



NEWCOMER WOMEN'S SERVICES TORONTO

CREATIVE EMPOWERMENT

SUMMER 2023

Montgomery's Inn

4709 Dundas St W, Toronto ON M9A 1A8



**TORONTO
ARTS
COUNCIL**

**FUNDED BY
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About Newcomer Women's Services Toronto

Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW) is an award-winning not-for-profit charity organization that was founded by a group of Latin American refugees in 1983 with a vision of strong women building strong communities. A multi-service agency with operations in two Toronto locations serving 800+ Immigrants and Refugees annually. The agency was awarded a Non-profit Employer of Choice Award in 2020! The Canadian Non-profit Employer of Choice™ Awards (NEOC) recognizes organizations across Canada that have committed themselves to better business management practices to achieve their mission. With 40 years of operations, NEW has been providing settlement, employment, youth programs, and services, as well as English language training for newcomers and immigrants. NEW also delivers special programs focused on immigrant women empowerment, leadership, skills development, mentorship and career advancement for immigrant and refugee women.

About Toronto History Museums

Toronto History Museums are a collection of 10 historic sites owned and operated by the City of Toronto with the mission to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance the understanding of Toronto's diverse stories through engaging and exciting experiences. Since 2020, the Toronto History Museums Strategic Plan: Laying a New Foundation has set a new direction for the way forward which aligns with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) new definition of museums.

Our Stories

Toronto's many pasts, presents and futures meet at our museums. The histories you'll experience here are not tales penned by a select few. They are stories written and told by the many who shape them. They are as diverse as the perspectives and experiences of our people – and we are many. See amazing and appalling things. Taste sweet and bitter flavours. Hear laughter and lament. Touch the silky and the prickly edges of our history. Meet us at the intersection of countless viewpoints. Leave us inspired about this place we call Toronto.

Montgomery's Inn

Built in the 1830s to shelter travellers, Montgomery's Inn brought people together from the surrounding area and beyond over food, drink, games, and more. More than 170 years later, it's still doing just that. This lively museum gives visitors the opportunity to see how a 19th-century Canadian inn was run from ballroom to bedrooms, with a kitchen and bar still in full working order. Montgomery's Inn has been a place of shelter and a temporary home to many newcomers. We are so proud to host the participants in NEW's Empowerment Circle, as they connect that history to their own experiences as Newcomer Women.

About The Project

Newcomer Women's Creative Empowerment

Creative Empowerment showcases the stories and artistic creations of newcomer and immigrant women. Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW) in partnership with Montgomery's Inn collaborate to uplift the diverse histories of immigrants finding a home and flourishing businesses at the Inn over the last hundred years. Thanks to the Animating Historic Sites Grant from the Toronto Arts Council, this project employed expert newcomer women artists to deliver innovative arts-based programming to newcomer women participants. On the May 27 activation day, we invited the public to join us in celebrating the unique newcomer women's stories and empowering artistic creations. The ongoing exhibition of the women's stories will be available for viewing throughout the summer of 2023 at Montgomery's Inn.

Artistic Practices

This project is co-designed and led by Newcomer Women for Newcomer Women. We believe in building community and empowerment through sharing stories and art making. All sessions utilize a trauma-informed approach and strive for an accessible framework (including art for children, translation, and more). Art is the vehicle we share for well-being, entrepreneurship, and self empowerment.

Timeline

This project spanned 8 weeks of programming.
(see bios below)

Weeks 1-4 - Storytelling led by expressive arts therapist and storyteller Sarah

Week 5 - Natural Dyes painting Led by Mercy

Week 6 - Photography Self Portrait by Marycarla

Week 7 - Dance and movement by Ashima

Week 8 - Beading by Ari

Culminating in an exhibition at Montgomery's Inn with our talented newcomer women artists! Visit

<https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/history-art-culture/museums/montgomerys-inn/>



ORGANIZERS



Bryna Tallman - Manager Programs and Special Projects

Bryna Tallman, PMP®, is currently the Manager of Programs and Special Project at Newcomer Women's Services Toronto. Bryna holds a Master's degree from North Park University in performance and pedagogy. In addition to an extensive performing career, Bryna is an experienced administrator, project manager with a passion for building community, education, and innovative research. She/They worked at the Canadian Opera Company as the Children, Youth and Family Programs Manager, and held a Manager position at CultureLink Settlement and Community Services. Bryna strives to bring inclusive and accessible education and arts-based programs to enhance learning and build lifelong self-empowerment with a focus on women, gender diverse folks, and children.



