



## **Honouring Black Muslim Women of Winnipeg** **Celebrating Black History Month**

The event commenced with a warm welcome to the esteemed keynote speaker, the [Honorable Uzoma Asagwara, who holds the position of Minister of Health, Seniors, and Long-Term Care](#). As the first non-binary Member of the Legislative Assembly in Manitoba, their historic election in 2019 marked a significant milestone in the province's political landscape. With a background in healthcare as a psychiatric nurse and addictions specialist, as well as a remarkable career in basketball, Uzoma Asagwara embodies resilience and leadership.

Following the introduction of the keynote speaker, several distinguished honorees were introduced, each with their own inspiring journey:

- Zebiba Ibrahim, Manager of Community Support Program at the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, shared her journey of overcoming challenges as an immigrant woman to pursue education and contribute to nonprofit organizations, emphasizing the importance of resilience and finding one's place.
- Siti Birkan, Community Services Manager at Manitoba Islamic Association, brought forth her remarkable journey from Somalia to Canada, highlighting her dedication to humanitarian work and community service, which continues to inspire others.
- Shakirat Ibitoye, Coordinator of Family Support ISSA, shared her story of resilience and commitment to education, demonstrating how she overcame adversity to positively impact lives in Winnipeg.
- Aynalen Ali, founder of HIV Awareness Day and advocate for Muslim women's events in Canada, showcased her kindness, resilience, and dedication to creating a more informed and compassionate society.
- Hodan Ali, Financial Empowerment Coordinator at Canadian Muslim Women's Institute, brought her diverse educational background and commitment to community development, empowering newcomers and advocating for positive transformations.

In addition to celebrating the resilience and contributions of these remarkable individuals, the Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA) is honored to recognize their achievements and dedication to their communities. ISSA acknowledges the importance of resilience in overcoming challenges and is committed to supporting individuals like Zebiba Ibrahim, Siti Birkan, Shakirat Ibitoye, Aynalen Ali, and Hodan Ali in their endeavors. Through its programs and services, ISSA continues to promote empowerment, advocacy, and community building, ensuring that the voices and experiences of diverse individuals are heard and respected.

## Here are the Honorees

### SHAKIRAT IBITOYE

A social worker and Coordinator of Family Support ISSA

a resilient professional with a rich history of academic achievement and community impact. Born and raised in Nigeria, Shakirat's journey is marked by determination, overcoming adversity, and an unwavering commitment to education. Despite facing the loss of her father at a young age, Shakirat pursued academic excellence, eventually earning her Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral degrees at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Her father's legacy of emphasizing the value of education propelled her through challenges, leading to a Ph.D. in counseling psychology. As the Coordinator of Family Support ISSA, Shakirat leads initiatives to strengthen the family support program. Please join me in welcoming Shakirat who continues to positively impact lives in Winnipeg.



### SITI BIRKAN

Community Services Manager at Manitoba Islamic Association

Arriving in Winnipeg in November 2019, she brings a remarkable journey of resilience and service. Born in Mogadishu, Somalia, Siti lived in three countries before finding her home in Canada. Fleeing the civil war in Somalia, she moved to Saudi Arabia at the age of 7 and later spent 18 years in Syria, graduating from Damascus University with a Bachelor of Science degree. Siti's heart for humanitarian work led her to volunteer with international NGOs like UNICEF, DRC, UNHCR, and Syrian organizations like SARC during her university years. Since November 2020, she has served as the Community Services Manager at Manitoba Islamic Association in Winnipeg, overseeing vital programs such as poverty relief, funerals, and mental health support. Siti's journey and commitment to community service truly inspire us all.



# AYNALEN ALI

founder of HIV Awareness Day (manitoba)

It is with great pleasure that we introduce remarkable individual Aynalen Ali, originally from Ethiopia, has called Canada home since November 12, 1995. A proud mother of five, she has been making a positive impact in both Ethiopia and Canada.

Since 2005, Aynalen has been helping orphaned children and mothers in Ethiopia, offering them support and a sense of community. Her caring nature has made a significant difference in the lives of those who felt alone.

In Manitoba, Aynalen is the founder of HIV Awareness Day. Her goal is to break down misconceptions about HIV, reduce stigma and promote understanding in community. Her efforts have helped create a more informed and compassionate environment.

Aynalen is also passionate about organizing women's event for Muslim women in Canada. These events serve as a platform for connection, empowerment, and community building.

Her story is one of kindness, resilience, and a deep commitment to making the world a better place for everyone



# ZEBIBA IBRAHIM

Manager of Community Support Program at the Canadian Muslim Women's Insitutes

Manager of Community Support Program at the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute. Originally from Eritrea, Zebiba moved to Canada in 2010. Despite challenges faced by many immigrants, particularly as a Muslim woman in hijab, she overcame hurdles to pursue education in Human Resources Management. Zebiba's 12-year journey reflects her dedication, resulting in her certification as an Organization Development practitioner. Passionate about fostering growth in non-profit organizations, her story is a testament to resilience and commitment. Zebiba's message to fellow immigrants is simple yet powerful: invest time in finding where you belong, and seek out those who recognize your potential.



# HODAN ALI

Financial Empowerment Coordinator at Canadian Muslim Women's Institute

Originally from Somalia, Hodan arrived in Canada in August 2017. With a background in law and a master's degree in human rights and development, she brings a wealth of knowledge to her role. Hodan's commitment to community development is further demonstrated by her diploma in Project Planning and Management from Uganda and a civic leadership certificate from the United States.

Since 2019, Hodan has been an integral part of the CMWI, currently serving as the Financial Empowerment Coordinator. In this capacity, she dedicates herself to educating newcomers and navigating them through government benefits, empowering them to build a better future.

Her vision extends beyond her professional duties. She aspires to be a voice for the voiceless, advocating for their rights and striving for positive transformations.

With her diverse educational background and hands-on experience, Hodan Ali is making a significant impact, working towards a more empowered and a vibrant future for all.

