Hema's journey from hardship to community pillar proves that kindness and perseverance can transform lives.



Nizar Kurji

At 77 years young, Nizar has spent 11 transformative years volunteering with F.O.C.U.S. on Seniors, where he lives the organization's values daily: Fostering friendships, Opportunities for growth, Community involvement, Unity, and Synergy. This multilingual volunteer bridges cultural gaps. Through meal deliveries with warm companionship - braving Calgary's harshest weather, welcoming hospitality at multicultural events, making seniors feel valued, peer mentorship inspiring other seniors to volunteer and share their talents. Mr. Kurji's empathy and leadership have created safe spaces where isolated seniors find connection and purpose.



Dr. Zaman Ara

Zaman is a visionary leader whose five years of voluntary service have transformed lives in Calgary's northwest communities. As Founder and President of the Health and Social Research Centre (HSRC), she identified and addressed critical gaps in support for vulnerable ethnocultural seniors—newcomers, immigrants, and those facing isolation or health challenges. Under her leadership, HSRC has launched impactful initiatives like Empowering Seniors for Quality Life, Seniors Friendship Hub, and Healthy Aging for Social Inclusion, fostering connection, cultural integration, and abuse prevention. Zaman's unique ability to bridge cultural divides has created a sense of belonging for dozens of seniors, improving their mental and physical wellbeing. An immigrant senior herself, she leads with empathy and tireless dedication, mobilizing volunteers, mentoring interns, and collaborating with organizations—all without personal gain.



Bharat Regmi

Bharat has dedicated over 500 volunteer hours to combating social isolation among seniors, particularly within Nepalese community. Through Together with Seniors Society (TOSS) and Nepalese Community Society of Calgary (NCSC), he has created impactful programs—from multicultural tours and gardening sessions to mental health workshops—fostering connection and emotional well-being. As an advisor for Nepali Mela and multicultural events (2023-2024), he promoted intergenerational and intercultural learning. His collaborative approach empowers seniors through art, shared meals, and dialogue, ensuring they feel valued. Beyond programming, Mr. Regmi is a trusted mentor for Nepalese immigrants, offering settlement support and guidance. His compassionate leadership has strengthened community bonds and enriched lives.



Najeebullah Soroush

Najeebullah is a devoted cultural ambassador who has generously shared his 35 years of calligraphy expertise through the Canadian Zalmi Calligraphy Program. Over the past two years, he has volunteered over 300 hours annually, offering free workshops that both teach artistic skills and preserve Afghan heritage for youth reconnecting with their Roots. His impact extends beyond instruction—Mr. Soroush designs tailored lessons, mentors advanced students, and organizes exhibitions to showcase their work. With a calm and encouraging approach, he fosters a welcoming space for artistic and cultural expression. His collaborations with community leaders have expanded arts access for underrepresented groups. By empowering students to find their creative voice, Mr. Soroush strengthens cultural pride, mental well-being, and intergenerational bonds within the Afghan-Canadian community.



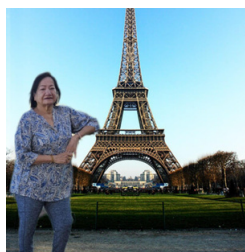
Arvindbhai N Patel

Arvindbhai is an exemplary senior volunteer who has dedicated himself to fostering social inclusion among Calgary's immigrant seniors. Since immigrating from India in 2014, he has overcome language and age-related challenges to become a pillar of support for isolated seniors in Saddleridge and beyond.

Arvindbhai actively bridges gaps by:

- Organizing social gatherings, picnics, and potlucks to combat isolation
- Providing translation services and guiding newcomers to resources
- Collaborating with organizations like CCIS, CIWA, and Genesis Centre
- Founding Senior Wellness Groups to promote mental health and community Engagement

His efforts have earned him the 2023 Immigrant Champions Award and an Inclusive Leadership Award. By empowering seniors to stay active and connected, Arvindbhai embodies the spirit of social inclusion, making him a deserving candidate for this honor.



Veena Bagai

Veena Bagai has dedicated over 700 volunteer hours in the past year to combating senior isolation through culturally sensitive programs. Her initiatives—like shared cooking sessions celebrating traditions and therapeutic art workshops—create spaces for connection, healing, and intergenerational bonding. Recognizing isolation's emotional toll, Veena tailors activities to restore confidence and dignity, from craft circles to community meals. Her approach prioritizes cultural inclusivity, ensuring seniors feel heard and valued. Beyond seniors, Veena uses art as a universal language to unite diverse age groups, fostering mutual respect. Her work has transformed loneliness into belonging, proving how one person's compassion can strengthen community ties.