Sara Asalya - Executive Director

Sara is a recognized champion of immigrants' rights. Her leadership and dedication to advancing newcomers' economic resilience, civic and political engagement have led to her being named one of Canada's Top 25 Canadian Immigrants and Women of Influence. Sara is the Executive Director of Newcomer Women's Services Toronto (NEW); a multi-service not-for-profit charity with operations in two Toronto locations serving thousands of Immigrants and Refugees annually. Sara is the Founder and former Executive Director of The Newcomer Students' Association, a national not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of migration, education, and social justice, and a platform committed to promoting inclusion and equity for post-secondary immigrant and refugee students.



ARTISTS



Sarah Abu-Sharar

Sarah comes from a long line of storytellers on her paternal side. She tells stories to both adults and children. Sarah has told stories both nationally and internationally at festivals in Canada, United Arab Emirates, Bosnia and Croatia. Sarah, grew up in several countries she tells stories from all over the world with the focus on Palestinian and Croatian stories where her roots lie. Her favourite stories are ones that promote social change. Sarah has also used stories in a therapeutic way with children in refugee camps and refugee children in Toronto, as part of their therapy. She works at the Parent Child Mother Goose Program using traditional storytelling to encourage parent child bonding. Sarah belongs to a collective called "Musical Story Studio" where stories and music are combined in performance and through workshops. Sarah, tells stories so that she may go deep inside of the tales and find herself in far away magical places, that she remembers, from long, long ago.



Mercy Verdugo

Mercy Verdugo is a photographer, actress, poet, and advocate of the arts. She is also the founder and director of ATELIER (founded in 2011). Atelier is a Mindful Art and Constant Creation project, where theatre, paper making, painting, film and music workshops are held. From the Laboratory of Ideas of the Atelier, social workshops are generated for the benefit of the neighborhood and the community. Mercy has shared The colors of the Earth Workshop in the Lacandona jungle, in various communities of Chiapas and Oaxaca, CDMX, Toronto, through different Collectives and in cultural and public spaces. She has been part of various projects, artistic actions and events through performance, installation, poetry and photography. Mercy is constantly participating in the community through art and poetic actions.

<https://mercyarte.wordpress.com/>

ARTISTS



Marycarla Quintazzi

Marycarla Quintazzi (She/Her) is a Toronto based photographer and a mobile phone photography instructor for women and newcomer's entrepreneurship hub. Also, she is a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and an ambassador for SettleNet Organization Community of Practice. She focuses mainly on products, food & drink and portrait photography. A combination of creativity, exploration, knowledge, and experience have allowed her to capture images that the viewer can connect emotionally. Her journey in the visual field started over 10 years ago with international work experience in a wide variety of fields which include television news, video production, communication consultant for NGOs, customer service, and photography in the cruise line industry and as an assistant for other photographers. Marycarla earned a Bachelor of Communication Sciences with a specialization in Journalism and Mass Communication Science Studies in her country Peru. In 2017, she graduated from Seneca College Independent Digital Photography program. In 2019, she graduated from the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub Program facilitated by Toronto Metropolitan University's TRSM Diversity Institute and Scadding Court Community Center.



Ashima Suri

As a story-teller and an artist, Ashima Suri is driven by the desire to share individual and collective stories in order to amplify voices that are often not heard. Ashima is an award-winning Established Dance Artist and the Artistic Director of Limitless Productions, a company that uses performance art and story-telling as a tool for social change. Ashima has produced and created her own shows, two of which were featured at the Toronto Fringe Festival. In 2013, 2014 & 2017, Ashima was selected to perform and deliver Masterclasses at the World Dance Alliance Global Summit. Ashima continues her community engagement by working on delivering dance & theatre programs across the GTA. In addition to being an Artist & an Educator, Ashima is also a Wellness Coach and Yoga Instructor. In her spare time, she loves long walks in nature, spending time with her daughter and making fun dance videos.

