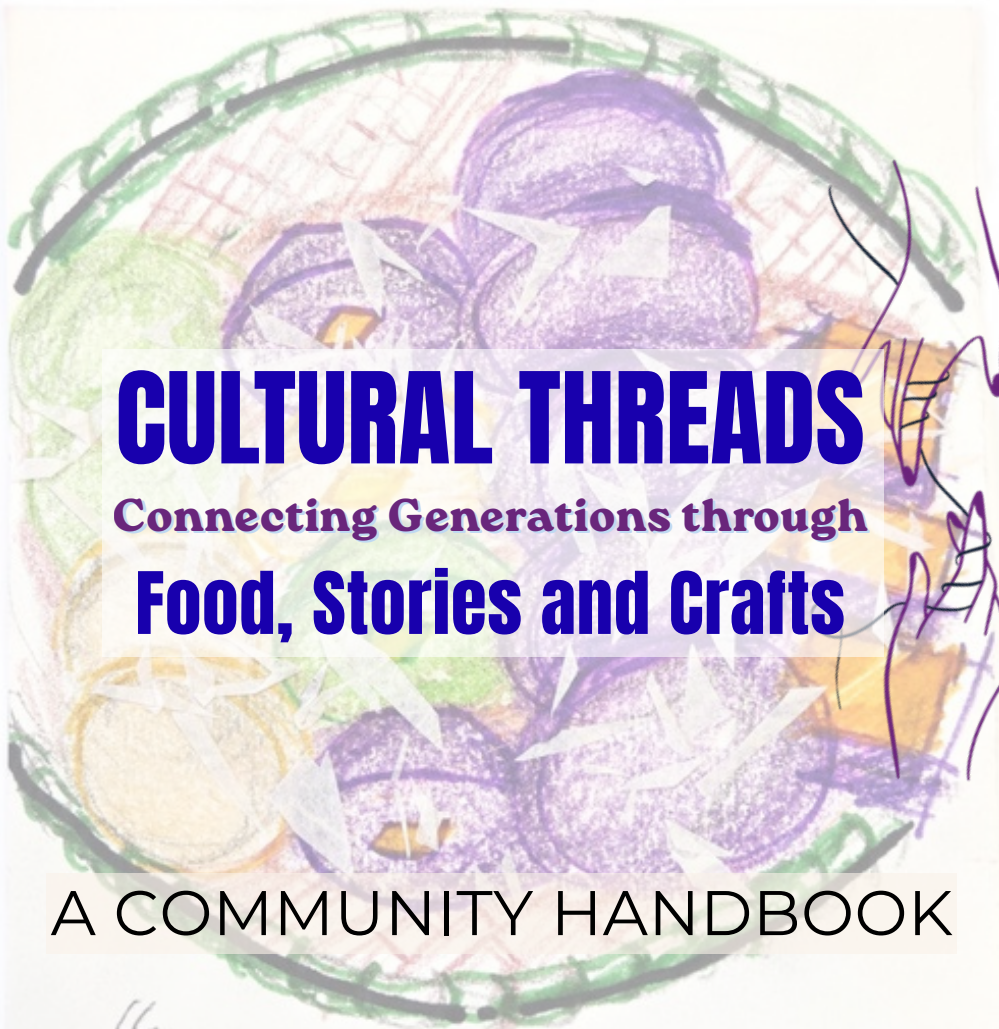




CULTURAL THREADS

Connecting Generations through
Food, Stories and Crafts

A COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

“Mixed Kakanin”



ALBERTA
NETWORK OF
IMMIGRANT
WOMEN

Funded by:

Alberta

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Funded by:



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The Cultural Threads project by Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW) was made possible through the generosity, creativity, and collaboration of many individuals and organizations. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to every participant who shared their stories, cultures, and artistic expressions with us. Your openness, enthusiasm, and willingness to connect with one another are what brought this project to life.

We sincerely thank our talented facilitators – Jeny Matthews Thusoo, Saloni Sharma, Mohar Gupta, Day Pajarillo, Thea Galang, and Cecilia Alcaraz – for thoughtfully designing and leading workshops that inspired creativity, encouraged meaningful conversations, and fostered connections across cultures and generations.

Our deepest appreciation also goes to our community collaborators: Generations Calgary, Focus on Seniors, the Philippine Consulate General, the Filipino Arts and Cultural Society of Alberta, Trellis Society (North East), and Salingpusa Magazine. Your partnership, encouragement, and generous support through your time, spaces, networks, and expertise played an invaluable role in the success of this project.

We gratefully acknowledge the Government of Alberta for its financial support, which made the Cultural Threads project possible.

Finally, we recognize and thank the dedicated ANIW staff members, volunteers, and everyone working behind the scenes whose commitment, coordination, and care ensured the success of every workshop, event, and exhibition.

