



COUNCIL OF
AGENCIES SERVING
SOUTH ASIANS

2024

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT



Annual General Meeting
Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

Wednesday, October 16th, 2024
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

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2024 AGM AGENDA

5:30 - 6:00 P.M.

Welcome, Registration and
Dinner

6:00 - 6:30 P.M.

Business Segment

6:30 - 6:50 P.M.

2023-2024 CASSA's
Accomplishments Video

6:50 - 7:50 P.M.

Panel Discussion -
"Addressing Exploitation and
Hate for International
Students"

7:50 - 8:00 P.M.

Closing Remarks



2023 AGM MEETING MINUTES

Date: November 28, 2023

Location: Centre of Excellence for South Asians at 705 Progress Avenue, Unit 101, in Scarborough.

Welcome, and Call to Order:

Bharat Saini, Chair of the CASSA Board of Directors, called the meeting to order.

Land Acknowledgement: Samya Hasan, Executive Director of CASSA, delivered the Land Acknowledgement before the business segment began.

Approval of Draft Agenda:

Hasina Quader from Bangladesh Centre & Community Services (BCCS) made the motion to approve the agenda. Ehsan Qureshi from GTA NorthWest Community Health Services seconded the motion.

Approval of 2022 AGM Minutes:

Bharat announced that only the members who attended the 2022 AGM were allowed to approve the minutes. Sukanya Akula from We Can Win made the motion to approve and Shalini Konanur from SALCO seconded the motion.

Chair's Report:

Bharat presented the Chair's report: CASSA saw tremendous growth in 2022 with focus on planning and strategizing. We built connections with South Asian agencies outside of the GTA in advocacy with the government and funders around the issues of housing, health, anti-hate and anti-racism. We were on the decision making tables and advisory bodies like Coalition against Anti-Asian Racism Canada and the Ontario Provincial Police Hate Crime Advisory. CASSA also became the secretariat for Toronto Non Profit Network (TNN) and played an active role in the Spatial Justice Campaign with focus on racial equity and reconciliation. We received funds from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation for the first time and successfully completed the project called 'Policies that Perpetuate Systemic Racism' in partnership with the Anti-hate community leaders Group. In 2022, CASSA winded up its vaccine engagement campaign and continues to work with South Asian health agencies on larger health equity campaigns. We also completed our strategic planning until 2026 and applied for charitable status. We are hopeful of getting the status soon. CASSA was also able to secure 5000+ square feet of space in Scarborough and aims to create a hub for South Asian communities which will be a one-stop shop for many social services.

Bharat thanked the funders, partners, and members for their contribution and generous support.

Executive Director Report:

Samya Hasan presented the Executive Director's report. CASSA began the process of expanding nationally in 2019 by creating partnerships with South Asian agencies located in Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec and we hope to continue this initiative in 2024 with the support of members and partners. Throughout 2022, CASSA worked with social justice agencies on online hate and social media training. The project was very successful and we were asked by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism to adapt our training and toolkit for children and youth. The grant helped us launch a mobile app called EradicateHate 2.0. We also successfully organized our Annual Health Equity summit in person. The theme this year was 'Shifting and Sharing Power: Community Engagement to Reducing Health Inequities'. We are going to work on a three-year project with a Postdoctoral fellow at University of Toronto which will focus on the exploitation of International students in Canada. In 2023, we successfully hosted the Social Justice Summit and the South Asian Heritage month virtually. On June 2-3, 2023, CASSA organized 'Together We Rise Festival' funded by the federal government. The festival included a mix of live performing arts, film screenings etc. and was well attended. CASSA's supported Anti-Islamophobia strategy was adopted by the Peel District School Board last year. This year, its development was authorized by the Toronto District School Board. We are now focusing on Durham region and York region.

Samya thanked the staff, funders and community members for their valuable contribution in CASSA's work.

Board Member Nomination:

Bharat introduced Zeeshan Sumrani from Skills for Change as the new member of the Board of Directors of CASSA.

The 2023-24 slate is as under:

Bharat Saini: Chair
 Tanzina Islam: Secretary
 Leanne Saldanha: Treasurer
 Jessica Singh: Member
 Thanuya Mohanathan: Member
 Ayesha Chughtai: Member
 Samir Parmar: Member
 Jessica Devi Chandrashekar: Member
 Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan: Member
 Zeeshan Sumrani: Member

The motion to approve the 2023-24 slate as the board of directors was made by Sukanya Akula from We Can Win and seconded by Afroza Begum of South Asian Community Support Canada (SACSC).

Special Resolution:

CASSA has been asked by the CRA to revise the Purpose Statement for the charitable status application. The motion to approve the new purpose statement was brought by Shalini Konanur of SALCO and seconded by Nasima Akter of BCS.

Auditor's Report:

Leanne Saldanha summarized the Auditor's report mentioning that the financial statements are presented fairly as remarked by Rashidi LLP. The motion to approve the 2022 audited statements was made by Amandeep Kaur of PCHS. It was seconded by Ehsan Qureshi of GTA North West Community Services.

The motion to reappoint Rashidi LLP as the auditor was moved by Shalini Konanur and seconded by Hasina Quader of BCCS.

Meeting Adjournment:

The motion to adjourn the business segment of the meeting was made by Ehsan Qureshi and seconded by Leanne Saldanha. The business segment was adjourned.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Dear friends, members, funders, and partners,

We are delighted to share that last year, 2023, was another year of tremendous growth and achievement for the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA). At the same time, it is imperative that we acknowledge the ongoing global conflicts impacting communities locally, nationally and internationally; the ongoing recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic and the existing systemic health inequities members of our communities continue to experience; and the amplification of false information related to equity and inclusion work that is negatively impacting a range of sectors from education to social services to healthcare.

In 2023, CASSA continued taking on new projects and initiatives to address the ongoing challenges experienced by South Asian communities in Ontario. We are grateful to all of our funders and collaborators, including our new funders and partners, who have been instrumental and working alongside us to support the ongoing and new projects addressing social justice issues impacting South Asian communities. The list of projects and initiatives is quite long. We encourage you to take some time and read through the 2023 Project Updates section to learn more about our projects and the impact they are having on South Asian communities. A heartfelt thank you to the CASSA team and partners for their unwavering commitment, dedication and courage to advancing this important work.

Additionally, we continued implementation of our 2022-2026 strategic plan, were committed to applying for and obtaining charitable status, securing a new space for CASSA and continuing our work on national expansion. We were delighted when we found out we successfully secured a new home for CASSA in Scarborough, Ontario. This new space allowed us to develop a hub of services for South Asian Communities in the Greater Toronto Area and the launch of the Centre of Excellence for South Asians

CASSA also had a positive impact at the international level through facilitation of a session at the United Nations Human Rights Council's fourth Universal Periodic Review in Switzerland. At this forum, we had the opportunity to share concerns and recommendations regarding human rights in Canada as well as meet with delegations to discuss our work and advocate for systemic change.

Much of the energy and impact of the activities of 2023 continued into 2024 for CASSA. Our effort to obtain charitable status came to fruition as we were successfully granted status on January 1st, 2024! Additionally, CASSA successfully achieved Anchor Agency status with United Way Greater Toronto in April 2024! We continued to build capacity of our organization through the contribution of the Community Services Recovery Fund. The Centre of Excellence for South Asians has had a steady stream of programming by CASSA and our partners including, legal aid support, employment counselling, mental health support, youth programming, seniors programming, yoga, and other recreational programming. We also continued our annual Social Justice Summit which was held in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic closures. The Summit was a huge success and provided the necessary knowledge and tools to our member agencies to advance social justice for racialized communities. For the first time, we held our South Asian Heritage Month event, in partnership with United Way Greater Toronto, at the Centre of Excellence in May 2024 which hosted more than one hundred guests. The focus of the 2024 campaign was on South Asian business leaders in Canada. In June 2024, CASSA embarked on its second cross-Canada journey to solidify partnerships and establish chapters in British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec. With the support of our partners, Action of Health Communities and Progressive Intercultural Community Services, we will be able to successfully launch our satellite locations in Edmonton, Alberta and Surrey, British Columbia. We are now working with South Asian focused agencies, groups, and leaders in the three provinces to collaborate on regional South Asian Social Justice Networks through which CASSA will support them in doing local and regional advocacy for their communities.

In addition to these milestones, CASSA staff continue to give everything they have to advocate for social and racial justice for the South Asian communities in Canada. Our Equity in Education project took a positive turn as we are now collaborating with the Durham District School Board to develop an Anti-Islamophobia strategy for them in partnership with the National Council of Canadian Muslims. For our project on the Exploitation of International Students, we continue to collect data and create awareness campaigns on social media. We are also very excited to launch the findings of our research on Toxic Masculinity and its Impact on Intimate Partner Violence at the end of this year! Finally, we were very fortunate to secure funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada in 2024 to continue our work with the Racialized Health Working Group which was paused for three years due to the pandemic!

Overall, it has been a year filled with milestones and achievements for CASSA. Our deepest gratitude to all of our funders, partners, friends, and members for your ongoing trust, collaboration and support. We hope with the support of our members, funders, and partners, we can continue this successful streak into 2025!

In solidarity,
 Samya Hasan, Executive Director, CASSA
 Bharat Saini, Chair of the Board, CASSA

CASSA 2023 PROJECT UPDATES



12th Annual Health Equity Summit

Project Manager: Mahdiba Chowdhury

Project Associate: Riya Shah

The Annual Health Equity Summit, hosted by CASSA, is dedicated to addressing health disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, with a particular focus on South Asian and other racialized groups. This year's theme was 'South Asian Youth Perspective on Health Equity & Inclusion.'

In today's rapidly evolving world, ensuring health equity and fostering inclusivity have become paramount, particularly when it comes to addressing the needs of youth aged 16-30. It is essential to recognize the unique experiences, challenges, and perspectives of diverse youth populations, including youth with mental health and disabilities, youth experiencing homelessness, and international students. By engaging in open and inclusive discussions that amplify their voices, we can work towards addressing the existing disparities in health support, promoting overall well-being, and ultimately building a more equitable and compassionate society that uplifts all members of the youth population.

The Summit featured a lineup of eight esteemed experts, each contributing their valuable insights and expertise. Amrit Parhat took the stage as the keynote speaker, addressing the theme of 'Youth as Catalysts for Change: Amplifying South Asian Voices in Health Equity.' During the breakout sessions, Summayah Poonah guided participants through the transformative journey of 'Breaking Stigma and Building Resilience: Advancing Health Equity for Youth with Mental Health and Disabilities.' Meanwhile, the dynamic duo of Dr. Shivajan Sivapalan and Sejal Ketyal led a session titled 'Inclusion without Borders: Advancing Health Equity for International Students.' Dr. Naomi Thulien delved into a critical session titled 'Beyond the Streets: Advancing Health Equity for Youth Experiencing Homelessness'. The plenary session, 'Cultivating Youth Leadership: Empowering South Asian Youth for Health Equity Advocacy,' featured an impressive lineup of speakers including Almeera Khalid, Eraj Waqar, Fairuz Karim, and Manvir Bhangu.

The Summit provided an opportunity for public health professionals, community leaders, researchers, academics, social service providers, and decision-makers alike to demonstrate valuing engagement as a core public health practice.

The Summit was held on Tuesday, November 7, 2023 from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM, and took place at the Centennial College Progress Campus Event Centre.

12TH ANNUAL HEALTH EQUITY SUMMIT

SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH EQUITY & INCLUSION

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Tuesday, November 7, 2023



9:30 AM - 4:00 PM



Centennial College Event Centre
937 Progress Ave, Scarborough,
ON M1G 3T8

HOSTED BY:



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



AMRIT PARHAR

Acting Executive Director
Institute for Change Leaders



SUMMAYAH POONAH

Director
Naseeha Mental Health



DR. SHIVAJAN SIVAPALAN

Campus Clinic Physician
Durham College and Ontario Tech
University Students



SEJAL KATYAL

Research Assistant
SAAAC Autism Centre



DR. NAOMI THULIEN

Investigator
MAP Centre for Urban Health
Solutions



ERAJ WAQAR

Youth Leader/ Facilitator/ Mentor
UWGT's South Asian Community
Advisory Council



FAIRUZ KARIM

Module Development Coordinator
Foundation for Medical Practice
Education



MANVIR BHANGU

Executive Director & Founder
Laadliyan



ALMEERA KHALID

Public Policy Consultant

High Priority Communities Strategy (HPCS) Program

Project Managers: Mahdiba Chowdhury and Sonia Baweja

Intern: Archanaa Krisnagopal

Partners:

- Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association
- Social Services Network (SSN)

The HPCS program, established by the Ontario Government, is a community-driven initiative aimed at addressing health disparities experienced by marginalized communities, with a special focus on South Asian women. In collaboration with Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association and SSN, CASSA is actively delivering critical services and support to the neighborhoods most affected by these disparities, primarily in Southeast Markham.