ARTISTS

Maria del Carmen Ordonez



Maria del Carmen Ordonez is an Educator who loves stories. She joined The Parent Child Mother Goose Program in 2006 when she came to Canada, and she discovered the art of Traditional Storytelling. Throughout these years she has performed at the Toronto Festival of Storytellers, The Word on the Street Festival, FOOL Festival and community libraries. She likes to tell folktales from Latin America and from the Spanish tradition in Spanish and English.

Ari Paranthahan



Ari is a second generation Sri-Lankan-Canadian, Hindu, non-binary, queer activist based in Scarborough, Ontario. They are an ESL teacher, theatre artist and a writer with a passion for reading, learning and unlearning. Ari completed an undergraduate degree in Business Communications at Brock University in St. Catharines, while also completing minors in Women and Gender Studies and the Dramatic Arts. During their time in St. Catharines, Ari got involved with social justice organizations such as the Brock Student Justice Centre, OPIRG-Brock as well as The Brock Faith and Life Centre. Ari is currently completing a certificate in English Literature and Popular Culture at Toronto Metropolitan University and their Masters of Education part-time at York University. Ari has co-created a theatre show archiving their queer faith journey called *That Power*, a play focusing on queer interfaith dialogue that was highlighted in In The Soil Arts Festival 2020. They are currently working on adapting *That Power* as new life experiences impact their queer faith journey. Ari recently worked at the Department of Imaginary Affairs (DIA) as a Storytelling Caretaker. They started working with DIA as a social researcher where they engaged in conversations with BIPOC community members about their experiences in public parks amidst the pandemic, hosted a virtual NaNoWriMo parks and lands based writing program and facilitated a lands based zine creation and storytelling program called *re:parks*. They have recently been approved for an ArtReach grant to work on a storytelling and zine creation program for BIPOC youth called *DREAMS* in the Toronto area in the fall of 2022 with their colleagues as part of DIA's programming. Ari has recently self-published two books through Bookleaf Publishing, one called "DEAR BODY", the other "displaced.", both about their journeys as a second generation diaspora community member and their queer journey, coming to terms with their sexuality and gender.

ARTISTS



Pavla Uppal

Pavla Uppal, M.A. is an educator and an applied theatre practitioner who has been expanding the use of theatre arts for social change in education and community-based projects for over 15 years. She has worked with Newcomer Women Services on several projects addressing gender-based violence through forum theatre, and is happy to support the Social Justice Lab with writing and directing the forum play that brings to you a story of Maria, a caregiver visa holder. Pavla has also worked with seniors, empowering them to tell their stories of resilience. She is a founder of Your Story Matters where she uses her passion for stories and Forum Theatre methodology to explore power hierarchy, to challenge assumptions, and to open creative possibilities for change. She offers professional development, such as Inclusion and Diversity Training and Intercultural Communication Training to organizations.



Jo Proulx (She/Her)

Film director, editor, and publicist French Abenaki Jo Proulx served on the Board of Director of the Inside Out Film Festival from 2018 to 2020. She co-directed *The Eighth Fire*, a documentary about the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, with award-winning director P.J. Marcellino (*When They Awake*) featuring Anishinaabe visual artist Philip Cote. As documentary filmmaker, Jo is interested in food sovereignty, identity, Indigenous music, and language revitalization. Relying on her journalism experience back in Montreal and her weekly Toronto radio show dedicated to Indigenous artists, Jo founded AKI MEDIA in early 2022 to promote Indigenous artists on the national and international scene. While the film and music industries were paralyzed by Covid, Jo spent the lockdown years learning culinary techniques at George Brown College Chef School where she trained with award-winning TV celebrity Chef David Wolfman. Jo is an alumnus of the 2021 WIFT Indigenous Writers Program and a member of the Director's Guild of Canada. Jo currently sits on the board of Folk Music Ontario and the Canadian Folk Music Awards.

