



## 15th ANNUAL TOP 25 CANADIAN IMMIGRANT AWARDS

**Film star, football hero, songstress and diverse community champions  
are among this year's Top 25**

*Recognizing immigrant success stories for 15 years from across Canada*

**Toronto, August 03, 2023** – With increasing immigration targets, more immigrants are coming to Canada to make a better life for their families, and data shows that Canada is better for it, too (e.g., immigration accounts for 100% labour force growth). But the true impact immigrants have on this country is best told through their personal success stories. That's what the Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Awards has been about for 15 years.

Presented by Western Union, *Canadian Immigrant* magazine's Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Awards is the only national awards program that celebrates the achievements of Canadian immigrants. Now in its 15th year, the program has been the leader in highlighting inspiring stories of immigrants in Canada, from coast to coast and from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The awards program is also supported by COSTI Immigrant Services and Windmill Microlending.

This year's Top 25 will join an inspirational list of past recipients who exemplify the notion of making Canada a better place. This year's list includes a film star/vegan advocate, a Juno-nominated songwriter who writes songs to empower, a Canadian football MVP and philanthropist, as well as many diverse community champions working tirelessly to do good.

"We are so proud to announce the recipients in this year's milestone awards program. For 15 years, we have been awed by the stories of our Top 25 inductees, and this year's winners are a testament to the important role that immigrants play in Canada," said Sanjay Agnihotri, Publisher of *Canadian Immigrant*. "As we welcome more newcomers to Canada, it's more important than ever for us to celebrate the important contributions immigrants and refugees make. Congratulations to all of this year's recipients, and thank you to Western Union for being our partner in the awards."

"Immigrants are an incredible engine of growth across Canada, contributing in so many ways to our society," said Ari Hagnas, Western Union General Manager, Canada. "In the spirit of recognizing their achievements, Western Union is once again honoured to sponsor these prestigious awards and recognize the numerous contributions from those who have moved to Canada from all parts of the world. We stand here to support them as they continue their journey in their new country."

Among the Top 25, we have again selected one winner as our Youth Award recipient, and one as our Entrepreneur Award winner. Syrian-born **Hanen Nanaa**, 25, founder of BAM Collective in Toronto is our

2023 Youth Award winner and **Sam Primucci**, founder of Pizza Nova, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, is our Entrepreneur Award winner.

The Top 25 Canadian Immigrants of 2023 were chosen after an extensive nomination, judging, shortlisting and public online voting process. Hundreds of nominations were received, from which 75 finalists were shortlisted by a diverse judging panel of past winners. Nearly 68,000 online votes were cast at [canadianimmigrant.ca](https://canadianimmigrant.ca). The 25 winners were chosen based on a combination of votes and judges' merit scores.

Winners are now being featured online at <https://canadianimmigrant.ca/canadas-top-25-immigrants> and in the August print edition of *Canadian Immigrant* magazine.

### **Windmill Microlending Empowerment Award**

For the 15th anniversary year of the Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Awards, we are pleased to welcome new partner Windmill Microlending, along with an exciting new award. The **Windmill Microlending Empowerment Award** recognizes individuals who are working above and beyond to empower and support the successful journeys of immigrants and refugees to Canada. This work can be in the capacity of an employment, entrepreneurial or volunteer initiative.

This award ran in conjunction with the Top 25 awards but with different eligibility requirements, and a separate nomination and selection process. This year's winner is **Syed Hassan**, founder and president of Love with Humanity Association in Calgary, Alberta.

### **AND THE TOP 25 OF 2023 ARE ...**

The Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award recipients of 2023 are listed in alphabetical order below and include current city residence and home country in parentheses. Read their full story on the Canadian Immigrant website: <https://canadianimmigrant.ca/canadas-top-25-immigrants>

The Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award recipients of 2023:

**Ali Abukar** (Saskatoon, SK/Somalia), Chief executive officer at Saskatoon Open Door Society.

**Paola Ardiles Gamboa** (Vancouver, BC, Chile), Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University.

**Ndiallo Aw Badji** (Pincourt, QC/Senegal), CEO of Mamy Kaya Inc. and CEO of Mamy Kaya World.

**Wyle Baoween** (Vancouver, BC/Yemen), Founder and CEO of HRx and co-founder of the Yemeni Canadian Society.

**Edward Cruz, PhD** (Windsor, ON/ Philippines), Assistant Professor at University of Windsor, Faculty of Nursing and co-chair of the Partners in Integration and Education of IENs.