The HPCS program is committed to providing equitable access to culturally and linguistically appropriate health services for South Asian women, effectively bridging gaps in public health. To achieve this, the program has identified three key priorities:

- **Ongoing COVID-19 Response and Recovery:** The program implements strategies to enhance testing and vaccination accessibility, particularly in the targeted communities. This includes facilitating convenient testing locations, mobile vaccination clinics, and providing community outreach to ensure all South Asian women can access crucial COVID-19 services. Additionally, it aims to promote vaccination education and combat vaccine hesitancy in these communities.
- **Women's Preventive & Primary Care:** The program is dedicated to minimizing barriers to women's preventive and primary care. It works towards making healthcare services more accessible by providing transportation assistance, facilitating mobile clinics, and offering multilingual support. This encompasses comprehensive women's health check-ups, preventative screenings, and health education workshops to empower South Asian women to take control of their health.
- **Mental Health and Well-being:** The program provides a range of mental health services, including referrals to individual counseling and support groups, as well as connections with mental health professionals who understand the unique challenges faced by South Asian women. These services are complemented by awareness campaigns and workshops to foster mental health resilience and awareness in the communities.

CASSA implements a multifaceted approach to address these priorities, such as launching impactful social media campaigns to raise awareness about cancer prevention, screening, and mental health. These campaigns provide crucial information and encourage individuals to take proactive steps towards safeguarding their physical and mental well-being. Additionally, CASSA organized workshops within various South Asian communities, providing in-depth guidance and support on these crucial health topics. Following the workshop, we facilitated discussions and distributed a survey to gain a better understanding of health-related concerns of South Asian women and the challenges they face in accessing care.

Each campaign and workshop was available in English, Arabic, Bangla, Punjabi, Tamil, and Urdu, making it accessible to a diverse audience.

Social Justice Summit

Project Managers: Yomna Omar and Samaha Kureshi

Intern: Debankita Joardar

CASSA's Social Justice Summit was held virtually through Zoom across two days, Tuesday, February 7th, 2023, and Wednesday, February 8th, 2023, from 9 AM - 1:30 PM. It was a first-of-its-kind, free, and virtual learning and sharing experience. The inaugural summit's theme for this year was "Unlocking Your Social Justice Potential: Capacity Building 101."

The Summit aimed to provide an introductory understanding (a 101-type introduction) to various social justice issues, empowering attendees to take actionable steps on diverse social justice-related concerns. It sought to enhance participants' ability to offer anti-racist and anti-oppressive services and to effectively share this knowledge with both staff and clients.

Comprising 12 sessions, eight of which highlighted materials and resources developed in 2022 by CASSA-led projects, the Summit delved into a spectrum of social justice matters. Session topics included best practices for gender-based violence service delivery during the pandemic, community-based research processes for non-profits, facilitation of hate crime reporting, combating online hate, addressing Islamophobia with school boards, and more.

The Summit also featured four sessions led by experts in the field of social justice. Kelsey Ford from the Abilities Center in Durham presented "Accessibility 101 for Non-profits," focusing on inclusion, personal and unconscious biases related to disability, and best practices for breaking down stigma. Lindsay (Swooping Hawk) Kretschmer led a session on Indigenous Social Justice, exploring challenges and opportunities in this context. The Ombudsman of Toronto, Kwame Addo, clarified the complaints process in the city and the accountability office's oversight of equity in city services, programs, and policies. Lastly, Lilian Obeng from the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals provided insights into Anti-Black Racism in service delivery, highlighting how anti-blackness manifests in the non-profit sector and offering suggestions for tailoring service delivery to the Black community.

Attended by staff from CASSA's member agencies, other service providers, and individuals not affiliated with any particular organization, the Summit served as a platform for professionals, community leaders, researchers, academics, students, social service providers, and decision-makers to convene, learn, unlearn, and engage in crucial conversations related to social justice matters. The overarching goal was to foster better and more equitable service delivery.

A summary of resources for the CASSA Staff-led sessions can be found [here](#) for reference.

UNLOCKING YOUR SOCIAL JUSTICE POTENTIAL: CAPACITY BUILDING 101

A series of 12 training sessions



About The Event

CASSA members, partners, and other service providers are invited to CASSA's first 2-Day capacity building conference for social justice focused service delivery. Over the course of 12 training sessions, participants will be introduced to the various tools and resources developed by CASSA and its partners in 2022. CASSA hopes participants will benefit from the introductory training sessions, seek further knowledge, and share what they've learned with their staff and clients.

Please make sure you sign up for at least 2 sessions.

Date : February 7-8, 2023
Time : 9:00 am - 1:30 pm (EST)
Location : Zoom

→ Training Sessions Offered

- Best Practices for GBV Service Delivery in the Pandemic
- Community-based Research Process for Non-profits
- Accessibility 101 for Non-profits
- Indigenous Social Justice
- Combatting Online Hate Toolkits
- Working with School Boards on Islamophobia
- Evidence-based Community Advocacy
- Health Promotion at the Community Level
- Ombudsman Toronto: Complaints Process
- Facilitating Hate Crime Reporting
- Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Service Delivery
- Fundraising 101 for Non-profits

South Asian Heritage Month 2023

Project Managers: Ridah Asghar, Yomna Omar, & Mahdiba Chowdhury

Intern: Debankita Joardar

SAHM is a month-long celebration in Canada that aims to recognize and highlight the contributions of South Asians to Canadian society. This celebration takes place during the month of May and is an opportunity to showcase the rich cultural diversity, history, and heritage of South Asians in Canada.

The 2023 SAHM initiative focused on the theme "South Asian-Canadian Systemic Changemakers," spotlighting seven exceptional individuals who have made a systemic impact on South Asian communities through their work in research, advocacy, activism, art, policy, outreach, and education:

1. **Gurdeep Pandher:** Bhangra Artist and Educator
2. **Masuma Khan:** Community Organizer and Artist
3. **Dr. Nasima Akter:** Executive Director, Bangladesh-Canadian Community Services
4. **Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains:** Director and Associate Professor, University of the Fraser Valley
5. **Seher Shafiq:** Civic leader, Writer, Speaker, and Consultant
6. **Sonali (Alyy) Patel:** Writer, Activist, and Author
7. **V.T. Nayani:** Director, Producer, Actor, and Writer

The hybrid panel discussion took place on Tuesday, May 30, 2023, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM at the Scarborough Civic Centre, simultaneously broadcasted on Zoom for remote participation. In this engaging discussion, panelists shared their experiences and challenges in achieving equity and justice, driving systemic change in the South Asian community. They also offered valuable recommendations for future generations to build upon the progress initiated by current South Asian changemakers.

2023 SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

SOUTH ASIAN-CANADIAN SYSTEMIC CHANGEMAKERS



GURDEEP PANDHER

Gurdeep Pandher is a Bhangra artist and educator based in Yukon who promotes intercultural understanding throughout Canada. His online dance classes, videos and uplifting messages brought joy and positivity during the pandemic. He was recognized by several international media organizations, including BBC News and CBC National. Gurdeep uses dance to break down barriers that BIPOC face and is a notable social media influencer.



MASUMA KHAN

Masuma Khan is a community organizer and artist born and raised in Nova Scotia. She is known for her overwhelming passion and commitment to dismantling systems of oppression. For Masuma poetry is an expression that is tied to her cultural practice as a Pashtun. Her art style is influenced by her lived experiences with white supremacy, colonialism, displacement, racism, islamophobia, disability justice, and more.



DR. NASIMA AKTER

Dr. Nasima Akter has been the Executive Director of Bangladesh-Canadian Community Services (BCS) in Toronto since 2010. She focuses on community engagement projects related to combating Islamophobia & racism, mental health, and intergenerational initiatives. Dr. Akter has over 26 years of experience in community development and holds a PhD in Environmental Technology & Management.



DR. SATWINDER KAUR BAINS

Dr. Satwinder Kaur Bains is the Director of the South Asian Studies Institute at the University of the Fraser Valley and an Associate Professor in the School of Culture, Media and Society, College of Arts. Her research focuses on language, culture and identity in South Asian Canadian migration and settlement. She is also involved in various community organizations and has held positions in several government commissions and boards.



SEHER SHAFIQ

Seher Shafiq is a national civic leader with over 10 years of experience working on Canada's civic challenges. Seher is also an experienced writer, speaker, and consultant who's been featured in CBC, TVO, Global News and more. She works for the Mozilla Foundation and runs a global program on ethical and trustworthy AI. Seher led the first non-partisan voter engagement campaign, has worked in refugee resettlement, and with the United Nations.



SONALI (ALYY) PATEL

Sonali (Alyy) Patel is a trailblazing LGBTQ+ scholar, activist, and author, who has made monumental strides for Queer South Asian Women. Alyy pioneered Canadian research on Queer South Asian Women's issues, solely founded the Queer South Asian Women's Network—a thriving national non-profit—and recently published her first book, Don't Tell My Parents: Queer Diasporic Truths.



V.T. NAYANI

V.T. Nayani is a director, producer, actor and writer, who explores the theme of coming of age. She's been supported by various platforms including Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Film Centre, and the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television. Her work has been showcased at film festivals such as TIFF, Mardi Gras, and Outfest Fusion. Her debut feature, THIS PLACE, is set to release this summer.

Official 2023 South Asian Heritage Month Poster by the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA).

This initiative is part of CASSA's ongoing work to highlight and appreciate South Asian-Canadian Trailblazers. This year's Trailblazers have made a systemic impact in South Asian communities through research, advocacy, activism, art, policy, outreach, and education. They have been integral in paving the way for an equitable road for future generations.

CASSA
www.cassa.ca



The Coalition for Racial Equity in Education Project

Project Manager: Samaha Kureshi

Project Associate: Ramsha Tariq

Intern: Ozair Asmal

Partners:

- Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR)
- Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action (TCCCA)
- Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ)

This project aims to empower Muslim-identifying high school students and their parents by equipping them with effective advocacy skills, enabling their active participation in decision-making processes within school boards. The overarching objective is to address and counteract racism and Islamophobia prevalent in Ontario's education system through community capacity building and the pursuit of systemic policy changes within school boards.

A pivotal milestone in this initiative was the unanimous vote in favor of implementing the strategy within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). This accomplishment stands as a testament to the unwavering dedication of the advocates and community leaders involved, showcasing broad acknowledgment of the imperative to address issues of equity and inclusivity, particularly for Muslim students and staff.

The TDSB's implementation led to notable achievements including the development of policies and guidelines aimed at combating Islamophobia and discrimination within the education system. The Peel District School Board (PDSB)'s successful adoption of similar policies set a precedent and provided a model for the TDSB and other school boards in the region.

Beyond policy changes, the initiative organized community forums to foster dialogue and raise awareness about equity and inclusivity issues. Volunteer training programs equipped individuals with the tools to become effective advocates for change.

Building on success in the TDSB, the initiative now targets the York Region District School Board and Durham District School Board, with an unwavering commitment to replicating Toronto's successes for the benefit of students and staff in these regions. Ongoing advocacy efforts aim to influence regional school boards and the provincial government, leveraging invaluable experience from collaborating with the TDSB and PDSB to navigate future challenges and opportunities.



Together We Rise Festival

Project Manager: Mahdiba Chowdhury

[Together We Rise Arts Festival](#) was a celebration of Greater Toronto Area's Asian diaspora artists and cultural organizations, featuring multi-disciplinary arts programming on the weekend of June 2-3, 2023. This "festival of festivals" programming included a mix of live performing arts, film screenings, in-person workshops, and multimedia installations, all of which were accessible to family audiences, and highlighted the creativity, diversity, and innovation of Scarborough.

CASSA worked with Toronto-based community arts organizations to co-produce and co-present the Together We Rise Arts Festival to celebrate the Scarborough community's rich heritage and artistic talents. These partner organizations included the Nagata Shachu Japanese Taiko and Music Group, Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, tiger princess dance projects (tpdp), Japan Foundation Toronto, Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts & Culture, and Empowered Phụ Nữ

CASSA's Intergenerational Storytelling event was held on June 3rd, both indoors and outdoors, at the Scarborough Civic Centre's Albert Campbell Square and in the Raymond Moriyama-designed building. The event featured a variety of engaging activities and performances centered around the theme of anti-racism, anti-oppression, discrimination, and the challenges faced during the settlement process. The aim was to explore and reflect upon the struggles experienced by individuals and communities, with the goal of fostering a deeper understanding and driving positive social change.

It featured storytelling led by Pirathajini Chandrakumar and Amal El Sadig, highlighting their immigration experiences and struggles. Noor Fadel delivered a powerful spoken word poetry piece titled '[Two Faces of War](#),' which reflected on her mother's harrowing experiences during the war and the sacrifices she made to protect her children. [Ahkenam Arts](#), a Toronto-based Tamil group, delivered an impressive performance with traditional Parai drums, reclaiming them as a symbol of cultural identity and social freedom. Additionally, we screened informative animated videos from our [Hate Crime Reporting Project](#) and [#EradicateHate 2.0](#) project, designed to educate and empower viewers to combat hate-motivated crimes in their communities and online spaces.