RESEARCHERS



Minju Kim

Minju, who moved to Canada from South Korea, is deeply passionate about working with and for people for social impact. She has experience working in non-profit community organizations and hospital for refugee women and children and for policies to advocate for people with mental health issues in South Korea. She is a Master of Social Work candidate at McMaster University, and her research interests focus on addressing social inequities through an intersectional framework and art-based approaches. Minju is also an amateur photographer interested in people's lived stories and inner feelings, in particular, complicating representations of marginalized groups and trying to highlight their underrepresented stories.



Maliheh Deyhim

Maliheh completed B.A. and an M.A. in Philosophy in Iran and arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland, to start an M.A. program in the Department of Philosophy at Memorial University in 2015. Having been born and raised in Iran, Maliheh increasingly became sensitive, curious, and aware of issues related to sexuality and gender equality. After finishing her M.A., she continued her academic journey in a Ph.D. program in philosophy at Memorial University, focusing on Muslim women's bodily experience of wearing and removing the hijab and the complications of their experience since the active colonial era.

Realizing her strong interest in connecting her theoretical background to a more practical field in which her passion lies, she started an M.A. program in Immigration and Settlement Studies at Toronto Metropolitan University upon finishing her Ph.D. Program. She is completing this program with a research project on the experience of queer refugees' sense of belonging in Canada. She is also currently collaborating with NEW's Special Programs Team .



ARTIST PARTICIPANTS

Homa Hedayat

Iryna Khrystynych

Romy Alza

Zehra Abrar

Novlette Evans

Vaish Sada

Nehal Mohamed

Israt Ayesha

Nazia Parveen

Laura Sanchez

Emel Gurbuzel

Sana'a Jaber

Debjani Saha

Jaweeria Sardar

Maseeha Faizi

Nooria Faizi sardar

Horia Faizi Sardar

Marisol Viveros

Basma Abouasaf

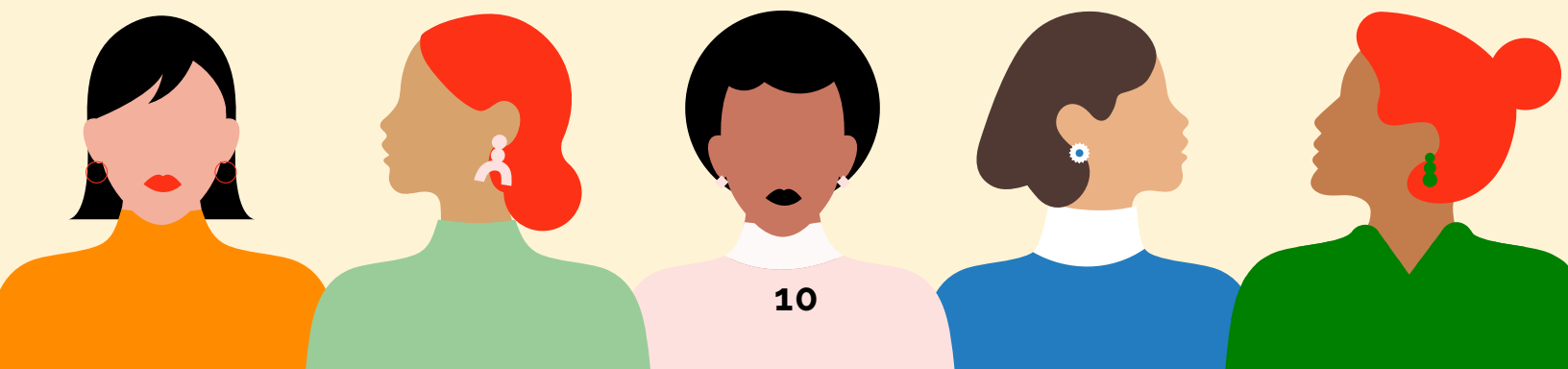
Maria Garcia

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