

No Opportunity is Too Small

By Taraneh Vejdani

My journey with the North York Women's Center (NYWC) started in August of 2020, during the initial shock of the pandemic. I joined the team on a 2-month contract. Pretty short, right? That's what I thought at first, but I soon realized that no opportunity to contribute to supporting women is too small or short.

My passion for learning about gender equality and fighting for women's rights is an important part of who I am. Even as a young girl, I never accepted and understood why boys and girls were treated differently. I distinctly remember, when I was a child I made the decision to "be the one who proposes" to my future partner. I didn't fully comprehend what marriage was, but I knew if it happens, it won't be like the movies! It could have been shrugged off as a small thought, but again, no opportunity for change is too small.

In 2011, my family and I moved to Canada. This was the beginning of a new journey. Learning a new language, understanding cultural differences, and navigating the challenges and directions of life felt overwhelming. However, the most painful lesson to learn was that even in this "new world", women and girls are treated unfairly. I became committed not only to understanding gender and the way it impacts our lives, but also to supporting those whose experiences are vastly impacted by their gender-identity.



This is the reason I wanted to work with NYWC! NYWC's Women's Empowerment Series (WES) stood out to me the most. To me, this program represented what I want to do in the battle for gender equality. WES is about having the space and tools to recognize that we each have an inner power and that regardless of all the challenges we face, we can create small steps towards what we want. We have the power to decide to be the person who proposes rather than the one who gets proposed to.

When I joined the NYWC team, the organization was in the process of developing the virtual curriculum for WES. Although it was frightening to lead a project of that magnitude, I said to myself, I only have two months and I am gonna give it my all. I worked with an incredible team of women who dedicated their time and energy to ensuring we create a program that is inspiring, informative, and accessible.

Nine months later, our team adapted all three curriculums of the WES program and delivered them to two cohorts. During this time, I have learned and grown significantly! I learned from the women we support, my colleagues, and from my own journey of self-discovery. I am thrilled to continue learning and growing as we bring in new staff to help us expand the program and develop new projects.

Whoever works in this field will tell you that it is the most challenging and rewarding job, and it's true. There are many ups and downs, but what has helped me the most is the mindset of "no opportunity is too small". I start my day/week/month with the resolution that if I am given any opportunity to support another woman, improve our services, and learn about gender equality, I am going to act as if that's the only opportunity I get and give it my all. With this mindset, every opportunity is a big one.