With COVID-19 having had a significant impact on the local art world and anti-Asian hate continuing to rise, this event fostered deeper engagement and collaboration between the participating organizations and artists and shared their work for free with the community.

A highlight video can be found on CASSA's YouTube Channel: [CASSA Online](#).

Together We Rise Arts Festival

Celebrating Asian Arts & Culture in Scarborough



Culture.

Collaboration.

Community.

FEATURING



NAGATA SHACHU
Japanese Taiko
and Music Group

TORONTO
reel asian
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

TORONTO REEL ASIAN
International Film Festival

ten•ten

ten ten
Japanese music collective



THE JAPAN FOUNDATION
Toronto



EMPOWERED PHU NỮ
Collective

Saturday, JUNE 3, 2023

12:00 noon – 9:00pm

_Rain or Shine

Scarborough Civic Centre

_150 Borough Drive

Cineplex Cinemas
Scarborough Town Centre

_300 Borough Drive

Note: Film screenings will take place on June 2 & 3

Free Admission

_Families & children of all ages welcome

FEATURING



KAPISANAN
Philippine Centre for
Arts & Culture



HANEUM
Korean Jazz Fusion Band



CASSA
(Council of Agencies
Serving South Asians)



TIGER PRINCESS
Dance Projects



CANADIAN CHINESE
Orchestra

Policies that Perpetuate Systemic Racism

Project Manager: Sonia Baweja

Interns: Archanaa Krisnagopal, Sara Zabiullah, and Asha Selvakumar

Volunteer: Manum Shahid

Partners:

- Naseeha Mental Health
- World Sikh Organization
- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
- Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)
- Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ)
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)
- Canadian Association of Jews and Muslims
- Migrant Workers Alliance for Change
- Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
- York Region Muslims (YRM)
- Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
- Critical South Asian Diasporic Feminisms
- Bangladesh Centre & Community Services (BCCS)

The "Policies that Perpetuate Systemic Racism" project, funded by the Canada Race Relations' Foundation, was a nine-month initiative by CASSA focused on highlighting the impacts of Quebec's Bill 21, the "Barbaric Cultural Practices Act", and the Canada Child Benefit's dependency on immigration status. This project was a key part of CASSA's commitment to addressing systemic racism.

The project unfolded in three phases: research, content creation, and a public awareness campaign. The research phase included interviews with individuals impacted by these policies, along with professionals working with affected clients, and comprehensive secondary research. The project's execution involved collaboration with over 10 diverse organizations, both new and existing partners, who provided a range of expertise, from advisory roles to content dissemination and knowledge sharing.

A variety of content was produced, including social media posts, animated videos, blog posts, illustrations, and podcasts. These materials, focusing on stories of individuals affected by the policies, aimed to foster understanding and empathy among audiences. The content played a significant role in enhancing knowledge, shifting attitudes, and sparking informed discussions and advocacy. The materials were disseminated through community networks and CASSA's social media channels.

Even though one political representative was directly engaged in the ongoing struggles of those without Canada child benefit, this aspect will be ongoing. The final phase of the project, which will be ongoing, involves engaging with political representatives. A call to action, backed by gathered data and stories, will be sent to political figures in the upcoming months as part of an advocacy strategy for policy change.

Toxic Masculinity and Gender-based Violence

Project Manager: [Past: Wardah Malik]

Project Associate: Neel Desai

Interns: Samson Mapile and Charito Grafilo



Partners:

- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
- Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS)
- South Asian and Tamil Women's Collective (SATWC)
- Nisa Homes
- Bangladesh Centre & Community Services (BCCS)
- Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)

In 2022, CASSA was funded by United Way Greater Toronto to take on a community-based research project. The study will be designed to understand toxic masculinity as it relates to and impacts gender-based violence (GBV) within the South Asian community in Canada. It will look into healthy and unhealthy established gender norms in the community, factors that cause toxic masculinity, and how to create culturally responsive intervention methods to combat it.

This study is important because toxic masculinity affects people of all genders and is associated with a greater risk of GBV in families or intimate relationships. Based on CASSA's previous GBV study, the study has critically identified how GBV is a "silent pandemic" within the South Asian community in Canada, particularly impacting South Asian women. CASSA aims to dive deeper into this research, by investigating how toxic masculinity contributes to this "silent pandemic" towards women and queer-individuals, as primary research that investigates this relationship within the community in Canada, is limited.

In order to conduct the study, CASSA will be joined by the abovementioned partners for data collection support. CASSA has also dedicated many months working on receiving an ethics approval from the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO) and is happy to announce that we have received the approval. Since receiving this from CREO, CASSA has designed and conducted training sessions for all partners to understand their obligations and the materials that have been distributed. At the moment, partners have begun participant recruitment within the South Asian community in Canada. CASSA will be there with partners every step of the way in order to ensure focus groups and surveys are conducted in an ethical and transparent manner. We look forward to receiving all the data and the analysis phase that will ensue in the coming year. The last year of the study, which will start from mid-2024 will entail knowledge mobilization and dissemination of results.

For more information, please visit cassa.ca/gtagbvstudy/.

Eradicate Hate 2.0: Combating Online Hate for Youth & Children Project

Project Manager: Noor Fadel [Past Co-Project Manager: Pirathajini Chandrakumar]

Partners:

- Early Learning & Literacy Alliance (ELLA)
- Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services
- Gibraltar Leadership Academy
- Neighbourhood Pods TO
- Mosaic Institute Youth Summit
- Naseeha Mental Health
- Canadian Council of Muslim Women
- YWCA Metro Vancouver
- YWCA Canada



In collaboration with the [Anti-hate Community Leaders Group](#), CASSA launched the EradicateHate 2.0 App, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism's Anti-Racism Directorate. This App features tutorials, reflection activities, and infographics, providing digital literacy tools to empower youth-focused organizations, educators, parents, and young victims of online hate. The content specifically tackles hateful attitudes and beliefs rooted in racist and xenophobic ideologies, addressing the creation and spread of online hate content.

A [recent study](#) by Concordia University found that online hate is growing in Canada and becoming normalized, especially among youth aged 18-25. Constant exposure to hate speech can make children and youth perceive it as the new "normal," leading to a decline in challenging online hate due to fear of scrutiny. CASSA's Executive Director, Samya Hasan, emphasized the need for the app, "We heard and witnessed what our young people are experiencing and responded with education and resources that can help them be safe online."

To engage children and youth effectively, the #EradicateHate App utilizes various communication modes such as storytelling, social media, animations, graphics, posters, cell phone apps, and games. The toolkit and app underwent multiple phases, including consultations from hundreds of youth, educators, parents, and community members.

"I was a target of a hate crime at the age of 18 years old as a visible Muslim woman. I thought the worst night of my life was the physical attack itself. Until I had the courage to speak out and share my experience online. I received hundreds and thousands of hate messages and threats. I can't even remember the physical pain of my attack, but I have struggled to forget and recover, reading all those messages I received. It's worse as once things go online they never disappear. It gives me hope to see organizations understanding the reality of how harmful online hate is, and we must do our best to bring awareness, support and create resources to allow children and youth to access when witnessing or experiencing online hate. I wish I had these resources available to me when I was experiencing online hate." says Noor Fadel co-Manager at CASSA for Combating Online Hate for Children and Youth.

All material will be available for public use in English and French. Parental content is translated in French, Arabic, simplified Chinese, Punjabi and Tamil. The App is free to download on [Apple Store](#) and [Google Play](#). All content can also be downloaded from the App or our [website](#).

CASSA 2024 PROJECT UPDATES

2nd Annual Social Justice Summit

Project Managers: Yomna Omar, Samaha Kureshi, and Ridah Asghar

CASSA's 2nd Annual Social Justice Summit was convened in person at the Centennial College Event Centre on Monday, March 4th, 2024, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. This year's theme, "Decolonizing Practices and Service Delivery: Agency to Racialized People and Resolute Allyship," addressed critically relevant issues.

The Summit sought to address a range of pressing social justice concerns, including the decolonization of workplaces, access to housing for racialized individuals, combating hate, the politics of allyship, and settler responsibilities.

The event featured six sessions and a "lunch & learn" workshop, highlighted by a distinguished roster of speakers:

1. **Fixing the Broken Rung for Racialized Women:** Amal Masri — CEO, Fix the Broken Rung
2. **Countering Extreme Polarization and Hate:** Mohamed Hashim — Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation; Peter Flegal — Executive Director, Government of Canada's Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat
3. **Lunch & Learn: Amrit Parhar** — Director of Programs, Institute of Change Leaders
4. **Workplaces for All: Decolonizing Workplaces and Service Provision:** Rayah Ali — Communications Coordinator, Coalition of Innovation Leaders Against Racism (CILAR)
5. **Policing of the Minds, Bodies, and Words!:** Justine Abigail Yu — Founder, Living Hyphen; Lakhdeep Singh — Program Manager, CASSA
6. **Rights to Reality: Racialized People's Access to Housing in Canada:** Sahar Raza — Director of Policy and Communications, National Right to Housing Network
7. **Politics of Allyship: Settler Responsibility and Establishing Relationships Between Indigenous and Settler Communities:** Kelly Brownbill — Educator on Indigenous Issues

The Summit brought together personnel from CASSA's member agencies, various service providers, and unaffiliated individuals. It provided a forum for professionals, community leaders, researchers, academics, students, social service workers, and policymakers to convene, exchange knowledge, critically evaluate concepts, and engage in pivotal discussions on social justice.

2024 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUMMIT

Decolonizing Practices and Service Delivery: Agency to Racialized People and Resolute Allyship

WORKSHOPS OFFERED

- Politics of Allyship: Settler Responsibility and Establishing Relationships Between Indigenous and Settler Communities
- Fixing The Broken Rung for Racialized Women
- Policing of the Minds, Bodies, and Words!
- Workplaces for All: Decolonizing Workplaces and Service Provision
- Countering Extreme Polarization and Hate
- Rights to Reality: Racialized People's Access to Housing in Canada
- Telling Stories That Connect to the Heart

04

Monday, March 4, 2024



9:00 AM - 5:00 PM



**Centennial College
Event Centre**
937 Progress Ave,
Scarborough, ON M1G 3T8

HOSTED BY:



COUNCIL OF
AGENCIES SERVING
SOUTH ASIANS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Canadian
Race Relations
Foundation

**AMAL MASRI**

CEO, Fix The Broken Rung

**MOHAMMED HASHIM**

Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation

**PETER FLEGEL**

Executive Director, Government of Canada's Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat

**RAYAH ALI**

Documentary Filmmaker & Communications Coordinator, Coalition of Innovation leaders Against Racism (CILAR)

**LAKHDEEP SINGH**

Program Manager, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

**JUSTINE ABIGAIL YU**

Founder, Living Hyphen

**SAHAR RAZA**

Director of Policy and Communications, National Right to Housing Network

**KELLY BROWNBILL**

Educator on Indigenous Issues

**AMRIT PARHAR**

Director of Programs, Institute for Change Leaders

South Asian Heritage Month 2024

Project Managers: Yomna Omar, Mahdiba Chowdhury, and Ria Arora

Partner: United Way Greater Toronto – South Asian Community Advisory Council (UWGT's SACAC)

Every May, CASSA organizes a month-long celebration to honor the rich cultural diversity, history, and heritage of South Asians in Canada. This year's theme, "Celebrating South Asian Business Leaders in Canada," shines a spotlight on diversity in leadership and entrepreneurship. Throughout the month, we showcased inspiring stories of South Asian trailblazers who are shaping various industries across Canada.

The campaign began with the launch of a poster on May 1, featuring distinguished leaders from multiple sectors including food, technology, real estate, finance, and communications:

- **Aman Adatia:** Managing Partner, FARE Group; Co-Founder & CEO, Epok Enterprises
- **Dr. Nabanita Nawar:** Co-Founder & CEO, HDAX
- **Nahid Aziz & Samad Razzak:** Co-Founders & Owners, Maison Chaïshai
- **Prasanna Ranganathan:** Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB) Advisor and Consultant; Speaker; Correspondent; Writer; Columnist
- **Saadia Muzaffar:** Founder & President, TechGirls Canada; Co-Founder, Tech Reset Canada
- **Tony Singh:** Founder & President, Fruiticana

2024 SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

CELEBRATING SOUTH ASIAN BUSINESS LEADERS IN CANADA



TONY SINGH

30 years ago, Tony Singh saw a gap in the Indo-Canadian community in B.C. Leveraging his experience in Montreal's produce industry, he founded Fruiticana in 1994. Today, Fruiticana operates 24 stores across B.C. and Alberta, it's a leader in Indo-Canadian grocery. Singh and the company have won numerous accolades and awards for business excellence over the years. Singh credits success to offering fresh produce and Indian favorites in a welcoming atmosphere.