Together, you have helped weave a colourful tapestry of stories, creativity, and community that will continue to inspire, long after the project's conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Dad's Cooking - Shirin
Collage on plate,
9.6 in diameter



Cultural Threads is a community-based arts project that brings together diverse community members through storytelling, creativity, and cultural exchange. Through collaborative artmaking workshops, participants explored themes of identity, migration, memory, family, food, tradition, and belonging by creating personal and collective artworks using mixed media and textile inspired approaches.

The project fostered intergenerational dialogue and celebrated the rich cultural experiences of participants while creating a welcoming space for connection, self-expression, and community building. The project culminated in a public exhibition showcasing participant-made artworks, highlighting the unique stories, perspectives, and cultural "threads" that connect communities together.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES:

SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

This series of artworks presents the findings and creative outcomes of a set of workshops conducted with the South Asian community in Calgary, exploring intergenerational connection and dialogue through storytelling, folk art, and food-based practices. The exploration of intergenerationality unfolded across three workshops. These activities were delivered in collaboration with Generations Calgary and Focus on Seniors. The workshops were facilitated by Jeny Mathews, Saloni Sharma, and Mohar Gupta.

Creating Futures with Jeny Mathews

The first workshop, facilitated by Jeny Mathews, a respected social worker and community leader in Calgary, centered on collective storytelling. Participants were invited to imagine the world 50 years into the future, guided by structured prompts that encouraged collaborative narrative-building. This process fostered meaningful dialogue between youth and elders, generating discussions that bridged traditional knowledge systems with contemporary problem-solving approaches.



*Image: Still from
Jeny Mathews
Workshop*



Top left: Workshop activities taking place
 Top right: card game example
 Bottom left: Final artwork by participants

Folk art workshop with Saloni Sharma

The second workshop introduced participants to the rich tradition of Madhubani, a centuries-old folk art form originating from the Mithila region of India. Guided by local artist and educator Saloni Sharma, participants explored the history, visual language, and symbolism that make this art form so distinctive.

The session highlighted the meanings behind common Madhubani motifs, including trees as symbols of growth and resilience, flowers representing beauty and renewal, fish signifying prosperity and abundance, and deer embodying grace and harmony with nature. Drawing inspiration from these traditional elements, participants created their own artworks while reflecting on their personal stories, cultural identities, and hopes for the future. The workshop became a meaningful way to connect cultural heritage with contemporary self-expression.



Image above: Saloni teaching art form to seniors



Top image: Madhubani art by participants displayed in exhibition

Bottom left: Participant holding their artwork

Bottom right: Senior and youth working together on a project

Thali art workshop with Mohar Gupta

Facilitated by local artist and educator Mohar Gupta, the third workshop explored food as a powerful expression of culture, memory, and identity. Through guided conversations, participants reflected on family recipes, changing food traditions, migration, and the ways meals bring generations together.

As part of the creative activity, participants designed their own thalis (food plates) using collage techniques. By selecting and arranging images of foods that held personal or cultural significance, they created visual representations of their identities, memories, and traditions. The activity sparked meaningful conversations about favourite dishes, family customs, and the role of food in preserving cultural heritage while strengthening connections across generations.



Image above: Mohar interacting with seniors during the workshop.



Top left: Participants creating collage thalis

Top right: Shaheer's plate

Bottom left: Seniors working through activities

Bottom right: Meena's plate

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES:

FILIPINO COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

This series of artworks explores intergenerational dialogue within the Filipino community in Calgary through food, storytelling, mapping, and collaborative art-making practices. The intergenerational creative approach unfolded across three workshops. This series was made possible through collaboration with the Filipino Arts and Culture Society of Alberta, Hawak Kamay Art Collective, the Philippines Consulate General, Trellis Society, and Salingpusa Creatives. The workshops were facilitated by Day Pajarillo, Thea Galang, and Cecilia Alcaraz.

Painting workshop with Day Pajarillo

The first workshop, led by local artist and community worker Day Pajarillo, centered on the cultural and evolving nature of halo-halo, a well-known Filipino dessert. Participants reflected on how the dish has transformed over time with the addition of diverse ingredients, using it as a starting point for broader conversations about change, memory, and identity. Following a brief presentation by the artist, participants were invited to paint tote bags inspired by halo-halo. While some responded directly to the theme, others expanded their imagery to include personal landscapes such as lakes, boating experiences, and the mountains of Alberta. The session fostered a lively atmosphere of exchange, where participants shared dessert recipes, stories, and supported one another through their creative process.



Halo Halo dessert painted by
Chezca Yoga



Top image: Participants creating their artworks

Bottom left: Final artwork on display in exhibition

Bottom right: Senior and youth interacting during workshop

Recipe Trading Cards with Thea Galang

The second workshop, facilitated by local artist Thea Galang, took place in the lead-up to the holiday season. Participants created illustrated postcards featuring personal drawings and handwritten recipes, with the intention of exchanging or trading them following the exhibition. Families participated together in discussions around food traditions and intergenerational cooking practices, comparing contemporary quick-preparation meals with more time-intensive traditional methods. The activity encouraged storytelling at the table, where participants shared favourite recipes and explored culinary memory through drawing and conversation.



