

2024  
**RISE**  
AWARDS  
WINNERS

Signature Sponsor



# 2024 RISE AWARDS NOMINEES



We proudly acknowledge the outstanding nominees of the **2024 Newcomer Centre RISE Awards**. Your dedication, resilience, and contributions have enriched our community, inspiring all of us to build a more inclusive and vibrant future. We celebrate your achievements and thank you for making a lasting impact on our shared journey.

**Abu Conteh**  
**Chandra Sigamoney**  
**Dong Phan**  
**Edmonton Chamber of Commerce**  
**Emebet Tesema**  
**Emma Kamanja**  
**Health and Social Research Centre**  
**John Lendein**  
**Kayijuka Rukabuz**  
**Kelechi Madu**  
**Lucenia Ortiz**  
**Marian Massalay**  
**Nargis Ahmadi**  
**Olga Loggale**  
**Safia Moke**  
**Sajai Sebastian**  
**Souleka Mustapha**  
**Supriya James**  
**Rasnim Halabiya**  
**Toyin Oladele**  
**Wazhma Sadaat**



# RISING STAR YOUTH AWARD

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The **Rising Star Youth Award** honors young immigrants aged 13 to 25 who show excellence, resilience, and leadership potential, inspiring others. It recognizes those who have excelled in academics, arts, sports, entrepreneurship, philanthropy, community service, or activism.

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## KAIRANDEEP KAUR DHILLION

Kairandeep, originally from a small village in India, immigrated to Canada three years ago to study Psychology at the University of Alberta. Now in her fourth year, she balances her studies with roles as a research assistant and behaviour interventionist, focusing on supporting immigrant women facing inter-generational trauma and domestic violence.



**Her Green Flow Period Pantry** project challenges the stigma around menstruation in Indian society by providing free, sustainable menstrual products, benefiting 300 individuals and securing \$20,000 in grants. Through this initiative, Kirandeep promotes menstrual equity and environmental stewardship. Additionally, her research on bilingual immigrant and refugee children underscores her commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for marginalized communities, making her an inspiring advocate for social justice and empowerment.





# ARTIST OF THE YEAR

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This award recognizes immigrant artists for their contributions to the arts and music community, promoting diversity, inclusion, and social justice. It honors an immigrant artist who has significantly enriched Edmonton's cultural landscape and celebrates the diverse artistic expressions of newcomers.

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## IDA BELTRAN- LUCILA

Ida Beltran-Lucila is a distinguished artist and arts administrator with a cum laude degree in Theatre Arts from the University of the Philippines. A former principal dancer with Ballet Philippines, she has performed in major ballets and pioneered a dance therapy program in Manila.

Since moving to Edmonton in 2005, she has taught dance, directed productions, and founded the Philippine Arts Council Alberta to promote Filipino culture. Ida has organized events like the Edmonton *Filipino Fiesta* and has written on cultural identity. Her work has earned multiple awards, including the City of Edmonton's Citation Award for Culture and the Arts, and she was instrumental in establishing June as Philippine Heritage Month.

A leader in the arts, she emphasizes authentic representation and empowers migrants, reflecting her commitment to community unity through voluntary efforts alongside her role at Edmonton Public Schools.





# COMMUNITY CHAMPION

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The **Community Champion Award** honors individuals or groups for their outstanding contributions to the community and their dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of others.

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## FUNKE OLOKUDE

Funke Olokude is an award-winning leader dedicated to promoting equity for marginalized individuals and families. With nearly two decades of experience in social services across Canada, she has driven impactful policy changes that enhance community well-being.

As the former Executive Director of the Ribbon Rouge Foundation, she led arts initiatives for health equity. Currently, as President of the **Nigerian Canadian Association Edmonton** and CEO of **Hexagon Wellness Institute**, she has strengthened community resilience, particularly during the pandemic. Funke founded the **Nigerian Leadership Circle** to improve support for families and prevent children from entering the welfare system.

Recognized as a Top 40 Under 40 and recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal, Funke continues to make a significant impact through her advocacy and leadership.