NABANITA NAWAR

Nabanita Nawar is the CEO and Co-founder of HDAX Therapeutics. Dr. Nawar led in building HDAX's science during her Medicinal Chemistry PhD at UofT. Forbes 30 Under 30 for Toronto in 2023. BIOTECANEXA Next Generation Leadership Awardee 2023. Boasts 10 publications, 2 patents, 20+ awards. HDAX raised >\$1M USD for breakthrough therapies. Also lectures at UofT's Temerty Faculty of Medicine.



PRASANNA RANGANATHAN

Prasanna Ranganathan, a producer, lawyer, DEIB consultant, and speaker, leads his consultancy. Formerly Head of Diversity at Shopify, he worked with the UN and as a human rights lawyer. Consulting Producer for Born for Business, speaker at TIFF, Guest Lecturer at USC Annenberg, Former CBC Radio columnist, red carpet correspondent, co-author of Made with Prema. Founding board member of Disability Screen Office.



AMAN ADATIA

Aman Adatia passionately redefines real estate's future, focusing on people, inclusivity, affordability, and climate resilience. He sees neighborhoods as hubs for shared growth, viewing the housing revolution as a moral imperative for positive, lasting community transformation. A valued member of multiple boards, he tirelessly works towards a better Canada, especially in Calgary.



NAHID AZIZ & SAMAD RAZZAK

Nahid Aziz and Samad Razzak, Co-founders of Maison Chaïshai in downtown Montreal, aim to create a cultural hub for the South Asian community. They serve fusion cuisine alongside authentic chais and street food. Nahid advocates for women in business and South Asian women's rights. Samad, previously in textiles, shares music at Chaïshai and volunteers with The Citizens Foundation.



SAADIA MUZAFFAR

Saadia Muzaffar, tech entrepreneur and advocate, founded TGC, advancing a STEM economy for women. Co-founder of Tech Reset Canada, featured in Canada 150 Women and Toronto Museum's 2023 exhibit. Board member of Women's Shelters Canada and UofT's CARE-AI. Canadian delegate to UN's 67th Commission on the Status of Women. WCT's Woman Of The Year 2024 for Leadership Excellence.

Official 2024 South Asian Heritage Month Poster by the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA).

This initiative is part of CASSA's ongoing efforts to recognize and celebrate South Asian-Canadian trailblazers. This year, we aim to celebrate diversity in leadership and entrepreneurship in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and BC, spanning across various sectors like food, restaurants, technology, real estate, finance, and communications!

CASSA
www.cassa.ca

The celebration culminated on May 29 with a panel discussion event, organized in partnership with UWGT's SACAC. The event featured a rich agenda, starting with an art exhibition by Asim Hussain (@studentasim), showcasing "First Contact," which explores the Partition of India. This was followed by captivating performances: Aakhya Singh, a celebrated Hindustani classical vocalist; Fahrina Kazi Junaid, presenting a classical South Indian dance; Tai Salih, offering a powerful spoken word piece on ancestral migration and sacrifices; and Ahkenam Arts, showcasing a powerful Tamil Indigenous Parai drum performance.

The highlight of the event was an engaging panel discussion featuring five distinguished individuals, accompanied by a live painting session by Khaula Siddique, a self-taught local artist of South Asian descent. The five speakers were:

- **Aman Adatia:** Managing Partner, FARE Group; Co-Founder & CEO, Epok Enterprises
- **Prasanna Ranganathan:** DEIB Advisor and Consultant; Speaker; Correspondent; Writer; Columnist
- **Saadia Muzaffar:** Founder & President, TechGirls Canada; Co-Founder, Tech Reset Canada
- **Puja Aggarwa:** Founder, KAPS Realty Group
- **Esa Para Esananda:** Real Estate Realtor; Community Activist/Volunteer

This event was a fitting conclusion to a month dedicated to celebrating the achievements and contributions of South Asian business leaders in Canada. We are proud to honour these trailblazers who continue to inspire and shape the future of our diverse community.

2024 South Asian Heritage Month Celebrating South Asian Business Leaders in Canada



Aman Adatia
Managing Partner of FARE
Group & Co-Founder + CEO
of Epok Enterprises



Saadia Muzaffar
Founder & President of
TechGirls Canada & Co-
Founder of Tech Reset Canada



Prasanna Ranganathan
DEIB Advisor & Consultant,
Speaker, Writer



Puja Aggarwal
Founder & CEO of KAPS
Realty Group



Lubiana Fidaali
Director at Deloitte



Esa Para Esnanda
Real Estate Broker



Tai Salih
Founder of the Red Ma'at
Collective & Red Ma'at Healing
Center



Kaula Siddique
Community Artist



Ahkenam Arts
Tamil Indigenous
Drumming & Dancing
Group



@StudentAsim
Multidisciplinary Artist



Kazi Fahrina Junaid
Classical Dance Performer,
Yoga Instructor



Aakhya Singh
Classical Vocalist

The Coalition for Racial Equity in Education Project

Project Manager: Samaha Kureshi

Interns: Ozair Asmal, Aeshah Doorani, Ameen Chaudhry, Hiba Syed, Humza Qureshi, Noorah Umar, Nurefsan Yigit, Nusaybah Akbar, Ruqayya Mulla, Sarah Popal, and Zahra Ali

Partners:

- Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR)
- Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action (TCCCA)
- Chinese Canadian National Council – Toronto Chapter (CCNC-TO)
- Ontario Alliance for Black School Educators (ONABSE)
- National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)

In this project, Muslim-identifying high school students and their parents are equipped with advocacy skills to actively participate in school board decision-making. By building community capacity and pursuing systemic policy changes, the overarching goal is to address and counter racism and Islamophobia within Ontario's education system.

This year, our focus was on two school boards: the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) and the Durham District School Board (DDSB). While we were unable to connect with YRDSB trustees for formal discussions, dedicated YRDSB student volunteers shared valuable first-hand experiences, shedding light on how their schools have—or have not—addressed key issues.

In 2023, many Muslim students were significantly impacted by the events of October 7th. Both students and parents reported heightened experiences of Islamophobia during this period. Among the school boards we approached, DDSB was the only one to respond, sharing that they are developing an Anti-Islamophobia Strategy and inviting CASSA and NCCM to collaborate on its creation.

Throughout 2024, we held in-person and virtual consultations with parents, youth, and educators in the Durham region, gathering their perspectives and lived experiences as Muslims within the school board. These consultations will conclude in October, after which we will begin drafting the strategy, with the goal of releasing it in early 2025.

In 2025, the final year of the project, we plan to engage with four additional school boards: Halton District School Board, Upper Grand District School Board, Waterloo Region District School Board, and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. We aim to secure active partnerships with at least one of these boards to continue advancing this work.

AFFIRMING MUSLIM IDENTITIES WITHIN DDSB

Date: Wednesday October 2, 2024

Time: 9:30am - 2:00pm (Door opens at 9:00 am)

Location: Maxwell Heights Secondary School

- 1100 Coldstream Dr, Oshawa, ON L1K 0N1

For: DDSB secondary students.



13th Annual Health Equity Summit

Project Manager: Mahdiba Chowdhury

Interns: Mayeesha Helali, Bengisu Onkal, Deepak Thapa, and Karishma Patel

Volunteer: Juwairia Razvi

Partners:

- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)
- United Way Greater Toronto – South Asian Community Advisory Council (UWGT's SACAC)
- Roots Community Services (RootsCS)
- Hispanic Development Council (HDC)
- Chinese Canadian National Council – Toronto Chapter (CCNC-TO)
- Canadian Arab Institute (CAI)
- Black Health Alliance (BHA)
- Computek College
- LAMP Community Health Centre

The 13th Annual Health Equity Summit, titled "United for Health Equity: Collaborative Strategies for Racialized Communities in Ontario," was a two-day event held in collaboration with the PHAC, UWGT's SACAC, Racialized Health Working Group (RHWG), Computek College, and LAMP Community Health Centre. The event reached full capacity, with 105 attendees each day, totalling 210 participants.

Event Details:

- **Day 1:** Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM
 - Residence & Conference Centre, (80 Cooperage St, Toronto, ON M5A 0J3)
- **Day 2:** Tuesday, November 26, 2024, 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM
 - Riverstone Community Centre (195 Don Minaker Dr, Brampton, ON L6P 2V7)

The summit highlighted the RHWG initiative, a collaborative effort involving CASSA, RootsCS, HDC, CCNC-TO, CAI, and BHA. The event presented key findings from surveys, consultations, and focus groups, showcasing the healthcare experiences of Black-African-Caribbean (BAC), South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern-North African (MENA), and LatinX Hispanic communities. The discussions focused on access to healthcare, quality of care, and systemic barriers such as racism, cultural competency gaps, and socio-economic disparities.

Over the two days, participants engaged in keynote speeches, plenary discussions, and breakout sessions to collaborate on actionable strategies for addressing health inequities, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The breakout sessions focused on the unique healthcare challenges faced by various racialized communities, including South Asian, LatinX Hispanic, MENA, BAC, Indigenous, and East & Southeast Asian groups. Each session averaged 35 participants and facilitated in-depth discussions on advancing health equity and overcoming barriers.

To read full proceedings report, including details of the sessions and speakers, please visit www.cassa.ca/annual-health-equity-summit/

13TH ANNUAL HEALTH EQUITY SUMMIT

UNITING FOR HEALTH EQUITY: COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES FOR RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES IN ONTARIO

The Annual Health Equity Summit, hosted by CASSA, is dedicated to addressing health disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, with a particular focus on South Asian and other racialized groups.

This year's Summit will be two days, it will center on the Racialized Health Working Group initiative, a collaborative effort between CASSA, Roots Community Services, Black Health Alliance, Hispanic Development Council, Chinese Canadian National Council-Toronto Chapter, and the Canadian Arab Institute. Together, these organizations will highlight the importance of community-led advocacy in driving targeted health equity strategies across Ontario.



Wednesday, November 20, 2024



9:30 AM - 3:00 PM



Residence & Conference Centre 80
Cooperage St, Toronto, ON M5A 0J3

HOSTED BY:



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Public Health
Agency of Canada



United Way
Greater Toronto



RACIALIZED HEALTH
WORKING GROUP



COMPUTEK
COLLEGE
BUSINESS • HEALTH CARE • TECHNOLOGY



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FARHEEN KHAN

*Chair, South Asian Advisory
Council*
United Way Greater Toronto



SOPHIA IKURA

Founder & Executive Director
Health Commons Solutions



MAHDIBA CHOWDHURY

*Project Manager, Health
Promotion & Equity*
CASSA



JAMAUL TAYLOR

*Community Development
Officer*
Roots Community Services



DAVID SANCHEZ VILLA

Researcher
Hispanic Development Council



NOAH (YINUO) WANG

Community Organizer
Chinese Canadian National
Council Toronto Chapter



NOURA HAMADE

Director of Research and Policy
The Canadian Arab Institute



DR. MANDANA VAHABI

Professor & Research Chair
University of Toronto



MARIANGELA CASTRO- ARTEAGA

MD, MSc
University of Toronto



DR. AREEJ AL-HAMAD

Assistant Professor
Toronto Metropolitan
University

13TH ANNUAL HEALTH EQUITY SUMMIT

UNITING FOR HEALTH EQUITY: COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES FOR RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES IN ONTARIO

The Annual Health Equity Summit, hosted by CASSA, is dedicated to addressing health disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, with a particular focus on South Asian and other racialized groups.

This year's Summit will be two days, it will center on the Racialized Health Working Group initiative, a collaborative effort between CASSA, Roots Community Services, Black Health Alliance, Hispanic Development Council, Chinese Canadian National Council-Toronto Chapter, and the Canadian Arab Institute. Together, these organizations will highlight the importance of community-led advocacy in driving targeted health equity strategies across Ontario.



Tuesday, November 26, 2024



9:30 AM - 3:00 PM



Riverstone Community Centre
195 Don Minaker Dr, Brampton, ON
L6P 2V7

HOSTED BY:



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Public Health
Agency of Canada



United Way
Greater Toronto



RACIALIZED HEALTH
WORKING GROUP



COMPUTEK
COLLEGE
BUSINESS • HEALTH CARE • TECHNOLOGY



MC



JAMAUL TAYLOR

Community Development Officer
Roots Community Services



DR. ROBERTA TIMOTHY

Assistant Professor, Black
Health Lead, & Program
Director
University of Toronto



HEBA QAZILBASH

Healthcare Relations Officer
National Council of Canadian
Muslims (NCCM)



DR. SUZANNE F. JACKSON

Associate Professor & Interim
Program Director MPH SBHS
University of Toronto



ANGELA J. CARTER

Advisor, Strategic Initiatives
Roots Community Services



DR. JOSEPHINE PUI- HING WONG

Professor & Research Chair
Toronto Metropolitan University



DR. AKWATU KHENTI

Director, Community
Resources Section, SDFA
City of Toronto



ASHLEY MORRISON

Indigenous Cultural Safety
Program Coordinator
Indigenous Primary Health Care
Council

New Horizons For Seniors Program

Project Lead: Kazi Fahrina Junaid

Volunteer: Parneet Kaur

The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) is a federal grants and contributions initiative that funds projects empowering seniors to engage in their communities and improve their overall health and well-being. This funded research project marks an important step toward addressing the systemic barriers that prevent seniors—particularly those aged 55 to 70—from accessing essential government assistance programs in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

The project's primary objective is to identify the challenges South Asian seniors and older adults face when accessing and navigating government assistance programs, to develop strategies for eliminating these barriers, and to provide policymakers with actionable insights. The findings will help inform the creation of more effective and culturally sensitive policies that better serve South Asian seniors as well as other diverse populations.