**Maninder Dhaliwal** (Vancouver, BC/India), electrical engineer and founder of Lions Gate International.

**Natasha Dhayagude** (Fredericton, NB/India), CEO and co-founder of Chinova Bioworks.

**Mina Hoorfar, PhD** (Victoria, BC/Iran), Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, University of Victoria.

**Sobhana Jaya-Madhavan** (Burnaby, BC/India), Associate Vice President, External Relations, Simon Fraser University.

**Dean Lin** (Hope, BC/Taiwan), Entrepreneur, volunteer and Manager of Enterprise Development at DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society.

**Mena Massoud** (Markham, ON/Egypt), Actor and founder of Ethnically Diverse Artists Foundation

**Archana Medhekar** (Toronto, ON/ India), Family Lawyer, Mediator, Author and founder of Archana Medhekar Law.

**Hénoç Muamba** (Toronto, ON/Democratic Republic of Congo), CFL Football player, mentor and public speaker.

**Hanan Nanaa** (Toronto, ON/Syria), Social entrepreneur, youth leader and founder of BAM Collective.

**Raymond Ngarbouï** (Winnipeg, MB/Chad), Community Development Coordinator at Community Education Development Association (CEDA).

**Florence Ngenzebuhoro** (Hamilton, ON/Burundi), CEO and Executive Director at Francophone Centre of Greater Toronto.

**Faouzia Ouihya** (Carman, MB/Morocco) Juno-nominated singer and songwriter.

**Mustafa Popalzai** (Toronto, ON/Afghanistan), Detective Constable, Toronto Police Service's Homicide Unit and co-founder of Project Hope.

**Ann Pornel** (Toronto, ON/Philippines), Comedian, actor, writer and co-host of *The Great Canadian Baking Show*.

**Sam Primucci** (Toronto, ON/Italy), Founder and CEO of Pizza Nova.

**Winston Sayson** (Richmond, BC/Philippines) Retired Crown Counsel and community volunteer.

**Agunbiade Seun Richards** (Saint John, NB/Nigeria), Social Entrepreneur, Researcher, and co-founder of the Black Business Professional Networks in Atlantic Canada.

**Cindy Sinclair, PhD** (Toronto, ON/Guyana) Academic faculty, University of Toronto and founder of Sinclair Consulting Services.

**Beili Wong** (Toronto, ON/China), Comptroller General of Ontario.

**Leslie Woo** (Toronto, ON/Trinidad and Tobago) Senior Fellow at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and CEO at CivicAction.

### **About Canadian Immigrant**

Attracting more than 400,000 readers each month and over 100,000 visitors a month online, Canadian Immigrant is a national multimedia platform to help immigrants succeed in Canada, with content, resources and events on careers, education and settlement. Canadian Immigrant is the producer of the cross-country Canadian Immigrant Fairs. Canadian Immigrant is a division of Metroland Media Group, a dynamic media company with more than 100 community and daily newspapers in print and online, as well as innovative websites including [wheels.ca](http://wheels.ca), [goldbook.ca](http://goldbook.ca), [save.ca](http://save.ca) and [localwork.ca](http://localwork.ca). Learn more at [canadianimmigrant.ca](http://canadianimmigrant.ca).

### **About Western Union**

Western Union is a global leader in cross-border, cross-currency money movement and payments. Western Union's platform provides seamless cross-border flows and its leading global financial network bridges more than 200 countries and territories and over 130 currencies. We connect businesses, financial institutions, governments, and consumers through one of the world's widest reaching networks, accessing billions of bank accounts, millions of digital wallets and cards, and approximately 600,000 retail locations. Western Union connects the world to bring boundless possibilities within reach.

### **About COSTI**

Meeting the needs of a diverse society since 1952, COSTI is a community-based diverse social impact agency providing employment, educational, settlement and social services to all immigrant communities, new Canadians, and individuals in need of assistance. COSTI strives to be a leader in community service by using a client-focused, proactive, and innovative approach in planning,

developing, and delivering services. Our programs ensure that regardless of language or cultural barriers, people communities are able to access information, use their existing skills and learn new ones that accelerate their ability to engage broadly and deeply in all aspects of Canadian society.

Operating from 18 locations in Toronto, York Region and the Region of Peel, COSTI provides services in more than 60 languages. We help over 39,000 individuals receive assistance.

**About Windmill Microlending**

Windmill Microlending works to reduce poverty, inequity and labour shortages by offering affordable loans to help skilled immigrants and refugees restart their careers in Canada. Our vision is to ensure skilled newcomers are equitably integrated into the workforce while contributing their expertise to Canada's economic and social success. We are the country's only national charity providing financial support to new Canadians to achieve their accreditation, training and professional development goals. Since 2005, Windmill has provided more than 8,000+ microloans to skilled newcomers. Funded by both the public and private sectors, Windmill converts newcomer potential to prosperity. Learn more at [www.windmillmicrolending.org](http://www.windmillmicrolending.org).

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