Tigest Damete Befcadu

As a founding member and Financial Officer of the Amhara Association of Calgary (AAC), Tigest has dedicated four years to strengthening her community. Beyond managing finances, she leads the Women's Sub-Committee, organizing events that foster unity and mutual support among women. Her involvement spans

cultural celebrations, meetings, and initiatives—all approached with compassion and diligence. Tigest's impact extends globally: she has sponsored 20+ refugees from Kenya and Uganda, guiding them through resettlement in Canada. Her selfless dedication—hundreds of volunteer hours without seeking recognition—reflects her mission to build a stronger, more inclusive community. A natural leader, Tigest combines heart and action to uplift others. Her work with AAC and refugees exemplifies unwavering commitment, making her a deserving honoree.



Soghra Sadeghzahed Monfared

Soghra has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to reducing isolation among Calgary's Persian seniors through four years of compassionate volunteerism. Beginning with the Calgary Senior's Resource Society, she created welcoming spaces for Persian elders, later expanding her impact with CIWA's Seniors Social Club.

When funding ended, she continued independently, organizing:

- Social outings (mall trips, picnics)
- Wellness activities (swimming, Zumba, yoga)
- Practical support (transit/housing assistance, medical appointment accompaniment)

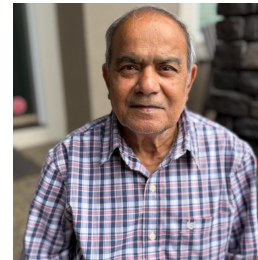
Her bridge-building connects seniors to vital services like Grandma's Kitchen and Kerby Centre events. Soghra's cultural sensitivity and advocacy have made her a trusted leader, transforming loneliness into belonging. For her selfless leadership and profound community impact, she richly deserves this honor.



Vidya Richardson

Vidya Richardson, an 80-year-old retired public health nurse, is a compassionate and dedicated community leader who inspires through her selfless service. Despite her age, she remains energetic and purposeful, contributing over 500 volunteer hours in the past year. A trusted figure at community events, she quietly

supports others without seeking recognition. For over a decade, Vidya has offered free yoga and meditation sessions at Village Square, providing solace to those facing stress or personal struggles. Vidhya has been an active volunteer with the CRESS Centre since 2023. She also organizes neighborhood block parties as an active member of the Whitehorn Community Committee, fostering unity and connection. Known for her resilience, integrity, and wisdom, Vidya empowers others to face challenges with courage. Her generosity and commitment to service make her a role model, proving that age is no barrier to making a meaningful difference. Vidya's life exemplifies compassion, perseverance, and the power of giving wholeheartedly.



Suresh Chandra Trivedi

Suresh has dedicated over 100 volunteer hours to combating senior isolation through CCIS programs. His leadership in organizing social teas, park picnics, Excel/crochet sessions, and multicultural activities creates welcoming spaces where seniors feel valued.

What sets Suresh apart is his proactive approach to inclusion:

- Actively engages both men and women in community activities
- Learns new languages to bridge cultural divides
- Introduces diverse traditions to foster mutual understanding

His initiatives have significantly reduced isolation among vulnerable seniors, including those with diverse gender identities. By leading through example—embracing new experiences and cultures—Suresh inspires peers to connect and participate.



Tost Raj Chhetri

Tost Raj Chhetri, a 66-year-old Nepalese immigrant, has dedicated over 1600 volunteer hours since 2018 to combating senior isolation in Calgary. His multifaceted contributions include:

Leadership & Digital Inclusion

- As Vice-President of CCIS's South Asian Seniors Club, he fosters culturally safe spaces for connection
- Mentors seniors in computer literacy, empowering them to access services and communicate with family

Community Bridge-Building

- Guides newcomers through Immigrant Services Calgary
- Supports City of Calgary environmental/animal programs, engaging seniors in parks and events

He commits to continuously enhance skills in cross-cultural communication, emotional intelligence, and sign language to better serve diverse needs. Mr. Chhetri's compassionate leadership has helped hundreds of seniors—particularly South Asian immigrants—feel valued, connected, and technologically confident. His work embodies the transformative power of inclusive volunteerism.



Rosalind Lee

Rosalind Lee has demonstrated exceptional commitment to fostering community wellbeing through cultural activities. As leader of the Malaysian Singaporean Brunei Community Association's Tai Chi group, she dedicated over 100 volunteer hours last year:

Rosalind Lee has demonstrated exceptional commitment to fostering community wellbeing through cultural activities. As leader of the Malaysian Singaporean Brunei Community Association's Tai Chi group, she dedicated over 100 volunteer hours last year:

- Guiding diverse participants in Tai Chi's health benefits
- Strengthening cultural connections through this traditional art
- Creating inclusive spaces that promote physical and mental wellness

Beyond Tai Chi, Rosalind:

- Organized cultural cooking initiatives
- Led the Starlights Dance Group to share traditional performances

Her multifaceted volunteerism bridges generations and cultures while addressing holistic health. Rosalind's leadership exemplifies how traditional arts can build healthier, more connected communities. Her warm, patient teaching style makes ancient practices accessible to seniors and newcomers alike.