The project unfolded in four phases: literature review, data collection, report writing and analysis, and dissemination. In the literature review phase, CASSA conducted secondary research on Ontario's older adult population, with a specific focus on South Asian communities. For data collection, a mixed-methods approach was used, combining surveys, focus group discussions, and expert interviews. The report-writing phase involved a detailed analysis of this data to identify gaps in benefit accessibility for South Asian older adults.

Findings—including identified barriers and recommendations for improving access—will be shared widely to ensure they reach South Asian seniors and the organizations that serve them. Feedback from participants has already informed practical recommendations aimed at enhancing access to financial, social, and healthcare assistance programs. The final report will be distributed to government agencies, policymakers, community organizations, and other key stakeholders to support informed policy and program development.

To ensure broad reach, project findings will also be communicated through social media using engaging graphics, and informational flyers will be translated into Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Punjabi, and English. These materials will be distributed in grocery stores and religious institutions to directly reach the target community. Through these efforts, we expect to reach over 1,000 seniors and directly benefit more than 500 individuals in the GTA.



Taking the Honour Out of ‘Honour-Based Violence’

Project Manager: Mahdiba Chowdhury

Partners:

- United Way Greater Toronto – South Asian Community Advisory Council (SACAC)
- Women’s Mosque of Canada
- Leading Social Justice Collective (LSJC)

This project is rooted in our commitment to improving the health and well-being of South Asian women impacted by ‘honour-based violence’ (HBV) in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and across Canada.

Guided by the World Health Organization’s holistic definition of [women’s health](#), we address the interconnected physical, sexual, mental, and emotional needs of South Asian women. However, systemic barriers—such as cultural stigma, language obstacles, and limited access to culturally safe services—often hinder their ability to seek help, intensifying the impacts of HBV and allowing violence to manifest in multiple areas of life.

Our mission is to eliminate systemic barriers faced by South Asian women experiencing Honour-Based Violence by conducting rigorous research, engaging survivors and experts in meaningful consultation, developing culturally tailored training and resources, and raising public awareness—ultimately fostering safer, healthier communities empowered to respond effectively to HBV.

Through this project, we aim to:

1. **Conduct a Scoping Review:** Carry out a comprehensive review of HBV across Canada and internationally to guide consultations and inform training module development. This includes assessing HBV prevalence, identifying current partners and service agencies, evaluating existing intervention strategies, and pinpointing gaps that need innovative solutions.
2. **Facilitate Consultation with Survivors and Subject Matter Experts:** Engage survivors of HBV and diverse range of subject matter experts—including health service providers, researchers, community advocates, and leaders. These conversations explore their understanding of HBV, assess current intervention strategies, and evaluate the availability of health, mental health, and practical support services. The insights gathered provide a nuanced understanding of community needs and experiences that directly inform the final report.
3. **Release Comprehensive Report:** Present findings from the scoping review and consultations, capturing both survivor and subject matter experts perspectives. The report will evaluate providers’ knowledge, responsiveness, and safety planning, while ensuring survivors’ voices are central. Actionable recommendations will guide improved support and intervention strategies. An abridged public version will be released to raise awareness while avoiding the vilification of communities.
4. **Develop HBV Training Module:** Build on and adapt previous training developed through the Women’s Mosque of Canada, tailored for both urban and rural South Asian communities. The module will include a ‘train-the-trainer’ approach and be piloted with government officials, community agencies, and law enforcement personnel, ensuring it is culturally relevant and practically applicable.
5. **Launch Social Media Campaign:** Deliver a targeted, multilingual campaign to raise awareness of HBV, reduce stigma, share resources, and connect South Asian women with culturally safe supports.

Racialized Health Working Group Initiative

Project Manager: Mahdiba Chowdhury

Intern: Mayeesha Helali

Volunteer: Juwairia Razvi

Partners:

- Roots Community Services (RootsCS)
- Hispanic Development Council (HDC)
- Chinese Canadian National Council – Toronto Chapter (CCNC-TO)
- Canadian Arab Institute (CAI)
- Black Health Alliance (BHA)

Racialized populations in Ontario are among the fastest-growing demographic groups, yet they continue to face significant health inequities that strain the province's health and social services. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, underscoring the urgent need for systemic reforms to dismantle longstanding barriers within Ontario's healthcare system.

The Racialized Health Working Group (RHWG), funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, is a coalition committed to driving transformative change in healthcare. Formed in 2019, the group initially brought together seven core partners: CASSA, Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, RootsCS, BHA, Punjabi Community Health Services, CCNC-TO, and the HDC. The original proposal included the creation of an Office of Racialized Health within Ontario's Ministry of Health to monitor health outcomes, foster partnerships, and ensure the delivery of culturally competent services.

In response to the evolving needs highlighted by the pandemic, RHWG revised its focus to prioritize racialized communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Six core partners—CASSA, RootsCS, HDC, CCNC-TO, CAI, and BHA—collaborated on this project, each dedicated to advocating for systemic change.

As part of this initiative, RHWG conducted a mixed-methods study involving five key racialized populations in Ontario: South Asian, Black-African-Caribbean (BAC), Latinx Hispanic, Middle Eastern & North African (MENA), and East Asian communities. The study explored barriers to healthcare access and experiences of discrimination among these groups, producing data-driven, community-informed recommendations to guide effective policy reforms and advance equitable health outcomes for all Ontarians.

The specific objectives of this research were as follows:

1. **Assessed the Impact of COVID-19 on Health Disparities:** Evaluated how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing health disparities within racialized communities and examined how these disparities evolved since the pandemic's onset. This included a closer look at the differential impact of the pandemic on various racialized groups and factors contributing to disproportionate outcomes.

2. **Analyzed Systemic Barriers to Healthcare Access:** Identified and assessed systemic barriers that affected healthcare access for racialized populations, including issues related to cultural competency, service availability, experiences of discrimination within healthcare settings, and the long-term consequences of the pandemic on accessibility.
3. **Examined the Impact of Social Determinants of Health:** Explored how social determinants such as employment, housing, and education contributed to health disparities, particularly in the context of the pandemic, and assessed how these factors evolved and their ongoing impact on health outcomes for racialized communities.
4. **Investigated the Need for Race-Based Disaggregated Data:** Advocated for the systematic collection and use of race-based, disaggregated data in healthcare, recognizing its importance for identifying health disparities and informing policies that address the unique needs of racialized populations.
5. **Engaged Racialized Communities in Healthcare Policy Development:** Involved racialized communities in the research through interviews, surveys, and focus groups, ensuring their perspectives were integral to the development of health equity strategies. This prioritized inclusion of community-driven insights to inform policy decisions and improve healthcare outcomes.
6. **Raised Awareness and Advocated for Change:** Increased awareness among healthcare providers, policymakers, and the public about persistent health disparities faced by racialized communities and the need for targeted health equity initiatives. This included advocacy for changes in healthcare delivery, policy reforms, and inclusion of health equity in medical education and practice.
7. **Provided Actionable Recommendations for Policy Reform:** Delivered evidence-based recommendations based on the research findings to inform policy reforms aimed at addressing ongoing health disparities. These recommendations were directed at Ontario's Ministry of Health and other key stakeholders to support the creation of a more equitable healthcare system.

The full research report is scheduled for release in early 2025.



RACIALIZED HEALTH WORKING GROUP

Alberta South Asian Social Justice Network

Project Manager: Amber Qureshi and Harnoor Kochar

Volunteer: Mariam Dar

Over the past 18 months, CASSA has been actively engaging with potential project partners, collaborators, and community members to better understand the needs of non-profit organizations and South Asian communities in Alberta. The primary aim of this initiative is to explore the expansion of CASSA's work into the province.

The initial phase focused on initiating dialogue with various nonprofit organizations and grassroots groups serving South Asian communities. These consultations aimed to explore the multifaceted landscape of South Asian-focused nonprofits and understand the unique challenges faced by these organizations and the communities they support.

In June 2024, CASSA conducted a series of in-person roundtables in Alberta to gain deeper insights into the needs and barriers faced by South Asian communities in the province. The findings from these discussions were compiled into a report highlighting the perspectives of stakeholders serving South Asians in Alberta. By meeting directly with key stakeholders—including representatives from nonprofits, grassroots groups, and community leaders—we explored region-specific issues relevant to the South Asian diaspora.

As we move forward, we are addressing gaps in our consultations and reaching out to additional South Asian-serving organizations. Our ultimate goal is to expand the South Asian Social Justice Network into Alberta. Through this network, we aim to foster collective community advocacy, raise awareness, and build capacity to empower South Asian communities across the country—guided by recommendations from local organizations and leaders.

We deeply appreciate the continued engagement and support from South Asian-serving organizations in both Edmonton and Calgary. Their involvement is essential to making a meaningful impact on South Asian communities in Alberta.

To find out more about the Social Justice Networks in British Columbia and Quebec, please take a look at our [National Expansion Report](#).



Toxic Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence

Project Manager: Dinoba Kirupa

Intern: Charito Grafilo

Volunteers: Rasnat Chowdhury, Shifa Abbas, Nozomi Shirakawa, Manvinder Gill, Tom Robert, Anoushka Anoushka, and Wardah Malik

Project Partners:

- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
- Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS)
- South Asian and Tamil Women's Collective (SATWC)
- Nisa Homes
- Bangladesh Centre & Community Services (BCCS)
- Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)

In 2022, CASSA was funded by United Way Greater Toronto to undertake a community-based research project. The study sought to understand toxic masculinity within the South Asian community and its impact on gender-based violence (GBV) in Canada. It was designed to examine healthy and unhealthy established gender norms in the community, identify factors that cause toxic masculinity, and develop culturally responsive intervention methods to combat it.

Toxic masculinity is a pervasive social construct affecting individuals across all genders and is linked to increased risks of GBV within families and intimate relationships. Building on this understanding, CASSA's previous GBV study revealed that GBV is a "silent pandemic" within the South Asian community in Canada, particularly impacting South Asian women. This new research expands on those findings by examining how toxic masculinity contributes to the ongoing issue for both women and queer individuals. Because there is limited primary research exploring this relationship within the Canadian South Asian community, this study fills an important gap.

To conduct the study, CASSA partnered with the aforementioned organizations for data collection support. After dedicating many months to obtaining ethics approval from the Community Research Ethics Office (CREO), CASSA was pleased to receive the approval. Following this, CASSA designed and conducted training sessions for all partners to ensure they understood their obligations and the materials distributed.

Partners completed primary data collection using a survey instrument and focus groups, conducted either in person or via Zoom. The study incorporated voices from both GBV survivors and past offenders or individuals currently accused to present a holistic understanding. The summer of 2024 was spent analyzing the collected data by the project team.

The team proceeded to write the final report. Starting in the fall, knowledge mobilization and dissemination began. This included:

1. A symposium in December to launch the report, which featured an informative panel and breakout discussions among attendees.
2. A series of workshops, designed for both the public and service providers/academics to facilitate discussions on toxic and healthy masculinities. These workshops were designed as safe spaces for those who identify as men to engage in important conversations and learn from one another.

For more information, please visit cassa.ca/gtagbvstudy/

Exploitation of South Asian International Students in Ontario

Project Lead & Researcher: Tanzina Tahereen

Volunteer: Jerry Kallada

Project Partner: University of Toronto

This project, funded by Mitacs and CASSA, began in May 2023 to investigate the experiences of South Asian international students in Ontario's colleges and universities. It examines the existing policies, structures, and practices related to the internationalization of higher education, assessing whether these processes foster an inclusive academic environment or contribute to exploitation and exclusion.

The research investigates three main questions:

1. In what ways do the internationalization policies and practices in universities and colleges in Ontario respond to the requirements for creating an equitable, inclusive, and diverse educational environment for international students?
2. How do South Asian international students perceive and experience the internationalization policies at their institutions? Which specific policies and practices do these students believe require modification to better meet their needs?
3. How do colleges and universities in Ontario differ in their approaches to internationalization, and how do these differences impact the experiences of international students within these institutions?