Top image: Families crafting recipes together
Bottom image: Families working on their projects



Top left: Recipes by NSV and AC Balaioing resp.

Top right: Recipes by Belinda and Luz resp.

Bottom right: Recipes by Minnie and Jindra resp.

Bottom left: All recipes on display in exhibition.

Philippine History in 100 words and 100 images by Cecilia Alcaraz

The final workshop, led by Cecilia Alcaraz, Executive Director of Salingpusa Magazine, focused on Filipino history through the theme “Philippines in 100 Words and 100 Images.” The session traced historical narratives through visual references, beginning with early maps of the Philippines and moving toward contemporary representations. Participants including many born in Canada with Filipino heritage engaged deeply with these historical perspectives. The workshop concluded with a collaborative activity in which participants assembled and decorated a puzzle map of the Philippines. This process sparked meaningful dialogue around identity, heritage, and cultural continuity, fostering connection and shared understanding across the group.



Top image: Participants creating their artworks

Bottom image: Participants engaging with workshop



Top image: Cecilia introducing the workshop

Middle image: Participants creating artwork

Bottom image: Final artwork displayed at Cultural Threads Exhibition

Cultural Threads Exhibition



Held from May 15–17, 2026 at Alcove Centre for the Arts (Beltline), the Cultural Threads Exhibition celebrated the culmination of months of community engagement, creativity, and connection. The exhibition brought together artworks created by participants and facilitators throughout the Cultural Threads project, offering visitors a glimpse into the stories, relationships, and shared experiences that emerged through the workshops.

The collection reflected themes of cultural identity, belonging, migration, memory, tradition, and intergenerational connection. Through a variety of artistic mediums, participants explored their lived experiences, celebrated their cultural heritage, and discovered common threads with one another. Each artwork stood as a unique expression while contributing to a larger collective story of community, dialogue, and creative exchange.

The exhibition also featured an interactive Mandala Art Workshop, inviting visitors to become part of the experience by creating their own artwork. Guided by the facilitator, the workshop encouraged mindfulness, creativity, and participation, reinforcing the project's belief that art is not only something to be viewed, but also something that brings people together.

Over the three-day exhibition, community members, families, project participants, partner organizations, and friends gathered to celebrate the creativity and dedication of everyone involved. The exhibition became more than a showcase of artwork, it became a space for conversation, reflection, and connection, where stories were shared across cultures and generations.

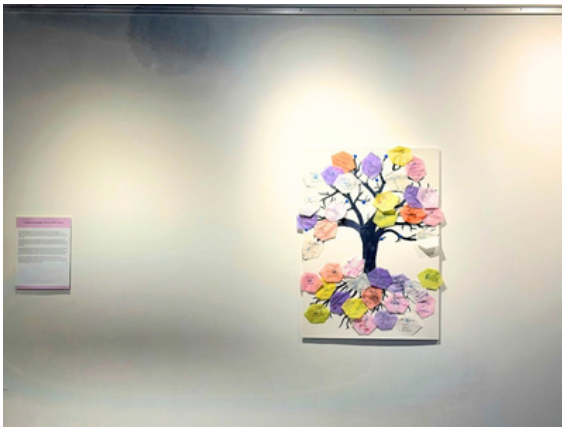
The image shows a title wall for the 'Cultural Threads' exhibition. It features a light beige background with a subtle gradient. The text is arranged in three lines: 'Cultural Threads' in a large, bold, dark blue font; 'Connecting Generations Through' in a smaller, dark blue font; and 'Food, Stories and Crafts' in a large, bold, dark blue font. The overall design is clean and modern.

Cultural Threads

Connecting Generations Through

Food, Stories and Crafts

Image of title wall in the exhibition



Top image: Artworks from South Asian community workshops
Middle image: Artworks from Filipino community workshops
Bottom image: Artwork created during newcomers conference



Top left: Philippine Consul General Emma visiting the exhibition

Middle right: Mandala art workshop

Middle left: Mandal workshop

Bottom right: a team member from the office of Corey Hogan, MP, House of Commons



Artwork by Day Pajarillo

The Cultural Threads Exhibition was made possible through the collaboration of artists, facilitators, community partners, volunteers, and participants whose generosity, creativity, and commitment shaped every stage of the project. It stands as a celebration of the power of community arts to foster belonging, honour diverse cultural experiences, and strengthen relationships through shared creative expression.

CONTACT US

Thank you for taking the time to explore the stories, creativity, and connections woven throughout the Cultural Threads project. We hope this collection inspires continued conversations about culture, community, and the power of the arts in bringing people together.

To learn more about Cultural Threads or the programs and services offered by the Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW), please reach out to:

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With Gratitude

The Cultural Threads project was made possible through the generous support of the Government of Alberta. We sincerely thank them for helping bring this vision to life.

The Alberta Network of Immigrant Women (ANIW) is committed to empowering immigrant women and fostering inclusive communities through programs that promote learning, creativity, leadership, and meaningful connections.