

EDUCATOR AWARD WINNERS

PROJECT FUNDING AWARD



Tim Anderson's project will investigate teacher perspectives of content-based instruction (CBI) in British Columbia's English-medium K-12 schools. Together with fellow researchers Lindy Robinson and Blair Pruden, the team will seek participation from BC school districts in all of lower mainland as well as greater Victoria. They hope their findings will, "inform professional development and teacher education programs, support curriculum design, and ideally advance the province's commitment to equitable and multilingual education."



Elaine Picher's project is named Building Community and Confidence through a School Garden. "Getting ESL students involved in learning a new language outside of the classroom—without textbooks—allows them to relax and communicate freely. This project creates a safe environment for improving English skills while connecting with nature. Many students feel overwhelmed when they first arrive in a new country. Outdoor activities can ease stress, encourage social interaction, and promote well-being. Working together in a community garden reduces intimidation, builds confidence, and supports emotional health—especially for students struggling to adjust. The garden fosters collaboration, belonging, and mutual support while offering real-world language practice."

SETTLEMENT LANGUAGE RESOURCE AWARD



Christopher Ito is the winner of the 2025 Settlement Language Resource Award. Over the past four years, he has created and taught original, classroom-tested instructional materials for adult beginner learners in the LINC program (Pre Benchmark and CLB1-2), focusing on foundational language skills and settlement-related content. Winning this award will allow him to refine, organize, and expand those materials into a shareable, practical resource package aligned with CLB outcomes and PBLA principles, providing worksheets, visual slide decks, and instructor guidance that settlement language instructors across British Columbia can use immediately to support beginner learners. In language education."

NAN POLIAKOFF MEMORIAL AWARD



The 2025 winner is Teresa Vaccaro. She is the Regional Director of Operations for Bayswater Canada. She is deeply committed to advancing excellence in language education and building stronger connections between educators, institutions, and industry partners. This award will aid in her attending the 2026 Languages Canada Conference in Calgary. At this conference, she hopes to gain deeper insight into evolving standards and best practices in English language program delivery—particularly in areas of student experience, academic integrity, and compliance within blended and pathway programs. cation."

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TEAL CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

AWARDS CEREMONY



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MAY 2026

AWARDS CEREMONY PROGRAM



4:30pm - 5:00pm

**Student and Educator Award
Winners Arrival**
Meet and mingle



5:00pm - 5:30pm

Guests Arrival
Meet and mingle



5:30pm - 5:40pm

Opening Ceremony
Karen Densky, TCF Chair



5:40pm - 6:15pm

Student Award Presentation
Awards Chair, Tom Jensen
Award Committee, Maged Sedky



6:15pm - 6:30pm

Educator Awards
Awards Chair, Tom Jensen
Award Committee, Maged Sedky



6:30pm - 6:45pm

**Closing Remarks & Board
Introduction**
Karen Densky, TCF Chair



6:45pm - 7:00pm

Photos and Farewell



<https://tealcharitablefoundation.ca/>



STUDENT AWARD WINNERS

THE NICOLAS COLLINS FOUNDERS REFUGEE AWARD



Ayah Taleb Helme shares her journey from Syria to Canada shaped by war, displacement, and resilience. After fleeing the Syrian war, her family lived in Jordan, where she faced loneliness, separation from her father, and discrimination as a refugee. Despite hardships, she found comfort in education and her mother's volunteer work. In 2019, her family moved to Canada, bringing both excitement and challenges, including adapting to a new language and environment. Through determination, she learned English, excelled in school, and built a community. Now, she teaches Arabic to children and aspires to become a dentist while pursuing a brighter future.

Diego Cortes Tagle reflects on his journey from Mexico to Canada, shaped by adaptability, responsibility, and ambition. Growing up in Mexico, he developed strong values and an interest in architecture and design, though opportunities were limited. Moving to Canada brought challenges, including adapting to a new language, culture, and education system. Over time, he gained confidence, independence, and improved his English skills. The Canadian school environment encouraged creativity and critical thinking, helping him clarify his academic goals. His experiences strengthened his resilience and broadened his perspective, motivating him to pursue post-secondary education and build a meaningful future in architecture and design.