This study is particularly significant because Ontario hosts the largest number of international students in Canada, and South Asians—who represent a wide range of linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds—make up the largest share of this population. Despite this, there is a paucity of research exploring the experiences of South Asian students in Canadian universities and colleges. While there are some studies focusing on Asian students in Canadian institutions (Housmand et al., 2014), and a few specifically on Indian international students (Marom, 2022; Sondhi, 2013), the distinct experiences of the broader South Asian student population have not been thoroughly investigated within the Canadian context. South Asian students are not a monolithic group; rather, they exhibit significant diversity in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, and lifestyle. Understanding these variations is crucial, as their strong national, ethnic, and religious identities influence how they experience the Euro-Canadian academic and cultural environment. Currently, no studies have examined these aspects or assessed the internationalization strategies of universities and colleges in relation to these diverse needs. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the experiences of South Asian students through the lens of their cultural frameworks.

This study employs a community-based participatory research approach, addressing the needs of the South Asian international student community by examining the internationalization of higher education in Canada and the experiences of South Asian international students. The research utilizes a qualitative case study methodology to explore the specific experiences of South Asian international students in Ontario. Data will be primarily collected through informal, semi-structured interviews with these students. To ensure comprehensive data triangulation, the study will also incorporate secondary data and published documents from various government and non-government sources, including policy-making documents and reports. Additionally, the research includes a bibliographical component, reviewing scholarly articles and existing research on the internationalization of higher education in North America.

The research is conducted in three phases:

1. **Bibliographical Research and Ethics Approval:** In the initial phase, a bibliographical review was completed, and ethics approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto.
2. **Participant Recruitment and Data Collection:** The current phase focuses on data analysis and report writing, while recruitment of international students for surveys and interviews continues. To date, 22 participants have been recruited and completed the survey. The project aims to recruit a total of 30 participants by December 2025, representing students from various colleges and universities across Ontario.
3. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** CASSA actively raises awareness within the South Asian community and the broader Canadian public. Activities include sharing news and blog posts on social media, collaborating with partner organizations, and producing outreach initiatives. Notably, CASSA launched the short film *Listen*, which highlights the experiences of female international students in Canada, and has organized multiple panel discussions and awareness campaigns targeting this population.



2023 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

DECEMBER 31, 2023

Rashidi LLP

CHARTERED
PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTANTS

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Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 0A9
Tel: (905)762-1900
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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Members of
Council of Agencies Serving South Asians

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Unqualified Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Council of Agencies Serving South Asians ("the Organization"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at December 31, 2023, the statement of operations, the statement of changes in net assets, and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Council of Agencies Serving South Asians as at December 31, 2023, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing these financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Organization's financial reporting process.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT (Continued)

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Organization's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Organization to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Rashidi LLP

Richmond Hill, Ontario
May 14, 2024

Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT DECEMBER 31, 2023

ASSETS

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Current		
Cash	\$ 266,617	\$ 383,736
Investments (Note 4)	52,499	50,602
Accounts receivable	2,585	2,397
Grants receivable	26,589	21,546
HST recoverable	12,752	5,240
Prepaid expenses	2,215	3,541
	<u>363,257</u>	<u>467,062</u>
Capital assets (Note 3)	<u>1,315</u>	<u>1,818</u>
	<u>\$ 364,572</u>	<u>\$ 468,880</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 21,878	\$ 39,586
Deferred contributions (Note 6)	148,076	271,177
Deferred revenue	74,166	38,459
	<u>244,120</u>	<u>349,222</u>
Net assets	<u>120,452</u>	<u>119,658</u>
	<u>\$ 364,572</u>	<u>\$ 468,880</u>

Approved on behalf of the Board:

*Bharat Saini*Director*Z. Sumrani*Director

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements)

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 119,658	\$ 116,412
Excess of revenue over expenses	794	3,246
Balance, end of year	<u>\$ 120,452</u>	<u>\$ 119,658</u>

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements)

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Revenue		
Grants (Note 8)	\$ 912,907	\$ 977,718
Government assistance (Note 5)	-	10,000
Partnerships, expense recoveries and other income	129,244	5,723
Fees for service	17,175	6,413
Membership fees	2,360	1,895
Interest income	1,898	302
	<u>1,063,584</u>	<u>1,002,051</u>
Expenses		
Salaries and benefits (Note 7)	633,893	421,330
Program - project expenses (Note 7)	268,091	376,928
Program - purchased services (Note 7)	40,168	127,847
Office and general (Note 7)	62,992	41,608
Rent and utilities	36,552	18,944
Professional services	7,515	6,200
Insurance	3,174	2,750
Travel and transportation	9,902	2,494
Amortization	503	704
	<u>1,062,790</u>	<u>998,805</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ 794</u>	<u>\$ 3,246</u>

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements)

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Cash provided by (used in)		
Operating activities		
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 794	\$ 3,246
Amortization	503	704
	<u>1,297</u>	<u>3,950</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	(188)	(2,387)
Grants receivable	(5,043)	(1,918)
HST recoverable	(7,512)	495
Prepaid expenses	1,326	91
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(17,708)	31,104
Deferred contributions (Note 6)	(123,101)	181,642
Deferred revenue	35,707	-
	<u>(116,519)</u>	<u>209,027</u>
Financing activities		
Receipt of term loan funds	<u>-</u>	<u>(40,000)</u>
Increase (decrease) in cash during the year	(115,222)	172,977
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of the year	<u>434,338</u>	<u>261,361</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of the year	<u>\$ 319,116</u>	<u>\$ 434,338</u>
Cash and cash equivalents represented by:		
Cash	\$ 266,617	\$ 383,736
Investments	<u>52,499</u>	<u>50,602</u>
	<u>\$ 319,116</u>	<u>\$ 434,338</u>

(The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements)

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

INCORPORATION AND PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION:

The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians ("the Organization") was established to research, identify and analyze the needs of the South Asian communities, to act as a resource centre for government and policy making organizations and to promote understanding of the diverse nature of the said communities.

The Organization was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization without share capital in the Province of Ontario on July 29, 1991. The Organization became a registered charity as of January 1, 2024 and the charity registration number is 135875599RR0001.

1. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES:

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations set out in Part III of the CPA Canada Handbook - Accounting. Outlined below are those policies considered particularly significant:

a) Revenue recognition

The Organization follows the deferral method of accounting for grants. Grants are recognized as revenue in the same period as the related expenditures. Grants received prior to the year to which they apply are deferred.

Donations and fundraising, and expense recoveries are recorded as revenue when received.

Other revenues such as programming, workshops, interest income, and rentals are recognized as revenue in the period in which they are earned.

b) Expense recognition

Expenses are recognized on the accrual basis.

c) Financial instruments

The Organization initially records all financial instruments at fair market value, and subsequently records them at amortized cost.

The Organization's financial instruments consist of cash, investments, accounts receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

1. SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES: (Continued)

d) Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosures of contingent liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenditures during the reported period. Significant items subject to such estimates and assumptions include the useful lives of capital assets, and year-end accrued liabilities. Actual results could differ from management's best estimates as additional information becomes available in the future.

e) Contributed services

Because of the difficulty of determining the fair value of services provided by volunteers, contributed services are not recognized in these financial statements.

f) Income taxes

The organization is a not-for-profit organization under the Income Tax Act (Canada) and, as such, is exempt from income taxes.

g) Capital assets

Capital assets are recorded at cost. Amortization is taken annually at rates calculated to write-off the assets over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Furniture and fixtures	20% declining balance
Equipment	20% declining balance
Computer equipment	30% declining balance

A capital asset is tested for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that its carrying amount may not be recoverable. An impairment loss is recognized when the carrying amount of the asset exceeds the sum of the undiscounted cash flows resulting from its use and eventual disposition. The impairment loss is measured as the amount by which the carrying amount of the capital assets exceeds its fair value.

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

2. CAPITAL MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE:

The Organization includes cash, prepaid expenses, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, and net assets in its capital management consideration. The Organization's objectives when managing capital are to safeguard its ability to continue as a going concern and continue to execute its mandate within the restrictions that the organization is not in receipt of core funding.

The Organization monitors these items to assess its ability to fulfil its ongoing financial obligations. The Organization relies primarily on grants, fundraising and self-generated revenues to fund its operations and makes adjustments to its budgeted expenditures in light of changes. The Organization is not subject to externally imposed capital requirements.

The Organization is dependent on grants and self-generated revenues for continued operations.

3. CAPITAL ASSETS:

Capital assets consist of the following:

	2023			2022
	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Accumulated Amortization</u>	<u>Net Book Value</u>	<u>Net Book Value</u>
Office equipment	\$ 15,307	\$ 14,970	\$ 337	\$ 420
Computers	13,800	12,822	978	1,398
	<u>\$ 29,107</u>	<u>\$ 27,792</u>	<u>\$ 1,315</u>	<u>\$ 1,818</u>

4. INVESTMENTS:

Investments consist of guaranteed investment certificates (GIC's) with an annual interest rate of 3.75% (2022 - 0.60%). As of December 31, 2023 the book value and market value of the funds was \$52,499 (2022 - \$50,602).

5. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE:

During 2020 the fiscal year, the Organization received the Canada Emergency Business Assistance ("CEBA") forgivable loan in the amount of \$40,000. As at December 31, 2022 management made the determination that the terms and conditions to exercise the forgiveness option would be met, and the non-forgivable portion of \$30,000 was repaid. Accordingly, the forgivable portion in the amount of \$10,000 (25% of the loan balance) was recognized as income in the 2022 fiscal year.

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

6. DEFERRED GRANTS:

Deferred grants are summarized as follows:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Canadian Red Cross	\$ 93,758	\$ -
Canadian Heritage	25,841	-
United Way - Gender Based Violence	14,759	4,467
United Way - Capacity Building	12,497	54,049
Urban Alliance of Race Relations	1,221	5,660
City of Toronto - Vaccine Engagement	-	110,000
Canadian Race Relations Foundation	-	49,264
Minister of Solicitor General	-	28,131
Canadian Women's Foundation	-	19,606
	<u>\$ 148,076</u>	<u>\$ 271,177</u>

Continuity of deferred grants for the year is as follows:

Deferred grants, beginning of year	\$ 271,177	\$ 127,594
Add – received/receivable during the year	789,806	1,121,301
Less - grant revenue recognized in the year	<u>(912,907)</u>	<u>(977,718)</u>
Deferred grants, end of year	<u>\$ 148,076</u>	<u>\$ 271,177</u>

7. ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES - SALARIES AND BENEFITS:

Salaries and benefits expenses have been included in program and administration expenses proportionately on the basis of time spent, as follows:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
Program - project expenses	\$ 45,378	\$ 40,207
Program - purchased services	1,332	14,932
Office and general	<u>14,002</u>	<u>14,691</u>
	<u>\$ 60,712</u>	<u>\$ 69,830</u>

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

8. GRANT REVENUE RECOGNIZED IN THE YEAR:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>
City of Toronto	\$ 198,499	\$ 468,394
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism	177,968	19,392
United Way - Capacity Building	151,551	70,951
Canadian Red Cross	90,482	-
United Way - Gender Based Violence	76,658	60,970
Canadian Race Relations Foundation	64,664	5,336
Canadian Women's Foundation	39,606	171,071
Urban Alliance of Race Relations	36,339	22,335
Canadian Heritage	34,159	56,951
Minister of Solicitor General	28,131	49,762
Public Health Agency of Canada	10,000	-
ESDC - Canada Summer Jobs	4,850	52,556
	<u>\$ 912,907</u>	<u>\$ 977,718</u>

9. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS:

The Organization's financial investments are comprised of guaranteed investment certificates (GIC's). The main purpose of these investments is to provide financing for the organization's activities. The Organization has various other financial assets and liabilities such as accounts receivable and accounts payable, which arise directly from operations. The main risks arising from the Organization's financial instruments are interest risk, credit risk and liquidity risk.

a) Interest Rate Risk

Interest rate risk is the risk of potential financial loss caused by fluctuations in their fair value of future cash flow of financial instruments due to changes in market interest rates. The Organization is exposed to this risk through its interest bearing investments. The Organization manages this risk through investing in fixed-rate securities of short to medium term maturity and plans to hold the securities to maturity.

b) Credit Risk

Credit risk is the potential for financial loss should a counter-party in a transaction fail to meet its obligations. The Organization places its operating and reserve cash and investments with high quality institutions and believes its exposure is not significant.

COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

9. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS: (Continued)

c) Liquidity Risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that an entity will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with financial liabilities. The Organization manages this risk by preparing and monitoring detailed forecasts of cash flows from operations, anticipating investing and financing activities and holding assets that can be readily converted into cash.

The Organization's financial instruments consist of cash, investments, accounts receivable, accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Unless otherwise noted, it is management's opinion that the organization is not exposed to significant interest, credit or liquidity risks.

The extent of the Organization's exposure to the above risks did not change during 2023.