# EQUITY IN ACTION

The Equity in Action Award celebrates organizations or businesses committed to building inclusive workplaces reflective of the larger society. The award acknowledges those who have taken concrete steps to ensure that all employees, regardless of their background, orientation or identity are treated equitably and have the same access to opportunities, resources, and benefits. This category encourages appreciation of diversity in workplace contributions.

## EMPLOY-ABILITIES SOCIETY

**EmployAbilities Society of Alberta** is a non-profit organization that was founded in February 1974. They offer skills development and employment services to Albertans facing barriers like disabilities and mental health challenges.

The EmployAbilities for Newcomers program offers cultural sensitive pre-employment programs and services, including placements to newcomers with a disability or permanent condition.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2024, the organization has evolved from "Employment Services for the Physically Disabled" and now serves Edmonton, Grande Prairie, and North-Central Alberta. Between July 2022 and June 2023, it helped over 500 clients, with nearly 400 finding jobs, including newcomers through its specialized program that partners with settlement organizations for training and support.



**EMPLOY**  
*Abilities*



CHARTERED  
PROFESSIONAL  
ACCOUNTANTS  
ALBERTA

Equity in Action



# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY IMPACT

This award honors the value of diversity and the contributions of cultural communities to our city. It promotes respect for all cultures and encourages organizations to embrace inclusive communities. Presented to a business, organization, or group that has created a welcoming community, nominees are evaluated on their efforts in promoting intercultural understanding and preserving cultural identity and heritage.

## EDMONTON HERITAGE FESTIVAL



Established in 1976, the **Edmonton Heritage Festival Association** (EHFA) is a registered non-profit that produces one of the largest multicultural festivals in the world.

The **Heritage Festival** unites local cultural groups annually to share their history, music, dance, and cuisine. Recognized as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Asset' by UNESCO, EHFA is also a member of the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF). Their efforts in promoting cultural appreciation and unity make them deserving of recognition.



## CANADA PALESTINE CULTURAL ASSOCIATION (CPCA)

The **Canada Palestine Cultural Association (CPCA)** exemplifies inclusion and cultural awareness, making significant strides in supporting both newcomers and established residents.

Through initiatives like the Threads of Diaspora project, youth soccer camps, Tareez workshops, and Dabkeh dance troupes, the CPCA fosters cultural exchange and provides healthy recreational opportunities.

Established in 1984, this volunteer-driven non-profit organization is dedicated to helping newcomers settle into their new lives while ensuring their programs are accessible and relevant to diverse groups, including children, youth, and women.

In light of current events in Palestine, the CPCA's ongoing relief efforts for families affected by the crisis are crucial. Their resilience in promoting Palestinian cultural heritage and community engagement not only enriches our society but also strengthens the bonds among its members, making our community more inclusive and vibrant.





# LGBTQIA+ EQUITY



This award honours an individual(s), business or organization demonstrating leadership in advocating for equal rights and the well-being and safety of the LGBTQIA+ community, setting an example for inclusiveness and equality. The nominee has raised awareness and promoted education on issues like gender identity, mental health, and intersectionality, and has contributed to policies and programs supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, such as youth outreach and diversity initiatives. They have also worked to create safer spaces and support for individuals facing discrimination, harassment, or violence.

## PRIDE CENTRE OF EDMONTON

The **Pride Centre of Edmonton** is adopting an anti-racist lens, focusing on refugees and newcomers seeking asylum for their queer identities.



Guided by an Indigenous and anti-racist framework, the **Pride Centre**, led by Executive Director Esjay Lafayette, is boldly shaping an inclusive space for the LGBTQI2S+ community. Through Esjay's visionary leadership, a comprehensive equity framework has been established, responding to the needs of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions and of the people in their lives making the Pride Centre a beacon of safety and accountability.



PRIDE CENTRE  
OF EDMONTON

Honoring this nominee emphasizes the critical role of organizations that are intentional in their anti-racist and equity-driven work, highlighting their unwavering commitment to uplifting the community.