Zahra Akbari, a 17-year-old from Afghanistan, shares her journey shaped by fear, perseverance, and hope. As a Hazara, she faced constant discrimination and threats from extremist groups, especially while pursuing education in Kabul. After the Taliban takeover in 2021, her family fled to Pakistan, where she was unable to attend school. In 2022, they resettled in Canada, where she embraced new opportunities. Zahra became active in school, volunteered in her community, and pursued interests like Taekwondo. Inspired by her experiences, she now dreams of becoming a pilot. Grateful for safety and opportunity, she is determined to succeed and give back.



THE TCF REFUGEE AWARD

Naghah Alyousef recounts her journey from war-torn Syria to Canada. After losing loved ones and living in fear during the Syrian war, her family fled to a refugee camp in Jordan, where they endured harsh conditions, poverty, and lack of education. In 2015, they were given the opportunity to move to Canada, marking a hopeful new beginning. Although she faced challenges such as learning English and experiencing bullying, she remained determined to succeed. Over time, she adapted, excelled in school, and embraced new opportunities. Grateful for a second chance, she aspires to become a dentist and give back to her community.

THE TAIGA GALLI MEMORIAL AWARD



Zhina Horvat describes her life before and after immigrating to Canada. Growing up in Afghanistan, she faced increasing restrictions as a girl, especially after the Taliban took control, limiting women's rights, banning girls' education, and creating constant fear and danger. Her family fled to a refugee camp in Abu Dhabi, later moving to Germany, and finally settling in Canada in 2023. In Canada, she faced challenges such as language barriers, financial struggles, and new responsibilities, including supporting her family. Despite difficulties, she became more independent, found community support, and embraced new opportunities, expressing gratitude for the chance to pursue her dreams.

Xingjing (Henry) Huang reflects on a childhood marked by hardship in China, where political persecution and family instability shaped his early life. His mother was repeatedly imprisoned for activism, while his father struggled with addiction and was abusive. Despite emotional and physical challenges, he continued his education, often seeking refuge in school. Eventually, he and his mother fled China, living in several countries while seeking asylum before arriving in Canada. There, he faced language barriers and social challenges but gradually adapted and became independent. Viewing hardship as a normal part of life, he remains resilient and determined to keep moving forward and building a better future.



THE DR. WILLIAM McMICHAEL TCF REFUGEE AWARD



Surkhav Babar shares a journey shaped by hardship, resilience, and determination. Born into a persecuted Christian family in Pakistan, she fled to Thailand at a young age, spending seven years as an asylum seeker facing poverty, lack of education, and fear of deportation. In 2019, her family moved to Canada, where she encountered cultural differences, financial struggles, and identity challenges. Despite these obstacles, she worked to support her family while pursuing her education. Transitioning to a diverse public school helped her find belonging and succeed academically. Grateful for new opportunities, she remains committed to achieving her goals and supporting her family.

DAVID LAM / BC TEAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER SCHOLARSHIP

Tingyu Zhang reflects on her transformation after moving to Canada from a structured environment with limited cultural exposure. Initially, English was a rigid subject, but in Canada, it became essential for communication. With support from teachers, ELL programs, and her community, she improved her language skills and developed confidence. Through volunteering, including helping new immigrants and supporting students, she embraced Canada's inclusive values. These experiences strengthened her communication, leadership, and teamwork abilities. Feeling a strong sense of belonging, she became motivated to give back. Tingyu now aspires to continue spreading inclusivity and contribute positively to her community and future endeavors.



Cynthia Jiang reflects on her transformation after moving from China to Canada. In China, her life was focused solely on academic achievement, leaving little room for self-discovery. After arriving in Canada, she faced language challenges but found support and encouragement in a more inclusive education system. This environment helped her build confidence, participate in class, and explore her interests. Through volunteering in dental clinics and hospitals, she discovered a passion for healthcare. Her experiences reshaped her identity, shifting her focus from grades to personal growth. She is now motivated, self-aware, and determined to pursue a future in the healthcare field.