10. COMMITMENTS:

The Organization is committed to a lease for its head office premises at Unit 101 - 705 Progress Avenue located in Toronto, Ontario, which requires the following annual minimum payments:

2024	\$	15,873
2025	\$	15,873
2026	\$	15,873
2027	\$	15,873
2028	\$	5,291

The term of this lease commitment expires on May 31, 2028. In addition to the above minimum lease payments, the Organization is responsible for its portion of occupancy cost and utilities which is estimated at \$32,000 annually.

11. RECLASSIFICATION OF COMPARATIVE FIGURES:

Certain of the 2022 comparative figures have been reclassified to conform with the current year's presentation.

CASSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SLATE 2024-2025

Bharat Saini – Chair

Bharat Saini is the inaugural Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) with the Faculty of Arts & Science at the University of Toronto. Bharat is responsible for developing and implementing strategic initiatives aimed at advancing EDI within the learning and working environments across the Faculty of Arts & Science. He provides strategic guidance and advice to the Dean's Executive team on matters of policy interpretation and practice concerning a range of areas, including accessibility, human rights, equity, diversity, inclusion, freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

Bharat has been working in the post-secondary sector for more than 15 years. Prior to joining UofT, he served as the Manager, Human Rights, Equity & Inclusion with the Centre for Human Rights, Equity & Inclusion at Humber College. In this role, he managed the Human Rights Program and provided strategic guidance on Human Rights and EDI related matters. Additionally, he led the College's Employment Equity Program and Co-Chaired the Equity & Inclusion Committee as well as the EDI Taskforce Access & Equity: Employees working group. Bharat continues in the role of Instructor with Humber's Faculty of Business. He has also held roles with Osgoode Professional Development at Osgoode Hall Law School, OCAD University and York University.

Bharat strongly believes in the importance of mentorship along with community work and engagement. For over a decade he had the privilege to serve on the Board of the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in Higher Education. In addition, since 2020, he has been serving as a Director on CASSA's Board, and during Summer 2022 became the Chair of the Board. Bharat completed his Bachelors of Science Honours, Bachelors of Education and Masters of Education from York University. During his M.Ed., his key areas of focus included human rights, equity and inclusion, competing rights, disability and academic accommodations, policy development, inclusive pedagogy and universal instructional design. He is also an Ontario Certified Teacher. In addition, he has extensive training in Alternative Dispute Resolution as well as workplace investigations focused on human rights and workplace harassment. Bharat is committed to protecting human rights and transformational systemic change to advance anti-racism, equity and inclusion and foster belonging for all.

Zeeshan Sumrani – Treasurer

Zeeshan is an International Development expert with over 20 years' experience in community impact, evaluation, program design and implementation at scale. At Skills for Change, Zeeshan works as the Chief Strategy, Innovation & Growth officer leading work in the key organizational areas of Business Operations, Strategic Planning & Implementation, Organizational Growth and Social Enterprise Development.

Prior to SfC, he worked as the Director of Programs & Operations at The Mississauga Food Bank and led the programs and operations teams that are responsible for client and agency service, capacity building, warehouse and operations aspects of the organization. In his previous roles, he was the Head of Community Impact for United Way India and General Manager - Programs for the Educate Girls Foundation where he designed programs that impacted the lives of over 600,000 children and youth. He was also a part of the team that designed and implemented the World's first Development Impact Bond in education.

He has the experience of working in various non-profit sub-sectors, including education, livelihood support, sports for development and women's empowerment. Zeeshan was also a part of the Skoll and Mastercard Foundation's Emerging Leaders program in 2017. He is also a passionate public speaker who believes in constantly upgrading himself with knowledge and ideas that help the world become a happier place.

Tanzina Islam – Secretary

Tanzina Islam is a public health planner specializing in health promotion strategies within the community health sector. She is currently the Manager of Health Promotion & Community Relations at the East Mississauga Community Health Centre. In her role, she oversees health interventions targeting priority populations, supports strategic planning, and monitors population needs and advocates for the good health of the Mississauga community. She was a former Project Coordinator at CASSA for the CapaCITY Creators Project and is a current member of CASSA's Health Equity Task Force.

Tanzina has worked in the areas of mental health, chronic health, gender-based violence, community engagement, social justice and health equity across institutions such as Humber College, Toronto Public Health, St Michael's Hospital and the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health (CAMH). Tanzina also leads two independent research projects focused on 'understanding honour killing as a form of gender-based violence' and 'identifying risk factors for global sex trafficking'. She is a University of Toronto Alumni and holds a Master of Public Health degree. Her expertise lies in applying evidence-based knowledge when developing, implementing and evaluating health interventions. Central to her focus is integrating equity-focused frameworks when planning health services for marginalized populations. She hopes to be a part of initiatives that empower communities, strengthen community action, and challenge sociopolitical structures that contribute to poor health and health disparities.

Jessica Singh – Director

Jessica is a change agent guided by empathic accuracy; internally driven to work for issues like gender equality, art therapy, access to quality education, and child protection. As a social development professional and research consultant, she offers strategic advice to social enterprises to enable meaningful contribution and provides tools to measure their impact effectively. She works with creativity, consideration and open-mindedness that allows seeing things from unconventional perspectives.

Jessica is a social worker and also holds a specialized degree in evidence-based research from the University of Oxford. She has 12+ years of experience impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation, multi-stakeholder relationships, qualitative research methodologies, strategic partnerships, capacity building and grant-writing both internationally and in Canada. She is currently serving on the board of North York Arts and has had the opportunity to work with organizations like the World Bank, Plan UK, Credit Suisse, GIZ, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, US Department of State, Centre for Social Innovation, Tedx Toronto and Plan Canada.

Thanuya Mohanathas – Director

Thanuya is a Social Worker who has extensive experience in community and youth development. She attended York University for Human Rights & Equity Studies, Seneca College for Social Service Worker Diploma, and is currently pursuing a degree in Public Administration & Governance at Ryerson University. Thanuya is TESOL certified and teaches ESL. She has learned to combine her roots in Social Work with her passion for music, specifically the piano and teaches a unique curriculum to students through Ruby's School of Music. Thanuya has extensive experience in grant writing, development and facilitation of workshops, community asset building, capacity building, strategic planning, and program evaluation.

Thanuya has shared spaces with vulnerable residents and has sought community partners and stakeholders to take a more collaborative and communal approach in the drafting and implementation of meaningful and impactful programs and services to better suit the needs of the communities they serve. Her desire to improve quality of life and to create better and more meaningful human relations, bring forth a sense of connection and belonging has been the driving force that has propelled her unwavering commitment to social justice and to CASSA.

Ayesha Chughtai – Director

Ayesha Chughtai is a Pakistani-Canadian immigrant living and working in Ottawa. After earning her bachelor's degree from the University of Calgary in Political Science she moved to Ottawa in 2017 to pursue a career with the federal government. She served as a Regional Advisor, and later a Senior Policy Advisor for the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development working on national housing policy, childcare, and service delivery in Canada. She then moved to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development serving as Director of Operations. In addition to managing a team of Regional Advisors, she worked on broadband policy and the development of new funding programs. Her last role in government was serving as a Regional Advisor to the Prime Minister focusing on the Prairies and North. In this role, she built relationships with provinces and territories, provided strategic advice, and managed the logistics of travel to the region. In July 2022, she left the federal government taking on a new role at Deloitte Canada as a Manager with the Future of Canada Centre (FCC). The FCC is Deloitte's premier thought leadership and public policy hub.

A proud Calgarian who lived her early years in Pickering, Ontario, Ayesha is passionate about the diversity of the South Asian community across the country.

Jessica Devi Chandrashekar – Director

Jessica Devi Chandrashekar works as a Staff Lawyer with the Refugee Law Office where she advocates for immigration detainees. She is also an adjunct instructor at Queen's University and is a research Doctoral student at Osgoode Hall Law School. She completed a B.Sc Honours degree at the University of Toronto, with minors in Women and Gender Studies, as well as South Asian Studies. There she went on to do her Masters in Women and Gender Studies, before pursuing a PhD at York University in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. Jessica also completed a Juris Doctor at Osgoode Hall Law School where she focused on immigration, refugee, and administrative law. Her current doctoral work at Osgoode Hall Law School examines the immigration detention regime in Canada. She holds professional memberships with several migrant advocacy organizations including the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, and the Refugee Lawyers Association. Jessica has presented her work at several conferences and workshops, enjoys mentoring and teaching, and is passionate about serving and supporting community organizations.

Samir Parmar – Director

Samir Parmar holds a Juris Doctorate in Law from the University of Windsor Faculty of Law and holds a license to practice law in the Province of Ontario. His journey began at the University of Toronto where he completed an Honours Bachelors of Arts in English and Health Policy. During his time at the University of Toronto, he was offered co-op opportunities and worked alongside health professionals to advocate and conduct research on a variety of health and social issues in and around the GTA, including a placement at the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians. Through these experiences, he grew to appreciate the need to better understand the legal impact of health policies and how the intersectionality of factors such as race, socio-economic status and ethnicity created barriers to those accessing healthcare.

After graduating law school, Samir had the opportunity to work with a major hospital and was able to utilize his diverse background to assist researchers, physicians and key stakeholders in the negotiation, drafting and review of corporate and research contracts. Samir is currently Research Legal Counsel (Corporate Projects) at a healthcare system in the Discovery District in downtown Toronto. Outside of his professional career, Samir enjoys spending quality time with his family, friends and is an avid fan of Toronto sports teams.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

CASSA's Mission:

To facilitate the economic, social, political, and cultural empowerment of South Asians by serving as a resource for information, research, mobilization, coordination, and leadership on social justice issues affecting our communities. Create social change by building alliances and working collaboratively with those who share a vision of empowering all communities to participate in defining Canada's future.

CASSA's Vision:

We envision and strive for a Canada free of all forms of discrimination in which all communities are free from marginalization and are fully empowered to participate in defining Canada's political, economic, social and cultural future.

CASSA's Values:

The following values serve as guidelines for our conduct as we implement our mission and work towards our vision:

- **Social Justice:** We are committed to working within a social justice framework, which promotes equity and empowerment for marginalized peoples and communities.
- **Anti-oppression, Anti-racism, Anti-homophobia:** We strive to incorporate anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic principles and practices in our work.
- **Responsiveness:** We strive to work through a variety of consultative and participatory structures and practices to ensure that our work is grounded in the realities and priorities of our communities.
- **Diversity:** We recognize and respect the diversity among and within South Asian communities and within Canadian society.
- **Collaboration and Solidarity:** We are committed to building alliances in order to work collectively towards common aims.
- **Accountability:** We are committed to maintaining effective governance, measurement and reporting practices.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CASSA's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan will allow for a renewed sense of purpose, provide clear and measurable goals, as well as a distinct future-focused strategy and implementation plan to facilitate sustainable organizational growth and development.

Pillars	Membership Engagement	Growth + Impact	Functional Priorities	Organizational Sustainability
Decision	Cultivate a thriving membership base	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve charitable status 2. Expand geographic impact 	Strengthening policy advocacy and research capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversifying revenue sources and strengthening financial position 2. Enhancing talent and development
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate trust and meaningful relationships. • Expand opportunities for member engagement and capacity building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and initiate the process for charity status. • Develop and implement a phased approach for regional and national growth. 	Strengthen collaborative partnerships with equity-focused agencies and allies.	<p>Assess opportunities for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable, year-over-year funding and • Increase staff complements and professional development
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Membership-informed capacity building opportunities (training, education and professional development) 2. Stewardship with membership 3. Reciprocal relationship with membership on areas of advocacy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore legal framework, opportunities and risks for charity status. 2. Develop the infrastructure to become a charity. 3. Cultivate regional and national partners and membership in other jurisdictions within Canada. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy Advocacy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Participate in relevant advocacy tables. b. Foster and expand policy partnerships. 2. Research capacity: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expand research portfolio and strengthen community-based research b. Enhance research infrastructure 3. Design monitoring and evaluation framework for all projects and campaigns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment of board members with experience in fundraising, finance, legal and human resources 2. Create an organizational financial sustainability plan 3. Build capacity to hire and retain permanent staff

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2021-2026



Support Immigration and settlement

Over the next five years, CASSA will commit to the following:

- facilitate processes that aim to build more inclusive and accessible communities in regions where immigrants settle across Canada
- develop tools and resources to support resettlement through community-based research
- advocate on behalf of newcomers collectively to eliminate barriers to decent work
- document and bring awareness to histories of South Asians in Canada
- advocate for elimination of systemic barriers to civic participation of immigrants, and create civic engagement capacity building tools for newcomers and immigrants
- engage newcomers and other South Asian communities in education about the true history of Canada as a settler colonial state and actions towards truth and reconciliation



Economic Empowerment

Over the next five years, CASSA will commit to the following:

- create awareness about the racialization of poverty and work with networks and coalitions to advocate for systemic changes to alleviate South Asians out of poverty
- advocate for accessible and affordable childcare for low and middle-income South Asians in Canada
- advocate for the right to adequate and safe housing for South Asians and to improve outcomes for those who are unhoused
- support campaigns and movements for workers' rights



Enhance Health Equity

Over the next five years, CASSA will commit to the following:

- build coalitions with South Asian and other racialized communities focused on health equity to advocate for policies that improve health outcomes
- advocate for the development and implementation of a South Asian Health Strategy for Ontario including culturally and linguistically accessible health services
- support the development of mental health tools, services and resources that are inclusive and tailored to South Asian communities
- advocate for, support, secure, and disseminate health equity focused research initiatives and race-based disaggregated data collection including data on the impact of COVID-19 on South Asian communities
- advocate for rights of South Asian seniors' health and culturally adapted long-term care
- advocate for the rights of South Asians with different abilities and disabilities



Advance Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

Over the next five years, CASSA will commit to the following:

- develop and deliver ongoing Anti-racism and Anti-oppression training for CASSA member agencies, partners, groups, government institutions, and private corporations
- create youth leadership training and opportunities grounded in anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks
- work with researchers and academics to ensure academic research and community-based research uses anti-oppressive and equity lens and use decolonial practices of consultation and data collection
- advocate for anti-racism, decolonial, and anti-oppressive policies and education at school boards across Canada
- create learning opportunities for South Asian communities on anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, anti-South Asian and anti-Asian racism



Gender Equity and Empowerment

Over the next five years, CASSA will commit to the following:

- develop and implement race-based data collection based on leading practices in the fields of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence to support evidence-based service delivery
- build awareness about what gender-based violence and intimate partner violence looks in the South Asian communities and advocate for policy and program changes
- partner with organizations and groups to advocate for the rights of gender diverse individuals and communities
- build capacity of South Asian and other racialized women through training, networking, and resource development



Combat Online Hate, Hate Crimes, and Hate Speech

Over the next five years, CASSA will commit to the following:

- build and sustain collaborations with racialized communities and faith groups to combat hate in all forms
- advocate for legislation to combat the rise of online hate
- work with institutions collecting data to make processes of hate crime reporting accessible and trauma-informed
- build capacity of agencies and groups to combat online hate, hate crimes, and hate speech
- create opportunities for and support interfaith and interracial dialogue

CASSA STAFF

2023-2024

2023 Staff

Executive Director – Samya Hasan

Director of Development – Ridah Asghar

Director of Operations - Suhail Mubeen

Executive Assistant & Membership Coordinator – Qurat Al Ain

Administrative Assistant & Receptionist – Fahrina Junaid

Finance Manager – Farhat Hasan

Project Manager – Yomna Omar

Manager of Partnerships – Ria Arora

Programs Manager – Lakhdeep Singh Dhaliwal

Project Manager, Gender-Based Violence – Dinoba Kirupa

Project Manager, Health Promotion & Equity – Mahdiba Chowdhury

Project Manager, Policies that Perpetuate Systemic Racism – Sonia Baweja

Project Managers, High Priority Communities Strategy – Mahdiba Chowdhury and Sonia Baweja

Project Managers, Eradicatehate 2.0 – Noor Fadel & Pirathajini Chandrakumar

Human Resources Generalist – Gurbinder Jaspal Kaur

Project Coordinators, Equity in Education - Samaha Kureshi

Communications Coordinator – Samaha Kureshi

Communications Consultant – Marco Campana

IT Specialist – Faizan Zubair

Project Associate, Anti-hate Initiatives and Spatial Justice Campaign – Akhila Appadurai

Project Associate, Health Equity – Riya Shah

Project Associate, GBV Research – Charito Grafil and Neel Desai

Co-op Students/Interns – Archanaa Krisnagopal, Debankita Joardar, Sara Zabiullah, Manum Shahid, Asha Selvakumar, Samson Mapile, Ozair Asmal, and Manum Shahid

2024 Staff

Executive Director - Samya Hasan

Director of Development - Ridah Asghar [On leave]

Director of Operations - Suhail Mubeen [Past]

Manager- Community Development - Nayani Nandakumar

Executive Assistant & Membership Coordinator - Qurat Al Ain

Administrative Assistant & Receptionist - Kazi Fahrina Junaid

Finance Manager - Farhat Hasan

Project Manager - Yomna Omar

Manager of Partnerships - Ria Arora [Past]

Programs Manager - Lakhdeep Singh Dhaliwal [Past]

Human Resources Generalist - Gurbinder Jaspal Kaur

Communications Coordinator - Samaha Kureshi

IT Specialist - Faizan Zubair

South Asian Social Justice Network - Calgary Lead - Amber Qureshi

South Asian Social Justice Network - Edmonton Lead - Harnoor Kochar

Project Manager, Gender-Based Violence and GTA GBV Study - Dinoba Kirupa

Project Manager, Health Promotion & Equity - Mahdiba Chowdhury

Project Lead, New Horizons for Seniors Program - Kazi Fahrina Junaid

Project Manager, Taking the Honour Out of Honour-based Violence - Mahdiba Chowdhury

Project Manager, Racialized Health Working Group Initiative - Mahdiba Chowdhury

Manager- Anti Hate- Initiative and BC Outreach Coordinator - Noor Fadel

Project Lead, The International Students Project - Tanzina Tahereen

Project Coordinator, Equity in Education - Samaha Kureshi

Project Associate, GBV Research - Charito Grafil

Co-op Students/Interns - Mayeesha Helali, Ozair Asmal, Aeshah Doorani, Ameen Chaudhry, Hiba Syed, Humza Qureshi, Noorah Umar, Nurefsan Yigit, Nusaybah Akbar, Ruqayya Mulla, Sarah Popal, Zahra Ali, Charito Grafil and Parneet Kaur.

CASSA VOLUNTEERS 2023-2024

Parneet Kaur	Rifa
Ozair Asmal	Yousif Ahmed
Aeshah Doorani	Soha Qureshi
Ameen Chaudhry	Aisha Kapa
Hiba Syed	Aliya Shaikh
Humza Qureshi	Sabrina Karim
Noorah Umar	Ruqayya Mulla
Nurefsan Yigit	Jasim Kapadia
Nusaybah Akbar	Farzana Mulla
Ruqayya Mulla	Faiz Qureshi
Zahra Ali	Riya Shah
Sarah Popal	Archanaa Krisnagopal
Ramsha Tariq	Debantika Joardar
Aaliyah Desai	Mayeesha Helali
Alesha Khan	Juwairia Razvi
Kulthum Ugharatdar	Charito Grafilo
Nariman Ansari	Rasnat Chowdhury
Izdeyar Umar	Manvinder Gill
Sadia Khan	Nozomi Shirakawa
Yousra Qureshi	Tom Robert
Zaynab Hussain	Wardah Malik
Ruqaiyah Chhiboo	Shifa Abbas
Fatimah Mulla	Anoushka Anoushka

CASSA ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS (AGENCIES) 2022-2023

1. Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)
2. Abhinayakshetra Fine Arts Canada
3. Afghan Women's Organization (AWO)
4. Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS)
5. Bangladesh Centre and Community Services (BCCS)
6. Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre (BBNC)
7. Breast Cancer Society of Canada (BCSC)
8. Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT)
9. Canadian Council for Muslim Women (CCMW)
10. Canadian Pakistani Support Group Association (CPSG)
11. Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD)
12. CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses
13. Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association
14. Centennial College
15. COSTI
16. Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment (CAAT)
17. Canada Foundation 12762862
18. Durham Tamil Association
19. Elizabeth Fry Toronto
20. Embrace Agency to End Violence (formerly known as Interim Place)
21. Epilepsy Toronto
22. Evergreen Hospice
23. Family Inter-Generation Link (FIG)
24. Family Service Toronto
25. Findhelp Information Services
26. Family Services York Region (FSYR)
27. Frontline Community Services
28. GTA North West Community Health Services
29. Humber College, Human Rights, Equity & Inclusion
30. Harbhajan Ranauta Legacy Foundation
31. Indo-Canadian Women's Association (ICWA)
32. Job Skills
33. JRS College
34. Labour Education Centre
35. Legal Aid Ontario, (Vanathy Wimalaswaran (SALCO))
36. Markham Arts Council
37. Markham South Asian Seniors Centre

38. [Markham Tamil Organization](#)
39. [Markham Tamil Seniors Association](#)
40. [MCIS Language Solutions](#)
41. [Meadowvale Community Centre](#)
42. [METRAC](#)
43. [Middlefield Seniors Wellness Club](#)
44. [NeighbourLink North York](#)
45. [Newcomer Women's Services](#)
46. [Ontario Caregiver Organization](#)
47. [Ontario Bengali Cultural Society \(OBCS\)](#)
48. [PACE Community](#)
49. [People For Education](#)
50. [Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services](#)
51. [Punjabi Community Health Services \(PCHS\)](#)
52. [Patron Career Staffing Inc.](#)
53. [Reh'ma Community Services](#)
54. [Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre](#)
55. [SAAAC Autism Centre](#)
56. [Settlement Assistance & Family Support Services \(SAFSS\)](#)
57. [Scarborough Women's Centre](#)
58. [Sandgate Women's Shelter](#)
59. [Scadding Court Community Centre](#)
60. [Scarborough Arts](#)
61. [SEIU Healthcare](#)
62. [Senior Tamils Centre of Ontario](#)
63. [Sherbourne Health](#)
64. [Skills for Change](#)
65. [Social Planning Network of Ontario \(SPNO\)](#)
66. [Social Planning Toronto](#)
67. [Social Services Network](#)
68. [South Asian Heart Health Group \(SAHHG\)](#)
69. [South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario \(SALCO\)](#)
70. [South Asian Network Supporting Awareness & Research \(SANSAR\)](#)
71. [South Asian Visual Arts Centre \(SAVAC\)](#)
72. [South Asian Women's Centre \(SAWC\)](#)
73. [South Riverdale Community Health Centre \(SRCHC\)](#)
74. [Schizophrenia Society of Ontario](#)
75. [South Asian Centre of Windsor](#)
76. [Sindhi Association of North America](#)
77. [South Asian Community Support Canada \(SACSC\)](#)
78. [South Asian Legal History Association](#)
79. [South Asian Health Alliance](#)
80. [South Asian Canadian Access to Justice Association](#)

1. South Asian and Tamil Women's Collective
82. South Asian Cultural Health Association for Youth & Seniors (SACHAYS)
83. Tamil Cultural & Academic Society of Durham
84. TESOC - Multicultural Settlement & Community Services
85. Thamil Poonka School & Daycare Centre
86. The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO)
87. Times Change Women's Employment Service
88. Toronto Centre of Learning & Development
89. Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action (TCCCA)
90. Tropicana Community Services Organization
91. TranslateKnowledge
92. Unifor National
93. University of Toronto - Comparative Education Service
94. Vasantham - Tamil Wellness Centre
95. Villa Karuna Home For Seniors
96. We Can Win
97. Women's Health in Women's Hands
98. Women for Women Support Services
99. Workers' Action Centre

CASSA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS (INDIVIDUALS) 2023-2024

1. Arull Thesomayanathan
2. Abhilash Jayachandran
3. Anujan Rajah
4. Asim Hussain
5. Fatima Khan
6. Farwa Zehra
7. Jerry Kallada
8. Lubaina Fidaali
9. Mohit Arora
10. Rasnat Chowdhury
11. Russell de Souza
12. Sunila Kalkar
13. Shivangi Sawh
14. Sridevi Veluganti Nagasai
15. Sandeep Kaur Marwaha
16. Shreya Menon

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OUR FUNDERS FOR 2023

We would like to appreciate and acknowledge the vital ongoing support for our activities by:

Canadian Race Relations Foundation
City of Toronto: Investing in Neighborhood Initiative
City of Toronto: Community Services Partnership
City of Toronto: Social Development and Finance Administration
Government of Canada: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
Government of Canada: Department of Canadian Heritage
Government of Canada: Employment and Social Development Canada
Government of Ontario: Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism
Toronto Non-Profit Network
United Way of Greater Toronto
Urban Alliance on Race Relations

We extend our sincere gratitude to all our community partners, volunteers, and board members for their invaluable support throughout our projects. Their contributions have been essential to the achievements we have made in 2023. Without their dedicated assistance, our accomplishments would not have been possible.

**Thank you all for your dedication and
for believing in CASSA**

**Thank you for attending
CASSA's 2024 AGM!**

We look forward to your continued support, guidance and involvement.

You or your organization can become a member of CASSA, if you wish to support our mission/mandate. Please visit our website www.cassa.on.ca for details on our mission, vision, values and strategic priorities. The members will receive regular updates on various happenings in the social services/social justice field that impact Ontario's South Asian communities.

Joining as a member will also keep you informed about job opportunities, volunteer opportunities and community events. Please visit our website for more information about becoming a member of CASSA and its benefits.

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