# WOMAN OF THE YEAR



The Woman of the Year Award, recognizes an immigrant woman for her exceptional achievements and contributions to her community while overcoming unique challenges related to immigration, settlement, or resettlement. This award honors her leadership, dedication, and perseverance in both personal and professional spheres. It celebrates the strength, resilience, and accomplishments of immigrant women, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

## RANDA ALHIJAWI

Randa Alhijawi, a proud Palestinian immigrant, balances her role as a Privacy Senior Advisor for the Government of Alberta with running her own business, **Alhijawi Driver Education**.



As president of the Canadian Palestinian Cultural Association (CPCA), Randa spearheaded the establishment of a pavilion at the Edmonton Heritage Festival, showcasing the richness of Palestinian arts through workshops in traditional weaving and dance. A passionate human rights advocate, she is committed to mentoring youth—especially young women—and has provided vital support to community members affected by the Gaza conflict.

Randa's leadership has elevated the CPCA's cultural influence while forging meaningful connections with diverse communities across Edmonton.



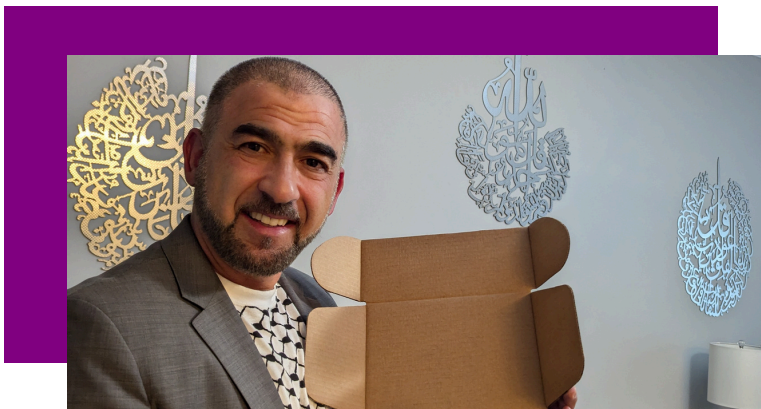
2024

# RISE AWARDS

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes an immigrant to Edmonton who has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to building safe and welcoming communities. This prestigious honor is awarded to individuals whose contributions have made a profound and enduring difference, shaping the fabric of their communities and the the city for at least a decade. It celebrates a legacy of impactful work, highlighting their lasting influence and the meaningful change they have inspired in the pursuit of equity and inclusivity.

# ISSAM SALEH



Issam's journey in community service began over twenty years ago, starting with the Muslim community's first roast beef dinner at the Boyle Street Community Centre. Known for his graciousness and willingness to help, he has built multiple organizations that support newcomers and youth, particularly in entrepreneurship and community education. His mentorship has provided invaluable guidance in leadership and finance to those lacking role models.

Issam has been instrumental in establishing essential institutions, including the MAC Islamic Centre and MAC Islamic School, and has served on various boards such as the Edmonton Regional Science Fair Council and the Edmonton Islamic Academy. He founded the EMAAN national scholarship program, helping marginalized students access education.

His commitment extends to basic needs, having established a long-running inner-city dinner program and numerous food drives. Additionally, Issam has actively engaged marginalized communities in political conversations, founding organizations that promote civic awareness and participation.

With a legacy of building social infrastructure and fostering inclusive communities, Issam is a deserving candidate for the Lifetime Service Award, reflecting his dedication to creating lasting change in Edmonton and beyond.



We sincerely thank our 2024 RISE Awards Sponsors for your invaluable support. Your dedication to recognizing and uplifting newcomers has made this celebration possible. Together, we honor the extraordinary contributions that strengthen our community and inspire a brighter, more inclusive future.

Thank you for your partnership.



Equity In Action



Rising Star



Community Champion



Intercultural  
Community Impact



LGBTQIA+ Equity

Artist of the Year

Woman of the Year

Lifetime  
Achievement

Donate



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